

REPRINT DEPARTMENT

George Wilkes: History of Oregon, Geographical, Geological and Political. (New York, Colyer, 1845.)

[The reprint of this rare work was begun in the first number of the Washington Historical Quarterly and has been continued in portions of varying lengths. For the sake of librarians and others who have kept the files, the work is here continued.—*Editor.*]

We soon arrived at the waters of the Portneuf, and from this point reined up our panting steeds to gaze upon the valley of the Saptin which lay at last before us. In an instant every head was uncovered, and a cheer rang back into the gorge to the ears of our companions, which made every team strain and wagon crack with renewed exertion. It is impossible to describe the enthusiasm which this event created in our party. Each wagon as it arrived at the point unfolding to the view the region which had been the object of our dearest hopes and the occasion of our weary travel, set up a cheer, which, taken up by those behind, rang through every sinuosity of the pass and reverberated along the sides of the beetling crags which hemmed it in. Jim Wayne, who was always "about" when anything of moment was afoot, was among the foremost to reach the point of sight, and there, with his bugle which he had burnished and swung around his neck for the occasion, he planted himself, receiving every wagon with "Yankee Doodle," "Hail Columbia," or "The Star Spangled Banner," and only pausing in the tunes, to wave the instrument in the air, in immense sweeps, to the measure of the answering shouts.

This passage was performed on the 29th of August, and on the afternoon of that day we pitched our tents in the valley of the southern arm of the great River of the West. The region we had passed through from the 30th July up to the 29th August, comprised all the passes through the Rocky Mountains, and was by far the most arduous and difficult portion of the whole journey. We performed it, however, without sustaining any loss or injury beyond the bursting of a single tire, and yet averaged while doing it the distance of about twelve miles a day. In many parts of this region we had to move sharply to secure water and range for our cattle, and

the scarcity of game forced us, so far as we were personally concerned, pretty much upon the resources of our private larders. Though consisting to a large extent of beetling rock, arid plains, craggy defiles and frowning gorges, Nature has provided throughout a large portion of this route, a continuous line of valleys, nourished by gentle rivers, whose fertile banks furnish abundant pasture for your cattle, and provide a road from the eastern to the western limits of the Rocky Mountains and through the spurs of the intermediate region, better than many of the wagon routes in some of the eastern states. The greater portion of this country, however, is a sterile, flinty waste, and except in occasional dots, and in the green ribbons that bind the edges of the stream, is worthless for agricultural purposes. One of the features of this section, of singular interest, is the number of soda springs it contains, of a most remarkable character. They are situated mostly on Great Bear river, at the end of the valley leading up to the pass. There you will find them, bubbling, and foaming, and sending up from their clear depths and gravelly bottoms a continual discharge of gas and steam, as though they were sunken cauldrons of boiling water. They are represented to possess highly medicinal qualities, and it is said the Indians set a great reliance upon their virtues for a numerous class of disorders. One of these springs makes a loud bubbling sound, which can be heard at a great distance, and there are others which eject their waters some distance into the air; and others, in addition to these peculiarities, have a temperature above blood heat. To such an extent do these phenomena prevail, that the surface of the river, in the neighborhood of those on the shore, is fretted for several hundred yards with large numbers of them, some of which force their jets many inches above the surface. The scenery about this spot is wild and impressive; but though composed mostly of towering rocks, the faithful bunch of grass still fastens to the vales, and offers its tribute of sustenance and refreshment to the cattle.

On the morning of the 30th, we performed our orisons for the first time in Oregon.

For the first time in many dreary days the beetling crags of the Rocky Mountains ran their frowning barriers in our rear, and a broad unbroken plain spread out before us. Our hearts swelled with gratitude and joy, and with these combined emotions came a mingling of surprise, that the passage through the valley and the shadow of that misrepresented gorge, had proved so slightly formidable in its character. This can only be accounted for by the fact that most of the pioneers upon the route, from need of the experience of others who had gone before, in the direction of their preparations, set out without providing properly against the difficulties and privations

of the route. Neglecting the important item of provisions, they have relied entirely upon their rifles, and their chance for game, and the result has been, that their stomachs, pinched by occasional deprivation, have spread their dissatisfaction to the mind and magnified and discolored every difficulty and trifling inconvenience into a monstrosity of hardship. It may readily be imagined, that a traveller on horseback, who was obliged to fly from rise to set of sun, over a barren patch of desert to obtain range and food, would be anything but flattering in his descriptions of the scene of his sufferings and perils; but a well appointed caravan, carrying water in their vehicles, and driving their provender along with them, would enjoy a greater measure of contentment, and be inclined to treat the account of their way-faring with a far greater degree of fairness and liberality. I do not hesitate to say, as I said before, that any wagon which could perform the journey from Kentucky to Missouri, can as well undertake the whole of this route, and there need be no dread of difficulties, in the way of natural obstructions, of a more serious character. I would be willing to traverse this road twice over again, if I possessed the means to purchase cattle in the States, and this opinion will appear less strange, when I assure the reader that several of the female emigrants feel in the same way disposed for the pleasures of a second expedition. It is true, there is a good deal of labor to perform on the road; but the weather is so dry, and the air so pure and bland, that one turns to it, as he does to the savory meals of the prairie, with a double alacrity and relish. Besides, many of the cares as well as troubles of a first expedition, would be avoided in the second. Experience would be our pioneer, and the continual apprehension of difficulties of an unknown character ahead, would vanish. We would not be continually harassed, whether we should abandon our horses at the pass, whether we should be out of provisions, or whether the route was practicable for travellers like us, at all! These uncertainties are dispersed forever. Emigrants may come now without fear. They will find a road broken to their use; they know the quantity of provisions they need; they know also the supplies they can gather by their rifles; they know that they will not suffer for want of water, and they have also been made aware that all the property they bring with them, is worth double its value as soon as they arrive. Fuel, it is true, is scarce at some points, but proper care and a little trouble, will provide against any suffering for want of that.

