

REPRINT DEPARTMENT

George Wilkes: History of Oregon, Geographical 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.*]

The committee applied to a Frenchman, named Pappa, who had a log house and a little spot of ground in cultivation at the crossing, and endeavored to hire his platform. But the old fellow insisting on the most unreasonable terms, no arrangement could be made with him, so the convention between Pappa and the plenipotentiaries of our republic, was broken abruptly off, and we were obliged to commence construction of a raft upon our own account. This proceeding brought the old curmudgeon to his senses, but not being able to regain the committee, he threw himself open to the impatience of a section of our party, who availed themselves of his reduced offers, and commenced crossing before the main body. This gave great dissatisfaction to the rest of the company, and inflamed the elements of discord anew in the camp. On the 28th, Pappa's platform while crossing with an inordinate load, suddenly sunk, and several women and children came very near being drowned; but some dozen or two of sturdy arms, soon brought them to the shore, and the mishap was confined to the loss of some property alone. Pappa's platform was then suffered to float down the stream, and our own being now finished, we all resolved to cross over afterwards upon a common footing. On the following morning, 29th, the general crossing commenced, but in consequence of the great number of our cattle, it was not finished until the 31st. The want of organization was the great object which retarded our movements. While we were lingering on the banks of this river, a number of wagons from the Platte country, came in to join the expedition. On the 30th, two Catholic missionaries arrived at the ford. They were pilgrims through the wilderness on a mission of faith to the Flathead Indians. We treated them with every observance of respect, and cheerfully lent them the assistance of our raft.

The Kansas river is at this point about a quarter of a mile wide, with

sandy banks and bottom, and its waters are muddy like those of the Missouri. The crossing, as I said before, was completed on the 31st, and the whole party were encamped safely on the other side, at Black Warrior Creek.

Having now tested to our heart's content the evils of too large an exercise of the "largest liberty," the desire became universal for the election of an absolute commander of arrangements. Accordingly, a general meeting was held, and the organization was consummated by the election of Peter H. Burnett, as commander in chief, and Mr. Nesmith as orderly sergeant.

This election took place on the 1st June, and on the 2d we left our quarters for an onward movement. Right glad were we to get away, for our situation had been very uncomfortable during the whole time from the 26th, and our stock kept constantly sticking in the mud on the banks of this miserable creek. On the 3d, we travelled a distance of fifteen miles, (more than all accomplished during the previous eleven days,) and on the following day seventeen miles more through a section of the most beautiful prairie lands that had as yet ever met my eye. This day's journey took us across a large creek with high banks, called "Big Sandy," but in consequence of the thorough organization which had already been effected by our commander, and his prompt measures, it offered but little obstacle to our progress. We encamped at close of day, some miles beyond its western bank. While stationing our wagons in their quadrangular order, and pitching our tents, we received a visit from some Kansas chiefs, much to the terror of the women and children, who gazed with any feelings but those of admiration upon the grim visages of the warriors, made more grim by the bars of black and red paint drawn across them; or who looked with any thing but a serene sensation upon the threatening tomahawks and scalping knives which grinned beneath their girdles. These lords of the soil, however, were by no means disposed to be savage with us, and after a temporary stay, during which they received some tobacco and a few loads of powder and shot, they retired in an opposite direction from whence they came. On the fifth, we crossed the east fork of the Blue, a large creek which is a tributary to the Kansas, accomplishing this day over twenty miles. On the afternoon of the sixth, we arrived at the west fork of the Blue, fifteen miles west of the branch we passed the day before. We found it to be a small river about fifty yards wide, and contrary to our expectations, it was fordable, a rain during the previous night having excited our apprehensions that we should find it swelled into a torrent. First driving in our cattle, we next propped up our wagon beds with large blocks of wood, and thus conveyed them over safe and sound. The prairie on the

other side was level and dry, and we encamped quite content with the day's performance.

Alas, our satisfaction was bound to be of short endurance; for about ten o'clock at night, the sky was covered with a darkness so dense as to fairly ache the sight that peered upward in the vain attempt to pierce it. A close heaviness oppressed the air that portended the coming of a thunder storm. A signal was given to us by the guards, and every one was up in a moment to make all secure about his tent or wagon as the case might be; but while yet bustling about, the inky pall was rent in twain, and a tremendous burst exploded over our very heads, that absolutely struck some of us to the ground. A sullen moan followed, increasing gradually into a wild shriek of the elements, as if every demon of the night was lending to the moment his croak or horror. At length the howling tempest struck us, and before we had fairly recovered from our first stupefaction, several tents were blown down, and two or three which had been carelessly staked were lifted in the air, and passed off on the breath of the hurricane like puffs of down. I stood near the scene of one of these mishaps, and could not restrain from a burst of laughter when, as the canvass departed, a husband and wife jumped up in their scanty night clothes, and on their hands and knees chased the fugitive sheets which curled over and over provokingly before them. My merriment startled the female pursuer, who on discovering me and my roaring companions made a rapid retreat and crept under the mattress.

