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SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE NEGATIVE TESTIMONY AND THE GENERAL SPIRIT AND METHODS OF BOURNE AND MARSHALL IN DEALING WITH THE WHITMAN QUESTION*

The Whitman controversy has been quiescent for some time, and possibly it may be an evil deed to reopen it. Nevertheless there are certain aspects of the case which seem to have so important bearing upon the methods of writing and interpreting history as to take it from the domain of the special case of Marcus Whitman and to place it among the questions of general interest to all students and teachers of history. I shall not endeavor mainly to support any certain view of the Whitman controversy, but rather certain principles which I think should govern the investigator and the writer in the acquisition of data, and the serious, even sacred, responsibility of presenting them to the world. In the writings of Bourne and Marshall I find certain attitudes and methods and assumptions which seem to me to violate the fundamental requisites of correct historical interpretation. They furnish a text therefore upon which I will offer this contribution. The readers of the Quarterly are familiar with the general literature of this subject, and with the names and opinions of the leading advocates and opponents of the central proposition in the Whitman case; viz., That Dr. Marcus Whitman was a great, if not a decisive factor in "saving Oregon to the United States."

When about a dozen years ago Professor E. G. Bourne of Yale University and Principal W. I. Marshall of Chicago entered the field as critics of the Whitman story, it was generally supposed that they would mark a new era in the discussion. They claimed to be

*While Bourne and Marshall are both dead, there are many who would feel impelled to defend them. This article is published, not to reopen the controversy but simply to give the other side what they consider a fair hearing on certain points.—Editor.

"scientific, unprejudiced investigators." There is no question that they greatly influenced opinion. No less a distinguished historian than John Fiske announced his change from belief to disbelief in the Whitman claims. Many readers East and West considered these books a final adverse settlement of the case. About a year ago Leslie Scott, in a review in the Oregon Historical Quarterly of Marshall's final work on the "Acquisition of Oregon," expressed the belief that this was the last word and that the Whitman "myth" might be considered exploded for good. But in spite of the considerable acceptance of this opinion, there is now a decided swinging of the pendulum the other way, and a disposition on the part of candid students to question the whole spirit and methods of Profs. Bourne and Marshall. This revival in the belief of the essential truth of the Whitman story is largely the fruit of the modest and unobtrusive yet convincing work of Myron Eells (convincing because of fairness, candor and honesty) in his "Reply to Professor Bourne," and his "History of Marcus Whitman," and although both Bourne and Marshall, the latter especially, have treated Eells with contempt (See page 45 of Marshall's "History vs. the Whitman Saved Oregon Story" for an example of his tone of petty spitefulness) I am ready to submit to any candid reader of both that Eells is as superior to Marshall in fairness, candor and dignity, as he is inferior to him in capacity of "scientific" abuse and misinterpretation.

As the limits of this article forbid long or numerous citations I will refer readers to the books concerned, Bourne's "Essay on Historical Criticism," and Marshall's "History vs. the Whitman saved Oregon Story," and "Acquisition of Oregon." Reference will also be given to Eells' "Reply to Professor Bourne," and "Marcus Whitman."

First, the spirit of these two writers. I shall refer mainly to Marshall. Professor Bourne was a "gentleman and a scholar," and his essay contains relatively few examples of abuse and vituperation, though not entirely free from them, as shown on page six of Eells' Reply. The chief feature in Professor Bourne's spirit to which I would call attention is that he is somewhat supercilious and academic. I would submit to close readers of this essay that it leaves the impression that he is more concerned in illustrating his theory of history than in ascertaining the real facts in the Whitman case. It has been asserted on supposedly good authority, although I do not claim it for I know nothing of it first hand, that some Yale student from this state presented Professor Bourne a class thesis on this subject which so much pleased him that he himself took up the theme, and that this

was the genesis of the essay. It certainly sounds like it. It has the spirit of certain historians and schools of history which go gunning to see if they can find some available target to shoot at in the way of some fine story or current belief. William Tell, Pocohontas, Washington and the Cherry tree, many other popular stories have been exploded by some "tireless and patient investigator with scientific methods!" What can Professor Bourne of Yale and his major students find to expose? They must find something in order to maintain their reputation as "scientific historians." Well, here is that Whitman story which some missionaries and college builders in a distant state seem to take much comfort in as an example of heroism and patriotism! How would it do to punch the eyes out of that by way of a little class practice? Such seems to me largely the attitude of Professor Bourne.

But when we turn to Mr. Marshall we find a prevailing tone of bitterness, abuse, and vituperation which removes him from the class of reliable historians and places him in that of mere controversialists. We refer readers to his own books for examples. His stock in trade is the imputation of dishonesty and falsification to men whom the Pacific Northwest honored in their time as models of Christian devotion and honesty. On page 50, Vol. 2, of the "Acquisition of Oregon" note his reference to "three credulous clergymen, all eager to get money from the national government, and profoundly ignorant of the * * * diplomatic struggle, etc." He refers to Spalding, Atkinson and Eells. He then gives certain letters of Atkinson in connection with the Dalles mission land. On page 51 he declares that "the Whitman legend would never have been heard of had the national government paid the thirty or forty thousand dollars claimed by Spalding and Eells for the destruction of the mission and allowed their claims for a square mile of land around each mission station." In the next paragraph he says that until he read Atkinson's letters he "had no idea that it (the 'legend') sprung up first from a contest with the Methodists as to which of them had saved Oregon, and so as a reward was entitled to a square mile townsite at the Dalles." Hence "the origin of the legend was vastly more sordid than I had previously supposed." And I would ask the people still living in Oregon and Washington who knew Eells and Atkinson, as well as their descendants who knew of them, what they think of a historian who places those heroes and saints in the ranks of petty grafters. Read those letters of Atkinson and see whether Marshall gives them any fair interpretation. And what of Father Eells? When we call up his long years of unselfish devotion, how he and his faithful wife almost worked their