You travel along the banks of streams all the way, and you can almost always reap a harvest of dry willows on the surface of the waters, and where these do not offer, you find an equivalent resource in the sedges on their shores.

CHAPTER VI.

Arrival at Fort Hall—The Three Regions of Oregon—Salmon Falls—The Saptin and the Platte—Fort Boise—Burnt River—The Lone Pine—"Woodman, Spare That Tree"—The Grand Round—Scientific Speculation of Mr. McFarley—A Fall of Snow—An Indian Traffic.

We killed a bullock this morning in a fit of extravagance, and after replenishing ourselves with a most substantial breakfast, set out with renewed energies and brightened prospects. We arrived in the afternoon at Fort Hall, a trading post belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company, on the Snake or Saptin River, and encamped in a fine piece of timber land, under cover of its wooden battlements. We past a most pleasant evening in exchanging civilities with its inmates, who were not a little surprised at this tremendous irruption in their solitude. Some of the members told us that they could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw the immense stretch of our line, the number of our lowing herds and our squads of prancing horsemen, and they inquired laughingly if we had come to conquer Oregon, or devour it out of hand. They treated us, however, with every attention, and answered with the utmost patience and particularity, all our inquiries in relation to the country.

We paused here a day to recruit our cattle, and when we set out in the morning following (1st September), we received a parting salute from one of the guns of the fort, and answered it with a volley from our small arms. Our journey today commenced through a piece of country well timbered, and possessing a soil apparently capable of raising the grains and vegetables of the States. I learned, however, that the climate of this region is subject to frequent frosts, the severity of which are fatal to agricultural operations of any magnitude.

Oregon, or the territory drained by the Columbia, is divided by immense mountain ranges into three distinct regions, the climate and other natural characteristics of which are entirely different from each other. The first region is that lying along the coast of the Pacific and extending in the interior to the line of the Cascade range; the second region lies between the Cascade chain and the Blue mountains, and the third, between the Blue and the Rocky mountains.

The first of these has a warm, dry and regular climate, and it is the abode of continual fertility. The second, or middle region, consists chiefly of plains between ridges of mountains, the soil of which is poor. The timber also is very scarce upon it, and what there is is soft and poor. The climate during the summer is agreeable and salubrious; but the winter brings with it frequent rains. Many of its plains, though generally unfit

for agricultural purposes, are covered continually with an abundant crop of short grass, which renders it a splendid field for raising stock, and for grazing purposes.

The third region is called *the high country*, and is a mere desert, consisting of ridges of rocks of volcanic strata and alternate sandy plains. It has its occasional fertile spots, it is true, but they are few and far between. Its distinguishing features are its excessive dryness, and the extraordinary difference of the temperature between night and day. This extremity amounting sometimes to a variation of 40 or even 50 degrees, is modified somewhat in the approach toward the middle region, but this outside section is doubtless incapable of being reclaimed to any great extent by the hand of man.* We emerged from the patch of vegetation around Fort Hall in a few hours upon wide barren plains of yellow sandy clay, which among its short and dry grass, bore nothing but the wild wormwood and the prickly pear, with here and there some stunted cottonwood or willow.

We crossed the Portneuf at the distance of eleven miles from our starting place, and still kept along the lower bank of the Saptin, the country remaining the same in its character—a desert wilderness except in the partial vegetation on its streams. We found the evenings now getting to be quite cold; the nipping air driving us to our camp fires and directing our attention to extra coverlets; but the morning sun, after getting an hour high, would give us another temperature, and till evening came again, we would have genial summer weather.

We reached the Salmon Falls (or Fishing Falls, as they are called from the great numbers of fish which abound in them) on the 11th, after having passed through a piece of country still the same in its barren and volcanic character, for the distance of one hundred and forty miles from Fort Hall. We here caught an abundance of fine salmon, and after a short enjoyment of the sport, moved onward on our course. Our eagerness, now that we had conquered the Rocky mountains, to get to the limit of our final destination, was extreme.

On the 14th we arrived at Boiling Spring. The country around this spot was wild in the extreme, the same arid, volcanic plain, flowing its sterile billows on before us—a vast lake of barren waste, hemmed in and bound by shores of beetling crags and towering mountains.

We were all the journey up to this point, still on the western bank of the Snake or Saptin river, but we crossed to its eastern shore above these springs, and followed the course of the other side. As this river is of the same importance to the emigrant for his travel in this region, as the Great

*Mr. Wyeth saw the thermometer on the banks of Snake river, in August, 1832, mark eighteen degrees of Fahrenheit at sunrise, and ninety-two degrees at noon of the same day.

Platte is for the Western Prairies, it is deserving of a special notice. The Platte is a tributary to the Missouri and unrolls its loveliness and vegetation from the States to the base of the Rocky Mountains; while the Saptin takes up the task on the western side of this stupendous barrier and leads the wayfarer in the same manner along its banks, until it yields its waters to the Columbia near Wallawalla.

Another striking feature of similarity is, that the country on either side of the Rocky mountains is a dry and barren desert for the space of two hundred miles. Through these sierras roll the streams of the respective rivers, trellicing the vast and naked wastes with their strips of fruitful green.

The headwaters of the Lewis, Snake or Saptin river, as it is variously called, rise in the mountains between the 42d and 44th degree of latitude. Thence it flows westwardly, passing through a ridge of the Blue mountains, and so on northwestwardly to its junction with the Columbia, receiving in its way the Malade, the Wapitacos, the Salmon River, the Malheur, the Burnt River, Powder River, and others of less significance. Its waters are very clear, and its current is, at some places, extremely swift. The rapids on it are extensive and frequent, and in consequence, the river is not navigable, except in occasional spots of still water between.

