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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JOHN BALL; ACROSS THE PLAINS TO OREGON, 1832

John Ball (1794-1884) was member of Nathaniel Wyeth's 1832 expedition to the Rockies and the Pacific Northwest. Ball provides an account of: Sublette's expedition across the plains to the 1832 Pierre's Hole rendezvous, the famous battle with the Blackfeet that occurred there, the continuation of Wyeth's remaining men to Oregon, and the first settlements in Oregon.

This text is derived from the portion of Ball's rather lengthy autobiography that deals with his experiences in the West. It begins with the chapter where Ball meets up with Wyeth in Baltimore, and ends just before Ball sails for the Sandwich Islands, on his journey back to the East.

Ball apparently wrote this autobiography from diaries and notes. The manuscript was eventually compiled by his daughters, Kate Ball Powers, Flora Ball Hopkins, and Lucy Ball, and published as:

**Ball, John, Autobiography of John Ball,
Grand Rapids, Mich., The Dean-Hicks
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Book 2 - Across the Plains to Oregon and the Return Home by Cape Horn, 1832-1835

NEW PLANS

CHAPTER I

While in New York I sought out and found some of John Jacob Astor's Oregon men for the purpose of gaining information from them about that country. There were the Messrs. Seaton's who sailed around Cape Horn and to the Columbia River and assisted in establishing the trading post Astoria, and Ramsey Crooks, who conducted the land party for him across the continent, reaching Astoria the second year. They told me much of their experiences there. I then went to Philadelphia and Baltimore and made collections in each place for the oilcloth contracts, for my sister, and sent her back after my leaving, in all, some three thousand dollars.

Notables in Washington

Having the time, before the arrival from Boston of my Oregon traveling companions, I went for the first time to Washington. Put up at Brown's Hotel, standing there almost alone, on the Avenue, Washington then being comparatively but a village. General Ashley, who had long been in the fur trade from Missouri to the Mountains, was stopping at Brown's. So I took the liberty to call at his room and inform him of my intended journey and asking from him advice and information. He kindly answered many inquiries. But finally said, "Young man, it would be as difficult to tell all about it, all that may occur or be needed on such a journey, as for a

carpenter to tell every blow he had got to strike on commencing to erect a house." He had sold out his fur business to William Sublette of St. Louis and others, and had been elected a member of Congress.

While thus spending a few days at Washington I took the opportunity with other things to attend the sitting of the United States Supreme Court. And then I listened to Chief Justice Marshall's celebrated decision of the Georgia and Cherokee case, with regard to the Cherokee lands. And, of course, attended the sitting of the houses of Congress, Calhoun, then Vice-President, presiding over the Senate, in which Benton, Clay, Webster and other celebrities were then members. As a presiding officer I have never seen Mr. Calhoun's equal, or a finer man to look on. And, as then constituted, it was indeed an August body and in the House were then Adams and Choate.

The latter I knew well at College and there were others in both houses with whom I might without impropriety have claimed acquaintance. But no, I poked about as a stranger. And as such presumed to call on General Jackson at the White House without any introduction. He however received me kindly.

President Jackson

Then, as always through life, I neglected to make use of men in place and of notoriety, as I perhaps might have done to my great advantage. Had I then told the President and others of my proposed journey they might have taken such interest, as to have given some aid, or more notoriety to my journey and personal advantage after its performance. But so it has always been, I have never felt much deference for men barely on account of holding office or claiming consequence. Had I studied to make use of such and shown them more regard and aid, who knows but some more notorious place might not have been mine. But there is

this consolation, I have no less self respect, and may have escaped more severe troubles than have now been my lot.

Captain N. Wyeth

After spending a few days at Washington I returned to Baltimore and awaited the coming from Boston by sea of Mr. Wyeth and his party. And they in a few days arrived, numbering about twenty. Mr. Wyeth I found a man of some intelligence and great energy in his undertakings. He had been a shipper of ice from a pond, Clear pond, in Cambridge. But his men were such loafers and laborers mostly, as he had picked up in and about Boston by high representations of the pleasures of the journey and the fortune-making result of the enterprise, none of them, as time showed, at all understanding what they were going into. A Mr. Sinclair, myself and one other, I think, joined them here. While at Baltimore I stopped at Belsover's, where was one of the best tables I ever sat at. And I made the best of it, knowing when I left it, I should go into camp life. I had always liked Baltimore, so beautifully located and its fine fountains of water.

Leaves Baltimore

Having arranged matters for our journey, about the middle of March we left Baltimore on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad for Frederick, sixty miles, by horse power. That sixty miles was then more than all the other railroads in the Union. It had been built at enormous labor, graded down and part of the way through the mountains to a dead level and the stringers, on which was riveted strap iron, were of cut granite rock. But they had been so moved out of place by the frost of the previous winter, that the cars moved roughly over them. From Frederick we took our journey on foot, having a wagon for our baggage. In fact commenced

our camp life, sleeping at night under tents and cooking our grub at a fire by the roadside. And so for some days we trudged on. At Cumberland visited the coal mines, which to me were quite new and interesting as were many other things on our way, for I had never been before in these parts. And so we continued along on the National Cumberland road to Brownsville on the river Monongahela. There we took a steamboat for Pittsburgh, where on arrival we looked about to see its wonders; for from its history, its commanding location, at the junction of those two mountain streams to form the Ohio, and its coal and iron made it one of the most marked places in the country. In passing thus slowly the Alleghenies, I noticed with much interest the geology of the country.

Bound for St. Louis

From Pittsburgh we took passage in a steamboat bound for St. Louis. And as we descended the river I noticed its high bluffs, where at first the openings to the coal mines were high up the same, but as we sailed on, they gradually opened lower and lower, till the coal veins passed below the river.

We stopped for a time at Cincinnati; which was then but a village, with few buildings hut of wood and these of no great pretensions. That spring the river had been so high as to flood much of the town, doing a good deal of damage. Among the passengers on the boat, bound to Cincinnati was the Reverend Lyman Beecher, and one pleasant day, as we were smoothly gliding down the stream, he and also Wyeth and myself were promenading the deck which had no bulwarks. We noticed that he turned many steps before he reached the stern of the boat, while we went so near that our next step would have been overboard. My companion remarked, "How is it that Mr. Beecher is so much more cautious than we sinners?" Implying that Mr. Beecher doubtless claimed that all would be right with him should he

be drowned, while with us we made no pretensions in that direction.

We had a pleasant sail down the river, running the rapids at Louisville, and stopping there and at a few other places, but not at Cairo, for there, all was swamp about the mouth of the Ohio. And when we entered the Mississippi we found it a muddy instead of a clear stream like the Ohio, and that we made much slower progress in stemming its current. The first sight of this mighty river strikes one as a thing almost sublime, thinking of the thousand streams so far away that make up its rushing volume. Arriving at St. Louis, I found it then but a village, mostly consisting of old French buildings along the levee and a street near the river, but few good buildings in the place. Draw a line then from there to, say Detroit and the entire white population beyond I do not think was ten, if five thousand. I saw a steamboat sail, while there to go up the Illinois River, with the United States soldiers to fight Black Hawk, who was overrunning the country about where Chicago now is.

ACROSS THE PLAINS

CHAPTER II

Sail up the Mississippi

Here we expected to settle about the manner of performing our further journey. We did not propose to undertake it, without guides or inducing some experienced mountaineers to join our party. And we learned that a Mr. William Sublette of St. Louis, successor with Smith & Jackson, of Gen. Ashley in the mountain fur trade business, was now fitting out in the upper part of the state for their annual trip. So thinking that we might probably join his party in the journey, we determined to go right on up the country. So took a steamboat for Lexington which is in the west part of the state and near where was then his party. So we sailed up

the Mississippi in company with the boat with the United States soldiers to fight Black Hawk and parted with it at the entrance of the turbid waters of the Missouri into that river. It is a very interesting thing to observe long before you reach the junction, the clear waters of the Mississippi of the east side of the river and the turbid waters of the Missouri commingling with them, giving the riled look to the whole river.

The Missouri

The waters of the Missouri I have compared in color to that of your creamed coffee or kind of ash color. For the purpose of cookery and drinking if one chooses, the waters of the river are put into a cask and left to settle. But I noticed that the boatmen preferred it fresh from the river, drinking it down with apparent relish--and this though when left to settle in the bucket there would be an inch of sediment at the bottom. On drinking it raw I could perceive the grit between my teeth. It collies sweeping along for thousands of miles from the summit of the Rocky Mountains. The country to the foot of those mountains seems to the sight not to rise, still there is sufficient ascent to give a constant and rapid current to its waters, so rapid that we found our boat checked in its velocity the moment we entered the same. And we steamed on, day and night, varying our course to avoid snags and sand bars.