These were not the worst of the visitations of the storm, for the wind was accompanied by a tremendous deluge of rain that flooded the whole surface of the prairie, and the entire platform of our encampment; and it is not too much to say that there was scarcely a dry inch of skin in it. Our condition during the night was, consequently, very uncomfortable, and it was not until a pretty advanced hour in the morning, that we had recovered from our condition. This learnt us a new lesson of precaution, which was to dig a trench around the tents on pitching them, so as to lead the water off.

On this days (6th,) we were encountered on our march by a party of Osage and Kansas, or Caw Indians, in all the horrid accoutrements of war. They numbered about ninety in all, and had evidently studied every means of making themselves disgusting and terrible. They all rode ponies, and had their heads closely shaven, with the exception of the stiff lock in the centre, which their politeness to their foes reserves for the scalping knife. The advantages of this international regulation of courtesy is obvious, for when a warrior has conquered a foe, instead of being obliged to rip off his scalp in a tedious operation with his teeth, he relieves him of it gracefully and

easily by the assistance of his top knot. He is thus allowed to pay attention to a greater number of foes, and the natural increase which thus takes place in deeds of arms, encourages the martial spirit of both nations. The exploit of this party had not been highly creditable to their character, for they had waged destruction only on one brave Pawnee, whom they had surprised and run down like a wild beast, but who, however, had wounded two of his pursuers badly before he was overcome. The miserable devils had his scalp with them, and they had also secured portions of his cheeks and nose, which were distributed among the chiefs. They had ripped the former from the head of their victim with considerable skill, the ears being attached to it, and upon inspection, I perceived they still contained their unfortunate owner's wampum ornaments.

The Kansas and Osages are the most miserable and filthy Indians we saw east of the Rocky mountains, and they annoyed us excessively whenever we fell in with them, through their mendicant propensities. We gave to this party a calf and some bread, as they importuned us with great earnestness, stating, to strengthen their application, that they had not tasted food for three days. One of the chiefs with an ear of the slaughtered Pawnee swinging around his neck, approached Green, a strapping Missourian, who stood leaning on his rifle, and gazing at the crew with a stern expression of mingled scorn and abhorrence. The savage importuned him by a sign for some powder and ball.

"Some powder and ball you want, eh?" said Green, slowly rising from his slightly incumbent position. "Some powder and ball, eh? Well, I can spare you jist one load out o' here!" saying which he significantly touched the muzzle of his gun with his finger, and then slowly raised it to his sight. The savage hesitated for a moment, uncertain of the white man's purpose, but perceiving that the weapon gradually travelled to a level, he stepped back and opened his hands, as if to explain the friendliness of his purpose.

But the hooshier's blood was up, and advancing as the Caw retired, he raised the butt of his rifle in a threatening manner, exclaiming in an imperative tone: "Out o' my sight, you d—d nigger, or by—, I'll spile your scalpin' for ever." The Indian slouched sullenly away, and Green, when tired of chasing him with his eye, turned off in another direction growling: "I'd like to spend a few private moments with that fellow in the open prairie."

In addition to their other bad qualities, these Indians have the reputation of being the most arrant thieves in the world. They satisfied us as to their rascally propensities on taking their departure, by the theft of a couple of horses, which disappeared from the time of their leaving us. One

of the animals was the property of the indignant Missourian.

On the 7th, we removed our camp to the distance of half a mile further on, and resolved to pause the whole day in order to dry our goods and repair the injuries done by the previous storm. The night, however, ended most of our labor, for we were visited by another severe shower, which again flooded the whole camp. On the following morning we started off in the rain, which was falling in torrents, with the determination of finding ground high enough to prevent our camp from being continually swamped. After a weary and miserable peregrination of five miles, we came to a grove of young elms on a slightly elevated knoll, which secured us just the advantages we sought. The rain still kept coming down, but after our tents were pitched, we were able to defy it.

Several of us had caught severe colds by the drenching we had received, and among the rest, Mr. Burnet was badly attacked with so serious an indisposition, that he was forced to resign the command.