Forty-eight miles more through deserts sprinkled with volcanic rock, and we struck the Boisé river. We had diverged from the bank of the Saptin into a valley stretching northwest, which brought up to the Boisé. We crossed this stream at its junction with the Saptin, and thence followed the eastern bank of the latter for eight or nine miles, until we arrived at Fort Boisé. This was on the morning of the 20th September. For the last twenty miles, the country had changed its character entirely. As soon as we struck the valley of the Boisé, instead of parched and sandy plains, cut rock and frowning crags, our eyes were gladdened with green vales, flowering shrubs and clustering timber lands. The grateful sight was welcomed with a common spring of joy, and our wearied and hunger pinched cattle revelled in the luxuries of its heavy herbage.

On the 22d we left Fort Boisé, and after traveling over an excellent road for fifteen miles, we came to a creek in the latter part of the afternoon. This we crossed without serious difficulty, and encamped upon its western bank. Throughout this day the wind had blown quite cool from the N. W. and we had to suffer also from an impoverished and scanty range and a scarcity of fuel.

On the 23d we started off again with the same cutting wind that had visited us the day before, and which staid with us over night. Our road today was tolerably good, and after having accomplished sixteen miles over it, we brought our day's journey to a close on the bank of a dry creek,

with no water at hand, except what we found in a sort of puddle in its bed. Two miles further on would have taken us to a good encampment, with plenty of fine range and water, but the Indian pilot who had been employed for us by Dr. Whitman was ahead, and out of reach with the foremost wagons.

On the 24th we had to encounter a very hilly road, which retarded our progress most seriously. The hills, however, were not high, neither were they rugged or abrupt, but they were frequent and thence our difficulty. We saw the Saptin today for the last time, for it now left our track in a bold northward curve till it returned to the Columbia near Wallawalla. We were able to make no more than ten miles today, encamping at the close upon another creek called Burnt river. This stream derives its title from the numerous fires which have consumed portions of the timber in its banks. This consists principally of cottonwood and birch, which abound in its valley; and these are also intermixed with aspen and willow. The stream does not deserve the name of a river, being merely an ordinary sized creek, but as others of less importance claim that title in this region, it may as well be accorded to it.

September 25th we started up the line of the Burnt river. The valley of the stream is very narrow, at some points being not more than twenty yards across, and it is hemmed in by mountains on either side. Though it abounds in timber, quite a safe and passable road could be made through it by clearing out the space for a track, but to do this effectually several crossings of the stream would have to be made. This could easily be performed in consequence of its low banks and firm bottom, but we had no time to clear out the way, and of late, the tortuousness of the roads had so scattered and divided our company, that we proceeded helter skelter along in separate detachments, each following, as best it could, the careless lead of those who went before. We were thus betrayed into many difficulties that might have been avoided, if an orderly arrangement had been preserved. Sometimes the turn only of a few yards would have saved us the most obstructive hills and hollows, and I am informed that the course of the river could have been avoided altogether by a turn to the left, which strikes the trail near Powder river, running in an extensive plain, remarkable for a solitary tree in its midst, known as "The Lone Pine." But if this should not be the case,* I would advise future emigrants to select some eight or ten good men to send on ahead, to search for the most eligible route, and, if necessary, to clear one. This will save them much trouble. The range from this spot to the end of the journey is most excellent; the bunch grass

*It is the case.

is plenty in the valleys and in the sides of the hills, and there are plenty of rushes along the banks of this stream. We made but eight miles today.

On the 26th, the road got worse, if anything, than before, and after floundering through hills and hollows for six miles, we struck a hill of most difficult ascent, that required us to double our teams. Yet even this hill, as well as another still more difficult, which we descended, might have been entirely avoided by an advance of two hundred yards farther up the stream, where nature has furnished an easy ascent round the sides of both. This, however, was not discovered until all the wagons had passed. The above hill is the first that we have met in our road, which obliged us to double our teams.

September 27.—We were visited last night by a sharp, keen frost, and when we turned out in the morning we found the shivering chill still lingering among the valleys of the surrounding mountains. This morning we emerged from our troublous passage through the immediate valley of the river, and struck a beautifully undulating valley which fringed with its luxurious productions the border of a lovely plain. In the mixed vegetation which here abounded in rich profusion, we found red hawes and cherries in abundance, and also a description of elder berries, which, unlike ours, that are of an insipid sweet, have a delicious tartness, somewhat similar in flavor to winter grapes before they are touched with the frost. In the course of the day we passed a Kiuse village, and after completing twelve miles over a good road, halted for the night.

September 28th.—Our route today lay through a beautiful valley surrounded on all sides by the overtopping ridges of the Blue Mountains, their huge bases clothed with immense forests of majestic pines, and their stupendous tops gleaming with everlasting snow. Above their dazzling peaks were piled in grand confusion, masses of fleecy clouds, through the irregular breaks of which the clear azure of the vault above showed its softening contrast, and the sharp rays of the sun poured their floods of radiance. But through all the towering terrors of these mountains, our sweet little valley still wound on, offering its velvet verdure and its gentle surface to facilitate our progress. In the afternoon we emerged upon an extensive plain, which I have mentioned before as remarkable for a solitary tree in its center. This noble monarch of the plain is a magnificent pine, rearing its head alone amid the level blank of the prairie, that bears no other object on its surface for miles together, higher than a stunted shrub. As we approached this lonely hermit, I could not resist an impression of sadness, and the idea was forced upon my mind that it had stood there a sapling amid a million of its kind, and that when centuries ago, the mastodon and the behemoth abandoned forever their sombre depths, the forest followed on, leaving this solitary scion of their race behind, to mark the

spot over which they had waved their sheltering foliage since the beginning of the world.