hands off at their farm at Waiilatpu in order to raise money to found Whitman College, how he travelled up and down on horseback through Eastern Washington, sleeping under a tree at night and living on dried salmon, parched corn and spring water, superintending schools, founding churches, ministering to the needy, with never a thought for personal gain or comfort, making such a place in the hearts of people of all sorts that throughout this state he is considered a veritable St. Paul,—then for a soured and spiteful old man who never saw him, or had any conception of the motives of his life, to so distort the letters about the Dalles town-site as to hold him up to history as a grafter and looter who fabricated the “Whitman legend” as a basis for plundering the national treasury! The reviewers who commend Marshall’s book must have a curious conception of justice and “finality.” The very use made by Bourne and Marshall of the words “Myth” and “legend” is a commentary on their spirit. It is the spirit of the advocate, of the prejudiced pleader, not of the fair and impartial historian. In the regular use that they make of those words they beg the whole question. The very point at issue is, *Is this a myth?* They assume that it is, name it “myth,” hammer the idea in like a persistent advertiser, and at the end triumphantly exclaim, “We have proved our case!” What kind of a spirit does that show in a historian? On pages 7 and 8 of Eells’ Reply are quotations from letters by John Fiske to Marshall in which he counsels him “to be less vehement,” and says “there is great value in a quiet form of statement.” Marshall, on pages 50 and 51 of his “History vs. the Whitman saved Oregon Story,” goes into a clumsy explanation of this in order, I should judge, to make an extra slap at Eells, and to convey to his readers the impression that he and John Fiske were great friends. It is worth noticing that Fiske in a private letter to a man in this state, said in substance: “I think that Marshall makes a strong case, but what is there for him to be so angry about?” What indeed? In view of his habitual anger, villification, and general bad temper, inexcusable in a historian, may we not go beyond Professor Fiske and conclude that he makes a strong case—against himself? We ask readers to turn to Marshall’s own pages to find proof of his habits of villification. Among numerous examples note his attempts in chapter 7 of volume 2 to belittle Whitman, to misinterpret and distort his letters, to minimize the greatness of his efforts, to under-rate the privations of that first missionary journey across the continent in 1836, and the fortitude of those two women, Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spalding, the first white women to cross the mountains. None but a man of microscopic soul could quote, as Marshall does in pages 190,

Vol. 2, from one of Whitman's letters as to the good health of the party, and then comment: "All of which shows that the journey was its own sufficient reward, as tens of thousands of people have since found the journey by wagon, train or saddle animal to be." So those two devoted women setting out on such a journey, that was to sunder them from every tie that made their lives worth living to them personally, were just out for a little health tour, or a little pleasure jaunt! Very easy for those women to cross the plains! Nothing particularly worthy of notice in that! Had good health!

Not less marked is Marshall's exhibition of a morose and prejudiced spirit to be found in chapter 8, Vol. 2, on the Massacre. His venomous spirit is found in nearly every reference to the victims of the tragedy. In giving his summary of causes for the Massacre he finally arrives, on page 261, at the conclusion that the chief cause was Whitman's unwisdom in continuing to practice medicine among the Indians though he knew perfectly well that they were in the habit of killing unsuccessful medicine men, while on page 268 he assures us that Whitman had ample warning, but that he possessed extreme obstinacy, and disinclination to accept good advice. So this is the conclusion of the whole matter. Dr. Whitman was to blame for his own murder? This clears the skirts of Hudson's Bay Company, renegade white men, half breeds, and probably Indians themselves! Whitman himself was the guilty party! If the Lord had not mercifully interposed to stay the constructive hand of the author of the "Acquisition of Oregon" we would probably have another chapter demonstrating that Whitman himself instigated the whole thing for the sake of raising the price of vegetables at Waiilatpu, or getting the government to give two or three sections of land to the mission. Really it seems to us that Whitman, besides all sorts of other obliquities and mendacities, must have been responsible for one crime that not even this "broad minded historian" would have thought of. If he had not been so foolish as to get himself massacred we might never have had all this bother about the Whitman controversy, and might even have been spared the writings of W. I. Marshall!

In connection with the Massacre notice one other illustration of Marshall's spirit in the ready acceptance of the letter of Mr. William McBeari, page 233. There he gives McBeari's version. In several places, among others in the Columbia River by myself, page 207, Josiah Osborne's version is given. Knowing the daughter of Mr. Osborne, Mrs. Nancy Jacobs, formerly of Walla Walla, now of Portland, and having a view of those events directly from her, I have no hesitation in saying that I would believe Mr. Osborne in such a con-

flict of statements instead of McBeari. Marshall, knowing neither one, follows the line of prejudice and accepts McBeari's version. Marshall seems to feel it incumbent on him to give the Hudson's Bay Company and the Catholic priests the benefit of every doubt, and at the same time open his large battery of rancorous hatred against the American missionaries.

Further in illustration of Marshall's spirit note his continuous epithets for Spalding; as "Spalding's crazy brain," page 276; "Lunatic," page 278. While it is no doubt true that Spalding's mind was impaired by the dreadful experiences of the Massacre any decent historian would find a more humane style in dealing with him.

But Father Eells was so totally different a type of man that no shadow of excuse can be found for Marshall's imputations of dishonesty and untruthfulness to so revered a character. On page 196 he refers to Eells' "ingenious and wholly fictitious version of that tale." He builds up substantially the charge that Eells fabricated the whole story for the sake of accomplishing two things; first, to get possession of that townsite at the Dalles; and second, to humbug people into giving money to Whitman College. Are the thousands of people in this state who know the heroic and unselfish devotion, the clear mind, the tenacious memory, the simple and guileless honesty, the almost painful rectitude of that good man, likely to accept such imputations?

Space forbids adding others of the numerous available examples of the spirit of this historian. We must enter upon the more important and more philosophical part of our subject, an analysis of the historical theory and methods which underlie the treatment of the Whitman controversy by both Bourne and Marshall.