The country along the lower part of the river seemed well improved and occasionally a small village. And when we got a short distance above Jefferson we came to a bar that extended entirely across the river, with no place over three feet of water, and our boat drew six. And the way in such cases is to run the boat's bow hard into the sand and when the water has washed it away about the same, push it in farther and in that way, in time, work through it. But some of us tiring of this slow navigation, quit the boat and

journeyed on foot. And thus got to Lexington first. This gave us the opportunity to see more of the country and the ways of its inhabitants. The country seemed rich and then but thinly settled, woodland and prairie interspersed. There were but few taverns along the road, but when we called at the cabin, the most were constructed of logs, we were hospitably received and lodged and fed in their best manner and at a very reasonable rate. As to their mode of cookery I noticed one thing to me peculiar, they cooked thin bread as well as meat and vegetables at each meal. It was a corn hoe or Johnny Cake or wheat flour biscuit, and the Johnny Cake made only with salt and water. Some think such is not good but I do.

Joins Fur Traders

When all had arrived at Lexington, we went on to Independence, near which Mr. Sublette and his party were in camp. And on meeting him he readily consented that we might join them on this condition: that we should travel fully under his command and directions, and under the most strict military discipline; take our due part with his people in guarding camp and defense in case of attack by the Indians, which he rather expected, from a personal dislike they had to him. They charged him with leaving the year before a horse in the country packed with infected clothing, to give them the smallpox. I hardly think he could have been guilty of it. We then traversed the country and purchased horses and mules for our journey over the plains and mountains. Rigged them with saddles for riding and packing, made up those packs by sorting out the goods, for Wyeth's party had brought on much more than they could pack. But for myself I had brought but little so had nothing to throw away. But Wyeth would start with so much, that he had to drop some things by the way. Among them a small anvil and blacksmith's tools.

Order of March

A Mr. Campbell of St. Louis also with some men joined Mr. Sublette's party, making in all some eighty men and three hundred horses. For with the traders, each man had the care in camp and charge in marching of three horses, one to ride and two with packs. And besides they took an extra number to supply the place of any that might fail in strength or be stolen. And thus rigged and ready we started on our march from Independence, on what was then in much use, the Santa Fe road or trail, leading off in a southwest direction, crossing the west line of the state some twelve miles south of the Missouri. Our order of march was always double file, the horses led, the first attached to the rider's and the third to him. So when under way our band was more than a hundred horses long--Mr. Sublette always giving all orders and leading the band, and Mr. Campbell as lieutenant bringing up the rear and seeing that all kept their places and the loose animals did not stray away.

Leaves Last Settlement

Our last encampment, before crossing the west line of the state, was at a Mormon settlement. They had come and settled here the previous fall, on this extreme border of the settled world. We procured from them some milk and they otherwise treated us very kindly. They thought then that they had found a permanent home. But no, like all new religionists, they were doomed to much persecution. I remember when the Methodists were slighted. It was the 12th of May that we left this last settlement and continued our march on said Santa Fe road over a beautiful prairie country, some two or three days, then left it and turned to the northwest and in a few days more came to the Kansas river, at a point I think near where is now Topeka. Here we found means to cross the river and swam our horses. For here was one white man, acting I think as a gunsmith for the Indians. He was the last white man we saw except of our own party.

Kansas River

We continued our march up the Kansas river along the edge of the prairie back of the timber bordering the river. For on most the larger western rivers and often on the smaller, as far as the land is moist, there is timber, but beyond grass. And in the spring or fall, the fire sweeping through this grass kills the timber on its border. But then it will, if the seasons are wet spring up again. So there was a constant warfare between the fires and the trees till these prairie fires were stopped by the settlers.

At this time I think the Indians were away, but we passed one of their villages where I noticed their mode of building. They dug holes in the dry ground some five or six feet deep and then built a roof of split plank, so made quite a warm winter house. When we had reached near the mouth of the Big Blue river, we left Kansas and traveled for days over the rolling prairies encamping at night on that stream. One day on this prairie march, with our band of packed horses, we overtook General or Captain Bonneville, who had also started out on a trading excursion, but with wagon, and with which he went all the way to the mountains, but with much difficulty. We halted for a few minutes to salute them and passed on, traveling with double the speed. The last time we encamped on the Blue, it was but a stagnant pool. And the next day's usual march, about 20 or 25 miles, brought us to the Platte about where is now Fort Kearney.

On this first part of our journey we did not depend at all on game for subsistence, but on supplies packed along on our horses. Mr. Sublette's party had also driven along cattle to slaughter on the way; as the horses never went faster than a walk, they could keep up. Then were some deer seen, but as yet no buffalo, so there was no reliance on game, or intended to be, till we should reach the buffalo. And now we continued our march over the smooth bottom of the turbid

Platte river on the south side, the river riley, broad and rapid, no falls, but a sufficient descent in the country to give a rapid current--from a half to a whole mile wide and very shallow. It gives its full share of the mud of the Missouri--some timber on its islands and on its shores, bottoms broad and rich bounded by broken bluffs and all the country beyond rolling.

Hunting for Provisions

Our provisions were becoming nearly exhausted and we were daily expecting to see our future resource, the buffalo, but none were met with, till the day we reached the forks of the Platte, when nearly our last meal on hand had been consumed. And the same day too, we had the last shower of rain of any account. Up to this time, about the first of June, we had occasional rains, and the prairies had become green affording good feed for our animals and the wild ones too on their native range. Not far above the junction of the North and South Forks of the Platte our band forded the south branch without any serious difficulty, the depth of water not being so great as to come over the saddles or wet many of the packs. But there being some fears of a quicksand bottom, its safe accomplishment gave great satisfaction. A short ride over the bluffs brought us to the north and main branch, in all its characteristics like the main river below the junction.

Mode of Encampment

Now came a march of day after day up this North Platte of great sameness. The main band keeping straight on the way, when the buffalo were not met with crossing our tracks. A few of the best hunters, each with two horses, one to ride and another on which to pack the meats, would leave the band and range the country back, kill and dress the animal and bring the meat to our night's encampment.

And I should have before described our mode of encamping. Mr. Sublette leading the band, always selected the ground, having reference in doing so to water, always encamping on the river or other stream, to feed for horses and the safety of the place for defense in case of an attack, which he seemed to rather expect. And if such place was reached by that time, he usually ordered "halt" by the middle of the afternoon, so as to give the horses time to feed and make full preparation for night. The horses were unpacked and men or messes arranged in a manner to leave a large hollow square, the stream forming one side. And then the horses were immediately hobbled, four feet tied together, and turned out of camp and a guard placed beyond them, to keep them from straying too far or drive them in if attacked. Then about sundown he would cry out "ketch up, ketch up" always repeating his order. Then each man would bring in the horses he had charge of, keep them still hobbled and tie them to short stakes carried with us, driven close into the ground, giving each one as much room as could be without interfering with others, so that they could feed also during the night. Then a guard, changed every three hours, sat for the night. As soon as light in the morning the order would be "turn out, turn out." And all would rise from their earthly beds, turn the horses out to bite, get a hearty breakfast, then the horses were saddled and packed and formed in line and the order given to "march." And as a reward for their expedition, the first ready took their place nearest to the commandant. In the middle of the day a stop was made, the horses unpacked to rest them, but not turned out, and a lunch taken by the men, if wished, of meat already cooked, and in half an hour pack up and march on.

Buffalo

We had now reached the region where there was no growing timber even along the river. And our fuel for cooking was the dry buffalo droppings. We usually in this part of our

journey cooked our meat by boiling it in our camp kettles. And it was rather hard fare, for the buffalo were still lean in flesh, they getting quite reduced in flesh during the winter from their poor chance. The men felt the change from common food to this lean meat only and without even salt very severely, and rapidly grew weak and lean. The men would almost quarrel for any part of the animal that had any tallow, even the caul. But as soon as the buffalo improved in flesh and we got where there was wood to roast whole sides by, the men rapidly improved. I was a little surprised that I stood this change of life and living about as well as the mountaineers, and better than most of the new ones at it, and as to a camp life I rather enjoyed its ways. I had for bed purposes, the half of a buffalo robe, an old camlet cloak with a large cape, and a blanket. I spread the robe on the ground, wrapped the blanket about my feet and the cloak around me, throwing the cape loosely over my head to break off the moonshine, and a saddle for my pillow. And oh! I always slept most profoundly. We had tents, but it never raining and but little dew, we did not use them. I felt less discomfort from the change of life than I expected, and much enjoyed every day's march. For at every mile I met with much that to me was interesting, while Wyeth's men dwelt on the hardships and privations and cursed the day they were induced into the undertaking.