This splendid outcast has long been known to all travellers in this region as "The Lone Pine," and it could not possibly have received a more expressive and appropriate designation. I was about six miles distant from it when it first attracted my attention, and as we progressed I kept regarding it with admiration, at intervals of every few moments. When but a little more than a mile off, I noticed that the leaders of our line were circling round it, and making demonstrations of an encampment. From the surface of the plain my eyes travelled naturally to the summit of the tree, when I was struck with its unusual motion. I thought I saw it tremble. I was seized with a sudden apprehension, but unwilling to yield to it, I rubbed my eyes and looked again. In the next moment my horse was galloping at top speed over the space that separated me from it, while I, regardless of the distance, was waving my arms to those around it, and shouting to them to desist. I was too late; before I had accomplished half the distance, the majestic monarch tottered for a moment from its perpendicular, then sweeping downwards through the air, thundered in ruin upon the plain. I could have wept for vexation, to see this noble landmark, which had braved the assaults of time through a thousand winters, thus fall an inglorious victim to the regardless axe of some backwoods' Vandal. It had been cut by some inconsiderate emigrants for fuel; a necessity that could have been more easily and much better supplied, by a profusion of small dead willows that were strewed about; for the pine was so green that it could not be made to burn at all. We this day accomplished eighteen miles.

September 29th.—We left the plain and its prostrate landmark this morning and in the middle of the day entered another valley, as rich in its fertility as the one of the day before, and like it, it also ran between two immense parallel ranges of snow-topped mountains, the sites of which, a little way below the vegetation line, were covered with thick forests of pine to where their bases were lost in the bottom swells. The range along here was very superior, and the surrounding proofs of general fertility gave evidence of its being admirably adapted to grazing purposes. The soil is most excellent, but the drought at the same time, must often be severe. Most of this beautiful valley might be irrigated from the tributaries of Powder River (itself a tributary of the Saptin), several of which we had to cross in following the course of this wide valley prairie. Twelve miles today.

September 30th.—Travelled nine miles over an excellent road, with the exception of the last half mile, which was rocky and perplexed; but this might have been escaped as we afterwards found, had we turned down an opening to our right, which we had rejected on passing, but which led

through a smooth and easy passage directly to the place where we finally encamped.

October 1st.—We this day came to the “Grand Round,” the name of an immense valley, one hundred miles in circumference, which will vie in fertility with the valley of the Missouri, or indeed, with any spot in the world. Trees of all kinds are sprinkled throughout its surface; shrubs, flowers, brooks, singing birds, meadow lark, and other winged game, diversify it, with many other of the attractions of more lavish regions, and its general temperature is guaranteed by the evidences of its prodigal vegetation. The Grand Round is nearly circular in its form and lies embosomed in the Blue Mountains, which here, like their predecessors before described, are covered from bottom to top with lofty pines in studded forests. The bottom of this magic circle is rich, level prairie land, trelliced with crystal springs issuing from its surrounding mountain border, which, with but slight assistance from the art of man, could easily be made to irrigate the whole surface of the valley.

In this region abounds a peculiar vegetable called Kamas root, which has a sweet and pleasant taste, and which is also very nutritious food. It is about the size of a partridge egg, and is cured by being dried upon hot stones. We purchased large quantities of it from the numerous Indians we found in the vicinity.

In this region also may be found one of the most wonderful creations of nature, existent in the world. This is a pond, or well, of boiling salt water, hot enough for cooking purposes, and bottomless in its depths. The steam arising from it may be seen at the distance of several miles, and resembles the vapor arising from a salt furnace. It occasioned no small degree of conjecture among the various savants and philosophers of our party, and not a few were the opinions expressed as to its cause. McFarley, however, gave the most satisfactory account of any, to the inquirers. He represented the meridian of Grand Round to be exactly opposite to Mount Vesuvius, on the other side of the globe; that that tremendous volcano “had been burning long afore Christ, and it stood to reason, as it eat deeper and deeper into the bowels of the earth, it must eventually come out on the other side.” He believed this spring to be an indication of its approach to the western surface, and that “the superincumbent weight of water upon the spot was all that kept it for a time from bursting to a vent.” He then added his deliberate opinion, that ere long, the area of Grand Round would be the scene of a tremendous eruption and the circle of mountains which hemmed it in, would be the rim of its crater.

This notion created no small alarm among some of our folks, and

a very extensive opinion prevailed that it was better to move on as soon as possible, and give Vesuvius a chance.

I should have mentioned before, that on entering the "Grand Round," we had to descend an abrupt declivity of three or four hundred feet, covered with loose rocks, as large, and, in some cases larger, than a man's head. This was by far the worst hill we had yet descended, but by locking both hind wheels, and with teams so well trained as ours, we all descended in about three hours without hurt or injury to a single soul, and no damage was done to our truck beyond a slight crush of one side of a wagon body.

October 2d.—We ascended a hill, or rather a mountain, at the edge of the "Grand Round," and then descended it in an extensive declivity on the other side, ending at a fine running creek, for which I could find no name, but on the banks of which we encamped. Both of these hills, the one at the entrance and the other at the outlet of the Grand Round, might be better avoided by turning to the left upon the mountain side and passing them altogether. We passed during the later part of this day, through large bodies of heavy pine timber, and I will take this occasion to remark, that the timber of the Blue mountains were the first considerable bodies we had seen since we left the banks of the Kansas.

October 3d.—We were obliged to ascend and descend three very bad hills, and to pass over eight miles of a very rough and difficult road, a portion of it running through a track heavily timbered with pine. We cut through this a road for the wagons, and it now offers much superior facilities for those who follow.

October 4th.—This day our route stretched through the still continuous pine, but they were more sparsely scattered than before, and our progress consequently was more easy. The weather was cold and bleak.