On the 9th the clouds dispersed, the sun broke through them with its enlivening rays, and we started off at an early hour to reach a grove about five miles distant, where we would have superior facilities in wood and water, for drying our clothes and recruiting ourselves. We reached it about twelve o'clock, and making a halt, in less than half an hour, forty or fifty huge fires were roaring and crackling in the plain. After we had thoroughly dried our garments and recovered our things from their previous confusion, we turned our attention to supplying the vacancy in the office of commander. A council was held which resulted in a separation of the two divisions, one under the command of Captain Jesse Applegate, and the other, after adopting a new organization, elected William Martin commander. The latter division was the largest of the two, having in it seventy-two wagons and one hundred and seventy-five men.

On the 10th, we started out under this new arrangement with fine weather, and a beautifully undulating landscape beckoned us on into its fertile depths. I rode on amongst the advanced guard on the look out for buffola, and yielding to the spirit of gaiety and spirit in my horse, I suffered him to carry me far beyond the rest. Halting at length to turn back to my companions, I paused to take a momentary scrutiny of the horizon, when I suddenly perceived in the extreme south west, two or three little dots just waving on its edge. "Buffalo, Buffalo!" shouted I, waving my hand to those behind, and dashing off with a dozen clattering fast behind me in the direction of the objects. We were not long left in doubt as to the nature of the new comers, for we were approaching each other, and in a few minutes were shaking hands with the mounted outposts of a trading caravan from Fort Larimie, on its way to Independence with furs and peltries.

When the wagons came up, they were cheered by our people, and welcomed with the same enthusiasm that hails a sail upon the ocean after a joyless solitude of months. It being noon, and a brook running hard by, we insisted on a pause, and we accordingly spent a couple of happy hours together, after which we separated, and both moved on again. Surely there is something good in human nature! Such scenes as this go very far to destroy the injustice of the assertion, that man's heart is continually evil, and that he naturally inclines to it as the sparks fly upward. The converse is the rule.

Upon our start, I resumed my position as a scout, and falling in with Green, the sturdy Missourian, we kept company together. As we led the advance with Capt. Gant, our attention was attracted simultaneously by a flock of large birds hovering over some object on the plain, and occasionally stooping down towards it. For the purpose of ascertaining the cause of their operations, we rode toward them, and, on approaching the scene, found them to be feasting upon the dead body of a man. Upon a close inspection, we discovered it to be the body of an Indian, whose dissevered head, badly scalped, lay within a few feet of his body. It was evidently the victim of the war party of the Kansas and Osages whom we had encountered a few days before.

"I'd give another horse to have a turn with one of the niggers who helped in this!" said Green, as we turned away.

The road was smooth all the way to-day; nothing within eye-shot, but a gently undulating landscape, relieved occasionally by little colonies of saplings, and covered with a generous crop of grass, in which our cattle found an elysium of provender. We had another fall of rain on the evening of the 11th, but it was slight, and so far from doing damage, it scarcely occasioned inconvenience.

On the 12th, as we were jogging along at a comfortable pace, the whole camp was suddenly thrown into a fever of excitement by shouts of: "Buffalo! Buffalo!" At the welcome and long wished for cry, several of us who were mounted, galloped ahead to take a share in the sport. On reaching the advance, our erroneous impressions were corrected by the information that the sport was over, and that Capt. Gant and others had just killed a large buffalo, and were waiting until the caravan arrived at the scene of the exploit, to take charge of the carcass. It turned out to be a veteran bull who had been discovered by the hunters grazing by himself him, discharging their rifles to stop his career, and when they had sufficiently about two miles distant on the lead. The horsemen immediately run upon shortened their distance, drew on him their large horse pistols. This proved effectual, and the old soldier bit the dust a victim to seven balls. He ap-

peared worn with grief at his desolate condition, and his flesh, toughened with age, proved hardly an enviable refreshment. The old fellow had probably been left there in the spring when sick, by the other buffaloes. These animals come down to Blue river in great numbers to spend the winter among the rushes, which are abundant in the bottoms near the stream, but leave in the spring.

On the 14th, we entered and passed over a broad district of prairie land, equal for farming purposes to any soil in the world; but it was all solitary wild prairie, and scarcely relieved by the slightest rise or fall.

For the last three or four days, we had every now and then seen an antelope, but in consequence of the extreme shyness of the animals none of us had been able to get a shot at one. To-day, however, Jim Wayne, who to his character of humorist and musician, added the qualities of a capital huntsman and woodsman, brought in a young doe slung across the saddle of his horse, singing—

“Merrily the wild stag bounds!”

with his gun crossed in the hollow of his arm, and his hat cocked more gaily than ever.

“Hollo, Jim!” shouted McFarley, who had just came up, “so you’ve had some luck, I see!”

“Yes, and I have discovered a new method of making cheap bread.”

“Say it, my hearty!”

“By finding *doe* to my hand in the prairie.”