North Platte

At times we would not see a buffalo for a day or two, and then in countless numbers. One day we noticed them grazing on the opposite side of the river on the wide bottoms and the side bluffs beyond like a herd of cattle in a pasture, up and down the country on that side as far as we could see, and continued the same during our twenty-five miles' march and no end to them ahead, probably, 10,000 seen in that one day. The greatest unevenness of the endless plain, the bottoms of the river over which we were marching, were the buffalo paths made by following one

path, direct from some break in the bluff, back to the river. For they range far back for their feed, but must come to the river for their drink. We saw not a spring or crossed a stream in traveling hundreds of miles up the North Platte. But we crossed many what are called dry rivers--beds of gravel and sand--where torrents must have run at the melting of the snow in the spring. And after many days on the close-fed plain and bluffs of earth back we came to an interesting change. We saw a whole day's march ahead on the plain, what looked a big castle, or small mountain. But on nearing it, we saw that it was a big tower of sand-stone far detached like an island, from the bluffs back, which had now all become of that kind of rock, high and perpendicular, and strangely worn into many fantastic shapes. The detached mass first seen is called the Chimney Rock a striking, landmark in this prairie sea. The upper, perhaps 100 feet of naked rock and the lower 50 a spreading pedestal, well grassed over.

THE MOUNTAINS

CHAPTER III

Crossing the Laramie

Finally we came to a big, rapid, turbulent tributary, the Laramie from the mountains of the same name, and to a dead halt at the point where since has been Fort Laramie. For here we had to make what proved a serious undertaking, a crossing of said river. And fortunately here was plenty of timber, out of which we made rafts on which to take ourselves and our goods across, and made the horses swim the river. It was so broad, say half a mile, turbid and turbulent, they were unwilling to go in, but were drove in and then headed back until they were compelled to seek the other side, but were so swept down by the current they landed far below. And I do not know that we should have got them to head across at all had not two or three

courageous men mounted some and made them swim ahead to give a lead to the rest. There was still snow in sight on the Laramie mountains, the melting of which made the high water of the river. With some difficulty we all got safely over, but some of the traders' goods were lost.

Now for two or three days' march there was a great change in the country, hilly, brooks of water, partially wooded, and better feed for horses. And we traveled back from the river. What we were crossing is a spur of the Black Hills, that extended to and far beyond the Platte toward the great bend of the main Missouri. It was a pleasant change from the monotonous plain. But we came again onto the river with its bottoms, but hills and mountains all the time in sight to the south. And after some more days' march we came to where it comes from the southwest, and our route required its crossing. And here we crossed it, but with less difficulty, in the same manner we had the Laramie. And the next day we reached the Sweet Water, a branch coming in from the northwest, and encamped at the Independence Rock, a granite boulder the size of two or three meeting houses, having got its name from some prior party having stopped here and celebrated the 4th of July on it. From it you behold a grand mountain and valley scene. And we now continued on our march up the valley of the Sweet Water, a beautiful, clear, cool stream, a great luxury as one may judge after quenching our thirst so long from the warmer, turbid waters of the Platte. It comes down a plain some few miles wide between high ridges of naked rocky mountains. And up this valley we wound our way till the stream was but a rivulet that you could step across--and so high we overlooked all the mountains we had passed, and snowdrifts around, though the middle of the summer.

South Pass

Here we were at the celebrated South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, said by his political friends, when a candidate for

President, though he was not there till ten years after, to have been discovered by General Fremont. And it was by no means then new to our fur traders. It has its name from Lewis and Clark and other early travelers always keeping on the main Missouri which led them to a crossing far north and more difficult. In two or three hours from our leaving this headwater of the Sweet Water that flows eastward to the Mississippi and to the Gulf of Mexico, we struck a small stream, a branch of the Colorado that falls into the Gulf of California. And here we were traveling over as level a prairie as I have ever seen, except bottom lands--stretching far away south and west with hundreds of buffalo feeding on the same. But stretching off to the northwest we looked out on the towering snowclad Wind River Mountains; the very crest of the Rocky Mountain range. For on the north of this, rise all the higher main branches of the Missouri; and on the west, branches of the Columbia river: and on the south, these waters of the Green and Colorado rivers.

And we continued our journey off northwest as near the foot of these mountains as the traveling was good, crossing the cool snow-formed streams of the Green river for perhaps one hundred or more miles. But our trappers now moderated their march, expecting before this to have heard from their mountain partners, who had passed the winter there or rather farther west, trapping and trading. For they knew the time they might expect Sublette out and the route he would come. And they were to send an express to meet him and inform him where they had rendezvoused to receive him. One of these days while we were laying over, a few of the party went out to hunt, and our horses were quietly feeding in the brook valley where we were, only a short distance from our camp. And these hunters, for mischief, as they came on the bluff gave an Indian whoop and fired, and the horses all came to camp for protection like scared children.

Indian Attack

One night in this part of our journey when we were encamped in the usual way, in messes all around, leaving quite a space within for our horses to feed, and the usual guard. But unperceived by the guard, Indians approached near camp and raised their whoop and fired guns and arrows, and so frightened the horses that they all broke loose from their fastenings and rushed by us out of camp. And all were instantly on their feet ready for fight. For myself the first consciousness I had, I found myself on my feet with my rifle in my hand. For always all were required to sleep with their rifles by their side, well loaded for action. But the Indians were not to be found. And we soon collected our horses and tied them and laid down to sleep. At least I did so, showing how a man will become, in a measure, indifferent to danger. I felt some fears before getting where there were Indians, but felt but little after. But this time we found in the morning, they so far did what they aimed at, had stolen some dozen or more of our best horses, those probably which ran farthest out.

Fremont's Trip

The only means I had to ascertain our altitude was the temperature of boiling water by my thermometer, and which I made in that way to be between 8,000 and 9,000 feet. But Mr. Fremont, who was sent out by government, supplied with barometer and all needful instruments, made it something less. His account of that exploration is very interesting. He was an intelligent and industrious traveler, but sometimes too rash and venturesome. As in this case in crossing the Nevadas in the deep snow, and still worse when he was sent on a railroad exploration, and was caught in midwinter in the mountains and escaped into New Mexico. No rain of any account in all this part of our journey. Sometimes a small cloud would form attended with thunder, and rain be seen falling part way to the ground, and all evaporate. Perhaps a few drops of rain or hail would reach

it. Nights clear and cold, often below freezing and days, hot sun and up sometimes to 80 degrees. But on the 4th of July as we approached and arrived at the first waters of the Columbia, we had an hour or two of snow.

Hunger

Now we came into a rough and mountainous country, more difficult than any we had experienced. . And to add to our troubles our animals had become, from their long journey, much worn out, and the men though in like feeble condition had to walk. And food too became short, for we met but few buffalo, but some game of other kinds. And nothing came amiss. And we ate of everything that fell in our way, but the snakes, I think. Sublette had before this met with some of his mountain trappers who guided us on our way to their rendezvous. And in four days of hard working our way through ragged ravines and over steep ridges brought us out on to a fine grassy plain among the mountains, called Pierre's Hole and to the grand encampment, where they had for some time been awaiting our arrival.

Grand Rendezvous

Here we found not only Sublette's traders and trappers, -but a party of the American Fur Company, and hands of Nez Perce and Flat Head Indians, who had by appointment met the traders here with their furs and five or six hundred horses. Many of them they sold us to take the place of our lean ones. They would allow something for the lean ones for with them, in their slow way of journeying they would recruit. But the full price of a pony was but a blanket and a cheap knife. So we supplied ourselves with all we needed. These mountain horses are of the Arabian stock, brought to Mexico by the early Spanish settlers--light of limb and fleet. It was a grand sight to look on their immense herd out on the prairie of all colors from white to black and many

spotted ones. For during the day they would send them out on to the open prairie to feed with the mounted guard with them, to run them into camp, if the Blackfeet, in whose country we were, should make a dash down the mountain side to steal them. At night they would bring them into camp where they would quietly remain among their owners tents till morning.