In considering this philosophical phase of the subject the two authors may justly be considered as a unit. They employ the same general theories of historical evidence, and to a considerable degree the same arguments and the same matter. On page 71 of Bourne's "Essays in Historical Criticism" he names Langlois, and Seignobos, and Edward L. Pierce as references upon the relative credibility of recollections and cotemporary writings as sources of history. As they seem to apply the theory it is substantially this: Memory testimony given some considerable or appreciable time after the events cannot be accepted as evidence, unless supported by contemporary writings, if such exist. That is the first working hypothesis. On page 99, volume 2, of Marshall's "Acquisition of Oregon" the same principle is stated in a quotation which he calls an unquestioned canon of historical investigation, as follows: "A single authentic contemporaneous written statement of the reasons which impelled any man to

do any deed must be held to outweigh any number of subsequent explanations, however ingenious, that he, and much more that his friends may have put forth to account for his actions." There is a second working hypothesis, not so specifically stated, but practically worked to the limit by both Marshall and Bourne. It is this: Errors by a witness in one part of his testimony invalidate the rest of it. Such, simply and briefly stated, is the basis employed by these two writers in the Whitman case. Starting with this basis they lay down two fundamental propositions. The first is that the letters and other written matter of the period when Whitman is alleged to have "saved Oregon" contain no definite reference to the alleged fact, and that the Whitman claim is built on recollections found in print only after 1864, or more than 20 years after "Whitman's Ride" and 17 years after the Massacre. The second proposition is that the various advocates of the "legend" make many errors in details and numerous contradictions both with the contemporary written records and with each other, and that therefore all their assertions must be rejected. From these two fundamental propositions they arrive at certain conclusions given with definiteness by Bourne on pages 99 and 100, and by Marshall at various points throughout his lengthy work. Divested of verbiage and epithets, the conclusions of both writers may be summed up in the following points: That "Whitman's Ride" was executed for the purpose of influencing the American Board of Foreign Missions to continue the Mission at Waiilatpu; that Whitman had no thought of national aims, and was no appreciable factor in getting Oregon before the attention of the National Government; that his part in organizing the immigration of 1843 and in getting it to Oregon was unimportant; that Whitman, instead of being a patriot and a hero, was a third rate or a fourth rate man of poor judgment and largely responsible for his own murder; that Whitman's extant letters written between his return to Waiilatpu in 1843 and his death in 1847, in which he claims an important part in the immigration of 1843 and in shaping events to the acquisition of Oregon, were simply an exaggeration of his own services which grew up in his own mind after the immigration of 1843; that the "saved Oregon" idea was never thought of even by Eells, Gray, Walker, Spalding, and other subsequent claimants until about 1864, in which year S. A. Clark, in an article in the Sacramento Union, and soon afterward Spalding, Atkinson, Eells, Gray, Treat, and others interested in Missions, developed the "legend" with such effect that historical writers of national reputation passed it on as veritable history, and it became embedded in many standard works; that the letters to the American Board written by the missionaries in

the period 1836-47 were "suppressed" and that there was a conspiracy to hide those letters, which when examined were seen entirely to disprove the "legend"; that the real reasons for the fabrication of the "legend" were an attempt by Atkinson, Eells and Spalding to get possession of the Mission land at the Dalles, valuable for a townsite, and later, on the part of Eells especially, to create a basis for an appeal for contributions to Whitman College. Such is substantially the line of argument.

Let us now consider the most important part of this whole matter, the application of those two fundamental historical postulates to the evidence, written and memory, in the Whitman case.

In connection with these two historical canons we must consider a third equally vital. This is, *that the testimony of the witnesses to an event takes precedence over all other testimony*, other things being equal. Now we come to the vitals of the whole subject—the interrelations of these three canons and the qualifications and limitations of each. We not only admit, but we insist upon the general validity of each. But truth can be arrived at only by remembering that each has its necessary limitations and exceptions.

Let us first consider then the proposition that memory testimony cannot be accepted unless supported by contemporary writing. As a general proposition this is entirely valid. Common observation shows of course that memory and imagination become interlocked, that with the passage of time clouds obscure the clearness of vision, and that statements made after events must be subjected to the test of comparison with any existing records of those events. But now note the vitally important matter of qualifications to this general rule of historical evidence. First, it makes all the difference in the world whether the memory testimony be *directly contradicted* by the written record, or whether the written record *merely fails to mention certain things* contained in the testimony of memory. If the written record declares positively that a given thing *did not take place*, which given thing is claimed in the subsequent recollections, we must perforce, other things being equal, decide in favor of the written record. If on the other hand the written record merely omits the mention of certain things later embodied in recollections, those recollections would not necessarily have to be rejected at all. Their acceptability would depend entirely upon the circumstances, and here at once we come to another necessary qualification of that canon of evidence, the second essential qualification. It is this: In order to give the written record that paramount authority claimed for it, the conditions under which it is written must have covered *all* the subject matter of the subsequent

recollections. Otherwise there is no reason why matters might not be later reported by memory which might not have appeared at all and would not naturally have appeared at all in the written records. A third qualification: It must be supposed again that there were no positive reasons for *withholding certain matters* from the contemporary written record and that those reasons did not afterward exist for withholding subsequent testimony by memory.

Come now to the necessary qualifications upon what we named as the third canon of historical evidence—that is, the primary credibility of the original witnesses to any event. This is fundamental in law or history. Nobody can gainsay the proposition that the first requisite of evidence is to secure the original witnesses to the event, and, other things being equal, their testimony must take precedence of any other. But now there are some very important qualifications to this law of evidence. Were the witnesses competent to observe and report, were they honest and reliable, did they have any motives for distorting the truth, what were their relations to contemporary records if any such exist? Obviously all these qualifications must be taken into account in listening to testimony, and this is the basis for cross examinations in court or cross examinations in history.