“Faith an’ you’ll find it well *kneaded*, too, (needed,) or my stomach’s no judge,” said the politician with a moistening mouth.

“That last execrable pun entitles you to one of her rump stakes, and I’ll see that it is bestowed upon you if it should be the last official act of my life,” replied the humorist with dignity as he moved on.

On the following day, 16th, I had agreed with Jim that he and I should take a skirr together, to see if we could not fall upon another animal of the same species; but an incident occurred in the course of the morning that diverted our intentions. A shout from the rear turned our attention in that direction, and splitting away at top speed, we saw a splendid buck antelope coming towards us, followed by some of our dogs in full chase. He had been hiding in a little thicket on our trail, and just as the last wagon passed, some loitering hound had caught the scent and started him up. Instead of striking away from us across the prairie, the frightened animal came direct along the line, and ran down its whole length, extending over two miles, at a distance of not more than two hundred yards. It was a most beautiful, and at the same time a most exciting sight. Away he flew like the wind, at every moment the pack scouring in

his rear, receiving new accessions as the chase advanced, and at the distance of every few hundred yards a rifle would send its ineffectual messenger to arrest his course. At length, however, a large hound from one of the foremost wagons seeing the squad approaching, ran down to meet them. The affrighted buck, terrified out of his wits, though plainly headed off, did not sheer an inch from his course, and the dog meeting him with a spring, seized him by the throat and tumbled him to the ground. The animal contrived to raise and shake him off before the rest of the pack arrived, but a rifle ball caught him in the shoulder, and he yielded to his fate by dropping first on his knees and then rolling over on his side upon the plain.

The antelope is a most beautiful animal, and perhaps there is no other creature in creation capable of an equal degree of speed. He is tall, graceful, and stately; shaped something like a deer, clothed in a hide of the same color; and like deer, the bucks have branching horns, though blacker and smaller in their size.

I had a conversation over the body of the animal, with an old backwoodsman, who told me in instancing the animal's fleetness, that he had once a very superior grey hound, which was brought into contest with one of the species in the following manner. The antelope and dog were running at right angles towards each other, the former not discovering the hound until they were within twenty feet of each other. The struggle then commenced, but the antelope shot away from the dog with the most astonishing swiftness. The race lasted for a quarter of a mile, each doing his best, but the antelope had then outran the dog so far, that the latter actually stood still and gazed after him in utter astonishment. Yet this hound had often run down deer and wolves with ease. The antelope is a very wary animal, and consequently extremely difficult to approach. His curiosity is, however, very great; and the hunter adapting himself to the habits of the animal, conceals himself behind a hillock of sand, or some other object, and putting his hat, cap, or handkerchief upon the end of his ram rod, waves it gently to and fro to attract his attention. As soon as the antelope sees it, he slowly approaches, occasionally pausing with a snort; then gradually advancing again, sniffs the air with the utmost suspicion, and though no breath is heard above the humming of a mosquito, will sometimes turn and dash off several yards, to return in like manner again. At length, however, his fate coaxes him within reach of the trusty rifle—a crack follows, and down he goes. He is not very tenacious of life, and a slight wound will bring him to an almost immediate surrender. Notwithstanding his exceeding fleetness, he can be run down when very fat, on horseback, if the chase is continued for twenty miles. My communicant, who had spent several

years in the region of the Rocky Mountains, informed me that they were frequently dun down by wolves, and that he had often snatched the jaded prey from these carnivorous banditti at the conclusion of a long chase, and appropriated it to himself. I found the flesh of the antelope very delicious eating. It is very juicy, and is generally prized above venison.

CHAPTER IV.

Visit of Pawnees—Arrival at the Platte—Its Valley—Its Stream—Buffalo Paths—Climate—Dodging a Sleeper—Buffalo Hunts—Buffalo Hunting—Directions How to Follow It—Buffalo Meat.

Our course from the 13th to the 17th lay up the Republican fork of the Blue, and at the close of the latter day we had accomplished two hundred and fifty miles from the rendezvous, giving an average of ten miles a day from the start; stoppages and all included. The Kansas country, which is the section through which we had passed, is nineteen-twentieths very fertile prairie, but scantily furnished with timber, except upon the streams. This consists generally of elm, low bur oak, cotton wood, small swamp ash, and a few willows, and these, as I said before, only grow (with a few solitary exceptions) on the margin of the streams. In consequence of this defect, there are but few portions of it suitable for farming purposes. The whole country is very scarce in game, and we saw none (barring the veteran buffalo) but a few deer and antelope.