Pierre's Hole

Here in Pierre's Hole was for us a grand time of rest and recruit. The Indians had an abundance of good, dried buffalo meat which we bought of them and on which we feasted, took a bite of the fat part with the lean, eating it like bread and cheese, uncooked or slightly roasted on the coals as we chose. And I never witnessed such recuperation of men as during the two weeks we lay at our ease in this camp, feeding on the dried buffalo meat, and our drink the pure cool mountain creek, a branch of the Lewis river, on which we were encamped. And among us, a varied congregation of some two hundred white men and perhaps nearly as many Indians, there was quite a social time, and a great exchange of talk and interesting indeed, from the wide and varied experiences of the narrators. There were cultured men from city and country down to white men lower than the Indian himself. Men of high-toned morals, down to such as had left their country for its good, or perhaps rather personal safety.

Some made the seasons trip from the miasmatic air of the Mississippi and its city follies to recuperate their bodily and mental derangement. And it proved a grand specific. This mountain-pure air and ever-shining sun is a grand, helpful thing for both soul and body, especially when feeding on only meat and water.

And here we had the test of the honesty of the Indian. When we had purchased a horse and it had got back into the immense herd, we could never have reclaimed it, or perhaps known it if seen, but they would bring them back to us, and

again and again, if needed. And if any of our property, tools or camp things seemed lost, they would bring them to us, were in all things orderly, peaceful, and kind. And the Flat Head chief used of an evening to mount his horse from which he would give his people a moral lecture. A white man who had been some years in their country and well understood their language told us what he said. And it was of a high, moral tone, telling them to be punctual in their dealings with us and orderly among themselves.

Here we were more than a thousand miles from the white settlements and had met no natives till now. And not having then ever seen much of them, I observed with much interest their ways. Their usual dress was a frock and leggings and moccasins made from dressed deer skin, and a well dressed buffalo skin with the hair on for a blanket, to ride on and sleep in. The frock of the women was longer than that of the men. Both had their dresses somewhat ornamented by a projecting edge of the leather, cut into a fringe, shells, feathers and beads, when to be had, worked into their dresses, or in their hair. The women, these mountain women were extremely diffident, would blush if looked at. And though they and their friends deemed it quite an honor to be married by a white man--one of these traders or trappers, who had passed years in their country--they, that is the father or nearest male relative, would never consent to any intercourse with these women, but for life. But I fear that the more virtuous and honorable Indian was sometimes betrayed into an alliance that the white man betrayed and annulled when he quit the country.

Sublette Returns

Mr. Sublette had here reached the end of his journey, and in a few days, but not till we left him, would commence his march back to St. Louis with his seventy horses packed with beaver, worth as he estimated, some \$50,000 in the New

York market. No other fur was deemed worth packing so far, not even the otter. And the pressing question arose with us Yankees as to the manner and safe means of our future and further journey. Many of Mr. Wyeth's men had long before they got here become disheartened and disgusted, but they could not stop or return alone. But now they decided to return with Mr. Sublette's party. And all decided to go no farther, except twelve.

For myself I never turned my face back for a moment and resolved to go on, if it was in the company of the Nez Pierces whose country was down near the mouth of the Lewis river. But a Mr. Frapp and Milton Sublette with a trapping party of Sublette's men were to go off trapping somewhere westward, so we resolved to go on, joined their party of some forty whites, half-breeds and Indians, and so keep on, thinking some way to bring out rightly.

JOURNEY CONTINUES WITH TRAPPERS

CHAPTER IV

Mr. Sublette had come out with arms, ammunition, traps, etc., for his business and new men to take the places of those whose term of service had expired, so there was much fixing up to sort out the parties for the different purposes. And our party of trappers under Mr. Frapp one afternoon left the main camp and went out some seven or eight miles and encamped on a prairie near some timber on a little creek, as usually there is timber on the streams and mountainsides.

We had a quiet night but in the morning, as we were about to commence our day's march, Indians were seen in line of march on horseback off across the prairie, say some two miles. And the trappers at once decided they must see who they were. So Frapp told Antoine, the half-breed, to take a good horse and have an Indian of the party go with him and

go out and see who they were. As Antoine approached them he saw they were Blackfeet, and their chief left his party and came out in a friendly way to meet him. But his father having been killed by the Blackfeet, he was going to have his revenge. So he said to his companion, "I will appear to be friendly when we meet, but you watch your chance and shoot him." His plan was carried out. He was shot down. Antoine caught his robe, a square of blue and scarlet cloth, and turned and the Blackfeet fired after him, when they saw his treachery. He escaped and came into our camp, said they were Blackfeet, and that he had killed their chief and there was his robe in evidence.

"All right" they said, "they would play friendly now but at night attack our camp." But we twelve could not appreciate the reasoning. But here we were in the company that thus decided. But as we watched to see what they would next do they seemed at first to break up and scatter, but soon we saw that a large band, the warriors, seemed coming directly towards us to make fight. So we immediately tied our horses to bushes near and put up our saddles as a kind of breastwork but before they reached us, they turned off into some timber on a stream, built a kind of fort of logs, bushes, their saddles and blankets, as a shade if we attacked them, and took their horses into the fort with them.

Fight with the Blackfeet

The moment that Antoine gave the information that they were Blackfeet, an express flew off back to the old camp to tell we had met the enemy, and in the time, it seemed to me, that race horses could have hardly gone over the ground, some of Sublette's men and the friendly Indians came rushing into our camp inquiring where were the Blackfeet. And on soon finding where they had fortified themselves, each white or Indian, as he felt that his gun was right, and all things ready for his part, would start off. And so they went helter skelter, each on his own hook to fight

the common enemy. For the friendly Indians had their own wrongs to avenge. As they thus almost singly approached their brush and saddle fort, they could only see the defences whereas, they, the Blackfeet, could see everyone who approached them. They soon shot down some of the trappers and Flatheads, for the timber was not large enough to shelter a man. And soon wounded men were brought back to our camp.

We twelve Yankees felt that we had no men to spare to be killed or wounded that we were not called upon to go out of the way to find danger, but had they attacked our camp, we should have taken our full part, to save ourselves and horses. But we readily assisted in taking care of the wounded and in other ways aid, as far as we felt belonged to us. They kept up a firing at them at a safer distance, but did not rout them. Six trappers and as many friendly Indians were killed or mortally wounded. And as night approached it was determined to retreat. And the whites took a wounded man on a horse, others riding each side to hold him up. The Indians fixed long fills to a horse letting the ends draw on the smooth ground and fixed onto them a kind of hurdle, onto which they laid the wounded and drew them off easily over the smooth prairie. A better way than ours.

When night came on we encamped in the best manner of defence we could, and the next day expecting surely an attack from them, built a high fence and strong pen for our horses in such case, and a guard on the open prairie to run them in if attacked, and then awaited the result. Their fort was finally visited and a number of dead horses found. But of course they had secreted any men they lost from scalping. We did not go back so far as the old camp.

Buried the Dead

The man who died in our camp we buried in the horse pen where the ground was so trodden that the enemy could not

find the body to scalp it. Another badly wounded was sent to Sublette's camp on a bier suspended between two horses, one ahead of the other. And when we found that the enemy was not near, after a few days, we took up our line of march as originally intended. And after two or three days reached the main Lewis river. To cross its water, and such others as they could not ford, the trappers had packed along what they call a bull boat, green buffalo hides with the hair off, which they soak in water till limber, then stretch this hide over a temporary frame made from such saplings as could be bent into shape, and then turn their rude boat up to the sun to dry, and thus keep in shape long enough to cross two or three times, before so soaked as to be unmanageable. The men with the goods, traps etc., were crossed in these and horses swam.

And so we traveled on slowly in a pleasantly rising country back from the river, the trappers stopping to set their traps for beaver on the branches that showed signs of their residences in and on the same. Not far from this part was afterwards built what was known as Fort Hall. And we were at one time in sight of the American Falls, also of the Lewis river, and a man of our party, who had been there said at one time we were within twenty-five miles of the Salt Lake. And so we kept on southwesterly with a low ridge of mountains between us and the river. And finally came to a stream running to the south or southerly, the country apparently descending in that direction. The trappers had poor luck and said they would now quit and turn back.

