Ox-Team Days on the Oregon Trail

Meeker, Ezra

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About Meeker:

Ezra Meeker (December 29, 1830–December 3, 1928) was an early pioneer who traveled the Oregon Trail by ox cart as a young man. Beginning in his 70s, he worked tirelessly to memorialize the trail, repeatedly retracing the trip of his youth. He was the principal founder of Puyallup, Washington. Meeker was born in Huntsville, Ohio, to Jacob and Phoebe Meeker; his family relocated to Indiana in 1840. Married in 1851, in 1852, with his wife and his newborn son Marian, he headed to the Oregon Territory during the era of the donation land claims, ending up near Puget Sound. They settled permanently in Puyallup in 1862, where Meeker began growing hops for brewing beer. By 1885 his business had made him wealthy. His wife Eliza Jane convinced him to allow her to build a mansion similar to those she had seen in Europe. Three years and $26,000 later, her mansion was finished. However, in 1891 an infestation of hops aphids destroyed his crops and nearly ruined him. He subsequently tried a number of ventures, including dehydrating fruits and vegetables, working on packaging milk in paper containers, and four largely unsuccessful trips to the Klondike looking for gold. He also wrote a novel about his experiences on the trip west. Meeker is an important figure in what is now the southern portion of King County and the eastern parts of Pierce County. A statue to Meeker was erected near the Puyallup Library in 1926. —Wikipedia, 5 November 2009

About Driggs:

Howard Roscoe Driggs (1873–1963) was an English professor at the University of Utah and New York University. He also was the author or editor of over fifty books, including at least seven novels. Driggs was born in Pleasant Grove, Utah. His parents had both come to Utah with the Mormon pioneers. Driggs studied at Brigham Young Academy, the University of Utah, where he received bachelor's and master's degrees, the University of Chicago, and New York University where he received his Ph.D. in 1926.

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The Oregon Trail—what suggestion the name carries of the heroic toil of pioneers! Yet a few years' ago the route of the trail was only vaguely known. Then public interest was awakened by the report that one of the very men who had made the trip to Oregon in the old days was traversing the trail once more, moving with ox team and covered wagon from his home in the state of Washington, and marking the old route as he went. The man with the ox team was Ezra Meeker. He went on to the capital, where Mr. Roosevelt, then President, met him with joy. Then he traversed the long trail once more with team and wagon—back to that Northwest which he had so long made his home. This book gives Mr. Meeker's story of his experiences on the Oregon Trail when it was new, and again when, advanced in years, he retraced the journey of his youth that Americans might ever know where led the footsteps of the pioneers. The publication of this book in its Pioneer Life Series carries forward one of the cherished purposes of World Book Company—to supply as a background to the study of American history interesting and authentic narratives based on the personal experiences of brave men and women who helped to pushthe frontier of our country across the continent.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR

OUT in the state of Washington recently, a veteran of more than ninety years stepped into an aëroplane with the mail pilot and flew from Seattle to Victoria in British Columbia, and back again. The aged pioneer took the trip with all the zest of youth and returned enthusiastic over the adventure.

This youthful veteran was Ezra Meeker, of Oregon Trail fame, who throughout his long, courageous, useful life has ever kept in the vanguard of progress. Seventy years ago he became one of the trail-blazers of the Farther West. In 1852, with his young wife and child, he made the hazardous journey over plains and mountains all the way from Iowa to Oregon by ox team. Then, after fifty-four years of struggle in helping to develop the country beyond the Cascades, this undaunted pioneer decided to reblaze the almost lost Oregon Trail.

An old "prairie schooner" was rebuilt, and a yoke of sturdy oxen was trained to make the trip. With one companion and a faithful dog, the veteran started out. It took nearly two years, but the ox-team journey from Washington, the state, to Washington, our national capital, was finally accomplished.

The chief purpose of Mr. Meeker in this enterprise was to induce people to mark the famous old highway. To him it represented a great battle ground in our nation's struggle to win and hold the West. The story of the Oregon Trail, he rightly felt, is an American epic which must be preserved. Through his energy and inspiration and the help of thousands of loyal men and women, school boys and school girls, substantial monuments have now been placed along the greater part of the old pioneer way.

Two years ago it was my privilege to meet the author in his home city. Our mutual interest in pioneer stories brought us together in an effort to preserve some of them, and several days were spent in talking over the old times and visiting historic spots.

Everywhere we went there was a glowing welcome for "Father Meeker," as he was called by some of his home folks, while "Uncle Ezra" was the name used affectionately by others. The ovation given him when he arose to speak to the teachers and students of the high school in Puyallup—the city he

founded—was evidence of the high regard in which he is held by those who know him best.

Other boys and girls and older folk all over the country would enjoy meeting Ezra Meeker and hearing of his experiences. Since this is not possible, the record of what he has seen and done is given to us in thislittle volume.

The book makes the story of the Oregon Trail live again. This famous old way to the West was traced in the beginning by wild animals—the bear, the elk, the buffalo, the soft-footed wolf, and the coyote. Trailing after these animals in quest of food and skins, came the Indians. Then followed the fur-trading mountaineers, the home-seeking pioneers, the gold seekers, the soldiers, and the cowboys. Now railroad trains, automobiles, and even aëroplanes go whizzing along over parts of the oldhighway.

Every turn in the Trail holds some tale of danger and daring or romance. Most of the stories have been forever lost in the passing away of those who took part in this ox-team migration across our continent. For thatreason the accounts that have been saved are the more precious.

Ezra Meeker has done a signal service for our country in reblazing the Oregon Trail. He has accomplished an even greater work in helping to humanize our history and vitalize the geography of our land, by giving to us, through this little volume, a vivid picture of the heroicpioneering of the Farther West.

HOWARD R. DRIGGS

THE WORLD'S GREATEST TRAIL

WORN deep and wide by the migration of three hundred thousand people, lined by the graves of twenty thousand dead, witness of romance and tragedy, the Oregon Trail is unique in history and will always be sacred to the memories of the pioneers. Reaching the summit of the Rockies upon an evenly distributed grade of eight feet to the mile, following the watercourse of the River Platte and tributaries to within two miles of the summit of the South Pass, through the Rocky Mountain barrier, descending to the tidewaters of the Pacific, through the Valleys of the Snake and the Columbia, the route of the Oregon Trail points the way for a great National Highway from the Missouri River to Puget Sound: a roadway of greatest commercial importance, a highway of military preparedness, a route for a lasting memorial to the pioneers, thuscombining utility and sentiment.

Part 1
FROM OHIO TO THE COAST

Chapter 1

BACK TO BEGINNINGS

I WAS born in Huntsville, Butler County, Ohio, on December 29, 1830. That was, at this writing, more than ninety years ago.

My father's ancestors came from England in 1637. In 1665 they settled near Elizabeth City, New Jersey, building there a very substantial house which stood till almost 1910. More than a score of hardy soldiers from this family fought for the Colonies in the War of Independence. They were noted for their stalwart strength, steady habits, and patriotic ardor.

Both my parents were sincere, though not austere, Christian people. Father inherited to the full the sturdy traits of his ancestors. I well remember that for three years, during our life in Indiana, he worked eighteen hours a day as a miller. For this hard service he received only twenty dollars a month and bran for the cow. Yet out of the ordeal he came seemingly as strong and healthy as when he entered it.

My mother's maiden name was Phoebe Baker. English and Welsh strains of blood ran in her veins. Her father settled in Butler County, Ohio, in the year 1804, or thereabouts. My mother, like my father, could and did endure continuous long hours of severe labor without much discomfort. I have known her frequently to patch and mend our clothing until very late at night, and yet she would invariably be up in the morning by four to resume her labors.

Small wonder that with such parents and with such early surroundings I am able to say that for fifty-eight years I was never sick in bed a single day. I, too, have endured long hours of labor during my whole life, and I can truthfully say that I have always liked to do my work and that I never watched for the sun to go down to relieve me from the burden of labor. My mother said I was "always the busiest young 'un" she ever saw,

by which she meant that I was restless from the beginning—born so.

According to the best information obtainable, I was born in a log cabin, where the fireplace was nearly as wide as the cabin. The two doors on opposite sides permitted the horse, dragging the backlog, to enter at one and then to go out at the other. Of course, the solid floor of split logs defied injury from such treatment.

The skillet and the Dutch oven were used instead of the cook stove to bake the pone or johnny cake, to parch the corn, or to fry the venison which was then obtainable in the wilds of Ohio.

A curtain at the farther end of the cabin marked the confines of a bedchamber for the "old folks." The older children climbed the ladder nailed to the wall to get to the loft floored with loose clapboards that rattled when trodden upon. The straw beds were so near the roof that the patter of the rain made music to the ear, and the spray of the falling water would often baptize the "tow-heads" left uncovered.

Our diet was simple, and the mush pot was a great factor in our home life. A large, heavy iron pot was hung on the crane in the chimney corner, where the mush would slowly bubble and sputter over or near a bed of oak coals for half the afternoon. And such mush!—always made from yellow corn meal and cooked three hours or more. This, eaten with plenty of fresh, rich milk, furnished the supper for the children. Tea? Not to be thought of. Sugar? It was too expensive—cost fifteen to eighteen cents a pound, and at a time when it took a week's labor to earn as much money as a day's labor would earn now. Cheap molasses we had sometimes, but not often, meat not more than once a day, but eggs in abundance.

Everything father had to sell was low-priced, while everything mother must buy at the store was high. Wheat brought twenty-five cents a bushel; corn, fifteen cents; pork, two and two and a half cents a pound, with bacon sometimes used as fuel by reckless, racing steamboat captains of the Ohio and Mississippi.

My earliest recollection, curiously enough, is of my schoolboy days, although I had so few. I was certainly not five years old when a drunken, brutal teacher undertook to spank me because I did not speak a word plainly. That is the first fight of

which I have any recollection. I could hardly remember that but for the witnesses, one of them my oldest brother, who saw the struggle. My teeth, he said, did excellent work and drew blood quite freely.

What a spectacle—a half-drunken teacher maltreating his pupils! But then, that was the time before a free school system. It was the time when even the parson would not hesitate to take a "wee drop," and when, if the decanter was not on the sideboard, the jug and gourd served as well in the field or in the house. In our neighborhood, to harvest without whisky in the field was not to be thought of; nobody ever heard of a log-rolling or barn-raising without whisky. Be it said to the everlasting honor of my father, that he set himself firmly against the practice. He said his grain should rot in the field before he would supply whisky to his harvest hands. I have only one recollection of ever tasting any alcoholic liquor in my boyhood days.