Placing thus in juxtaposition these two canons of historical evidence with the necessary limitations we are prepared to apply them to the Whitman controversy as it is revealed in the original written records and in the subsequent recollections of the original witnesses. This process leads us first to ask the question: "Are letters and other documents contemporary with "Whitman's Ride" in *direct contradiction* to the recollections which were reduced to writing some years later, or do they simply *omit to mention* those essential things embodied in the recollections? To answer this question we must ask what are the contemporary records. They are reducible practically to three groups: First, letters written by the missionaries from 1836 to 1847 to the American Board, and to various friends in the East; second, Government documents and correspondence; third, letters and other documents pertaining to the emigration of 1843. Time forbids me to quote these letters and documents, and I can simply say that they are found in greater or less fullness in the books themselves which we are considering. Now, boiled down to the smallest possible compass, the proposition of Bourne and Marshall is that the first group contains no mention of Whitman's aim being other than missionary business; that the second group contains no hint that Oregon was in danger of being lost, nor any mention of Whitman; and that the third group contains no evidence that he bore any important part in

organizing or leading the immigration of 1843. There we have the whole thing in a nutshell. (While it is a side issue, yet Marshall makes so much of it that I wish to interject a thought here about his claim that those missionary letters in group one were for a long time dishonestly concealed by the claimants of the Whitman "Legend." Now I want to ask why, if the missionaries, including Dr. Treat, who was connected with the American Board, were in a conspiracy to hide the evidence, they did not put the letters where they could not be found, and especially why did they allow Marshall himself free access to them so that the whole story was right there before him. Does that look like conspiracy to conceal the evidence?)

The space at our command compels us to limit our inquiry to the case of the first group of the written records, that is the missionary letters. But we are prepared to prove that the same general facts apply to the other two groups of letters, essentially the same conditions prevail in the subject matter of all.

And now for the examination of these records in the light of the three qualifications which we have laid down. First we assert, and the story as given by these very writers themselves sustains our assertion, that the missionary letters and reports do not at all *contradict* the claim in regard to Whitman's aims, subsequently reduced to writing. Examine these letters as given in Marshall's own book, and you will find that they nowhere claim that Whitman did *not* have such political and national aims. They merely say that he did go on his desperate winter ride in order to do some work connected with the missions, and, somewhat vaguely, declare that he had important business that compelled him, as he thought, to take that journey. Now right here is where the whole matter of the negative testimony of Bourne and Marshall comes in. They assume that *everything connected with Whitman's Ride must have gone into those letters*. Now would that necessarily have followed at all? We are indeed obliged to admit that those letters prior to Whitman's ride, so far as they are extant, do not make any definite claim of his political purposes. But does that at all prove the contention that he had no such aims? Not at all, unless it can also be proven that *all* the records and letters have been preserved and correctly interpreted and reported, that the letters must have covered the same subject matter as the later recollections, and that there was no reason for withholding from the letters the claim later brought up for those political purposes. And this, as the reader can see, involves at once the other qualifications which we have mentioned in connection with the written records. In other words, we claim broadly that not only do those letters *not contradict* the subse-

quent memory testimony, but that there were positive reasons why the missionary party did not wish to commit to writing at that time the political aims of Whitman. Or, to put it in the positive and more correct form: The advocates of the Whitman story claim; first, that the conditions were such that the missionaries would have covered in their letters *only* such things as would bear upon their special relations to the American Board, and to their special correspondents; and second, that there were positive reasons why they did not wish to commit the political matters to writing. If they can make these claims good they evidently have a good basis for claiming that the silence of those existing letters is no proof against the later testimony. I wish to emphasize here the proposition that Bourne and Marshall are depending almost entirely upon *negative testimony*. Their position substantially is that the claim for Whitman's political aims is not found in those letters; ergo, the claim must be rejected. Now it is always hard to prove a negative. Any logician must admit that the *absence of testimony* to some phenomenon by one group of witnesses does not prove the non-existence if supported by the *positive testimony* of another group of reliable witnesses. The negative testimony of any number of witnesses in a court does not disprove the positive testimony of even one or two witnesses to a crime, unless it can be shown that the one or two were either dishonest or incompetent. So in this case, Bourne and Marshall are logical enough to try to show that the claims for Whitman would necessarily have appeared in the correspondence to the Board and to their friends prior to Whitman's ride. They cling tenaciously to this contention, and well they may, for without it their labored argument falls to the ground. Do they sustain their point? They make a great parade of the absence of proof in those letters and their argument sounds quite plausible. It is not surprising that readers far remote in time and place from the conditions and the individuals concerned, entirely ignorant of the character of the witnesses, and considering the entire question rather from the abstract and theoretical viewpoint, should believe the argument convincing. But now what were the conditions? Here was a little band of missionaries in a land not owned by any civilized country, but under a joint Occupation Treaty between rival nations, sent out here to the ends of the earth to "save the souls of the heathen," the only white people in this vast region except the Hudson's Bay Company on whom they were dependent for mail service and for everything of a civilized nature that they had to purchase, surrounded by savages, some at least of whom were treacherous and murderous. It took letters six months to reach them. There was little incentive or op-

portunity for them to write for publication. Although they gladly recognized the great kindness and courtesy of the Hudson's Bay officers toward them individually, they knew that the great Company was necessarily opposed to the acquisition of Oregon by the United States and its development into a cultivated country. Under these conditions they naturally would do the very thing that they all testified that they did do; that is, withhold from their letters such things as would be likely to involve them with the Hudson's Bay Company, especially such a great and important question as to who should own Oregon. Every thing that they said at a later time, as well as the very nature of the case, confirms their explanation of their silence on that question. Moreover they had another reason. They felt that they had been sent out by a missionary board on "the Lord's work," and they supposed that they would be censured if they took up political or business matters. We must remember another thing too. It is likely that in the natural course of events many of their miscellaneous letters, especially to confidential friends, have been lost. Such might have contained some explanation of conditions outside of their regular correspondence.

In short, come to analyze the matter and look right at it from the standpoint of actual conditions, are not Bourne and Marshall making a sweeping and entirely unjustifiable assumption in their contention that since the definite proclamation of Whitman's political aims is not found in letters prior to his "Ride" that he had no such aims? Come to think about it candidly, would it not have been very surprising if he had proclaimed them? Would he not have been a great fool if he had? All testimony is that he was a close-mouthed, reticent, secretive, sort of man, just the kind who would have kept still on a ticklish question like that of the ownership of Oregon, and the other missionaries would very naturally have followed his example. In connection with this phase of the subject Marshall makes so much of the failure by Mr. and Mrs. Walker to record anything of Whitman's aims that I wish to insert here a brief reference to the explanation which they themselves later made of the reasons of such omissions, and this is the more significant from the fact that the Walkers always frankly admitted that they were strongly opposed to Whitman's political aims, and in some measure to his methods. I have in my possession a copy of the Oregonian of August 23, 1885, in which there is an interview by S. A. Clark with Mrs. Walker. Now Mrs. Walker was a woman of remarkable mental ability and high conscientiousness. In the article in the Oregonian referred to she is quoted as making the following statement:

"Mrs. Walker tells me it was understood among the missionaries that Dr. Whitman went East to bring out an immigration to occupy Oregon on the part of the United States, as well as to prevent the breaking up of the missions. The doctor always urged that he could bring wagons through; he was continually arguing that question. That was what Mr. Walker meant by his prayer for Whitman all the time of his absence, for Mrs. Walker says that her husband, during all that time, introduced into family prayer a petition bearing on Dr. Whitman and used the following expression: That if he was not doing what was right and best, 'may his way be hedged up, but if he is in the path of duty, may he be preserved and prospered.'"