Sixteen free trappers, as they were called, men on their own hook, said they would go down that stream, I now know it to be the Humboldt, and go to California and get mules. None of our party had been so far in that country before and knew nothing of the country beyond in any direction. And for aught I know the free trappers are still going, Frapp and his party turned back, and we twelve turned northward to again get onto the Lewis river.

Other things I should have before said--one, the great clearness of the air of the Rocky Mountain region, from the dryness of the same, no mist or haze to prevent a distinct view of very distant objects. Objects, on our march, that seemed as though we should reach in a few hours, would perhaps take as many days, being accustomed to judge of distances through a humid atmosphere. We were soon now to pass the range of the buffalo. So while in the country where they ranged, say north of the Salt Lake, we halted a day or two to dry, in the sun and on hurdles over a slow fire, some of their meat to pack along for our future use, a wise forethought for game was scarce.

Birth of an Indian Baby

Mr. Frapp had an Indian wife who traveled along with him, and the Indians of the party, some of them, had their wives, these women as good horsemen as the men, always riding astride. One day we delayed our march, we knew not why, till after a time we heard an outcry for a few minutes from Frapp's wife, out to one side in some bushes. And we soon learned the cause of our laying over, was to give her the opportunity to lay in, give birth to a child in camp and not on our day's march. But the very next day, she sat her newborn baby, feet down, into a deep basket that she hung to the pommel of her saddle, mounted her horse and rode on in the band as usual. And she had another child of two or three, who had his own horse. He was sat on the saddle and blankets brought around him so as to keep him erect, and his gentle pony went loose with the other pack horses, which kept along with those riding and never strayed from the common band. I mention these things to show something of the Indian ways in their own country, and that whites in their country readily from necessity and convenience, fall into like habits, and soon find but little inconvenience from the same. The Canadian Frenchman seems to adopt their life

as readily as though raised in that way, and others the same after a little time.

Trapping for Beaver

I have been writing from recollection mostly. But on turning to the scant minutes I made at the time I find that there were the Trois Tetons and other snow mountains all the time in sight. The country we passed through zig-zag, as Milton Sublette, a brother of William, and Frapp were after the beaver, and went up and down the mountain streams hunting them, set their traps at night; and the second or more, if the game was found plenty, on the same ground. Three boys left our party soon after crossing the Lewis river to make a seasons trapping by themselves on the mountains to the left in the midst of the Blackfoot country, showing the strange, wild, fearless habits formed by these mountain trappers. The sixteen free trappers left us on the Humboldt, but Sublette and Frapp kept on westward and we parted with them on the creek that ran north and which we followed.

We were with these trappers more than a month, parting from them the 28th of August. I had during the time made many interesting observations of things around, the weather clear, and days hot and usually frost at night, ranging from say 30 to 80 degrees often. Soon after crossing the Lewis river I observed for the first strata of igneous or volcanic rock in conglomerate. And ever after met with it and saw beautiful white and variegated marble bowlders, and lime and granite rock partially melted down, but still showing the original rock. The vegetation was much diversified, timber of various kinds and extended prairies. Though but little or no rain, grass was often good and occasionally we met with fruit, which, you may well think, was very acceptable to us-- a berry growing on a shrub they called a service berry, resembling what is called in New England the robin pear,

and red and orange colored currants, all of an excellent quality. I brought the seeds home, but they did not grow.

TWELVE OF WYETH'S PARTY GO ON ALONE

CHAPTER V

The first day after leaving the trappers, we traveled over a rough country of all sorts of rock, burnt and unburnt, and encamped in what is now called a canyon, between high basaltic rocks. We twelve thus for the first time alone it seemed a little lonely. And though not fearful, there was something like a deep curiosity as to the future, what might happen to us in that unknown land. Our aim was to get back on to the Lewis river and follow that to its junction with the Columbia. And I now presume we were on the headwaters of the Owyhee, the east boundary of Oregon. And the next day and for days we kept on the same or near. We pursued it till so shut in that we had to leave it by a side cut and get onto an extended plain above, a plain with little soil on the basaltic rock, and streams in the clefts or canyons. One day we traveled 30 miles and found water but once, and in the dry atmosphere our thirst became extreme. On approaching the canyon we could see the stream meandering along the narrow gorge 1,000 feet down, and on and on we traveled not knowing that we should survive even to reach it to quench our thirst. Finally before night we observed horse tracks and that they seemed to thicken at a certain point and lead down the precipitous bluff where it was partially broken down. So by a most difficult descent we reached the creek, dismounted and down its banks to quench our thirst. And our horses did not wait for an invitation, but followed in quick time. The bluffs were of the burnt rock, some places looking like an oven burned brick kiln, and others porous. And laying over the next day and going a short distance down the creek, we found Indians who had our future food, dried salmon. And getting out on the other side we traveled on and when we came again to the river we found it, though

now quite a stream, decidedly warm, made so by hot springs gushing in from porous bluffs. Quite a stream came in of the temperature of 100 degrees.

Shoshone Indians

The creek finally comes out of the ravine into a better looking country, and here we met other Indians. They call themselves Sho-shones and seemed very friendly and sold us their salmon for such of our goods as they seemed most to need-- awls of iron to prick their deer skins for sewing into garments, and knives, for they hardly possessed an article of our manufacture. They used a sharp bone for an awl, one flattened for a chisel, stone knives and hatchets. Ourselves and all we had seemed to them great curiosities. For their country being poor in furs it had not been visited by traders.

In some ten or twelve days after leaving the trappers, we reached the mouth of the creek where it joins the Lewis river. And here we found a large encampment of Indians, being a favorable site for fishing. The first thing on arriving the chief, in their usual hospitable manner, sent us a fine salmon for our dinner, and would have deemed it an insult to be offered pay for it. We were strangers and his guests.

Indian Fishing

Their manner of fishing was ingenious. The stream was shallow and they built a fence across it near its mouth and then some distance above, leaving weirs at one side, so that the fish coming down or going up would come in, but would not find their way out. They had spears with a bone point with a socket that fitted onto a shaft, and a hole through the point by which a string tied it to the handle. At sunrise at a signal from the chief they rushed in from both sides, struck the salmon through with the spear, the point came off, and

held by the string to the shaft, they towed them to shore and so soon had hundreds on land.

Near, up the Lewis river, were bluffs of basaltic rock thirty feet high and resting on the sandy shore, the pentagonal columns tumbling down into the river as the earth was washed away, showing that there had been melted overflow of rock, which then cooled and crystallized into rock and in this form in blocks, one above another.

Beavers

As we occasionally saw the fresh marks of beaver on the streams, we set our traps and occasionally caught some, preserved and packed along their skins, knowing that they would be acceptable to the Hudson Bay people in exchange for such things as we should need from them. And at times we had nothing else to eat but their meat, which having nothing else, we relished right well. About the beaver building houses, they only do it when the land along the streams, where they are, is low. For when there are high banks they burrow up and make their nests in the earth, but always have the mouths of their holes under the water, so even when the streams are frozen over they can come to the water under the ice. They subsist on the bark of small trees, but for winter's use cut with their chisel teeth, small trees into blocks and store them in the mud at the mouths of their burrows or in the same, as the squirrel does with his acorns. And the muskrat too makes his nest of grass or rushes in the swamp, raising it above the water. The beaver is an intelligent and interesting animal and so are all others, birds and all, each in his way.

Reckless of Danger

In this part of our journey we twelve were often very reckless of danger. For the purpose of this trapping we would separate, for a night or for more. When in full camp

our horses were always picketed near us and some two or more always awake as a guard. But when two or three were away for a night's trapping, we slept with our horses' long halters tied to a bush near us or sometimes in our hand. One night when thus encamped I had my old camlet cloak stolen from my saddle and our horses' halters cut, but they, the horses, did not leave us, and we did not see by whom done. At another time we found the Indians about at night, for though generally friendly, they could not forego the attempt to steal away in a quiet manner, our horses, of which we had two to a man.

We traveled some days along or in the vicinity of the Lewis river after meeting Indians, and subsisting mostly on fresh or dried salmon bought or given us from them, and making short or long day's journeys and laying over to catch the beaver. They are a night animal.

At one night's encampment, we made the Indians understand that we were going to Walla Walla, the name of that place being the only word we had in common. All else was by signs, talk with the fingers. Inquiring the way, one of the Indians said that he had been to Walla Walla and made in the sand a map of the country. He said that such a mark meant the river and another the trail, that the road kept down the river three sleeps, always reckoning distances by day's journeys, or in two if we whipped up; that then the river went into mountains, it does pass through a canyon and for a hundred or two miles, and the road left the river and up a creek, and then we should go so many days and come to a mountain, go over that and encamp, then over another and encamp, then a plain and in two days Walla Walla.