I did, however, learn to smoke when very young. It came about in this way. My mother always smoked, as far back as I can remember. Women smoked in those days, as well as men, and nothing was thought of it. Well, that was before the time of matches,—leastwise, it was a time when it was necessary to economize in their use,—and mother, who was a corpulent woman, would send me to put a coal in her pipe. I would take a whiff or two, just to get it started, you know, and this soon developed into the habit of lingering to keep it going. But let me be just to myself. More than forty years ago I threw away my pipe and have never smoked since, and never will smoke again.

My next recollection of school days was after father had moved to Lockland, Ohio, then ten miles north of Cincinnati. It is now, I presume, a suburb of that city. I played hooky instead of going to school; but one day, while I was under the canal bridge, the noise of passing teams so frightened me that I ran home and betrayed myself. Did my mother whip me? Bless her dear soul, no! Whipping of children, both at home and in the school-room, was then about as common as eating one's breakfast; but the family government of my parents was exceptional for that time, for they did not think it was necessary to rule by the rod.

Because my mind did not run to school work and because my disposition was restless, my mother allowed me to work at odd jobs for pay instead of compelling me to attend school. This cut down my actual school days to less than six months. It was, to say the least, a dangerous experiment, and one to be undertaken only by a mother who knew her child better than any other person could. I do not by any means advise other mothers to adopt such a course.

In those days apprenticeship was quite common. It was not thought to be a disgrace for a boy to be "bound out" until he was twenty-one, especially if he was to be learning a trade. Father took a notion he would bind me out to a Mr. Arthens, the mill owner at Lockland, who was childless, and one day he took me with him to talk it over. When asked, finally, how I should like the change, I promptly replied that it would be all right if Mrs. Arthens would "do up my sore toes," whereupon there was such an outburst of merriment that I never forgot it. We must remember that boys in those days did not wear shoes in summer, and quite often not in winter either. But mother put an end to the whole matter by saying that the family must not be divided, and it was not.

Our pioneer home was full of love and helpfulness. My mother expected each child to work as well as to play. We were trained to take our part at home. The labor was light, to be sure, but it was service, and it brought happiness into our lives. For, after all, that home is happiest where every one helps.

Our move to Indiana was a very important event in my boyhood days. This move was made during the autumn of 1839, when I was nine years old. I vividly remember the trip, for I walked every step of the way from Lockland, Ohio, to Attica, Indiana, about two hundred miles.

There was no room in the heavily laden wagon for me or for my brother Oliver, aged eleven. It was piled so high with household goods that little space was left even for mother and the two babies, one yet in arms. But we lads did not mind riding on "Shank's ponies."

The horses walked so briskly that we had to stick to business to keep up with them. We did find time, though, to throw a few stones at the frisky squirrels, or to kill a garter snake, or to

gather some flowers for mother and the little ones, or to watch the redheaded woodpeckers hammering at the trees. The journey was full of interest for two lively boys.

Our appearance was what might well be called primitive, for we went barefooted and wore "tow pants" and checkered "linsey-woolsey" shirts, with a strip of cloth for "galluses," as suspenders were at that time called. Little did we think or care about appearance, bent as we were on having a good time—and that we surely had.

One dreary stretch of swamp that kept us on the corduroy road behind the jolting wagon I remember well; this was near Crawfordsville, Indiana. It is now gone, the corduroy and the timber as well. In their places great barns and comfortable houses dot the landscape as far as the eye can reach.

One habit that we boys acquired on that trip stuck to us all our lives, until the brother was lost at sea. When we followed behind the wagon, as we did part of the time, each took the name of the horse on his side of the road. I was "Tip," on the off side; while brother was "Top," on the near side. Tip and Top, a span of big, fat, gray horses that would run away "at the drop of the hat," were something to be proud of. This habit of Oliver's walking on the near side and my walking on the off continued for years and through many a mile of travel.

Chapter 2

BOYHOOD DAYS IN OLD INDIANA

WHEN we reached Indiana we settled down on a rented farm. Times were hard with us, and for a season all the members of the household were called upon to contribute their mite. I drove four yoke of oxen for twenty-five cents a day, and during part of the time boarded at home at that. This was on the Wabash, where oak grubs grew, my father often said, "as thick as hair on a dog's back;" but they were really not so thick as that.

We used to force the big plowshare through and cut grubs as big as my wrist. When we saw a patch of them ahead, I would halloo and shout at the poor oxen and lay on the whip; but father wouldn't let me swear at them. Let me say here that I later discontinued this foolish fashion of driving, and always talked to my oxen in a conversational tone and used the whip sparingly.

That reminds me of an experience I had later, in the summer when I was nineteen. Uncle John Kinworthy—a good soul he was, and an ardent Quaker—lived neighbor to us in Bridgeport, Indiana. One day I went to his house with three yoke of oxen to haul into place a heavy beam for a cider-press. The oxen had to be driven through the front dooryard in full sight and hearing of Uncle John's wife and three buxom Quaker girls, who either stood in the door or poked their heads out of the window.

The cattle would not go through the front yard past those girls. They kept doubling back, first on one side and then on the other. Uncle Johnny, noticing that I did not swear at the cattle, and attributing the absence of oaths to the presence of ladies, or maybe thinking, like a good many others, that oxen could not be driven without swearing at them, sought an opportunity, when the mistress of the house could not hear him,

to say in a low tone, "If thee can do any better, thee had better let out the word."

My father, though a miller by trade, early taught me some valuable lessons about farming that I never forgot. We—I say "we" advisedly, as father continued to work in the mill and left me in charge of the farm—soon brought the run-down farm to the point where it produced twenty-three bushels of wheat to the acre instead of ten, by the rotation of corn and clover and then wheat. But there was no money in farming at the prices then prevailing, and the land for which father paid ten dollars an acre would not yield a rental equal to the interest on the money. The same land has recently sold for six hundred dollars an acre.

For a time I worked in the *Journal* printing office for S. V. B. Noel, who published a Free Soil paper. A part of my duty was to deliver the papers to subscribers. They treated me civilly, but when I was caught in the streets of Indianapolis with the Free Soil papers in my hand I was sure of abuse from some one, and a number of times narrowly escaped personal violence from the pro-slavery people.

In the office I was known as the "devil," a term that annoyed me not a little. I worked with Wood, the pressman, as a roller boy, and in the same room was a power press, the power being a stalwart negro who turned a crank. Wood and I used to race with the power press, and then I would fly the sheets,—that is, take them off, when printed, with one hand and roll the type with the other. This so pleased Noel that he advanced my wages to a dollar and a half a week.

One of the subscribers to whom I delivered that anti-slavery paper was Henry Ward Beecher, then pastor of the Congregational Church that faced the Governor's Circle. At that time he had not attained the fame that came to him later in life. I became attached to him because of his kind manner and the gentle words he always found time to give me.

One episode of my life at this time I remember because I thought my parents were in the wrong. Vocal music was taught in singing school, which was conducted almost as regularly as were the day schools. I was passionately fond of music. Before the change of my voice came I had a fine alto voice and was a leader in my part of the class. This fact coming to the notice of

the trustees of Beecher's church, an effort was made to have me join the choir. Mother first objected, because my clothes were not good enough. Then an offer was made to clothe me suitably and pay me something besides. And now father objected, because he did not want me to listen to preaching of a sect other than that to which he belonged. The incident set me to thinking, and finally drove me, young as I was, into a more liberal faith, though I dared not openly espouse it.

Another incident that occurred while I was working in the printing office I have remembered vividly all these years. During the campaign of 1844, the Whigs held a gathering on the Tippecanoe battle ground. It could hardly be called a convention; a better name for it would be a political camp meeting. The people came in wagons, on horseback, afoot—any way to get there—and camped, just as people used to do at religious camp meetings.

The journeymen printers of the *Journal* office planned to go in a covered wagon, and they offered to make a place for the "devil" if his parents would let him go along. This was speedily arranged with mother, who always took charge of such matters. When the proposition came to Noel's ears, he asked the men to print me some campaign songs. This they did with a will, Wood running them off the press after the day's work while I rolled the type for him.

My, wasn't I the proudest boy that ever walked the earth! Visions of a pocketful of money haunted me almost day and night until we arrived on the battle field. But lo and behold, nobody would pay any attention to me! Bands were playing here and there; glee clubs would sing and march, first on one side of the ground and then on the other; processions were parading and crowds surging, making it necessary to look out lest one be run over. Although the rain would pour down in torrents, the marching and countermarching went on all the same and continued for a week.

An elderly journeyman printer named May, who in a way stood sponsor for our party, told me that if I would get up on the fence and sing the songs, the people would buy them. Sure enough, when I stood up and sang the crowds came, and I sold every copy I had. I went home with eleven dollars in my pocket, the richest boy on earth.

In the year 1845 a letter came from Grandfather Baker in Ohio to my mother, saying that he would give her a thousand dollars with which to buy a farm. The burning question with my father and mother was how to get the money out from Ohio to Indiana. They actually went in a covered wagon to Ohio for it and hauled it home, all silver, in a box. This silver was nearly all foreign coin. Prior to that time but a few million dollars had been coined by the United States Government.

Grandfather Baker had accumulated his money by marketing small things in Cincinnati, twenty-five miles distant. I have heard my mother tell of going to market on horseback with grandfather many times, carrying eggs, butter, and even live chickens on the horse she rode. Grandfather would not go into debt, so he lived on his farm a long time without a wagon. He finally became so wealthy that he was reputed to have a barrel of money—silver, of course. Out of this store came the thousand dollars that he gave mother. It took nearly a whole day to count the money. At least one of nearly every coin from every nation on earth seemed to be there, and the "tables" had to be consulted in computing the value.

I was working on the *Journal* at the time when the farm was bought, but it seemed that I was not cut out for a printer. My inclinations ran more to open-air life, so father placed me on the farm as soon as the purchase was made and left me in full charge of the work there, while he gave his time to milling. Be it said that I early turned my attention to the girls as well as to the farm and married young, before I reached the age of twenty-one. This truly was a fortunate venture, for my wife and I lived happily together for fifty-eight years.

Chapter 3

LEAVING THE HOME NEST FOR IOWA

IN the early '50's there lived near Indianapolis two young people. Their fathers were old-time farmers, keeping no "hired man" and buying very little "store goods." The girl could spin and weave, make delicious butter, knit soft, well-shaped socks, and cook as good a meal as any other country girl around. She was, withal, as buxom a lass as ever grew in Indiana. The young man was a little uncouth in appearance, round-faced, rather stout in build—almost fat. He loved to hunt possums and coons in the woods round about. He was a little boisterous, always restless, and not especially polished in manners. Yet he had at least one redeeming trait of character: he loved to work and was known to be as industrious a lad as any in the neighborhood.