October 5th.—A slight fall of snow this morning brought us to our heaviest clothing, and increased the size of our early campfires. The roads were excellent before us, but in consequence of two bad hills, and the disposition to linger round our fires, we did not make more than eight miles, after completing which we went early to camp.

On the 6th we descended the Blue mountains, by an easy and gradual declination over an excellent road, and encamped on the banks of the Umatilla river near a Kiuse village. This stream, like most of the rivers we had crossed in Oregon, was nothing more than a good sized creek. Its waters were beautifully clear and its banks were studded with an abundance of cottonwood timber. We were now in the second region of Oregon, and from the moment we had descended from the mountains, we felt the difference of the two climates. The one we had left being sharp and severe, and this

being mild and dry, and offering in its abundant grasses superior facilities for stock raising and grazing.

After descending from the region of the pine, we had now come into a country of broad sandy plains, intermixed with a yellowish clay, productive, as I have said before, of abundant herbage, but destitute of timber, except upon the margin of the streams. From this point to the Columbia at Wallawalla, is between forty and fifty miles through continuous plains, varied only with occasional hills of sand. This surface, except in the valleys of the streams, is sandy and sterile, yet in its least favored sections it bears a description of scattering bunch grass, upon which the cattle become very fat.

We found the Indians of this village very friendly, and exceedingly anxious to trade with us. They proved their degree of civilization and advance in the arts of agriculture, by bringing us large quantities of Irish potatoes, peas, corn and kamas root, for which we gave them in exchange clothes, powder, ball and sundry trifles. They raise a large number of horses, by the luxuriant pasturage of the surrounding country, and were continually pressing them upon us for sale, offering two of the finest that we might select for one of our cows. Seduced by the delights and comforts of this place, after the weary wayfaring we had just passed through in the upper region, we determined to remain here a day to recruit, and we accordingly gave ourselves up to a regular frolic, during which the peas, corn and potatoes, with nice spare ribs, fish and steaks to match, vanished from the earth like witchcraft.

Let me remark, for fear that I may overlook it, that while travelling on the Burnt river, and while passing through the Blue mountains, we had much trouble in finding our stock in the morning, as they wandered off in bushes during the night, and often strayed out among the hills after the bunch grass. We found the road along this river, and through these mountains, the worst of the whole route, and indeed, nearly all the bad road we saw at all. Lieutenant Fremont, who came behind us, and who had Mr. Fitzpatrick for a guide, went further down the Grand Round to the right, came out at a different point, and made his way through the Blue mountains by a route, which he states to be more safe and easy by far than the one by which we came. Our route, at any rate, can be so improved with a small amount of labor as to be quite practicable, and even as it was, we came through it with our wagons in perfect safety, without even unloading them at a single point. Many, if not most of the bad hills we had passed, could have been avoided or overcome, with a very little labor.

CHAPTER VII.

Arrival at Doctor Whitman's Mission—Perplexity—Conflicting Counsels—Division Into Squads and Successive Departures—Progress of the Advance Guard to Vancouver—Our Arrival at Fort Wallawalla—Arrangements With Its Commander—Naval Operations—Boat Building—The Grand Rapids—The Falls—The Little Dalles—The Grand Dalles—The Whirlpool—Death in the Rapids—General Characteristics of the Middle Region; Its Indians, Their Habits and Pursuits.

On the 8th October, we moved on and encamped in the afternoon within twenty miles of the Methodist mission establishment, kept by Dr. Whitman, on the banks of a little tributary of the Wallawalla; but not finding the pasturage to our liking, we moved on the next day a few miles further in advance, and finding a prairie offering us all the advantages we sought, the section to which I was attached, determined to make a halt for a few days, to recruit, our weary and way worn cattle. Most of the party had advanced before us and were already at the mission, but we, in consequence of our halt, which continued through a period of five days, did not reach there until the 15th. The mission establishment is situated on the northeast bank of a small stream emptying into the Wallawalla, around which there are two or three hundred acres in good cultivation, and on the other side of the stream was the grist mill, where the Doctor converted his grains into flour. It was in a very dilapidated condition when we saw it, but the Doctor informed us that he had made arrangements to rebuild it, and make it an efficient feature of his little colony.

This settlement has existed here under the care of the doctor and his excellent wife, ever since 1834, and by his persevering industry he has fairly coaxed civilization into the very bosom of the wilderness. The stream on which the mission house is situated is from fifteen to twenty yards in width; its clear cool waters run over a gravelly bed at the rate of five or six miles to the hour, and its banks, on either side, are ornamented with groves of flourishing timber, and flowering shrubbery, that are the usual accompaniments of fertility of soil and geniality of climate. The valley of this stream is about thirty miles in circumference, and is a favorite spot with the Kiuse for raising horses, numbers of which we found galloping about in all their native freedom over its plains.

Upon our arrival, we found the pasturage in the immediate vicinity of the mission much eaten out by these animals; but a few miles further back, towards the mountains, it flourished in unsurpassed profusion. We found at Doctor Whitman's everything to supply our wants, and he fur-

nished us with fine wheat at one dollar per bushel, and potatoes for forty cents. His supply of the first gave out, but he had corn and potatoes in abundance.