I felt confident I understood him, though this all by signs, and it proved just as he had said, and of great help to us. But as we traveled on we met with no more Indians from whom to buy our fish, and we met with no game that we

could kill. And not taking the precaution to pack along much, we soon got short of food. And we hurried on making thirty miles one day, crossing a most beautiful fertile plain surrounded by mountains, the same I think is called the Big Pound. And came to the mountains, the Indian described, the Blue Mountains. And here we were in a bad plight, our horses, some of them at least, exhausted by hard travel, and ourselves the same, having been some days on short allowance and now nothing left. So for food we killed an old horse. But hungry as we were, this did not relish well. But I will show that horse, in good condition is good food, for I afterwards tested it.

Wyeth Presses Ahead

Here, the next day, Wyeth took four of the men and the best horses and started off express for Walla Walla, requesting me the next day after to follow on and he would get food and send back for us. So the next day following I told the men they better pack along some of the horse meat they had dried, and some of them did so. And we ascended the mountain on the Indian trail and found a quite level road along its ridge, and scattering pine and cedar timber on its sides. After many hours travel the road led down the mountain to the west into a valley where we found water and encamped. Here the men who would not pack along any of the horse, stole from those who did. As for myself, as each one looked out for himself, I had saved to this time some dried salmon, having eaten but one meal per day for many days.

Mount Hood

The next day we ascended another ridge and kept along the same, hour after hour. And it was a clear bright day except some cumulous, or thunder clouds as some call them, and I noticed one, on the western horizon, that seemed stationary. And after watching it an hour, I made up my

mind that it was no cloud but white, snowy Mount Hood and called the attention of the men to it, and hailed it as the discovery of land--an object on which men had looked and of which they knew something of its locality. Just at night we came down to a creek and out of the mountains, and encamped, ourselves weary and our horses more so. An old pack mule turned round to me the moment I dismounted to be unpacked. Here for food we found a few blackthorn berries and rose berries.

The next day we started out onto the plain, but found so many trails we did not know which to take. But we traveled on the deepest worn, but not as proved the most direct one. Encamped at night and found some stagnant water and next day hard traveling brought us to a fine creek running west which proved to be the Walla Walla creek.

And now I proposed to the men, as we had been so long without food, to kill another horse and the best conditioned one in the lot, but they thought they could stand it another day, so we did not kill the horse. The next day we started early down the creek, for I thought that would bring us out right, and in a few hours we came to an Indian encampment, where we got some food. They had dried-bear and other meat and elderberries, and we bought and ate, for they had learned of the whites. For myself I did not eat so ravenous, but the men ate till I urged them to desist, for I feared the result. We soon after encamped, and the next day arrived at the fort, where we found Wyeth who had been there two or three days.

OREGON

CHAPTER VI

Fort Walla Walla

The said fort was a small stockade of upright timbers set in the ground some fifteen or eighteen feet high with stations or bastions at the corners for look-outs. And the company kept here for the purpose of trade a clerk and some half-dozen men. We were kindly received and here for the first time since leaving the forks of the Platte the first of June ate bread, being now the 18th of October. The fort is at the mouth of the creek on the Columbia nine miles below the mouth of the Lewis river. It was an interesting sight to look on the Columbia, after the long, long journey to see the same and to get to it.

The country about looked barren, for the fall rains, if they have them, had not commenced--little or no timber or shrubs, except the artemisia, wild sage, which grows from one to five or six feet high, and is found everywhere on the mountain plains. It has an ash-colored leaf as bitter as the garden sage; still when nothing else can be found it is eaten by the buffalo and deer. I am informed that there is now cultivation in these parts and crops raised; but I presume it must be by means of irrigation. Here we decided to leave our faithful horses and descend the river by boat. Oh! the horse is appreciated, when one for months has passed with him, his days and nights.

Down the Columbia

We procured at the fort a boat and two Canadians to take us down the river and started the day after our arrival. And in descending soon came into the high perpendicular basaltic bluffs with only river and a narrow shore on one or the other side, of grass and sand, the current of the clear water with a slight blue ocean shade sweeping swiftly on. And when we encamped at night, if we could find a place that we could ascend the bluff we found no timber, but a dry, grassy plain stretching far away to distant mountains, in the west the

Cascade range and snow-clad Mount Hood. At one night's encampment the Indians, being acquainted with our boatmen, gave them a young horse to kill for our supper. And though we had received a plenty of food for our voyage at the fort, I tried the horse and found it as good meat as I had ever eaten, it being in better condition than the one killed by us at the Blue Mountains. And we voyaged on past the big falls and came to the Dalles and then stopped to see the Indians and found there had been great mortality among them. We walked by the wonderous chute or flume through which all the water rushes at its low stage, but passed the boat through it.

Saw the basaltic columns at places along the bluffs standing out prominently, or even singly, all pentagonal, blocks or sections piled one on the other, the upper side of the block dishing and the next fitted to it, and all as compact as iron. Lewis and Clark called them "high black rocks" as well they might. Finally we came to the cascade where the mighty river rushes for some miles through the break in the Cascade range of mountains, a continuation of the Nevada range of California. The mountain on the north side somewhat subsides giving a land pass way, but abrupt and thousands of feet high on the south side, down which leap from the immense height beautiful cascades. These passed we came to the tide waters of the Columbia. On the mountain is evergreen forest to the snow line, east of the mountains no timber on the plains but west, timber and prairie interspersed.

Fort Vancouver, 1832

Stopped over night at a sawmill of the company on a creek, and saw there, two strange looking men, saw at once they could be neither Caucasian, Indian or African. And so it proved, they were Kanakas, Sandwich Islanders, in the employ of the traders. And the mill was under the superintendence of one of Astor's men who had remained in

the country. And the next day the 29th of October we arrived at Fort Vancouver, which is on the north side of the river, and so now in Washington territory. It was quite an extensive stockade enclosure, on a prairie, some little back from the river, with the store houses, the houses for the Governor and gentlemen, as partners and clerks were called, and quite a garden, and for the servants, the Canadian Frenchmen, little houses outside the fort. This was the main station of the Hudson Bay Company west of the mountains. And to this place came up their shipping, what they called 100 miles up the river.

Indian Burial

Though a hard looking set and unexpected, we were received very kindly and treated ever in the most hospitable way.

Some of us did not feel that we had reached the end of our journey till we had seen the Pacific. So a few days after, five of us took an Indian canoe and paddled down the river, passed the mouth of the Willamette river, found the country for miles level, prairie and timber, met a company's sloop, and often Indians singing as they paddled their canoes swiftly along.

Encamped one night near one of their burial places. Their way of burial here was to wrap their bodies in their clothing and mats, and place them in canoes, which they place on some conspicuous place on shore or on an island, one is called Coffin Island, then cover the boat with boards, split slabs, and load them down with stone so that the wolves or other animals could not get at the body and put the deceased's property in and about the canoe. To steal from a grave they view a great crime.

Fort George

After a time in descending the river the country becomes very broken and heavily timbered and after some days reach and encamp on Tongue Point, where we could look out to sea, and next day go to Fort Astoria, or as they called it, Fort George. We were there kindly received by the clerk and fur people. A fallen tree near the fort, one writer calls 45 feet in circumference and another seven fathoms, and I thought it no exaggeration.

And on going into the standing forest out towards Youngs Bay, the bay in which Lewis and Clark wintered, I saw many trees of enormous size, in girth and height. The whole forest was nearly 200 feet high, for the small trees had to grow so high to get the sun, and so dense that I should think more weight of timber on one acre than on four anywhere east that I have ever seen. And the brakes and other vegetation of annual growth were equally gigantic of their kind. Still on their little clearings about the fort, the potatoes and other things were small and the soil looked poor.

We got a yawl and one of their men to sail it and crossed over to Chenook Point and returned across the broad boisterous bay to Clatsop Point on the inside and encamped. And I urged the men, or some of them at least, to accompany me around the point to the seashore, but they declined. So the tide being down, I alone footed some three miles, fairly around on the beach to where I could look out on the broad Pacific, with not an islet between me and Japan, look far down the coast and Cape Disappointment across the mouth to the northwest. Here I stood alone, as entranced, felt that now, I had gone as far as feet could carry me west, and really to the end of my proposed journey.