From the same interview with Mrs. Walker we quote also these paragraphs, "At a council of the missionaries held in September Whitman explained his views to his associates and they knew how interested he was in the political future of Oregon. He made an excuse to go East to explain the value of the southern mission, but his great incentive was to reach the states in time to work for an immigration the following year, in which he succeeded."

"A joint or united appeal by Whitman, Spalding, Walker, and Eells and others would have satisfied the home Board of Missions as to the value of the stations on the south. Even if they deemed it expedient to send on a member of the mission it would have answered all needs had he gone in February or March, or even later in the spring of '43. But Whitman had this secular matter at heart, and his associates, as honorable men as live, write to say so now, more than forty years after."

"Whitman left without waiting for the arrival of letters that his associates had written to the home Board. Had it been his chief motive to correct the wrong information given to the Board he would have certainly fortified himself with all the evidence at command, and the protest and assurances of his associates would have been invaluable. There is no reason to doubt that he hurried to Washington, first taking steps to spread correct information of Oregon along the frontier. That he remained some time at Washington before going to visit the missionary Board is probably true, and also true that his superiors found fault with his course in meddling with political questions at their expense."

In a letter from S. T. Walker of Forest Grove, Oregon, the youngest son of Elkanah Walker, to myself, I find these sentences: "Up to the time that father died there had never been any question about the matter, and this accounts for the fact that is made much of by some of the other side, that father was silent on the subject.

There was no call for an answer. Soon after father's death the question was taken up by the Honorable Elwood Evans of Tacoma, Wash. He made a great deal of a meeting of the members of the A. B. C. F. M., held at Whitman station, going so far as to question the holding of such meeting, calling in question the account given by Rev. C. Eells, and finally went so far as to say that if 'written proof of the meeting could be found they would yield the question.' I looked up father's journal and copied it and sent it to the Oregonian, showing that Father Eells' account after 40 years was absolutely correct as to times of starting, places of camping, etc., except that he was one day early or late as to date of starting home. As Evans had called in question Father Eells' memory in respect to certain claims he made in respect to the purpose and incidents of Whitman's journey, I made the claim that if he remembered so well the facts in respect to this journey, which was made once or twice a year by Father Eells, and the camping places, etc., being governed by the time they started and variations in routes gone over, it would go to prove the reliability of his memory on other facts. Mr. Evans wrote me a long letter in answer to it promising to make a public acknowledgement, but never did so far as I ever heard. However, he never wrote anything more on the subject."

"I have often heard mother say, that even for years after the mission was disbanded, they were loth to say much about his (Whitman's) work, that much reproach had been brought upon the Methodist mission on account of many giving up the work for lands and other things."

So much for the attitude of Mr. and Mrs. Walker on this subject, of which Bourne and Marshall make a very illogical use.

To sum up briefly this immediate phase of the subject let us insist at this point that Bourne and Marshall, in order to sustain their negative line of argument, must maintain these propositions: First, that *everything* bearing upon the subject of Whitman's ride was necessarily preserved in the missionary correspondence and the missionary journals; second, that all of that correspondence is still in existence; third, that it has been fairly and accurately examined and honestly and correctly reported. Now we know that no such propositions can be for a moment sustained. For instance, Father Eells' journal which would have been contemporary writing, together with other valuable documents, was lost in a fire which destroyed his house. His record of the mission meeting of September, 1842, was destroyed in the Massacre. The same fate or other destructive agencies must necessarily have destroyed similar valuable matter. Taking all these

considerations into account is it not preposterous to claim that the absence of these claims to the extent noted by these historians, and in view of the fact that the missionaries themselves had a positive reason for not publishing it widely, necessarily invalidates their later testimony? Of course it was a curious inadvertance, one greatly to be deplored, and one that would almost justify a little extra choice villification by W. I. Marshall, that those narrow-minded, mercenary, ignorant, and quarrelsome missionaries at Waiilatpu, Chimakain, and Lapwai, did not maintain regular correspondence with the Oregonian, P.-I. and Spokesman-Review, and telephone connections with the chief business centers, and send a daily night letter to Washington City. But they were so parsimonious and so anxious to sell vegetables to the immigrants, and general conditions in the Forties so unfavorable, that I suppose it never really occurred to them that they could do it.

Negative testimony! That is the basis of the whole argument against the Whitman legend. By the same line of reasoning or the same faulty application of an acknowledged canon of history we could reduce all history to a *reductio ad absurdum*. Grant that such letters of the missionaries prior to Whitman's ride as have been found and reported do not proclaim his national purposes, but suppose that the only people that had the opportunity of knowing his aims testified that he had them, but that he and they had sufficient reasons for not writing them at that time. Are we going to throw away such first-hand testimony for the sake of an assumption? All history is in the first place individual memory testimony. Greater or less time always must pass before any of it is reduced to writing. Some people would make errors if they wrote it down within an hour. Others would retain and correctly report their knowledge years afterward. And we may well emphasize in this connection the well-known fact of human nature that *the big things are ordinarily accurately retained and reported*. It is the little things in which memory is so treacherous.