While pausing at this place, we were agitated and perplexed in the extreme what course to take in relation to the arrangements we should make for the successful conclusion of our expedition. We were assailed with various opinions from everyone we met, and in the general indecision were for a time brought to a dead stand. Most of the residents of the mission agreed in advising us to leave our cattle and wagons at this point, or if we did take them to the Dalles or narrows (a point on the Columbia, 120 miles in advance) to send them back here to winter. Others told us that we could not reach the Dalles with our teams, as jaded as they were, as we would find no range along the course of the Columbia. All, however, seemed to think that it would be impossible for us to get our wagons, or our cattle, to the Willamette this fall. But we had already overcome too many difficulties to admit the word *impossible* as a part of our vocabulary. We could not remain where we were for a number of reasons. The pasturage in the immediate vicinity was too scanty; the width of range would not allow us to keep our stock together, and we suffered an additional danger of their loss from the dishonest practices of the Indians, who, if they did not steal them outright, led them off, for the purpose of being paid to bring them in. Many of us were obliged to pay a shirt (the price uniformly charged by the Indians for every service) for three or four successive mornings, to get back the same animal, and this was a kind of tribute that if kept up, would make fearful inroads upon our wardrobe. The majority of the emigrants therefore resolved to attempt the threatened dangers to the actual evils that now beset us. Accordingly they set out in squads, on successive days, and before the end of the month, all had reached the Dalles in safety. What surprised them most, after the representations which had been made, was the fine pasturage they met with all along the way, and especially at the Dalles, where, we had been led to believe, the cattle could not subsist at all during the winter. As the parties to which I now allude preceded me, I may as well continue this anticipatory account of the route as far as it concerns their progress. They struck off in a southwesterly direction, leaving the sterility of the river's bank, and instead of perishing for want of range, their cattle even improved all along the way. Some of them left their wagons at the Dalles, and drove their cattle through the Cascade mountains, conveying their baggage and families on pack horses through the mountain paths; and some went down the river by boats. But the greatest portion of them constructed rafts of dead pine timber, a few miles below the Dalles, large enough to carry six or eight wagons, and

upon these floated safely down to the Cascades on the Columbia. Their cattle were driven down the river's bank about thirty miles, then swam across and were driven down the other bank to Vancouver. Here the party obtained boats from Dr. McLaughlin, the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company's establishments in Oregon, and returned to the Cascades for such of the families, wagons and baggage as had been left behind. This method was found to be, of all, the most successful. By the first of December, all the emigrants had arrived at Vancouver, but the greatest portion of them had reached there as early as the fifteenth of the preceding month.

The large portion of the emigration to which I belonged arrived at Fort Wallawalla on the 16th October. This we found to be a rough parallelogram constructed out of the driftwood drawn from the river during the annual rise of the Columbia, in June and July. It is situated on the northern bank of the Wallawalla, just where it joins the Columbia. We found a Mr. McKinley, a very intelligent Scotchman, in charge of this post, and at his hands received every civility and attention. This gentleman proposed to us a conditional arrangement, subject to the ratification or refusal of Doctor McLaughlin, his superior, at Vancouver, in regard to our cattle. He represented the impossibility of our conveying them to Vancouver, and to save us any loss, offered to take them for himself, and give us an order on the Doctor for an equal number of Spanish cattle of the same age and gender, in the possession of the latter at the before-mentioned station. If Dr. McLaughlin disapproved of the arrangement, Mr. McKinley was to hold our cattle subject to our order, and to receive one dollar per head for their keeping. This was a pretty acute arrangements of his, as we afterwards found, but as it eventuated in nothing but a temporary deprivation of our beasts, we did not have occasion to regard it as a very serious matter. As soon as this arrangement was made, we went to work briskly in building boats from material which we sawed out of the driftwood of the stream, and having all our preparations completed on the 20th, we set out on that day with Indian pilots for our guides.

The Columbia at Wallawalla is a beautiful clear and calm stream, and about as wide as the Ohio at Louisville, Kentucky. We made fifteen miles the first day, and on the morning of the second passed in safety the Grand Rapids, one of the most dangerous points on the river. From this point to the falls, about ten miles above the Dalles, we passed through many severe rapids and narrow passes. At the falls, where the whole Columbia tumbles down a perpendicular ledge of rocks from a height of ten feet, we were obliged to draw our boat from the stream and make a portage of about three-quarters of a mile, and then launch her anew. This was done

with the help of a party of Indians, thirty-five in number, whom we found at the place of our landing, and whom we employed to shoulder our baggage and carry our boat the necessary distance; giving to each of them for the service, five loads of powder and ball, and to their chief, a *shirt* and some tobacco. These fellows appeared to understand their interests very well, and subserved them often with as much acuteness as thorough Yankees. Employ all, or none, was the word, and until we had made a fair business arrangement with the chief, not a lop ear would lend a hand to any of our work. The chief spoke English very well; was a tall, fine looking fellow, dressed in the broadcloth costume of a white man, and wore, upon his feet, instead of moccasins, a pair of very fine shoes. His authority appeared to be absolute, and the moment he gave the word of command everything was performed with the regularity of clock work. Our boat, which was a superior one, that I had procured by especial favor from Mr. McKinley, had now far outstripped all the rest, and indeed, when we left the river for the portage, the remainder of the flotilla had been out of sight for several hours. After our launch, we pursued the stream for four or five miles, when we struck the little Dalles. This is a narrow channel, rushing in whirlpools and dangerous rapids through two precipitous walls of rock. Here we were obliged to again put our families on shore to lighten the boat, and to procure some Indians to take her through the gorge. Below this point, and between it and the Grand Dalles, we encountered some severe and threatening rapids, all of which, however, we safely overcame. The Grand Dalles is a narrow channel cut through the solid rock, over which it used to flow and fall, by the mere force of stream. This channel is about two miles in length, and runs between perpendicular walls of basaltic rock, which fence it in on either side, to the height of four or five hundred feet. When the river is low, it may be navigated with but little danger, but if swollen, it is death to attempt it, and a portage must of necessity be made. We employed some more Indians here, but Isaac Smith, our intrepid waterman, insisted upon acting as the coxswain. It was fortunate for us he did, for when we were about in the middle of the pass, the stroke paddle snapped in two, pitching the Indian who worked it, nearly over the bows, and the boat suddenly twisted around and shot down the stream stern forwards. Smith alone was calm, and seizing a paddle from the redskin nearest to him, shouted in a voice of authority, which danger sanctions in superiority, "Down! down! every soul of you!" Fixing his eye upon a whirlpool ahead, he waited until we reached it, and then adroitly striking his paddle in the water, by a dexterous movement whipped her head into the force of a circling eddy, and checking it instantly on the other side, before she could repeat the motion, our little craft shot life an arrow from the perilous

spot, head on again, into a smoother current. Smith drew a heavy sigh of relief as he handed the paddle back, and sat down in his place without evincing any other sign of satisfaction at the triumphant result of his exploit.