The Pacific

There to stand on the brink of the great Pacific, with the rolling waves washing its sands and seaweeds to my feet! And there I stood on the shore of the Pacific enjoying the

happiest hour of all my journey, till the sun sank beneath its waters, and then by a beautiful moonlight returned on the beach to camp, feeling that I had crossed the continent. Cape Disappointment is in Lat. 46.19 N. and 123.59 W. Mount Saint Helens being due east, majestic and symmetrical in its form. This was the 9th of November and we had left Baltimore the 26th of March, seven and one-half months before. We returned slowly up the river, seeing something of the Indians, always peaceable in their ways, for these traders had the good sense and tact to keep a good understanding with them, though they had to deal with them quite in their own way, the Indian always knowing just how much he was to get for his furs in the articles he wanted. I should mention the fact that the Columbia in parts, as we passed, seemed alive and white with geese and ducks.

Death of One of the Twelve

When we got back to Fort Vancouver, we found that one of our fellows, and one who had stood all the hardships well, was dead and buried. He had eaten heartily of peas for his supper which gave him the colic and before morning he was dead. It was new food for him for we had lived on animal food. Mr. Wyeth as captain of the party and myself from some cause, were invited by Dr. McLaughlin, the oldest partner and nominal governor, to his own table and given rooms in the fort, and the others of our men to quarters with his, out of the fort. And I soon gave him and Mr. Wyeth to understand I was there on my own hook, and that I had no further connection with the others, than that for the making of the journey. We were received at the fort as guests without talk of pay or the like, and it was acceptable, or else we should have had to hunt for subsistence.

First Teacher in Oregon, 1832-1833

But not liking thus to live gratis, I asked the doctor, as he was always called, being a physician, for some employment. He at first told me I was a guest and did not expect to set me to work. But after further urging, he said if I was willing he would like to have me teach his son and other boys about the fort. I, of course, gladly accepted the offer. So he sent the boys to my room to be instructed, all half-breed boys of course, for there was not then a white woman in Oregon. The doctor's wife was a Chippewa woman from Lake Superior, and the lightest woman, a Mrs. Douglas, a half-breed woman from Hudson Bay. Well, I found the boys docile and attentive and making good progress, for they are precocious and generally better boys than men. And the old doctor used to come in to see the school and seemed much pleased and well satisfied. And one time he said, "Ball, anyway you will have the reputation of teaching the first Academy in Oregon." And so I passed the winter. The gentlemen in the Fort were pleasant and intelligent, a circle of a dozen or more usually at the well provided table, where there was much formality. They consisted of partners, clerks, captains of vessels, and the like--men to wait on the table and probably cook, for we saw nothing or little of their women, except perhaps sometimes on Sundays out on a horse-back ride, at which they excelled.

The National boundary had not then been settled beyond the mountains, and these traders claimed that the river would be the boundary, and called the south side the American.

Hudson Bay Company

The fur trade was their business, and if an American vessel came into the river or onto the coast for trade they would at once bid up on furs to a ruinous price--ten to one above their usual tariff. And as the voyage around Cape Horn from England was so long to bring supplies, they got a bull and seven or six cows from California and in seven years had

about 400 cattle. They had turned the prairies into wheat fields and had much beyond their wants, ground by ox power and made good flour. Salmon was so abundant that the men would throw it away to get some old imported salt beef, for they had not yet killed any of their own raising.

To show the climate, the wheat green all winter, for there was no snow, still spring and summer so cool that harvest did not come till last of July or August. Rained from middle of November till New Year's incessantly with the temperature day and night about 40 to 45 degrees, then rain and shine till May, frost, clear nights and vegetation nearly stationary, grass for the cattle, but cold for them out, the summer cool and dry, still the wheat first rate, the berry large and good, corn did not mature. Potatoes and vegetables seemed to do well, and were dug in winter as used.

Wyeth Returns East

In the spring Wyeth and two of his men returned home across the mountains, some way successfully. Others went into the company employ. I wrote to my friends in New Hampshire and New York and by the Hudson express that leaves Fort Vancouver on the 20th of March, goes up the North, the main branch of the Columbia, to about the latitude of 52 degrees and by men on snow shoes over the mountains in about two weeks to where they take bark canoes on the La Bashe, that flows into the Arctic Ocean. Descend that a distance then make a short portage at Fort Edmonton to the Saskatchewan and down that to Lake Winnipeg, and by its outlet, the Nelson, to Hudson Bay and also up the said Lake to Lake Superior, etc., to Montreal, from which place my friends got my letters by September.

Thinking I might long stay in the country, believing after so much had been said on the subject, that others would come soon to settle though urged by Dr. McLoughlin to continue

the school and stay at the fort, I determined to go to farming. And when I learned that some of the Company's men had turned farmers and gone up and settled on the Willamette river, I went there to see the country and found it very inviting. And when the doctor found that I was bent on going to farming, he kindly told me, he would lend me farming utensils, seeds for sowing and as many horses, as I chose to break in, for a team. So I took seed and implements by boat, getting help up the Willamette to the falls where the city of Oregon now is, passing the site where Portland stands, carried by the fall, boat and all. First stopped with one of the settlers, a half-breed, with two wives, his name J. B. Desportes. Yes, two wives, seven children, and cats and dogs numberless.

Farming

Caught from the prairie a span of horses only used to the saddle, made for them a harness and put them to work. Stuffed some deer skin sewed in due form for collars, fitted to them for harness crooked oak limbs, tied top and bottom with elk skin strings, then to these, straps of hide for tugs, which tied to the end of a stick for a whiffletree, and the center of this I tied to the drag, made from a crotch of a tree. And on this I drew out logs for a cabin, which when I had laid up and put up rafters to make the roof, I covered with bark peeled from cedar trees. And this bark covering was secured by poles across and tied with wood strings, withes, at the ends to the timbers below. And out of some split plank for no sawed boards, I made bedstead and table. And so I dwelt in a house of fir and cedar.

And with the aid of my neighbors and their teams I broke up quite a large field of rich prairie lands. Drew out fencing stuff with my own, to enclose the same, and sowed and planted my farm, a farm that butted half a mile on the river and extended back to California. My family consisted part of the time of a Mr. Sinclair, one of my mountain companions, a

young wild native to catch my horses, and some of the time entirely alone. Got meal from the fort to make my bread, my meat some venison and some salmon from the falls, for being 60 feet high they could not jump them.

A rather primitive lonely life I found it and not seeing when it was likely to be less so, and having seen something of the country and experienced its climate, and the Hudson Bay people having entire control of the country, and no emigrants arriving, I began to think I might as well leave could I have the opportunity. Yes, this primitive life of the plains, mountains, and keeping house with only Indian neighbors, had lost its novelty and I wanted a change. To be sure the Willamette valley is a fine country, being a valley watered by a stream of that name, fifty miles wide and say one hundred and fifty long with a coast range on the west and towering Cascade range on the east, crowned by Mount Hood, in the bright summer days ever in sight. And I was near the river, handy for a summer bath, and out of its bank a short distance from my house was the fine cool spring from which I got my water.

Indian Customs

Near by was the graveyard of the Indians, and on one occasion I attended with them the burial ceremony of one of their young men. They dug a grave as we would, put down some slabs at the sides and bottom, wrapped the body in his clothing and over these some mats, lowered it down to its place, put a board over and filled up with the earth. Then they built a fire on the grave and sat on the ground around and for an hour chanted a mournful dirge, all very orderly and impressive. And for a long time after his mother would come almost daily to place food in the earth at the head of the grave for his use on his journey to the other world. At the head of a man's grave they stuck a paddle and at the woman's a camas stick, a crooked pointed stick used by them to dig the camas root, with them a great article of

food, the digging of which is woman's business, while paddling the canoe is that of the man.

The camas grown on the prairies is the size of an onion, a stem, say a foot high, having a blue blossom. It is as palatable and nutritious as the potato. The wapeto, another root they eat, is not so good but grows larger. It is the root of a kind of plant like the waterlily, which grows in the shallow waters of lakes and streams, and which they gather by wading in the water, often up to their arms, and break off with their toes, when it will rise to the surface. A common way of cooking these, as also sometimes meat, is to wrap in leaves and place in a hole in the ground, heated by a fire in it, then buried in same and a fire above, a very good way to cook.