Therefore at this point we must needs consider the character of the witnesses to the Whitman claims. We refer here to Eells' Reply to Bourne, page 54 *et seq.* These witnesses were men of unusual mental vigor and moral rectitude. I personally knew most of them and their families after them. Mr. Gray and Mr. Spalding, were the only ones who could be called "cranky," and they have been abused and maligned by the opposition beyond all reasonable limits. While they had some intense hatreds and prejudices, their general powers of observation and statement were excellent. No one who knew W. H. Gray ever questioned his force of mind or rectitude of character,

however much he may have been biased by strong prejudices. Of Father Eells it may be said that he was one in ten thousand for clearness of observation, retentiveness of memory, accuracy of statement, and conscientiousness. Dr. William Geiger, Alanson Hinman, A. L. Lovejoy, P. B. Whitman, Elkanah Walker, Mrs. Walker, and others whom Eells introduces as witnesses were every where known within their circles as of strong minds, accurate memories, and moral rectitude. Moreover, they were in the exact positions to know these things as no others could. Now when these witnesses unite in testifying to one central fact, even though they differ on unimportant details and even though their known published statements were committed to writing some years after the events, what is the historian going to do about it? Which principle of evidence has the greater weight, the united testimony of the original witnesses, accepted by all who knew them as competent and honest, or the negative testimony based upon the absence of direct claim in certain missionary letters written prior to 1843? Which choice is the fair-minded seeker for truth likely to make in such a conflict?

Now let us note another vitally important phase of the subject. Thus far I have been admitting the contention that there was not written contemporary evidence to the claims for Whitman's national aims, and that those claims did not appear in written form until 1864. This is the essential basis of the contention by Bourne and Marshall that the whole thing was an afterthought, or, according to Marshall a deliberate fabrication. Even admitting this gulf in time, my contention was that in view of the mere negation in the records and the character of the witnesses, the story was entitled to credence. Now I will say that our case is much stronger than that, for there is abundant collateral evidence of a knowledge by many of Whitman's aims prior to 1864. This is given in many forms by Myron Eells in his two books already cited. My own parents who came to Oregon in 1849 told me many times that Whitman's national aims and services were matters of common discussion among people of their acquaintance soon after their arrival. Prof. Thomas Condon who came a little later said the same. One other witness of that group is worthy of special mention for reasons that will appear. This is W. S. Gilliam, now deceased, son of General Gilliam who commanded the volunteers who went to Walla Walla after the Whitman Massacre. I knew Mr. Gilliam intimately for many years at Walla Walla. He was a broad-minded, liberal, not in sympathy with churches and not prejudiced in favor of missions, and hence not in the category of many of the witnesses adduced by Mr. Eells, and objected to by Marshall on the

ground of religious bias. Everyone who knew him was aware of his remarkable mentality, retentive memory, and high rectitude. Now he, as a boy in the Willamette Valley, son of a prominent pioneer, knew the general opinion held of Whitman by the pioneers, and was familiar with the discussions of the Whitman story, and he was a firm believer in it and a steadfast and convincing advocate of it. He has told me repeatedly that Whitman's political aims and ambitions were discussed in his hearing from the time of his settling in Oregon, a boy of fifteen, in 1844. Now it will be said of course by these critics that all this is memory testimony again. But when a great volume of such testimony comes from East and West giving the views formed during Whitman's life by all sorts of people, and when the essential propositions are maintained by this mass of testimony, even though there may be many differences in unimportant details, is the impartial seeker for historical truth justified in throwing it away in order to sustain a certain canon of historical investigation, which is indeed valid in general terms, but which may be, and in this instance I am satisfied is, so twisted as to defeat the very aim of history, the *establishment of a fact*? In short, are not Bourne and Marshall, by the arbitrary application of a canon, after all their parade of scientific investigation, sacrificing the vital facts to a hypothesis?

But I now go farther than this. A third vital point must be considered. I now declare that there is not a total lack of contemporary written matter. There are some writings of utmost significance belonging to the period or immediately after it, and in dealing with them we reach the weakest place in the writing of Bourne and Marshall. We have time but for two examples of these, although others may be found in the writings of Myron Eells and others. One example is the case of St. Amant. While this was not exactly contemporary with Whitman's Ride and Massacre, it came so soon after and is of such a nature, and is so juggled with by both of these authors as to be a most significant point. (See page 21 of Bourne for the original quotation in French). This was first publicly noted by Dr. J. R. Wilson of Portland in his address at the dedication of the Whitman monument in 1897. While we have not space to enter into any details of this we would submit to any candid reader whether this is not a strong link in the chain.

But a matter of much more significance is involved in the letters written by Dr. Whitman himself, between 1843 and his death in 1847. These letters constitute cotemporary written testimony of the highest importance, and they contain abundant claim on Whitman's own part that he had national aims. But now note how Bourne and Marshall

treat this fundamental testimony. They have been rejecting memory testimony and demanding contemporary written records. Now we produce this written testimony by the letters of the one man under consideration most competent to speak, and what is their treatment of it? Instead of dealing fairly and justly with these letters written by Whitman immediately after his return from the East they misapply, misrepresent, and avoid the logical inferences from them. I refer the reader to pages 177, *et seq.* in Marshall, Vol. 2. He mentions eleven letters by Whitman to D. Greene, one to the secretary of war, one to L. P. Judson, and one to Augustus Whitman. Now let the unbiased reader carefully study those letters, and he must make up his mind to one or the other of two things, either Whitman had made it the great aim of his life during as well as before the "Ride" to establish American possession and settlement in Oregon, or he was a consummate liar. Of course Marshall would at once accept the latter, for his short and simple method for anyone who disagrees with him is at once to declare that he is a liar. But what would any historian with ordinary decency and fair mindedness say? Note now that Bourne and Marshall have been demanding written contemporary evidence. We produce it in Whitman's letters. Having before them the very kind of evidence that they demanded they crawl out of it by attributing to Whitman "exaggeration, extravagant claims, lack of foresight, narrowness of mind, making claims of which only one is correct," etc., etc. If anything, more than the long list of epithets and vituperations, were necessary to damn Marshall as a historian, his handling of Whitman's letters would be. We urge every reader to thoroughly examine Whitman's letters and accompanying bill to the Secretary of War written in 1843 after his return from the East. It casts a flood of light upon this whole history. It shows that Whitman was a statesman as well as a hero. Either that letter was a downright forgery or the claims of Whitman are essentially true. That document may be found in the appendix of Eells' "Marcus Whitman," and how any candid student can evade its logical conclusion is beyond my power to understand. We have heard of "straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel" and we here see it illustrated to the limit. They try to nullify all the natural and logical inferences of Whitman's correspondence, but swallow without a wriggle the letter of McBean in regard to the Massacre. (Marshall, page 233, Vol. II).