The only description of smaller game we saw was a small kind of snipe, and a very few small birds of other descriptions. The carcass of a half-starved wild cat, killed by one of the company, attested the paucity of her range, among this description of prey. The streams also were very niggard in their yield of fish. The road from Independence to this point (the crossing point to the line of the Platte) is through prairie almost altogether, interrupted only by occasional swells, which are far from being an obstacle to travel. The only difficulties are experienced at the fords upon the streams, which are miry, abrupt, and as I have shown, sometimes difficult to cross. You will, nevertheless, not be driven more than once to a raft.

In the afternoon we encamped for the last time upon the Blue river, and this circumstance in connection with the rapid progress of the last three days, put us in a most excellent humor with ourselves. While we were employed in the usual duties and amusements of such a pause, we received the visit of a large party of Pawnees, who approached us from the south, in which direction they had been on a hunt. They had with them several packs of buffalo meat; the reward of their expedition. They cut this when

they butcher it, into long, thin, and wide slices, with the grain of the meat, and then cure it by drying it in the sun. After it is thus dried, they have a mode of pressing it between two pieces of wood, which gives it a very smooth and regular appearance. They gave us of it very liberally, and asked for nothing in return. These Indians are a much superior race to the Kansas and Osages; they wear their hair like the whites; their stature is athletic, and their mien noble. While with us, they straggled freely through the camp, and amused themselves very much by imitating our mode of driving the teams. We informed them, before they left, of the massacre of their brother by the Osages and Caws, upon which they set up a howl of wo, and swore revenge with the most violent gesticulations. They left us as they met us, in the most friendly manner, and we did not suffer from their depredations as we had from those of their enemies.

"Hurrah for the Platte! tira la! tira la!" cried Jim Wayne from his mouth, and blew Jim Wayne on his bugle, as he galloped up and down the line, on the morning of the 18th. "Hurrah for the Platte! Good morning, Mrs. Robbins!—mornin', McFarley—come, stir about, bustle, bustle, we must reach the Platte today! tira la! tira la!" and away went the mad devil repeating the summons in every quarter. All was stir and bustle; the Platte had long been sighed for as the direct line of route that was to lead us straight to the passage of the mountains, and on its banks we had been assured of finding a constant and abundant supply of game. Being twenty miles or more away, it was necessary we should bestir ourselves at an early hour, to reach it before night-fall. We accordingly got an early breakfast, and soon the long line of the caravan unwound itself over the undulating fields, to span the main dividing ridge between this tributary of the Kansas and the Great Platte. We travelled all day without any interruption, over the finest road imaginable, and just as the sun was going down behind the bleak sand-hills on its northern bank, we caught our first view of the wide and beautiful valley of the American Nile. Being yet two miles distant from its bank, we halted in the fertile bottom land, after having accomplished a distance of twenty-five miles, congratulating ourselves with the prospect of plain sailing, and plenty of fresh provender, until we struck the mountains. This was all we had to console us for a cold supper, in consequence of the complete absence of fuel where we were. In the morning (19th) we had to start without breakfast, in consequence of this want, but after travelling a few miles, we found plenty of dry willows to serve our purpose, and then made a most voracious meal. We struck the Great Platte near the head of Grand Island.

This was a beautiful island, lying in the center of the stream (very wide at this place), seventy-five miles in length, and covered with the finest

timber, while not a solitary tree grew on the south side of the river, where we were.

Having now brought the reader to the grand avenue, which leads the emigrant direct to his future destination, I will not trespass upon his patience by a description of every day's journeys and proceedings, but shall content myself with giving him a general view of the route, its characteristics, facilities and extent; thus advancing with greater rapidity to the main subject of inquiry—Oregon itself; and thus avoiding the unnecessary repetitions of diurnal trips, nine-tenths of which would be in their description mere counterparts of those that went before.

The Great Platte is one of the most remarkable rivers in the world, and when considered with a view to the facility its level banks afford for intercommunication with our Pacific territories, its value is immense. It takes its rise in Wind River Mountain (in latitude $42\frac{1}{2}$), a little north of, and near the Great Southern Pass, and runs due east, with scarcely a perceptible deviation of course to the traveller along its banks, for a distance of 600 miles, to its junction with its southern branch, and from that point 300 miles more, when it disembogues into the Missouri, in latitude about $41^{\circ}, 30'$. Like the Nile, it runs hundreds of miles through a sterile wilderness, and like the Nile it unrolls its strip of green across the vastness of the desert, and is the father of all the vegetation near it. In the way of navigation, it is useless; its waters being too shallow in great portions of it even to float a canoe, and in the winter it is bound in ice. Its banks are low and sandy, its waters muddy like the Missouri, and its current very rapid. In consequence of its shallowness it is very easy to ford, except when rains have swollen the stream, and then its additional force makes it in places extremely dangerous. Though it varies greatly as to width, its average breadth is about two miles, and its center is frequently diversified with most beautiful islands, large and small, covered with the finest trees whose rich and clustering foliage contrast splendidly with the sand-hills and wide prairie plains on either side. On each side of the river and at the distance of about three miles from either bank, run a continuous line of sand-hills. From the foot of these, to the water's edge, is spread a sheet of lively verdure, and on the other side, the boundless level is only lost in the line of the horizon.