These two young people grew up to the age of manhood and womanhood, knowing but little of the world outside their home sphere. Who can say that they were not as happy as if they had seen the whole world? Had they not experienced the joys of the sugar camp while "stirring off" the lively, creeping maple sugar? Both had been thumped upon the bare head by the falling hickory nuts in windy weather; had hunted the black walnuts half hidden in the leaves; had scraped the ground for the elusive beechnuts. They had ventured to apple parings together when not yet out of their 'teens.

"I'm going to be a farmer when I get married," the lad quite abruptly said to the lass one day, without any previous conversation to lead up to the statement.

His companion showed by her confusion that she had not mistaken what was in his mind. After a while she remarked, "Yes, I want to be a farmer too. But I want to be a farmer on our own land."

Two bargains were confirmed then and there when the lad said, "We will go West and not live on pap's farm," and she responded, "Nor in the old cabin, nor any cabin unless it's our own."

So the resolution was made that they would go to Iowa, get some land, and grow up with the country.

About the first week of October, in 1851, a covered wagon drew up in front of Thomas Sumner's house, then but four miles out from Indianapolis on the National Road. It was ready to be loaded for the start.

Eliza Jane, Thomas Sumner's second daughter, the lass already described, was now the wife of the young man mentioned (the author). She also was ready for the journey. She had prepared supplies enough to last all the way,—cake and butter and pumpkin pies, jellies and the like, with plenty of substantials besides. The two young people had plenty of blankets, a good-sized Dutch oven, an extra pair of shoes apiece, cloth for two dresses for the wife, and an extra pair of trousers for the husband.

Tears could not be restrained as the loading progressed and the realization faced the parents of both that the young people were about to leave them.

"Why, mother, we are only going to Iowa, you know, where we can get a home that shall be our own. It's not so far away—only about five hundred miles."

"Yes, I know, but suppose you get sick in that uninhabited country; who will take care of you?"

Notwithstanding this motherly solicitude, the young people could not fail to know that there was a secret feeling of approval in the good woman's breast. After a few miles' travel the reluctant final parting came. We could not then know that this loved parent would lay down her life a few years later in a heroic attempt to follow the wanderers to Oregon. She rests in an unknown and unmarked grave in the Platte valley.

What shall I say of that October drive from the home near Indianapolis to Eddyville, Iowa, in the delightful atmosphere of Indian summer? It was an atmosphere of hope and content. We had the wide world before us; we had good health; and above all we had each other.

At this time but one railroad entered Indianapolis—it would be called a tramway now—from Madison on the Ohio River. When we cut loose from that embryo city we left railroads behind us, except where rails were laid crosswise in the wagon track to keep the wagon out of the mud. No matter if the road was rough—we could go a little slower, and shouldn't we have a better appetite for supper because of the jolting, and sleep the sounder? Everything in the world looked bright.

The great Mississippi was crossed at Burlington. After a few days of further driving, we arrived at Eddyville, in Iowa. Though we did not realize it at the time, this was destined to be only a place to winter, a way station on our route to Oregon.

My first introduction to an Iowa winter was in a surveyor's camp on the western borders of the state. This was a little north of Kanesville, now Council Bluffs. I began as cook for the camp, but very soon changed this position for that of flagman.

If there are any settlers now left of the Iowa of that day, they will remember that the winter was bitter cold. On the way back from the surveying party to Eddyville, just before Christmas, I encountered one of the bitterest of those bitter days.

A companion named Vance rested with me overnight in a cabin. We had scant food for ourselves or for the mare we led. It was thirty-five miles to the next cabin; we must reach that place or lie out in the snow. So a very early start was made before daybreak, while the wind lay. The good woman of the cabin baked us some biscuits for a noon lunch, but they were frozen solid in our pockets before we had been out two hours. The wind rose with the sun, and with the sun two bright sun dogs—a beautiful sight to behold, but arising from conditions intolerable to bear. Vance came near freezing to death, and would have done so had I not succeeded in arousing him to anger and getting him off the mare.

I vowed then and there that I did not like the Iowa climate, and the Oregon fever that had already seized me was heightened. The settlement of the northern boundary by treaty in 1846 had ended the dispute between the United States and Great Britain for ownership of the region north of the Columbia. As a consequence, American settlers were beginning to cross the Columbia in numbers, and stories were coming back of the wonderful climate, the rich soil, and the wealth of

lumber. The Oregon Country of that day included the present states of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, and parts of Montana and Wyoming.

It was a special consideration for us that if we went to Oregon the government would give us three hundred and twenty acres of land, whereas in Iowa we should have to purchase it. The price would be low, to be sure, but the land must be bought and paid for on the spot. There were no preëmption laws or beneficial homestead laws in force then, nor did they come until many years later.

But what about going to Oregon when springtime came? An event was pending that rendered a positive decision impossible for the moment. It was not until the first week of April, 1852, when our first-born baby boy was a month old, that we could say we were going to Oregon in 1852. It would be a long, hard journey for such a little fellow, but as it turned out, he stood it like a young hero.

Chapter 4

TAKING THE TRAIL FOR OREGON

WHEN we drove out of Eddyville, headed for the Oregon Country, our train consisted of but one wagon, two yoke of four-year old steers, and one yoke of cows. We also had one extra cow. This cow was the only animal we lost on the whole journey; she strayed away in the river bottom before we crossed the Missouri.

Now as to the members of our little party. William Buck, who had joined us as partner for the expedition, was a man six years my senior. He had had some experience on the Plains, and he knew what outfit was needed; but he had little knowledge in regard to a team of cattle. He was an impulsive man, and to some extent excitable; yet withal a man of excellent judgment and honest as God makes men. No lazy bones occupied a place in Buck's body. He was scrupulously neat and cleanly in all his ways; courteous to every one; always in good humor and always looking upon the bright side of things. A better trail mate could not have been found.

Buck's skill in camp work and his lack of ability to handle the team naturally settled the division of the work between us. It was he who selected the outfit to go into the wagon, while I fitted up the wagon and bought the team. We had butter packed in the center of the flour, which was in double sacks; eggs packed in corn meal or flour, enough to last us nearly five hundred miles; fruit in abundance, and dried pumpkins; a little jerked beef, not too salt. Last though not least, there was a demijohn of brandy "for medicinal purposes only," as Buck said, with a merry twinkle of the eye.

The little wife had prepared the homemade yeast cake which she knew so well how to make and dry, and we had light bread

to eat all the way across. We baked the bread in a tin reflector instead of the heavy Dutch oven so much in use on the Plains.

The butter in part melted and mingled with the flour, yet it did not matter much, as the "shortcake" that resulted made us almost glad the mishap had occurred. Besides, did we not have plenty of fresh butter, from the milk of our own cows, churned every day in the can by the jostling of the wagon? Then the buttermilk! What a luxury! I shall never, as long as I live, forget the shortcake and corn bread, the puddings and pumpkin pies, and above all the buttermilk.

As we gradually crept out on the Plains and saw the sickness due to improper food, or in some cases to its improper preparation, it was borne in upon me how blessed I was, with such a trail partner as Buck and such a life partner as my wife. Some trains were without fruit, and most of them depended upon saleratus for raising their bread. Many had only fat bacon for meat until the buffalo supplied a change; and no doubt much of the sickness attributed to the cholera was caused by bad diet.

I am willing to claim credit to myself for the team, every hoof of which reached the Coast in safety. Four steers and two cows were sufficient for our light wagon and the light outfit, not a pound of which but was useful (except the brandy) and necessary for our comfort. I had chosen steers that had never been under the yoke, though plenty of broken-in oxen could have been had, generally of that class that had been broken in spirit as well as to the yoke.

The ox has had much to do with the settlement of the country. The pioneers could take care of an ox team in a new settlement so much cheaper than a horse team that this fact alone would have been conclusive; but aside from this, oxen were better for the work in the clearings or for breaking up the vast stretches of wild prairie sod. We used to work four or five yoke to the plow, and when dark came we unhitched and turned them on the unbroken sod to pasture for the night.

I have often been asked how old an ox will live to be. I never knew of a yoke over fourteen years old, but I once heard of one that lived to be twenty-four.

On the Plains, oxen were better than horses for getting their feed and fording streams. There was another advantage, and a

very important one, to oxen: the Indians could not run them off at night as easily as they could horses.

The first day's drive out from Eddyville was a short one. When we got to plodding along over the Plains, we made from fifteen to twenty miles a day. That was counted a good day's drive, without unusual accidents or delays.

As I now remember, this was the only day on the entire trip when the cattle were allowed to stand in the yoke at noontime, while the owners lunched and rested. When it was near nightfall we made our first camp. Buck excitedly insisted that we must not unyoke the cattle.

"What shall we do?" I asked. "They can't live in the yoke always."

"Yes, but if you unyoke here you will never catch them again," he said.

One word brought on another until we were almost in a dispute, when a stranger, Thomas McAuley, who was camped near by, stepped in. He said his own cattle were gentle; there were three men of his party, and they would help us yoke up in the morning. I gratefully accepted his offer and unyoked, and we had no trouble in starting off the next morning. After that, never a word with the least semblance of contention to it passed between Buck and me.

Scanning McAuley's outfit in the morning, I was quite troubled to start out with him. His teams, principally cows, were light, and they were thin in flesh; his wagons were apparently light and as frail as the teams. But I soon found that his outfit, like ours, carried no extra weight, and he knew how to care for a team. He was, besides, an obliging neighbor, which was fully demonstrated on many trying occasions, as we traveled in company for more than a thousand miles, until his road to California parted from ours at the big bend of the Bear River.

Of the trip through Iowa little remains to be said further than that the grass was thin and washy, the roads muddy and slippery, and the weather execrable, although May had been ushered in long before we reached the little Mormon town of Kanesville (now Council Bluffs), a few miles above the place where we were to cross the Missouri River. Here my brother Oliver joined us, having come from Indianapolis with old-time

comrades and friends. Now, with the McAuleys and Oliver's party, we mustered a train of five wagons.

It was here at Kanesville that the last purchases were made, the last letter sent back to anxious friends. Once across the Missouri and headed westward, we should have to cross the Rocky Mountains to find a town again.

We had now come to the beginning of the second stage of our long journey. We had reached the Missouri River. From the western bank of the river we should strike out across the Plains, through what is now Nebraska and Wyoming, to the crest of the continent. We should follow the ox-team trail along the north bank of the Platte, and then up the north fork of the Platte to the mountains. But first we must get across the Missouri.

"What on earth is that?" exclaimed one of the women, as we approached the landing for the ferry which crossed the river to a point a few miles below where Omaha now stands.

"It looks for all the world like a big white flatiron," answered another.