The Columbia river above this point can never be made safe for boats of any size; the navigation being difficult and uncertain, even at low water; and when high, as I said before, it is quite impassable. But the day for our passage, one of Captain Applegate's skiffs upset with three men and three boys. Two of the boys and one of the men were drowned. The former were about ten years old—one of them being the son of Captain Jesse Applegate, and the other of Lindsay Applegate. The man drowned was an old man named McClelland, who steered the skiff.

During our passage from the Wallamette to the Dalles, we saw no timber on the Columbia river, or near it, indeed no bolder vegetation appeared than a few occasional willows near its brink. The Indians are numerous all along its line, and are exceedingly thievish, stealing without hesitation everything they can lay their hands on. The reason of their being so numerous in this quarter is that the Falls and the Dalles are the great fisheries of the Columbia river, where immense numbers of salmon are annually taken by these primitive fishermen.

Before leaving this region, I will remark, that the portion that we saw of it in our passage down the river was of a description that should by no means be taken as an evidence of its general character. Beyond the immediate line of the Columbia, which is a tract of blank, discouraging sterility, stretch numbers of fertile plains, which, though not adapted to the general purposes of agriculture, produce a rich, continual and luxuriant herbage, admirably adapted to grazing purposes, and indeed rendering it second to no region in the world for raising stock. Its surface is almost a thousand feet above the level of the sea, and it is generally a rolling prairie country, with the exception of that portion about a hundred, or a hundred and fifty miles to the north, which is barren and rugged, and much broken with rivers and mountain chains. It is in this section that all the horses are reared for the supply of the Indians and the traders of the interior. "It is not uncommon," says Captain Wyeth, "that one Indian owns hundreds of them. I think this section for producing hides, tallow, and beef superior to any part of North America; for with equal facilities for raising the animals, the weather in the winter when the grass is best, and consequently the best time to fatten the animals, is cold enough to salt meat, which is not the case in Upper California. There is no question that sheep might be raised to any extent in a climate so dry and so sufficiently warm, and where so little snow or rain falls. It is also the healthiest country I have ever been in, which, I suppose, arises from the small quantity of decaying

vegetable matter, and there being no obstruction from timber to the passing winds."

The premium portion of this whole region, I have been informed, is the Nez Percés country, which takes its name from one of the tribes inhabiting it. The region, however, in the vicinity of Mr. Spaulding, an American missionary, who has an establishment on the Saptin, a few miles above its junction with the Columbia, is thought to be the finest of all. He has a fine herd of cattle and a very numerous lot of sheep, and I am informed upon good authority, that his ewes have lambs twice a year. The whole surrounding country is covered with a heavy bunch grass which remains green during the whole winter. This generally dries up during the summer heats of July, but it is then as good as hay, and the slight rains in the fall make it shoot up at once, after which it remains green till the succeeding summer. I saw it in October as green as a wheat field.

While at Wallawalla I saw Ellis, the chief of the Nez Percés. He spoke the English language very well, and I found him to be quite intelligent and well versed in the value and the rights of property. He has a fine farm of thirty acres in good cultivation, a large band of cattle, and upwards of two thousand beautiful horses. Many of the Kiuses have, as Wyeth says, hundreds of these noble animals. They have a great desire to acquire stock, of which they have already a considerable quantity, and yearly go to the Willamette and give two of their finest horses for one cow. In a few years from this time these Indians will have fine farms and large herds of cattle. They have already made great progress in civilization, and evince a strong desire to imitate the whites in everything they do. This is shown in a remarkable degree, by their fondness for our dress, the meanest portion of which, strange to say, they have the strongest passion for. As I said before, they uniformly charge a *shirt* for every service they perform, and to such an extent do they carry their admiration of this graceful article, that I have seen some of them with nothing else on under heaven besides, but a pair of old boots and a worn out hat, parading up and down for hours

*The following extract from the letter of Nathaniel Wyeth, in the report of the Committee of the House of Representatives on the Oregon Territory, February 16th, 1838, will serve to confirm this description. Wyeth was the enterprising trader who established Fort Hall.

"This country (the middle region), which affords little prospect for the tiller of the soil, is perhaps one of the best for grazing in the world. It has been much underrated by travellers who have only passed by the Columbia, the land along which is a collection of sand and rocks, and almost without vegetation; but a few miles from the Columbia, towards the hills and mountains, the prairies are open wide, covered with a low grass of most nutritious kind, which remains good throughout the year. In September there are slight rains, at which time the grass starts; and in October and November, there is a good coat of green grass, which remains so during summer; and about June it is ripe in the lower plains, and drying without being wet, is made like hay. In this state it remains until the autumn rains again revive it. The herdsman can at all times keep his animals in good grass, by approaching the mountains in summer, on the declivities of which almost any climate may be had."

with the most conceited strut, as if they were conscious of attracting universal admiration.

Grain grows very well in the vicinity of Mr. Spaulding's, as also do potatoes and garden vegetables generally. It also produces fine corn, but for this the soil requires irrigation. Mr. Spaulding last year raised four hundred and ten bushels upon four acres. The ground was measured in the presence of five gentlemen, and its quantity accurately ascertained. It was sown in drills.