The banks of the Platte are generally devoid of trees, and we suffered a great scarcity of wood previous to reaching Fort Larimie in consequence; but we frequently found bunches of willows, and more than once, the remains of Indian wigwams of the same material, eked out a substitute for cooking purposes. Our general expedient was to pick up pieces of drift wood from the river, during the day. These we could get at the

expense of wading to our knees, and they supplied all our necessities with a little care. But little fuel is required if proper means are used in consuming it; and to proceed correctly, with a view to saving, a narrow ditch should first be dug in the earth about eight inches wide, a foot deep, and about a yard long; this arrangement confines the heat, and prevents the wind from scattering and wasting the fire.

The valley of the Great Platte is from fifteen to twenty miles wide, beyond which line, on either side, the prairies lose a portion of their fertility, and gradually extend towards the west in arid and cheerless wastes. The strip along the banks, of which I spoke before, is filled with the most luxuriant herbage, the sand-hills which bar it from the plain beyond, are about three miles through, and the outer prairie interminable. Within these sand hills you will find numerous valleys covered with a profuse bottom vegetation, and leading by easy tracks from plain to plain. Upon the outer plain, and sometimes in the sand hills, you will find the buffaloes and numbers of white wolves, and upon the inner one, range the antelope and deer. When the season is wet, the buffalo find plenty of water in the ponds or puddles of the outer plain, and, consequently, are not forced to the inner one, or to the river on its edge, for water. As the summer advances, and the ponds dry up, these animals gradually approach the stream, and are found in numbers in the inner section. As you go along the edge of the river, you are struck with the numerous beaten paths diverging in the direction of the sand hills, and leading across the surface of the farther plain. A stranger is at a loss, at first, to account for such signs of population in a wilderness, but, upon inquiry, they are found to be the tracks made by the buffalo, in their journey to the banks of the stream for water. These paths are cut to the depth of six or eight inches in the soil, and indicate by their narrowness, the habit of the animals in these excursions to proceed in narrow file. In traveling up the Platte, we crossed one of these paths at almost every thirty yards, and they were about the only annoyance we met with upon the surface of the plain. They are serviceable in a high degree in one view, for they afford a perfect security against your getting lost, your simple resource when having strayed far away on a hunt, being merely to strike a buffalo track, and you are sure to be in a road leading directly to the river, by the nearest route.

The whole road along the line of this stream is doubtless the best in the world, considering its length. The greatest inconvenience attendant on its travel that I know of is the unconquerable propensity it occasions in one to sleep in the day time. The air is so bland, the road so smooth, and the motion of the vehicle so regular, that I have known many a teamster to go to sleep while his team stood winking idly in the road without budging

a step. The usual custom with us when such a case as this would occur was for each wagon in turn to drive cautiously around the sluggard, and leave him to have his nap out in the middle of the road. It would sometimes happen the sleeper would not awake for two or three hours, and when he arrived that time behind in camp he would either swing around in a towering passion, or slink out of reach of our merciless tauntings, heartily ashamed.

On the 22d of June we saw the first band of buffalo on the plain near the river. There were about fifty altogether—and they were on their road through the sand hills to the river to drink. We immediately mounted and gave chase, and being fortunately to the leeward, they did not scent of us until we were well down upon them; then by pushing our horses to their utmost speed, we managed to get near enough for a shot, and a general discharge succeeded in bringing down two of the finest of the lot.

As the buffalo is sometimes a very important item in the emigrant's calculations for food, it will not be improper for me here to devote a few remarks upon the manner of obtaining them.