We drivers had little time for looking and for making comparisons. All our attention had to be given to our teams, for as we neared the landing we found the roads terribly cut up on account of the concentrated travel.

It was indeed a sight long to be remembered. The "white flatiron" proved to be wagons with their tongues pointing to the landing. A center train with other parallel trains extended back in the rear, gradually covering a wider range the farther back from the river it went. Several hundred wagons were thus closely interlocked, completely blocking the approach to the landing.

All about were camps of every kind, some without any covering at all, others with comfortable tents. Nearly everybody appeared to be intent on merrymaking, and the fiddlers and dancers were busy; but here and there were small groups engaged in devotional services. These camps contained the outfits, in great part, of the wagons in line; some of them had been there for two weeks with still no prospect of securing an early crossing. Two scows only were engaged in crossing the wagons and teams.

The muddy waters of the Missouri had already swallowed up two victims. On the first day we were there, I saw a third victim go under the drift of a small island within sight of his shrieking wife. The stock had rushed to one side of the boat, submerging the gunwale, and had precipitated the whole load into the dangerous river. One yoke of oxen that had reached the farther shore deliberately reëntered the river with a heavy yoke on, and swam to the Iowa side; there they were finally saved by the helping hands of the assembled emigrants.

"What shall we do?" was the question passed around in our party, without answer. Tom McAuley was not yet looked upon as a leader, as was the case later.

"Build a boat," said his sister Margaret, a most determined maiden lady, the oldest of the party and as resolute and brave as the bravest.

But of what should we build it? While a search for material was being made, one of our party, who had got across the river in search of timber, discovered a scow, almost completely buried, on the sandpit opposite the landing. The report seemed too good to be true.

The next thing to do was to find the owner. We discovered him eleven miles down the river.

"Yes, if you will agree to deliver the boat safely to me after crossing your five wagons and teams, you may have it," said he.

The bargain was closed then and there. My, but that night didn't we make the sand fly from the boat! By morning we could begin to see the end of the job. Then, while busy hands began to cut a landing on the perpendicular sandy bank of the Iowa side, others were preparing sweeps. All was bustle and stir.

Meanwhile it had become noised around that another boat would be put on to ferry people over, and we were besieged with applications from detained emigrants. Finally, the word coming to the ears of the ferrymen, they were foolish enough to undertake to prevent us from crossing without their help. A writ of replevin or some other process was issued,—I never knew exactly what,—directing the sheriff to take possession of the boat when it landed. This he attempted to do.

I never before or since attempted to resist an officer of the law; but when that sheriff put in an appearance and we realized what his coming meant, there wasn't a man in our party that did not run to the nearby camp for his gun. It is needless to add that we did not need to use the guns. As if by magic a hundred other guns came in sight. The sheriff withdrew, and the crossing went on peaceably till all our wagons were safely landed.

We had still another danger to face. We learned that an attempt would be made to take the boat from us, the action being not against us, but against the owner. Thanks to the adroit management of McAuley and my brother Oliver, we were able to fulfill our engagement to deliver the boat safely to the owner.

We were now across the river, and it might almost be said that we had left the United States. When we set foot upon the right bank of the Missouri River we were outside the pale of law. We were within the Indian country, where no organized civil government existed.

Some people and some writers have assumed that on the Plains each man was "a law unto himself" and free to do his own will,—dependent, of course, upon his physical ability to enforce it. Nothing could be farther from the facts than this assumption, as evil-doers soon found out to their discomfort.

It is true that no general organization for law and order was effected on the western side of the river. But the American instinct for fair play and a hearing for everybody prevailed, so that while there was no mob law, the law of self-preservation asserted itself, and the counsels of the level-headed older men prevailed. When an occasion called for action, a "high court" was convened, and woe betide the man that would undertake to defy its mandates after its deliberations were made public!

An incident that occurred in what is now Wyoming, well up on the Sweetwater River, will illustrate the spirit of determination of the sturdy men of the Plains. A murder had been committed, and it was clear that the motive was robbery. The suspected man and his family were traveling along with the moving column. Men who had volunteered to search for the missing man finally found evidence proving the guilt of the person suspected. A council of twelve men was called, and it

deliberated until the second day, meanwhile holding the murderer safely.

What were they to do? Here were a wife and four little children depending upon this man for their lives. What would become of his family if justice was meted out to him? Soon there developed an undercurrent of opinion that it was probably better to waive punishment than to endanger the lives of the family; but the council would not be swerved from its resolution. At sundown of the third day the criminal was hanged in the presence of the whole camp. This was not done until ample provision had been made to insure the safety of the family by providing a driver to finish the journey. I came so near to seeing the hanging that I did see the ends of the wagon tongues in the air and the rope dangling therefrom.

From necessity, murder was punishable with death. The penalty for stealing was whipping, which, when inflicted by one of those long ox lashes in the hands of an expert, would bring the blood from the victim's back at every stroke. Minor offenses, or differences generally, were arbitrated. Each party would abide by the decision as if it had come from a court of law. Lawlessness was not common on the Plains. It was less common, indeed, than in the communities from which the great body of the emigrants had been drawn, for punishment was swift and certain.

The greater body of the emigrants formed themselves into large companies and elected captains. These combinations soon began to dissolve and re-form, only to dissolve again, with a steady accompaniment of contentions. I would not enter into any organized company, but neither could I travel alone. By tacit agreement our party and the McAuleys travelled together, the outfit consisting of four wagons and thirteen persons—nine men, three women, and the baby. Yet although we kept apart as a separate unit, we were all the while in one great train, never out of sight and hearing of others. In fact, at times the road would be so full of wagons that all could not travel in one track, and this fact accounts for the double roadbeds seen in so many places on the trail.

Chapter 5

THE WESTWARD RUSH

WE crossed the Missouri on the seventeenth and eighteenth of May. The next day we made a short drive, and camped within hearing of the shrill steamboat whistle that resounded far over the prairie.

The whistle announced the arrival of a steamer. This meant that a dozen or more wagons could be carried across the river at a time, and that a dozen or more trips could be made during the day, with as many more at night. Very soon we were overtaken by this throng of wagons. They gave us some troubles, and much discomfort.

The rush for the West was then at its height. The plan of action was to push ahead and make as big a day's drive as possible; hence it is not to be wondered at that nearly all the thousand wagons that crossed the river after we did soon passed us.

"Now, fellers, jist let 'em rush on. If we keep cool, we'll overcatch 'em afore long," said McAuley.

And we did. We passed many a team, broken down as a result of those first few days of rush. People often brought these and other ills upon themselves by their own indiscretion.

The traveling had not progressed far until there came a general outcry against the heavy loads and unnecessary articles. Soon we began to see abandoned property. First it might be a table or a cupboard, or perhaps a bedstead or a cast-iron cookstove. Then feather beds, blankets, quilts, and pillows were seen. Very soon, here and there would be an abandoned wagon; then provisions, stacks of flour and bacon being the most abundant—all left as common property.

It was a case of help yourself if you would; no one would interfere. In some places such a sign was posted,—"Help

yourself." Hundreds of wagons were left and hundreds of tons of goods. People seemed to vie with each other in giving away their property. There was no chance to sell, and they disliked to destroy their goods.

Long after the end of the mania for getting rid of goods to lighten loads, the abandonment of wagons continued, as the teams became weaker and the ravages of cholera among the emigrants began to tell. It was then that many lost their heads and ruined their teams by furious driving, by lack of care, and by abuse. There came a veritable stampede—a strife for possession of the road, to see who should get ahead. It was against the rule to attempt to pass a team ahead; a wagon that had withdrawn from the line and stopped beside the trail could get into the line again, but on the march it could not cut ahead of the wagon in front of it. Yet now whole trains would strive, often with bad blood, for the mastery of the trail, one attempting to pass the other. Frequently there were drivers on both sides of the team to urge the poor, suffering brutes forward.

We were on the trail along the north side of the Platte River. The cholera epidemic struck our moving column where the throng from the south side of the Platte began crossing. This, as I recollect, was near where the city of Kearney now stands, about two hundred miles west of the Missouri River.

"What shall we do?" passed from one to another in our little family council.

"Now, fellers," said McAuley, "don't lose your heads, but do jist as you've been doing. You gals, jist make your bread as light as ever, and we'll take river water the same as ever, even if it is most as thick as mud, and boil it."

We had all along refused to dig little wells near the banks of the Platte, as many others did; for we had soon learned that the water obtained was strongly charged with alkali, while the river water was comparatively pure, except for the sediment, so fine as seemingly to be held in solution.

"Keep cool," McAuley continued. "Maybe we'll have to lay down, and maybe not. Anyway, it's no use frettin'. What's to be will be, 'specially if we but help things along."

This homely yet wise counsel fell upon willing ears, as most of us were already of the same mind. We did just as we had been doing, and all but one of our party escaped unharmed.

We had then been in the buffalo country for several days. Some of the young men, keen for hunting, had made themselves sick by getting overheated and drinking impure water. Such was the experience of my brother Oliver. Being of an adventurous spirit, he could not restrain his ardor, gave chase to the buffaloes, and fell sick almost to death.

This occurred just at the time when we encountered the cholera panic. It must be the cholera that had taken hold of him, his companions argued. Some of his party could not delay.

"It is certain death," I said, "to take him along in that condition."

They admitted this to be true.

"Divide the outfit, then," it was suggested.

Two of Oliver's companions, the Davenport brothers, would not leave him; so their portion of the outfit was set aside with his. This gave the three a wagon and a team.

Turning to Buck, I said, "I can't ask you to stay with me."

The answer came back as quick as a flash, "I'm going to stay with you without asking."

And he did, too, though my brother was almost a total stranger to him.

We nursed the sick man for four days amidst scenes of death and excitement such as I hope never again to see. On the fifth day we were able to proceed and to take the convalescent man with us.

The experience of our camp was the experience of hundreds of others: there were countless incidents of friends parting; of desertion; of noble sacrifice; of the revelation of the best and the worst in man.

In a diary of one of these pioneers, I find the following: "Found a family consisting of husband, wife, and four small children, whose cattle we supposed had given out and died. They were here all alone, and no wagon or cattle in sight." They had been thrown out by the owner of a wagon and left on the road to die.

From a nearby page of the same diary, I read: "Here we met Mr. Lot Whitcom, direct from Oregon. Told me a great deal about Oregon. He has provisions, but none to sell; but gives to all he finds in want, and who are unable to buy."

Chapter 6

THE PIONEER ARMY OF THE PLAINS

DURING the ox-team days a mighty army of pioneers went West. In the year that we crossed (1852), when the migration was at its height, this army made an unbroken column fully five hundred miles long. We knew by the inscribed dates found on Independence Rock and elsewhere that there were wagons three hundred miles ahead of us, and the throng continued crossing the river for more than a month after we had crossed it.