But more and worse yet. After having rejected memory testimony for "scientific" reasons, and then having tried to nullify and distort the contemporary writing of the most important witness in the case, they finally land at the point where they throw away their own

theory by accepting memory testimony of much later date and far inferior inherent credibility. I have space for but two examples of this. On page 108 of Bourne is a letter from D. P. Thompson to P. W. Gillette, dated Feb. 6, 1900, in which Mr. Thompson says that he had many times heard "General Lovejoy say that all those statements claiming that Dr. Whitman made that winter ride to save Oregon was nonsense—mere bosh and wholly untrue—he always indicated that he was going in the interests of his mission." Now compare that with the letters written by A. L. Lovejoy himself over thirty years earlier to W. H. Gray and G. H. Atkinson, and the letter to Eells in 1876, from which there is an extract in Eells' Reply, page 60. Note also what Mrs. Lovejoy and Miss S. Barlow say, as quoted in the same book, page 61. Bourne gulps down Thompson's postscript in a letter of 1900, quoting Lovejoy, but Lovejoy's own testimony, entirely different, of many years earlier, is not "scientific." O no! Consistency, thou art a jewel! A "narrow minded missionary" or a "lunatic" would be called to sharp account for such juggling, but for a Yale professor of history we suppose that there is some "scientific" excuse.

The other instance is from Marshall, and deals with that much abused story of Gray and Spalding in regard to the Fort Walla Walla dinner, which Whitman is said to have attended and at which a young priest is said to have shouted that the Americans were too late and that the British had the country. Marshall and all the objectors seem to fall into a boiling rage over that story, and reject it at once as an afterthought of mere fabrication. It was "memory testimony" more than twenty years after the event. But now note on page 84 from Marshall, Vol. II, extracts from a letter from Archibald McKinlay to Elwood Evans, used by the latter in an article in 1881, in which McKinlay says, "that the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company knew enough of the rules of hospitality to avoid such tender topics as the boundary question, etc., and that he knew nothing of such an event." Evans and Marshall accept without question the negative memory of McKinlay written in 1881, while the positive affirmation of Gray in his history of about 1867 is rejected in a great rage. Now mind, I am not here expressing an opinion as to the truth of Gray's story or of McKinlay's reliability (he was a most admirable man) but I am simply making a commentary on Marshall's methods. With him it is, "heads I win, tails you lose!" How do these two examples do for straining at the gnat and swallowing the whole menagerie?

Of the two other important groups of written testimony, Government records and immigrant records, the narrowing limits of time forbid me to speak at any length. I will only say that the same

course of argument which I have developed in relation to the missionary records apply to the others also. Bourne and Marshall *fail to find* reference to Whitman in certain government documents and immigrant letters where they *assume they should be found*, and they therefore reject the claim that Whitman influenced Government or people. Negative testimony again! They make an arbitrary principle out of their historical canon in such fashion as would destroy the basis of all history. The fact that a dozen government officials or a hundred immigrants did not know of Whitman in connection with the immigration of 1843 does not at all invalidate the positive testimony of three or four public men and twenty immigrants to the effect that they did know of him and were influenced by him. Any lawyer knows that the testimony of one positive witness to a fact may be accepted in the face of that of a dozen who knew nothing about it, unless of course the dozen were in such relation to the alleged fact that they absolutely could not help knowing it in case it existed. In the nature of things Whitman could not have seen any large number of public men during his hurried trip. Those that he did see did not necessarily write everything that they ever knew or heard of or thought of. Bourne and Marshall make a great deal of the claim that Oregon was in no danger of being lost at that time. We suppose of course that they would not deny that there was a Joint Occupation Treaty between Great Britain and the United States. Nor would they probably deny that the Hudson's Bay Company and the government of England were playing a tremendous game to get as much of Oregon as they could. They probably would not deny the work of Floyd, Linn, Hannegan, and Benton in Congress during those long years of the Oregon struggle. All that is necessary is that the reader consult Benton's great work, "The Thirty Year's View," to be satisfied that a good many statesmen thought that there was danger of losing Oregon. Thousands upon thousands of people thought that there was such danger and that was one of the great incentives to the Great Immigration. No Whitman advocate is, of course, so foolish as to claim that all the immigrants of 1843 were influenced by Whitman or even knew of him. It has always been understood that that great decisive immigration was of composite formation and leadership. But when we do have testimony from many of them that Whitman was a decisive factor in their coming, what is the fair minded historian going to do about it? I knew Hobson, Zachery, Senator Nesmith, Almorán Hill, and many others of that immigration, and when Almorán Hill told me that he started without knowing of Whitman it did not at all prevent me from believing John Hobson when he told me that

Whitman induced his father and family to come to Oregon instead of going to Wisconsin, and that he himself drove one of the leading teams in the train, and that Whitman was almost always leading the caravan on horseback, but would frequently ride in Hobson's wagon, and at such times they would converse about the roads and the prospects in Oregon. Bourne and Marshall try again in the most dishonest fashion to throw away the testimony of these immigrants. But Hobson, as an example, was at that time a young man of eighteen at the very age for the most accurate and permanent impressions, and he was known throughout his long life as a man of very clear mind and reliable statements. Eells had testimony from sixteen immigrants who stated that their coming to Oregon was due to Whitman, while twenty-two out of the total number of thirty-eight from whom he had replies stated that they started without knowledge of Whitman. Again I ask what is the historian going to do? Is he going to reject the positive testimony of the sixteen on account of the negative testimony of the twenty-two? But for any further discussion of this branch of the subject I must refer to the unanswerable presentation by Myron Eells, in his Reply and in his *Marcus Whitman*.