There is perhaps no chase so exciting to a sportsman as a buffalo hunt, and the reader can readily imagine the tremendous addition its interest receives when the stomach has been in rebellion for hours, perhaps for days, from the insidious excitements of the fresh prairie air. The mode of hunting these noble animals is very simple. They are most generally found upon the outer range, grazing near the head of some hollow, leading up towards the sand hills. The sight of the buffalo is very dull, but their scent, by its superior acuteness, compensates for this defect. You must, therefore, always manage, if possible, to get to the leeward of them, or you are almost certain to see the whole herd scamper off before you arrive in pulling distance. As an instance of this, I one day saw a band of about a hundred buffaloes at two miles distance on the opposite side of the river running up its line on a parallel with our train. They did not see us, but the wind being from our side, they caught the scent when about opposite our center, upon which they turned off instantly at a right angle and scoured away like mad. Approach them to the leeward, however, and you are almost certain to get within easy shooting distance. When you have discovered a herd close up to the line of the hills, you should station your horses in some hollow near at hand (but out of sight), and then creep cautiously up to your position, pick out your animals, and fire, one at a time, in slow succession. If you give them a volley, they directly scamper off, and a rapid succession of shots is followed by the same result; but if you load and fire slowly, you may kill several before the whole herd take alarm. I have seen three or four reel down, or bound into the air and fall, without exciting

any attention from their indifferent companions. When you have fired as often as you can, with effect, from the position you have taken, and the animals have moved beyond your reach, you should hasten to your horses, mount with all speed, and approach as near as possible without showing yourselves; but when you do, put your horses up to the top of their speed and away after the game as fast as you can go. You may dash at a band of buffaloes not more than a hundred yards off, and though you may think you are about to plunge into the very midst of them in a moment, you will find, if your horse is not well down to his work, that they will slip away like legerdemain. Though they appear to run awkwardly, they contrive to "let the links out" in pretty quick succession, and if you suffer them to get any kind of a start, you must expect to have a hard run to overtake them. The better plan, therefore, is to put your horse to the top of his speed at once, and thus by bringing the matter to a climax, you obviate the inconvenience of being drawn to a distance from the camps, and of making your jaded steed carry a wearisome load several miles back.

If you hit a bull from cover and he sees no enemy, he will at once lie down, but if you press him on the open plain, when injured, he will resent the wrong, turn short round, bow his neck and waving his tail to and fro over his back, face you for a fight. At this crisis of affairs, it is well to show him some respect, and keep at a convenient distance. If you will content yourself with fifty yards he will stand and receive your fire all day. As soon as you bring him once at bay you are sure of him, for you may fire as often as you please, and the only indication he gives before going down, of having received a wound, is by a furious kicking at the assaults of his deadly visitant. You must not attempt to kill him by shooting at his head, for you will only spatter your ineffectual lead upon his frontal bone, but shoot him behind the shoulder at the bulge of the ribs, or just below the backbone in the same latitude, and you will pass your ball directly through the thick part of the lungs. This is the most deadly of all shots, for the flow of blood stifles his respiration and suffocates him at once. When excited these animals are very hard to kill, and unless when wounded in this fatal spot, I have seen them so tenacious of existence as to live for hours, even with two or three bullets through their hearts.

The animal, though it generally flies pursuit, is capable of the most romantic deeds of daring. An instance of this kind occurred on the 27th of June. We had stopped our wagons at noon within half a mile of the river, and while enjoying the comforts of our mid-day meal, we discovered seven large buffalo bulls slowly moving up the opposite shore of the river. When they got directly opposite our encampment, they turned and plunged suddenly into the stream and swam directly towards us as straight as they could come, in the face of wagons, teams, cattle, horses, men and all.

Every man prepared his gun, and those on the extreme ends of the line, stretched down to the bank of the river, thus forming a complete semicircle of death for their reception. Notwithstanding we were thus prepared for their approach, we all felt certain they would turn tail and recross the river; but to our complete astonishment, on they came, regardless of our grim and threatening array. They were received with tremendous bombardment, and down went every bellowing vagabond to the ground. Several of them rose to their feet, but the storm of death bore them back again upon the sod and not a single one escaped to profit by this lesson of imprudence.

There is perhaps no flesh more delicious to a traveller's appetite than buffalo meat, particularly that cut from a fat young buffalo cow; and it has the peculiar advantage of allowing you to eat as much as you please without either surfeit or oppression. I shall never forget the exquisite meal I made on the evening of the first of June. I had been out hunting all day, was very weary, and as hungry as a whole wilderness of tigers. Out of compassion for my complete fatigue, Mrs. Burnett cooked six large slices from a fat young buffalo for my supper. My extravagant hunger induced me to believe when I first saw the formidable array served up, that I could readily dispose of three of them. I *did* eat three of them, but I found they were but the prologue to the fourth, the fourth to the fifth, and that to the sixth, and I verily believe that had the line stretched out to the crack of doom, I should have staked my fate upon another and another collop of the prairie king. This story hardly does me credit, but the worst is yet to come, for two hours afterward, I shared the supper of Dumberton, and on passing Captain Gant's tent on my way *home*, I accepted an invitation from him to a bit of broiled tongue; yet even after this, I went to bed with an unsatisfied appetite. I am no cormorant, though I must admit I acted very much like one on this occasion. My only consolation and excuse, however, is that I was not a single instance of voracity in my attacks upon broiled buffalo meat.