How many people this army comprised cannot be known; the roll was never called. History has no record of a greater number of emigrants ever making so long a journey as did these pioneers. There must have been three hundred and fifty thousand in the years of the great rush overland, from 1843 to 1857. Careful estimates of the total migration westward from 1843 to 1869, when the first railroad across the continent was completed, make the number nearly half a million.

The animals driven over the Plains during these years were legion. Besides those that labored under the yoke, in harness, and under saddle, there was a vast herd of loose stock. A conservative estimate would be not less than six animals to the wagon, and surely there were three loose animals to each one in the teams. Sixteen hundred wagons passed us while we waited for Oliver to recover. With these teams must have been nearly ten thousand beasts of burden and thirty thousand head of loose stock.

Is it any wonder that the old trail was worn so deep that even now in places it looks like a great canal? At one point near Split Rock, Wyoming, I found the road cut so deep in the solid sandstone that the kingbolt of my wagon dragged on the high center.

The pioneer army was a moving mass of human beings and dumb brutes, at times mixed in inextricable confusion, a hundred feet wide or more. Sometimes two columns of wagons, traveling on parallel lines and near each other, would serve as a barrier to prevent loose stock from crossing; but usually there would be a confused mass of cows, young cattle, horses, and men afoot moving along the outskirts. Here and there would be the drivers of loose stock, some on foot and some on horseback: a young girl, maybe, riding astride and with a younger child behind her, going here and there after an intractable cow, while the mother could be seen in the confusion lending a helping hand. As in a thronged city street, no one seemed to look to the right or to the left, or to pay much attention, if any, to others, all being bent only on accomplishing the task in hand.

The dust was intolerable. In calm weather it would rise so thick at times that the lead team of oxen could not be seen from the wagon. Like a London fog, it seemed thick enough to cut. Then again, the steady flow of wind through the South Pass would hurl the dust and sand like fine hail, sometimes with force enough to sting the face and hands.

Sometimes we had trying storms that would wet us to the skin in no time. One such I remember well, being caught in it while out on watch. The cattle traveled so fast that it was difficult to keep up with them. I could do nothing but follow, as it would have been impossible to turn them. I have always thought of this storm as a cloudburst. Anyhow, in an incredibly short time there was not a dry thread left on me. My boots were as full of water as if I had been wading over boot-top depth, and the water ran through my hat as though it were a sieve. I was almost blinded in the fury of the wind and water. Many tents were leveled by this storm. One of our neighboring trains suffered great loss by the sheets of water on the ground floating away camp equipage, ox yokes, and all loose articles; and they narrowly escaped having a wagon engulfed in the raging torrent that came so unexpectedly upon them.

Fording a river was usually tiresome, and sometimes dangerous. I remember fording the Loup fork of the Platte with a large number of wagons fastened together with ropes or chains, so that if a wagon got into trouble the teams in front

would help to pull it out. The quicksand would cease to sustain the wheels so suddenly that the wagon would drop a few inches with a jolt, and up again the wheel would come as new sand was struck; then down again it would go, up and down, precisely as if the wagons were passing over a rough corduroy road that "nearly jolted the life out of us," as the women folks said after it was over, and no wonder, for the river at this point was half a mile wide.

Many of the pioneers crossed rivers in their wagon boxes and very few lost their lives in doing so. The difference between one of these prairie-schooner wagon boxes and that of a scow-shaped, flat-bottomed boat is that the wagon box has the ribs on the outside, while in a boat they are on the inside.

The number of casualties in that army of emigrants I hesitate to guess at. Shall we say that ten per cent fell on the way? Many old plainsmen would think that estimate too low; yet ten per cent would give us five thousand lives as one year's toll paid for the peopling of the Oregon Country. Mrs. Cecilia McMillen Adams, late of Hillsboro, Oregon, kept a painstaking diary when she crossed the Plains in 1852. She counted the graves passed and noted down the number. In this diary, published in full by the Oregon Pioneer Association, I find the following entries:

June 14. Passed seven new-made graves.
June 16. Passed eleven new graves.
June 17. Passed six new graves.
June 18. We have passed twenty-one new graves today.
June 19. Passed thirteen graves today.
June 20. Passed ten graves.
June 21. No report.
June 22. Passed seven graves. If we should go by the camping grounds, we should see five times as many graves as we do.

This report of Mrs. Adams's, coupled with the facts that a parallel column from which we have no report was traveling up the south side of the river, and that the outbreak of cholera had taken place originally in this column coming from the southeast, fully confirms the estimate of five thousand deaths

on the Plains in 1852. It is probably under rather than over the actual number.

To the emigrants the fact that all the graves were new-made brought an added touch of sadness. The graves of previous years had disappeared, leveled by the storms of wind or rain, by the hoofs of the stock, or possibly by ravages of the hungry wolf. Many believed that the Indians had robbed the graves for the clothing on the bodies. Whatever the cause, all, or nearly all, graves of previous years were lost, and we knew that the last resting places of those that we might leave behind would also be lost by the next year.

One of the incidents that made a profound impression upon the minds of all was the meeting with eleven wagons returning, and not a man left in the entire train. All the men had died and had been buried on the way, and the women and children were returning to their homes alone from a point well up on the Platte, below Fort Laramie. The difficulties of the return trip were multiplied on account of the throng moving westward. How those women succeeded in their attempt, or what became of them, we never knew.

Chapter 7

INDIANS AND BUFFALOES ON THE PLAINS

OUR trail led straight across the Indian lands most of the way. The redmen naturally resented this intrusion into their territory; but they did not at this time fight against it. Their attitude was rather one of expecting pay for the privilege of using their land, their grass, and their game.

As soon as a part of our outfits were landed on the right bank of the Missouri River, our trouble with the Indians began, not in open hostilities, but in robbery under the guise of beggary. The word had been passed around in our little party that not a cent's worth of provisions would we give up to the Indians. We believed this policy to be our only safeguard from spoliation, and in that we were right.

Our women folks had been taken over the river with the first wagon and had gone on to a convenient camp site nearby. The first show of weapons came from that side of our little community, when some of the bolder Pawnees attempted to pilfer around the wagons. No blood was shed, however, and indeed there was none shed by any of our party during the entire journey.

Soon after we had left the Missouri River we came to a small bridge over a washout across the road, evidently constructed by some train just ahead of us. The Indians had taken possession and were demanding pay for crossing. Some parties ahead of us had paid, while others were hesitating; but with a few there was a determined resolution not to pay. When our party came up it remained for that fearless man, McAuley, to clear the way in short order, though the Indians were there in considerable numbers.

"You fellers come right on," said McAuley. "I'm goin' across that bridge if I have to run right over that Injen settin' there."

And he did almost run over the Indian, who at the last moment got out of the way of his team. Other teams followed in such quick succession and with such a show of guns that the Indians withdrew and left the road unobstructed.

Once I came very near to getting into serious trouble with three Indians on horseback. We had hauled my wagon away from the road to get water, I think, and had become separated from the passing throng. We were almost, but not quite, out of sight of any wagons or camps.

The Indians came up ostensibly to beg, but really to rob. They began first to solicit, and afterwards to threaten. I started to drive on, not thinking they would use actual violence, as there were other wagons certainly within a half mile. I thought they were merely trying to frighten me into giving up at least a part of my outfit. Finally one of the Indians whipped out his knife and cut loose the cow that I was leading behind the wagon.

I did not have to ask for my gun. My wife, who had been watching from within the wagon, saw that the time had come to fight and handed my rifle to me from under the cover. Before the savages had time to do anything further they saw the gun. They were near enough to make it certain that one shot would take deadly effect; but instead of shooting one Indian, I trained the gun so that I might quickly choose among the three. In an instant each Indian had dropped to the side of his horse and was speeding away in great haste. The old saying that "almost any one will fight when cornered" was exemplified in this incident; but I did not want any more such experiences, and consequently thereafter became more careful not to be separated from the other wagons.

On the whole, we did not have much trouble with the Indians in 1852. The great numbers of the emigrants, coupled with the superiority of their arms, made them comparatively safe. It must be remembered, also, that this was before the treaty-making period, and the Indians of the Plains were not yet incensed against white men in general.

Herds of buffalo were more often seen than bands of Indians. The buffalo trails generally followed the water courses or paralleled them. But sometimes they would lead across the country with scarcely any deviation from a direct course. When on

the road a herd would persistently follow their leader, whether in the wild tumult of a stampede or in leisurely grazing as they traveled.

A story is told, and it is doubtless true, of a chase in the upper regions of the Missouri, where the leaders of the buffalo herd, either voluntarily or by pressure from the mass behind, leaped to their death over a perpendicular bluff a hundred feet high, overlooking the river. The herd followed blindly until not only hundreds but thousands lay struggling at the foot of the bluff. They piled one upon another till the space between the river and the bluff was bridged, and the last of the victims plunged headlong into the river.

Well up on the Platte, but below Fort Laramie, we had the experience of a night stampede that struck terror to the heart of man and beast. It so happened that we had brought our cattle into camp that evening, a thing we did not usually do. We had driven the wagons into a circle, with the tongue of each wagon chained to the hind axletree of the wagon ahead. The cattle were led inside the circle and the tents were pitched outside.

Usually I would be out on the range with the oxen at night, and if I slept at all, snuggled up close to the back of my good ox, Dandy; but that night, with the oxen safe inside the enclosure, I slept in the wagon.

William Buck and my brother Oliver were in a tent near by, sleeping on the ground.

Suddenly there was a sound like an approaching storm. Almost instantly every animal in the corral was on its feet. The alarm was given and all hands turned out, not yet knowing what caused the general commotion. The roar we heard was like that of a heavy railroad train passing at no great distance on a still night. As by instinct all seemed to know suddenly that it was a buffalo stampede. The tents were emptied of their inmates, the weak parts of the corral guarded, the frightened cattle looked after, and every one in the camp was on the alert to watch what was coming.

In the darkness of the night we could see first the forms of the leaders, and then such dense masses that we could not distinguish one buffalo from the other. How long they were in passing we forgot to note; it seemed like an age. When daylight

came the few stragglers yet to be seen fell under the unerring aim of the frontiersman's rifle.

We were lucky, but our neighbors in camp did not escape loss. Some were detained for days, gathering up their scattered stock, while others were unable to find their teams. Some of the animals never were recovered.

When not on the road, the buffalo were shy, difficult to approach, and hard to bag, even with the long-range rifles of the pioneers. But for over six hundred miles along the trail, a goodly supply of fresh meat was obtainable.