Chenook Language

There was in use a mongrel language between the Indians and traders, called the Chenook; but unlike theirs, which was said by a man well acquainted with that and other Indian languages, to be the most copious of any. But this comprised hardly three hundred words, and probably not half of these theirs. but composed in part of words of other tribes, English and French. Things new to the Indians were called by their accustomed names. The hog had its French name, the ox the Indian name of the buffalo where the buffalo ranges in the mountains. The Indians on the Willamette, as most of the Indians, talked much by signs and sounds. One word was used for bird, for instance, then by imitating its cry, would express that it was the swan, goose or duck. One word meant growing vegetables; then by an adjective, or some motions, show whether grapes or trees were meant.

In enclosing my lands I fenced in a portion of their road or trail, and they went around, never crossing my fields. And in all things they were kind and just, as far as I observed, so I

am disposed to ascribe our troubles with the Oregon Indians to injustice, or indiscretion, on the part of the whites. And this was the cause of the trouble, in most cases from the first settlement of the country.

Ague and Discouragement

I suffered much while residing on my farm from the ague, a disease said to be unknown to the Indians or traders, till within some four or five years. It first broke out among the Indians near the fort, and spread far into the country, except near the ocean. And with the natives it proved very fatal, sweeping off whole bands, partly probably owing to their plunging into the water when the fever came on, and other improper ways. Still they seemed wonderfully aided by the use of such medicines as they procured from the whites. As an instance, to show the fatal effect, a trader returning to the fort came to their lodges on the river, just below the mouth of the Willamette, and he found numbers dead and unburied. The only one alive was an infant child at its dead mother's breast. He carried it to the fort, and it was living when I was there. When the disease broke out, they seemed to think they must have it, and die from its effects, so gave up and died.

For myself, I had no superstitious fear about it, but I suffered severely, and the more so on account of my unfavorable condition to meet sickness, my living poor, and no nurse but my friend, Sinclair. And at one time I had to send him off to the fort for medicine, to be gone some three or four days, leaving me alone, and so poorly that I hardly knew whether it was day or night. But still I mustered strength, when I became very thirsty and out of water, to get out and down the bank of the river to my spring for more. And when the medicine came it helped me, and then I would be taken down again, and so kept in rather a feeble state of health.

LEAVES OREGON

CHAPTER VII

No immigrants arrived from the States, as I expected, and the Hudson Bay Company having control of the country, so I could do nothing but subsist in the way I was pursuing. And tiring of the life I was leading, I saw no object of staying longer in the country, than for an opportunity to get away by sea. For once crossing the mountains and plains, I thought enough. I had passed nearly a year there, and experienced its climate and seen its lands and waters, and become acquainted with the natives and traders. And the company being about to send a vessel to the bay of San Francisco and the Sandwich Islands, I exchanged my crop, now mostly harvested, for a passage in the same.

So about the 20th of September, 1833, I quit my home on the Willa- mette with something of regret after all, but on the whole gladly went down the river by boat, and when I got to the falls an Indian boy of perhaps eighteen assisted us in carrying our boat by. On inquiring of him how his people were, he said, they were sick and dying, and when we came back, as he expected we would, he should be dead. Asking the chief of the band below the falls for two of his men to row us to the fort, for I was feeble and had with me only my friend, Sinclair, he answered that his men were all sick or dead, so he could not supply us. So we had wearily to paddle our own canoe.

Boards a Hudson Bay Company's Ship

After some days delay at Fort Vancouver, the ship Dryad made sail down the Columbia, with a Mr. Douglas, a botanist, a Mr. Finelson, a member of the Hudson Bay Company, myself, Sinclair, and two others of the Wyeth men. We stopped at Astoria, Fort George as they called it,

and a long time in Baker's Bay, under the shelter of Cape Disappointment, which is a high promontory, the north cape at the mouth of the river, from which there is a splendid look out over the river and bays, the land and the ocean. There again I suffered severely with another attack of the ague, the chills lasting all day long.

On October 18, 1833, we sailed from Astoria, the wind having subsided, but we still found the swell in crossing the bar tremendous, and much of wind and storm as we sailed down the coast. So with the combined seasickness and ague I was not able to leave my berth for some days. But after a time both left me and I was able to look out on the sea, and occasionally the land. Still we kept at so respectful a distance that we saw little of it, and no harbor was then known between Columbia river and the bay of San Francisco.

Golden Gate

After a half month's voyage we neared the coast and on the 4th of November entered at the Golden Gate, but some fifteen years or more before it received that name.

The only buildings then seen about the bay were just at the turn, on the right, as you enter the same, called "The Presidio," which we passed and came to anchor some mile or so south, near the shore of little valleys and sand hills, all in their natural forest of bushes and trees. And here, and hereabout, they say is now the city of San Francisco. Some mile or two beyond and back from the bay was a mission called Dolores, consisting of a few, small adobe buildings; and back on the opposite side of the bay were some farmers. For I recollect from them our vessel got some pumpkins and other vegetables. I met there but one resident not Spanish or Indian. This was a Mr. Forbes, a Scotchman, but who said he had resided in the United States. He seemed rather a shrewd man for as no one

unless a Catholic could hold real estate, I noticed, when with them, he was a good one too. How often do we see that one's religion aids his business, a great thing with many for this world. Rather a digression.

Lassoing a Wild Bullock

And here our ship lay for many days. On one, I saw a Spaniard noose with his lasso a wild bullock on the shore, or rather two of them. And thus mounted on their horses, used to the business, one threw and caught him by his horns, and then wound his lasso around the high pommel of his strong, well girthed saddle, and the horse stood and held him. But they wishing to throw him down, so as to butcher him, the other man threw his so accurately that by his first move the ox stepped into the noose, which caught him by his foot. Then each turned their horses in opposite directions and starting up they laid him flat on the ground in a twinkling. And then the horses keeping their stand, one dismounted and cut his throat. All quicker done than said.

The only vehicle I saw was a drag made from the crotch part of a tree. On this a man placed a barrel containing whiskey, perhaps, and to this drag he tied his lasso, mounted his horse and tied the other end to the pommel of his saddle, and so drew along the barrel home on the drag, the lasso passing by the horse's side.

Dolores Mission

One day I went to the Mission on another through the woods and over the hills to the seashore, and up to the Gate where I found in the grass, dismounted, some three or four cannon, which were once probably used to guard the entrance to the bay. But the fatigue of this day's trip again brought on the ague, so I did not go much more, staying aboard the vessel.

Upper California was then, and till acquired by our war with our neighboring Republic, a Mexican territory. One day its governor came aboard the ship to dine. He had come, I suppose, all the way from Monterey, his capital, for that purpose. His name was Figueroa. There is much said of John Augustus Sutter, as an early settler in this country, but this was long before his time. The only trade to these parts seemed to be by vessels from the States with calico and the like to exchange for hides, their only product, the country being full of cattle, and vessels came in for that purpose while we were there. And not having heard from that country for nearly two years, I inquired with much interest for the news, but was much disappointed in not getting more. He knew that Jackson was still President, and that the nullification business was all settled, but there came the puzzle, what nullification was. I had never heard the term, and he could not define it any further than it was something about South Carolina.

And a whaler came in to get supplies from the Japanese Banks, as the fishing grounds were called, where they had been on a cruise. They told the time they had taken, which was very short for a well constructed sailer, whereas their ship was an old Gerard Philadelphia Square, built over forty years before, showing the constant prevalence of a westerly wind in that latitude on the Pacific and in fact the world around. And here all our Americans except myself quit our vessel and went aboard this whaler, it being of their own country, so to them attractive. I said all were Spanish except Mr. Forbes. No; I also met here Russians, who resided at some point up the coast, and raised wheat to supply their trading posts at Sitka and other places in Alaska.

When here I had somehow a presentiment that we should some day, by purchase or otherwise, become possessed of this splendid bay of San Francisco, and the surrounding

country. Oregon I felt sure we should not relinquish to the English, and if we held that we also needed this. I thought those Hudson Bay men seemed to be very civil to their neighbors here, and that it was reciprocated by the call of the Governor, etc. All the trade that came to my notice was the purchase of some tallow from them. It was put up in hides sewed up into a kind of bag, and the melted tallow poured in, making a snug bale of goods. And if it be asked for what these traders wanted the tallow, it was mainly as a portion of the rations to their French and Indian employees, which with corn and other grain made their soup.

While we lay in the bay the weather was very pleasant, uniform, and of an agreeable temperature, being from 52 to 60 degrees. And we were a long time there, from the 4th to the 29th of November, with them probably a pleasant part of the year.

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