There is a second general canon of historical investigation upon which Bourne and Marshall rely. It is that errors in one part of the testimony of a witness invalidate other parts of his testimony. As a general proposition this is a correct canon. But it too has important qualifications. People with imperfect knowledge in one line may have very accurate knowledge in another. People with prejudices or manias may give very reliable testimony in some field outside of their prepossessions. Here again I must refer to the fair and frank and candid treatment by Myron Eells of the errors of Spalding, Gray and others, including himself, and the weight that should be given to them in comparison with their general testimony. I claim that Bourne and Marshall usually grossly overestimate the degree, character, and significance of these errors, and that they draw unwarranted conclusions in considering such errors to destroy the credibility of the main story. If the reader will make a careful tabulation of the alleged errors he will find in a good many cases that it is a question whether they are errors at all, and again he will find that most of them are trivial and have no logical bearing upon the main proposition. Spalding, Gray, and Barrows seem to be the ones especially charged with error, but even most of their errors pertain to unimportant details, or to names, places and dates in which errors were natural and which have little or no bearing on the general harmony, continuity, and reliability of the Whitman story in its essential features. I can

give only a few illustrations. Take a few extreme cases, cases which seem to put most of the antagonists of Whitman in a foaming rage. They make a great deal of the fact that Spalding states that the Ashburton treaty was still pending when Whitman went East. This was an error, but when we come to analyze it, does it have any very important bearing upon the essentials of the story? Spalding was and had been far distant from the scene of operations in the "States," was probably not well posted on the details of history, but he knew (and was correct) that there was a question of treaty concerning Oregon between England and the United States in process of formation at that time. He knew that there was an Ashburton treaty, and he simply used the name Ashburton for the pending treaty. He had the fact, but used the wrong name for it. This was not scholarly, but it after all was an error in a name, and would not necessarily affect at all his knowledge of Whitman's aims in going East. Take the case of Spalding again, over which Marshall fairly gloats with the appetite of a vulture, in stating that Mrs. Spalding was killed in the Whitman Massacre. This is of course an extreme and very strange error, but it is obvious on the face of it that it was due to a mental lapse, or was merely an error in writing. Spalding could have had no possible motive in such an error as that, and it is monstrous to build up from such an obvious slip a general denial of all his testimony. Take another instance dealing again with that Walla Walla dinner in 1842 as narrated by Gray and Spalding. They refer to the fact that a courier entered the dining hall stating that the Red River immigration had just arrived at Colville. This story is rejected angrily on the ground that the Red River immigration had come the previous year, and hence it is argued that no such incident could have taken place. Now it is certainly true that the Red River immigration came in 1841, and Gray and Spalding are in error if they meant to affirm that it came in 1842. But analyze their statements. Do they undertake to affirm that the immigration did come in 1842? They only say that some courier *said that it had just come*, and that some young priest evidently accepted the statement, and as a result Whitman hastened home and made immediate preparation to go East. The courier and the priest might *have supposed that there was some second* Red River immigration. It might have been a mistake or misstatement by them, and yet had the same results. Now I am not vouching for the truth of that Walla Walla dinner story, but I do say that it has been distorted out of all proportion to its importance, and that the error about the Red River immigration does not in any way affect the larger aspects of the Whitman case. One more instance in connec-

tion with Gray, as to which Marshall again licks his chops with an unappeasable appetite. This is given on page 81 of Marshall's second volume. It is Gray's examination in the Hudson's Bay Company case, in which he says that he thought Fillmore was president in 1843. This is certainly a gross error, and it must be confessed that Gray does not show up very well as a student of American history. But it is a matter of common observation that men of mental power and accuracy in general are sometimes way off on some detail to which they may not have been paying any recent attention. Gray's critics have exaggerated that unfortunate error out of proportion to its importance. It really makes no difference to the essentials of the story whether Tyler or Fillmore was president. That was not the point at issue. Gray knew that it was *some* President and the fact that he made a blunder in the name has no necessary bearing on the credibility of his narrative. One more incident may be mentioned as a sample of the way in which Marshall gets hold of some trivial thing, and from it constructs some seemingly great matter. On page 295, Vol. II, he pours out great floods of scorn upon Pres. S. B. L. Penrose for what he calls "the silliest piece of testimony adduced in support of the Whitman story." Pres. Penrose quotes Cyrus Walker, the oldest son of Rev. Elkanah Walker, as remembering that his father was accustomed to pray that Dr. Whitman's life might be spared, but that he might fail in his purpose. Marshall with withering sarcasm, and mathematical accuracy, figures out that "the boy had reached the mature age of three years and ten months, when Whitman started, and four years and ten months when he returned," and adds that any comment on the silliness of Mr. Penrose's evidence is unnecessary. Now Mr. Penrose might be justly chargeable with a little carelessness of expression in seeming to assert that Cyrus Walker remembered that distinctly himself. But as to the general fact there is no question. As long ago as I can remember I heard Mrs. Walker and her sons tell the very same thing, together with much other matter of similar nature bearing and supporting the whole story. What Cyrus Walker had in mind was, of course, that he knew that matter as one of the family traditions,, which he knew as well as though he had been himself old enough to fully understand it. Anybody that ever wrote or gave testimony is liable to the class of errors of which Bourne and Marshall try to make so much. If we should apply to these historians themselves a similar rule of errors we would soon have them wiped off the map. On the first page of the introduction of Marshall's "History vs. the Whitman saved Oregon Story" he refers to H. W. Scott as a native of Old Oregon territory. This is an error.

Mr. Scott was a native of Illinois. On page 315 he speaks of the Walla Walla Union as being in very close relation with Whitman College. This is a surprising revelation to Walla Walla people, and is apparently thrown in by Marshall to account for the mention in the paper of a sermon by Dr. Hillis at Des Moines.

This article has already far exceeded the limits intended and must end. In conclusion let me say that my essential aim has been to indicate my conception of the spirit and methods in which history should be written, and to show the respects in which I believe Professors Bourne and Marshall have failed to exemplify them. I shall not close as Marshall does by using the sacred words of the Great President, "with malice toward none, with charity for all," but will simply say that if anything could excite malice in a breast of charity it would be the reading of the "Acquisition of Oregon" by W. I. Marshall.

Walla Walla, Washington.

W. D. LYMAN.