Chapter 8

TRAILING THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN LAND

AS the column of wagons passed up the Platte in what is now western Nebraska, there was some relief from the dust. The throng was visibly thinned out; some had pushed on beyond the congested district, while others had lagged behind. The dead, too, had left room upon the road.

When we reached the higher lands of Wyoming, our traveling became still more pleasant. The nights were cooler, and we had clearer, purer water. As we gradually ascended the Sweetwater, life grew more tolerable and discomfort less acute.

We were now nearing the crest of the continent. The climb was so gradual, however, as to be hardly observable. The summit of the Rocky Mountains, through the South Pass, presents a wide, open, undulating country. The Pass offers, therefore, an easy gateway to the West.

Passing Pacific Springs at the summit, we rolled over to Big Sandy Creek. At this point we left the Salt Lake Trail (known also as the Mormon Trail) and took the Sublette Cut-off over to Bear River. This was a shorter trail to the Oregon Country, made by William Sublette, one of the American fur traders of the early days. The earlier emigrants to Oregon went on to Fort Bridger before leaving the Salt Lake route.

The most attractive natural phenomenon encountered on the whole trip was found at the Soda Springs, near Bear River in Idaho. Some of the springs, in fact, are right in the bed of the river. One of them, Steamboat Spring, was spouting at regular intervals as we passed.

Just after leaving Soda Springs our little company of friends separated. The McAuleys and William Buck took the trail to California, while with Oliver and the Davenport brothers we

went northwest to Oregon. Jacob, the younger of the brothers, fell sick and gradually grew worse as the journey grew harder. Shortly after reaching Portland the poor boy died.

Thomas McAuley settled in the Hobart hills in California and became a respected citizen of that state. When last I heard of him he was eighty-eight years old.

William Buck has long since lain down to rest. A few years after we had parted on the big bend of the Bear River, I heard from William in a way that was characteristic of the man. He had been back to "the States," as we then called the eastern part of our country, and returning to California by way of the Isthmus of Panama, he had brought fifty swarms of bees. Three of these swarms he sent up to me in Washington. As far as I know these were the first honey bees in that state. William Buck was a man who was always doing a good turn for his friends.

When Snake River was reached, and in fact even before that, the heat again became oppressive, the dust stifling, and the thirst at times almost maddening. In some places we could see the water of the Snake winding through the lava gorges; but we could not reach it, as the river ran in the inaccessible depths of the canyon. Sickness again became prevalent, and another outbreak of cholera claimed many victims.

There were but few ferries, and none at all in many places where crossings were to be made. Even where there was a ferry, the charges were so high that they were out of reach of most of the emigrants. As for me, all my funds had been absorbed in procuring my outfit at Eddyville, in Iowa. We had not dreamed that there would be use for money on the Plains, where there were neither supplies nor people. But we soon found out our mistake.

The crossing of the Snake River, although late in the journey, gave us the opportunity to mend matters. About thirty miles below Salmon Falls the dilemma confronted us of either crossing the Snake River or having our teams starve on the trip down the river on the south bank. We found that some emigrants had calked two wagon beds and lashed them together, and were using this craft for crossing. But they would not help others across for less than three to five dollars a wagon, the party swimming their own stock.

If others could cross in wagon beds, why couldn't we do likewise? Without more ado all the old clothing that could possibly be spared was assembled, and tar buckets were scraped. Old chisels and broken knives were hunted up, and a boat repairing and calking campaign began. Very soon the wagon box rode placidly, even if not gracefully, on the waters of the Snake River.

My boyhood experience at playing with logs and leaky old skiffs in the waters of White River now served me well; I could row a boat. My first venture across the Snake River was with the wagon gear run over the wagon box, the whole being gradually worked out into deep water. The load was so heavy that a very small margin was left to prevent the water from breaking over the sides, and some water did enter as light ripples on the surface struck the *Mary Jane*—for we had duly named our craft. I got over safely, but after that I took lighter loads, and I really enjoyed the work, with the change from the intolerable dust to the clear atmosphere of the river.

Some people were so infatuated with the idea of floating on the water that they were easily persuaded by an unprincipled trader at the lower crossing to dispose of their teams for a song and to embark in their wagon beds for a voyage down the river. A number of people thus lost everything they had, and some even lost their lives. After terrible hardships, the survivors reached the road again, to become objects of charity. I knew one survivor who was out seven days without food other than a scant supply of berries and vegetable growth and "a few crickets, but not many."

We had no trouble to get the cattle across, although the river was wide. Dandy would do almost anything I asked of him; so, leading him to the water's edge, with a little coaxing I got him into swimming water and guided him across with the wagon bed. The others all followed, having been driven into deep water after the leader. It seems almost incredible how passively obedient cattle will become after long training on such a journey. Indeed, the ox is always patient, and usually quite obedient; but when oxen get heated and thirsty, they become headstrong and reckless, and won't obey. I have known them to take off the road to a water hole, when apparently nothing

could stop them till they had gone so far into the mud and water that it was a hard job for them to get out again.

We had not finished crossing when tempting offers came from others to cross them; but all our party said, "No, we must travel." The rule had been adopted to travel some distance every day that it was possible. "Travel, travel, travel," was the watchword, and nothing could divert us from that resolution. On the third day we were ready to pull out from the river, with the cattle rested by the enforced wait.

Now the question was, what about the lower crossing? Those who had crossed over the river must somehow get back. It was less than a hundred and fifty miles to the place where we must again cross to the south side (the left bank) of the river. I could walk that distance in three days, while it would take our teams ten. Could I go on ahead, procure a wagon box, and start a ferry of my own? The thought brought an affirmative answer at once.

With only food and a small blanket for load, I walked to the lower crossing. It may be ludicrous, but it is true, that the most I remember about that tramp is the jack rabbits. Such swarms, as I traveled down the Boise valley, I had never seen before and I never saw again.

I soon obtained a wagon bed, and all day long for several days I was at work crossing people. I continued at this till our teams came up, and for a few days after that. I left the river with a hundred and ten dollars in my pocket. All but two dollars and seventy-five cents of this was gone before I arrived in Portland.

But we could not delay longer, even to make money. I thought I could see signs of failing strength in my young wife and the baby. Not for mountains of gold would we jeopardize their lives.

All along the way the baby and the little mother had been tenderly cared for. We used to clear away a space in the wagon bed for them to take a nap together. The slow swaying of the wagon over smooth, sandy stretches made a rock-a-by movement that would lull them off to dreamland and make them forget the weary way.

When we left the lower crossing, the mother and baby were placed in a small wagon. A sprightly yoke of oxen was hitched

to it that they might get an early start and keep out of the dust. What few delicacies the pioneers had were given to them. By this tender care the mother and child were enabled to continue to the end of the long journey, though the brave little mother was frail and weak from the wearisome struggle before we reached a resting place at last.

What became of that baby? He thrived and grew to manhood and he is now living, sixty-nine years of age, in California. Some of his grandchildren are almost grown to manhood and womanhood.

Chapter 9

REACHING THE END OF THE TRAIL

AFTER leaving the Snake River we had one of the worst stretches of the trying journey. From the lower crossing of the Snake River at old Fort Boise to The Dalles is approximately three hundred and fifty miles over mountains and deserts. It became a serious question with many travelers whether there would be enough provisions left to keep them from starvation and whether their teams could muster strength to take the wagons in. Many wagons were left by the wayside. Everything that could possibly be spared shared the same fate. Provisions, and provisions only, were religiously cared for. Considering the weakened condition of both man and beast, it was small wonder that some ill-advised persons should take to the river in their wagon beds, many thus going to their death.

The dust got deeper every day. Going through it was like wading in water as to resistance. Often it would lie in the road fully six inches deep, so fine that a person wading through it would scarcely leave a track. And when disturbed, such clouds! No words can describe it.

At length, after we had endured five long months of soul-trying travel and had covered about eighteen hundred miles, counting from the crossing of the Missouri, we dragged ourselves on to the end of the Overland Trail at The Dalles on the Columbia River. From here my wife and I, with the baby, went by boat down the river, while Oliver took the ox team on to Portland by the land way.

The Dalles is a name given to the peculiar lava rock formation that strikes across the Columbia, nearly two hundred miles from the mouth. These rocks throw the great stream into a fury of foaming rapids. An Indian legend says that the Bridge of the

Gods was once near The Dalles, but that the bridge broke and fell.

On the September day in 1852 when we reached The Dalles, we found there a great crowd of travel-worn people. This assemblage was constantly changing. It was a coming-and-going congregation.

The appearance of this crowd of emigrants beggars description. Their dress was as varied as pieces in a crazy quilt. Here was a matronly dame in clean apparel, but without shoes; her husband perhaps lacked both shoes and hat. Youngsters of all sizes were running about with scarcely enough clothing to cover their nakedness. Some suits and dresses were so patched that it was impossible to tell what was the original cloth. The color of practically everybody's clothing was that of desert dust.

Every little while other sweat-streaked, motley-dressed homeseekers would straggle up to this end of the long trail. Their thoughts went back to their old homes, or to the loved ones that they had laid away tenderly in the shifting sands of the Plains. Most of them faced the future with fortitude; the difficulties they had met and mastered had but steeled them to meet the difficulties ahead. There was an undercurrent of gladness in their souls with the thought that they had achieved the end of the Overland Trail. They were ready now to go on down the Columbia to find their new homes in this great, unknown Land of Promise.

Almost every nationality was represented among them. All traces of race peculiarity and race prejudice, however, had been ground away in the mill of adversity. The trying times through which these pioneers had just passed had brought all to a kinship of feeling such as only trail and danger can beget.

Friendships, sincere and lasting, came as one of the sweet rewards of those days of common struggle and adversity. Few of the pioneers are now left to talk over the old days; when any of them do meet, the greeting is one of brotherhood indeed.

We camped but two days on the bank of the Columbia River. When I say "we," let it be understood that I mean myself, my young wife, and the baby boy who was but seven weeks old when the start was made from Eddyville.

I do not remember the embarking on the great scow for our trip down the Columbia to the Cascades. But incidents of the voyage come to me as vividly as if they had happened but yesterday.

Those who took passage felt that the journey was ended. The cattle had been unyoked for the last time; the wagons had been rolled to the last bivouac; the embers of the last camp fire had died out. We were entering now upon a new field with new present experiences, and with new expectancy for the morrow.

The scow, or lighter, upon which we took passage was decked over, but without railing, offering a smooth surface upon which to pile our belongings. These, in the majority of cases, made but a very small showing. The whole deck surface of the scow was covered with the remnants of the home-seekers' outfits, which in turn were covered by the owners, either sitting or reclining upon their possessions, with but scant room to change position or move about in any way. There must have been a dozen families or more on the boat, or about sixty persons. These were principally women and children; the young men and some of the older ones were still struggling on the mountain trail to get the teams through to the west side of the Cascade Mountains.