CHAPTER VIII.

Arrival at the Dalles Mission—Continuation of Journey Down the River—Scenery of the Columbia—The Cascades—Indian Tradition—Arrival of Vancouver—The Chief Factor—Mr. Douglas—Conduct of the Hudson's Bay Company to Emigrants—Jumping the Rapids—Penalty of Braving the Cascades—Stock Raising—Condition of the Settlement at Vancouver—Prices of Goods in the Territory.

After we had passed the narrow and dangerous channel of the Dalles, we came out into a smooth and calm surface of river, over which our little craft glided with a quiet rapidity. We now for the first time caught a glance at a seal, occasionally popping his head above the level of the stream and as quickly withdrawing it on our approach, and as we progressed we found their numbers increased. This animal abounds in the Columbia from this point to the sea, and it is also found in considerable quantities in the Willamette, below the falls of that river.

A mile's sail from the fret of the Dalles brought us to the Methodist mission establishment under the charge of Messrs. Perkins and Brewer, which is commonly known as the Dalles Mission.

The mission houses stand on a most commanding and eligible site on the southwest side of the river. When you ascend the bank, the sward runs before you in a gentle and regular inclination for about a mile, when it joins a line of hills of moderate altitude, covered with a profusion of pine timber, intermixed with some scattering white oak. Just at the foot of the hill, and on the edge of this timber, stand the mission houses, and between them and the river, are sprinkled numerous Indian huts or lodges, whose rude inmates are the object of the missionaries' philanthropic care. Immediately to the southwest is a fine mill stream, and directly below it a rich bottom prairie, skirted with yellow pines and oak. This plain is about large enough for three fine farms, and can easily be irrigated from the stream I have alluded to. The grazing in the vicinity of this spot extends

in a circumference of twenty or thirty miles, and offers facilities at a very trifling expense, for raising great numbers of sheep, horses, and other cattle, and the mast from the white oak will support numerous droves of hogs.

The Dalles mission is at the head of the practical navigation of the Columbia, and I regard it as one of the most important stations in the whole territory. It is a point which all who go up and down the river must pass, and I have no doubt that in a few years steamboats will be running between it and the Cascades. In addition to the facilities which I have already mentioned, it has a mild and dry climate, about the same as that of Nashville, Tennessee. It is slightly colder than Wallawalla, in consequence of its nearer vicinity to one of the stupendous Titans of the Cascades or President's range, called Mount Washington, about fifty or sixty miles to the southwest. I was at the Dalles on the 23d of November last, and there had up to that time been no visitation of cold weather, nor no fall of rain heavy enough to wet the ground two inches deep. To this place, moreover, from its peculiar situation, and the characteristics of large portions of the adjacent country, both north and south, will all the cattle raised in the second region have to be driven to be slaughtered, and here the inhabitants from above will purchase their general supplies.

The beauty of this situation and the advantages it possessed over any to which I had yet arrived, determined me to leave my folks and effects there for a time, and make a voyage to Vancouver myself, to carry out the provisions of the arrangement I had made with Mr. McKinley at Wallawalla, in relation to our cattle. I accordingly set out on the 5th of November, and continued my route down the river.

The Columbia, between the Dalles and Cascades, is a calm and clear stream, without a rapid in it, and as safe in its navigation as the Ohio. The current is slow, but there is at all times an ample supply of water. The distance between the two points is thirty-six miles. Immediately after leaving the missionary landing, the river, which was about a mile wide, passed for two miles through high walls of perpendicular basaltic rock standing in square columns, sometimes of a foot, and sometimes of two feet in thickness. These rocks, which are the same in character as all that I had seen on the borders of this stream, were perpendicular in their position, except at two points where we found them gently inclining inward towards the river. After we had proceeded some three or four miles from our starting point, the hills gradually ran towards the river's sides. Those on the southern bank are covered with pine and white oak, and those on the northern side bear scarcely anything but scrubby white oak. As we neared the Cascades, the mountains increased greatly

in height, and the pines upon their sides grew larger in their size than those on the introductory hills, and became more thickly studded, until the mountains were covered with them. We frequently passed tall walls of rock many hundred feet in height, that raised their castellated sides on the very brink of the river. In fact, the river is so shut in with these natural bastions, both above and below the Cascades, for twenty miles on either side, that within this whole space, there is no bottom lands at all with the exception of a single spot of fertility three miles below, and occasional scollops, stolen from the mountains, bearing in their semicircles nothing but the hut of some Indian fishermen. On our way down, we passed several rafts carrying the adventurous members of our expedition, their families and their baggage, and arrived there ourselves on the seventh.

The Cascades are made by the Columbia forcing its way through the Cascade or President's range of mountains over an immense field of rocks, which at this point strew its bottom and peep above its surface. This point of the river bears no resemblance to the Dalles at all. Instead of being confined between perpendicular walls of basaltic rock, it is lined on either side by the slopes of towering mountains studded with evergreen pine, and birch and oak. Immediately at the Cascades, the mountains run close in to the shore, but, as if satisfied with the experiment at this point, they start away from both sides to the east, and leave several spaces of high, yet tolerably level land. As we approached the Cascades, the roar of the waters fretting in their uneasy course, gave token of its vicinity, and the increasing current of the river lent to our little vessel an additional speed. The growing foam, and gathering obstructions in the shape of rocks in the bed of the stream, at length warned us to the shore, and we were obliged to give our boat again to the Indians on the bank, and make a portage to escape the danger. The water is here very deep, and the bed of the river is filled with huge detached rocks, with intervening patches of white sand. From the compression of its volume in a trough of three or four hundred yards, and its fall of one hundred and fifty feet in the distance of a mile and a half, the current here sets downward with immense force, and renders the passage dangerous in the extreme.

(To be continued)