CHAPTER V.

Progress of Travel—Grand Complimentary Ball to the Rocky Mountains—Route Through the Mountains—Its Points—Its General Character—Passage Through the Pass—Arrival in Oregon.

On the 29th of June we crossed the south fork of the Platte. On the 1st of July we crossed the north fork at a distance of thirty-one miles from the passage the day but one before, and then proceeded along its northern bank for a period of nine days, passing in succession the points on the route known as "Cedar Grove," "the Solitary Tower," "the Chimney,"

and "Scott's Bluffs," until we arrived at Fort Larimie on the 9th; thus averaging, from the time of our crossing the south fork on the morning of the 29th of June, about sixteen miles a day. During this period, and this space of march, the weather was uninterruptedly fine, the thermometer ranging from 74° to 83°, and the face of the road suffering no sensible variation. We paused for a day at Fort Larimie, and resumed our march on the morning of the 11th. From this point thereout, we suffered no further scarcity of timber, but we now began to encounter a few more difficulties from the surface of the road. This we found to be interrupted by bolder undulations, and after we had travelled eight miles further westward, we came to the *debris*, as it may be called, of the Black Hills, whose occasional abrupt inclinations now and then caused our teams a little extra straining, but did not require us to resort to double ones. This lasted but for a short distance, however, and we were soon on a level route again. On the 16th we struck the Sweetwater, a beautiful little tributary of the Platte, and following its course for one hundred miles, at last came in view, on the afternoon of the 30th, of the eternal snows of the Rocky Mountains. We still had an open route before us, and a portion of the day remained to avail ourselves of it if we pleased; but this event was worthy of the commemoration of an encampment, and we accordingly wound up the line two hours earlier than usual. The hunters of our party had been fortunate this day in obtaining some fine antelope and two fat young buffaloes, and we set out for a regular feast. When the meal was over, and when the prospective perils which lay in the entrails of those grim giants had been canvassed again and again, we broke from all grave considerations to consecrate the evening to merriment. The night was beautiful, scarcely a breath stirred the air, and the bright stars in the blue vault above looked brighter than ever. The camp fires streaming upwards from the prairie plains flooded the tents with their mellow light, and made the tops of the quadrangular barricade of wagons look like a fortification of molten gold. Jim Wayne's fiddle was at once in request, and set after set went in upon the sward to foot a measure to its notes. McFarley and the representative of Big Pigeon forgot in the moment all the bickerings of their ambition, and formed two of a party (amongst whom was my old friend, Green the Missourian), who listened to the Indian traditions of Captain Gant, and then told their own wonderful stories in return. The revelry was kept up till a late hour, and the result was that the whole party went to bed worn out with pleasure and fatigue. From this point we pursued a directly western course, crossing in our route two creeks called "Big Sandy" and "Little Sandy," and three or four others, until we struck Green river, a tributary of the Colorado, which empties its waters into the Pacific, in the Mexican

bay of San Francisco. We followed Green river down its course through the mountains for twenty miles, where we struck a branch of it called Black's fork. From thence we turned off in a westerly direction for thirty miles, to Fort Bridger. Still west we proceeded for twenty more, to a branch of the Great Bear river, called Big Muddy, and down this branch for thirty-seven miles of fine travel, in a north westerly direction to Great Bear river itself. We now took up the course of Great Bear river, and following it in a north westerly direction for fifty-seven miles, passed a range of hills which run down nearly to its bank; and continuing our course for thirty-eight miles more, arrived at the Great Soda Springs. From the Great Soda Springs, which we left on the 27th August, we took the course of a valley leading to the great dividing ridge between us and Oregon, and after passing up it to the distance of about forty-five or fifty miles, came upon the wide depression of the mountains that was to lead us into the promised land. This remarkable pass is so gentle in its slope, as to afford no obstacle for the heaviest loaded wagons; and, without any difficulty at all, our most cumbrous teams passed through it into the valley of the Satpin, the southern branch of the Columbia. This natural avenue, though surrounded, nay, almost overhung, in parts, with immense crags of frowning desolation, was covered, generally, with the softest and most delightful verdure that had for a long time met our eyes. A beautiful little brook meandered through it; flowers and trees were flourishing along it in profusion, and the sweet scent and soft air that floated in our faces off its fields half persuaded us that we were suffering the delusion of some fairy dream. Impatient of delay, some dozen or two of us on horseback plunged into the inviting scene, and led the way at a gallop to a view of the region beyond.

(To be continued.)