As we went floating down that wonderful old river, the deep depression of spirits that, for lack of a better name, we call "the blues," seized upon us. Do you wonder why? We were like an army that had burned the bridges behind it. We had scant knowledge of what lay in the track before us. Here we were, more than two thousand miles from home,—separated from it by a trackless, uninhabited waste of country. It was impossible for us to retrace our steps. Go ahead we must, no matter what we were to encounter.

Then, too, we had for months borne the burden of duties that could not be avoided or delayed, until many were on the verge of collapse from strain and overwork. Some were sick, and all were reduced in flesh from the urgent toil at camp duty and from lack of variety of food. Such was the condition of the motley crowd of sixty persons as we slowly neared that wonderful channel through which the great Columbia flows while passing the Cascade range.

For myself, I can truly say that the journey had not drawn on my vitality as it had with so many. True, I had been worked down in flesh, having lost nearly twenty pounds; but what weight I had left was the bone and sinew of my system. The good body my parents had given me carried me then and afterwards through many hardships without great distress.

In our company, a party of three, a young married couple and an unmarried sister, lounged on their belongings, listlessly watching the ripples on the water, as did also others of the party. But little conversation was passing. Each seemed to be communing with himself or herself, but it was easy to see what were the thoughts occupying the minds of all. The young husband, it was plain to be seen, would soon complete that greater journey to the unknown beyond, a condition that weighed so heavily upon the ladies of the party that they could ill conceal their solicitude and sorrow. Finally, to cheer up the sick husband and brother, the ladies began in sweet, subdued voices to sing the old familiar song of "Home, Sweet Home," whereupon others of the party joined in the chorus with increased volume of sound. As the echo died away, at the moment of gliding under the shadow of the high mountain, the second verse was begun, but was never finished. If an electric shock had startled every individual of the party, there could have been no more simultaneous effect than when the second line of the second verse was reached, when instead of song, sobs and outcries of grief poured forth from all lips. It seemed as if there were a tumult of despair mingled with prayer. The rugged boatmen rested upon their oars in awe, and gave way in sympathy with the scene before them, until it could be truly said no dry eyes were left nor aching heart but was relieved. Like the downpour of a summer shower that suddenly clears the atmosphere to welcome the bright shining sun that follows, so this sudden outburst of grief cleared away the despondency, to be replaced by an exalted, exhilarating feeling of buoyancy and hopefulness. The tears were not dried till mirth took possession—a real hysterical manifestation of the whole party, ending all depression for the rest of the trip.

On this last stage of the journey other parties had much more trying experiences than ours. John Whitacre, afterward governor of Oregon, was the head of a party of nine that

constructed a raft at The Dalles out of dry poles hauled from the adjacent country. While their stock was started out over the trail, their two wagons were put upon the raft. With the women and children in the wagons, perched on the provisions and bedding, the start was made to float down the river to the Cascades.

They had hardly begun the journey when the waves swept over the raft. It was like a submerged foundation upon which their wagons stood. A landing a few miles out of The Dalles averted a total wreck, and afforded opportunity to strengthen the buoyancy of the raft with extra timber carried upon the backs of the men for long distances.

Then the question arose, how should they know when they would reach the falls? Would they be able to discover the falls in time to make a landing? Their fears finally got the better of them and a line was run ashore; but instead of making a landing, they found themselves hard aground out of reach of land, except by wading a long distance. This occurred while they were many miles above the falls, or Cascades. At last they gave up the raft and procured a scow. In this they reached the head of the Cascades in safety.

As we neared Portland we felt that a long task had been completed. Yet reaching the end of the Overland Trail did not mean that our pioneer struggles were over. Before us lay still another task—the conquest of the new land. And it was no easy work, we were to learn, to find a home or make one in the western wilderness.

Part 2
SETTLING IN THE NORTHWEST COUNTRY

Chapter 1

GETTING A NEW START IN THE NEW LAND

ON the first day of October, 1852, at about nine o'clock at night, with a bright moon shining, we reached Portland. Oliver met us; he had come ahead by the trail and had found a place for us to lodge.

I carried my wife, who had fallen ill, in my arms up the steep bank of the Willamette River and three blocks away to the lodging house, which was kept by a colored man.

"Why, suh, I didn't think yuse could do that, yuse don't look it," said my colored friend, as I placed my wife on the clean bed in a cozy little room.

This was the first house we had been in for five months. From April until October we had been on the move. Never a roof had been over our heads other than the wagon cover or tent, and no softer bed had we known than the ground or the bottom of the wagon.

We had found a little steamer to carry us from the Cascades to Portland, along with most of the company that had floated in the scow down the river from The Dalles. The great Oregon Country, then including the Puget Sound region, was large enough to swallow up a thousand such migrations.

Portland was no paradise at that time. It would be difficult to imagine a sorrier-looking place than the one that confronted us upon arrival. Some rain had fallen, and more soon followed. With the stumps and logs and mud and the uneven stretches of ground, it was no easy matter to find a resting place.

The tented city was continually enlarging. People seemed to be dazed; it was hard to find paying work; there was insufficient shelter to house all. The country looked a great field of forests and mountains.

Oliver and I had between us a cash capital of about three dollars. It was clear that we must find work at once, so at earliest dawn next day Oliver took the trail leading down the river, to search for something to do. I had a possible opportunity for work and wages already in mind.

As we were passing up the Willamette, a few miles below Portland, on the evening of our arrival, a bark lay seemingly right in our path as we steamed by. This vessel looked to our inexperienced eyes like a veritable monster, with hull towering high above our heads and masts reaching to the sky. Probably not one of that whole party of frontiersmen had ever before seen a deep-sea vessel.

The word went around that the bark was bound for Portland with a cargo of merchandise and was to take a return cargo of lumber. As we passed her there flashed through my mind the thought that there might be opportunity for work on that vessel next day. Sure enough, when morning came, the staunch bark *Mary Melville* lay quietly in front of the mill.

Without loss of time my inquiry was made: "Do you want any men on board this ship?"

A gruff-looking fellow eyed me all over as much as to say, "Not you anyhow." But he answered, "Yes. Go below and get your breakfast."

I fairly stammered out, "I must go and see my wife first, and let her know where I am."

Thereupon came back a growl: "Of course, that will be the last of you! That's the way with these newcomers, always hunting for work and never wanting it." This last aside to a companion, in my hearing.

I swallowed my indignation, assured him that I would be back in five minutes, and went post-haste to impart the good news.

Put yourself in my place, you who have never come under the domination of a surly mate on a sailing vessel of seventy years ago. My ears fairly tingled with anger at the harshness of the orders, but I stuck to the work, smothering my rage at being berated while doing my very best. As the day went on I realized that the man was not angry; he had merely fallen into that way of talking. The sailors paid slight heed to what he said. Before night the fellow seemed to let up on me, while increasing his

tirades at the regular men. The second and third day wore off. I had blistered hands, but never a word about wages or pay.

"Say, boss, I'se got to pay my rent, and we'se always gits our pay in advance. I doan' like to ask you, but can't you git the old boss to put up somethin' on your work?"

I could plainly see that my landlord was serving notice to pay or move. What should I do? Suppose the old skipper should discharge me for asking for wages before the end of the week? But when I told him what I wanted the money for, the old man's eyes moistened. Without a word he gave me more money than I had asked for, and that night the steward handed me a bottle of wine for the "missus." I knew that it came from the old captain.

The baby's Sunday visit to the ship, the Sunday dinner in the cabin, the presents of delicacies that followed, even from the gruff mate, made me feel that under all this roughness lay a tender humanity. Away out here, three thousand miles from home, the same sort of people lived as those I had left behind me.

Then came this message:

> St. Helens, October 7th, 1852.
> Dear Brother: Come as soon as you can. Have rented a house, sixty boarders. This is going to be the place. Shall I send you money?
> OLIVER P. MEEKER.

The mate importuned me to stay until the cargo was on board. I did stay until the last stick of lumber was stowed, the last pig in the pen, and the ship swinging off, bound on her outward voyage. I felt as if I had an interest in her.

Sure enough, I found St. Helens to be the place. Here was to be the terminus of the steamship line from San Francisco. "Wasn't the company building this wharf?" "They wouldn't set sixty men to work on the dock unless they meant business." "Ships can't get up the Willamette—that's nothing but a creek. The big city is going to be here."

This was the talk that greeted my ears as I went looking about. We had carried my wife, this time in a chair, to our

hotel—yes, our hotel!—and there we had placed her, and the baby too, of course, in the best room the house afforded.

One January morning in 1853, our sixty men boarders did not go to work at the dock building as usual. Orders had come to suspend work. Nobody knew why, or for how long. We soon learned that the steamship company had given up the fight against Portland and would thenceforward run its steamers to that port. The dock was never finished and was allowed to fall into decay. With our boarders scattered, our occupation was gone, and our supplies were in great part rendered worthless to us by the change.

Meantime, snow had fallen to a great depth. The price of forage for cattle rose by leaps and bounds, and we found that we must part with half of our stock to save the rest. It might be necessary to provide feed for a month, or for three months; we could not tell. The last cow was given up that we might keep one yoke of oxen, so necessary for the work on a new place.

The search for a claim began at once. After one day's struggle against the current of the Lewis River, and a night standing in a snow and sleet storm around a camp fire of green wood, Oliver and I found our ardor cooled a little. Two hours sufficed to take us back home next morning.

Claims we must have, though. That was what we had come to Oregon for. We were going to be farmers; wife and I had made that bargain before we closed the other more important contract. We were still of one mind as to both contracts.

Early in January of 1853 the snow began disappearing rapidly, and the search for claims became more earnest. Finally, about the twentieth of January, I drove my stake for a claim. It included the site where the city of Kalama now stands.

With my mind's eye I can see our first cabin as vividly as on the day it was finished. It was placed among the trees on a hillside, with the door in the end facing the beautiful river. The rocky nature of the site permitted little grading, but it added to the picturesqueness.

The great river, the Columbia, was a mile wide at the point where our house stood. Once a day at least it seemed to tire from its ceaseless flow and to take a nooning spell. This was when the tides from the ocean held back the waters of the river. Immediately in front of our landing lay a small island of a

few acres, covered with heavy timber and driftwood. This has long since been washed away, and ships now pass over the place in safety.

The cabin was built of small, straight logs. The ribs projected a few feet to provide an open front porch—not for ornament, but for storage of dry wood and kindling. The walls were but a scant five feet high; the roof was not very steep; and there was a large stone fireplace and a chimney.

The cabin was not large nor did it contain much in the way of furnishings; but it was home—our home.

Our home! What a thrill of joy that thought brought to us! It was the first home we had ever had. We had been married nearly two years, yet this was really our first abiding place, for all other dwellings had been merely way stations on our march from Indianapolis to this cabin. The thought brought not only happiness but health to us. The glow returned to my wife's cheek, the dimple to the baby's. And such a baby! In the innocence of our souls we honestly thought we had the smartest, cutest baby on earth.

Scarcely had we settled in our new home before there came a mighty flood that covered the waters of the river with wrecks of property. Oliver and I, with one of our neighbors, began to secure the logs that came floating down in great numbers. In a very short time we had a raft that was worth a good sum of money, could we but get it to market.

Encouraged by this find, we immediately turned our attention to some fine timber standing close to the bank near by, and began hand-logging to supplement what we had already secured afloat. This work soon gave us ample means to buy our winter supplies, even though flour was fifty dollars a barrel. And yet, because of that same hand-logging work, my wife came very near becoming a widow one morning before breakfast; but she did not know of it until long afterwards.

It occurred in this way. We did not then know how to scaffold up above the tough, swelled bases of the large trees, and this made it very difficult to chop them down. So we burned through them. We bored two holes at an angle to meet inside the inner bark, and when we got a fire started there the heart of the tree would burn through, leaving an outer shell of bark.

One morning, as usual, I was up early. After lighting the fire in the stove and putting on the kettle, I hastened to the burning timber to start the logging fires afresh. As I neared a clump of three giants, two hundred and fifty feet tall, one began toppling over toward me. In my confusion I ran across the path where it fell. This tree had scarcely reached the ground when a second started to fall almost parallel to it, the two tops barely thirty feet apart and the limbs flying in several directions. I was between the two trees. If I had not become entangled in some brush, I should have been crushed by the second falling tree. It was an escape so marvelous as almost to lead one to think that there is such a thing as a charmed life.

In rafting our precious accumulations of timber down the Columbia River to Oak Point, we were carried by the current past the place where we had expected to sell our logs at six dollars a thousand feet. Following the raft to the larger waters, we finally reached Astoria, where we sold the logs for eight dollars a thousand instead of six, thus profiting by our misfortunes.

But this final success had meant an involuntary plunge off the raft into the river with my boots on, for me, and three days and nights of ceaseless toil and watching for all of us. We voted unanimously that we would have no more such work.

The flour sack was nearly empty when I left home. We were expecting to be absent but one night, and we had been gone a week. There were no neighbors nearer our cabin than four miles, and no roads—scarcely a trail. The only communication was by the river. What about the wife and baby alone in the cabin, with the deep timber at the rear and a heavy jungle of brush in front? Happily we found them all right upon our return.

Chapter 2

HUNTING FOR ANOTHER HOME SITE

OUR enjoyment of this first home did not last long. Hardly were we fairly settled, when news came that unsettled us again.

In April of 1853, the word had begun to pass around that we were to have a new Territory to embrace the country north of the Columbia River. Its capital was to be on Puget Sound. Here on the Columbia we should be away off to one side, out of touch with the people who would shortly become a great separate commonwealth.

It seemed advisable to look about a little, before making the move; so leaving the little wife and baby in the cabin home one bright morning in May, Oliver and I each made a pack of forty pounds and took the trail, bound for Puget Sound. We camped where night overtook us, sleeping in the open air without shelter or cover other than that afforded by some friendly tree with drooping limbs.

Our trail first led us down near the right bank of the Columbia to the Cowlitz, thence up the latter river thirty miles or more, and then across the country nearly sixty miles to Olympia.

At this time there might have been, about Puget Sound, two thousand white people all told, while now there are nearer a million. But these people were so scattered we did not realize there were even that number, for the Puget Sound country is a big place—more than two hundred miles long and seventy-five miles wide—between two mountain ranges, with the Cascades on the east and the Olympics on the west. The waters of the Sound, including all the channels and bays and inlets and shores of forty islands, make more than sixteen hundred miles of shore line—nearly as many miles as the Oregon Trail is long;

that is, almost as many miles as we had the previous year traversed from the Missouri River to the Sound.

Our expectations had been raised high by the glowing accounts of Puget Sound. But a feeling of deep disappointment fell upon us when we could see in the foreground only bare, dismal mud flats, and beyond these a channel scarcely twice as wide as that of the great river we had left, bounded on either side by high, heavily timbered land. We wished ourselves back at our cabin on the Columbia.

Should we turn around and go back? No; we had never done that since leaving our Indiana home. But what was the use of stopping here? We wanted a place to make a farm, and we could not do it on such forbidding land as this. The dense forest stretching out before us was interesting enough to the lumberman, and for aught I knew there were channels for the ships; but I wanted to be neither lumberman nor sailor. My first camp on Puget Sound was not cheerful.

Olympia at the time contained about one hundred inhabitants. It had three stores, a hotel, a livery stable, a saloon, and one weekly newspaper. A glance at the advertising columns of this paper, *The Columbian* (the name which was expected to be that of the new territory), disclosed but a few local advertisers. "Everybody knows everybody here," a resident remarked to me, "so what's the use of advertising?"

We could not stay at Olympia. We had pushed on past some good locations on the Chehalis, and farther south, without locating. Should we now retrace our steps? Oliver said no, and my better judgment also said no, though I was sorely pressed with a feeling of homesickness.

The decision was quickly made to see more of this Puget Sound. But how were we to see these—to us—unexplored waters? I declared that I would not go in one of those Indian canoes, that we should upset it before we were out half an hour. I had to admit that the Indians navigated the whole Sound in these canoes and were safe, but I would not trust myself in a craft that would tip as easily as a Siwash canoe. When I came to know the Indians better and saw their performances in these frail craft, my admiration for the canoes was even greater than my distrust had been.

Neither Oliver nor I had much experience in boating, and we had none in boat building. However, when we had discarded the idea of taking a canoe, we set to work with a hearty good will to build us a skiff. We made it out of light lumber, then easily obtained at Tumwater. We determined to have the skiff broad enough not to upset easily, and long enough to carry us and our light cargo of food and bedding.

As in the trip across the Plains, we must provide our own transportation. Here and there might be a vessel loading piles and square timber for the San Francisco market, but not a steamer was then plying on the Sound; there was not even a sailing craft that essayed to carry passengers.

As the tide drew us off on the placid waters of the bay at Olympia, with just a breath of air stirring, our little eighteen-foot craft behaved splendidly. The slight ripples jostling against the bow brought dreams of a pleasure trip, to make amends for the tiresome pack across the country.

We floated lazily with the tide, sometimes taking a few strokes with the oars, and at other times whistling for the wind. The little town of Olympia to the south became dimmed by distance. But we were no sooner fairly out of sight of the little village than the question came up which way to go. What channel should we take?

"Let the tide decide; that will carry us out toward the ocean."

"No, we are drifting into another bay; that cannot be where we want to go."

"Why, we are drifting right back almost in the same direction from which we came, but into another bay! We'll pull this way to that point to the northeast."

"But there seems a greater opening of water to the northwest."

"Yes, but I do not see any way out there."

So we talked and pulled and puzzled, until finally it dawned upon us that the tide had turned and we were being carried back into South Bay, to almost the very spot whence we had come.

"The best thing we can do is to camp," said Oliver.

I readily assented. So our first night's camp was scarcely twelve miles from where we had started in the morning. It was a fine camping place. A beautiful pebbly beach extended

almost to the water's edge even at low tide. There was a grassy level spit, a background of evergreen giant-fir timber, and clear, cool water gushing out from the bank near by. And such fuel for the camp fire!—broken limbs with just enough pitch to make a cheerful blaze and yet body enough to last well. We felt so happy that we were almost glad the journey had been interrupted.

Oliver was the carpenter of the party, the tent-builder, wood-getter, and general roustabout, while I, the junior, was "chief cook and bottle-washer."

An encampment of Indians being near, a party of them soon visited our camp and began making signs for trade.

"*Mika tik eh*[1] clams?" said one of the matrons of the party.

"What does she say, Oliver?"

"I'm blessed if I know, but it looks as if she wanted to sell some clams."

After considerable dickering, with signs and gestures and words many times repeated, we were able to impart the information that we wanted a lesson in cookery. If she would show us how to cook the clams, we would buy some. This brought some merriment in the camp. The idea that there lived a person who did not know how to cook clams! Without saying by your leave or anything else, the motherly looking native woman began tearing down our camp fire.

"Let her alone, and see what she's up to," said Oliver, noticing that I was disturbed at such interference with my well-laid plans for bread-baking.

She covered the hot pebbles and sand where the fire had been with a lighter layer of pebbles. Upon these the clams were deposited. They were covered with fine twigs, and upon the twigs earth was placed.

"*Kloshe*,"[2] she said.

"*Hyas kloshe*,"[3] said her husband, who squatted near by, watching the proceedings with evident approval.

"What did they say?" I asked.

1.You want.
2.Good.
3.Very good.

"I know what they said, but I don't know what they meant," responded Oliver, "unless it was she had done a good job; and I think she has."

Thus began and ended our first lesson in the Chinook jargon, and our first experience with a clam bake.

This first clam bake gave us great encouragement. We soon learned that the bivalves were to be found in almost unlimited quantity and were widely distributed. The harvest was ready twice a day, when the tide was out, and we need have no fear of a famine even if cast away in some unfrequented place.

"*Ya-ka kloshe al-ta*,"[4] said the Indian woman, uncovering the steaming mass and placing the clams on a sliver found near by. "*De-late kloshe muck a muck alta.*"[5]

Without understanding her words, but knowing well what she meant, we fell to disposing of this, our first clam dinner. We divided with the Indians the bread that had been baked and some potatoes that had been boiled. The natives soon withdrew to their own camp.

Before retiring for the night, we repaid the visit. To see the little fellows of the camp scud behind their mother when the strangers entered, and shyly peep out from their retreat, while the mother lovingly reassured them with kind and affectionate caresses, and finally coaxed them out from under cover, revealed something of the character of the natives that neither of us had realized before. We had been in Indian country for nearly a year, but with guns by our side, if not in our hands, during nearly half the time. We had not stopped to study the Indian character. We took it for granted that the Indians were our enemies and watched them suspiciously; but here seemed to be a disposition to be neighborly and helpful.

We took a lesson in Chinook, and by signs and words held conversation until a late hour. When we were ready to leave they gave us a slice of venison, enough for several meals. Upon offering to pay for it we were met with a shake of the head, and with the words, "*Wake, wake, kul-tus pot-latch*," which we understood by their actions to mean they made us a present of it.

4.Good now; ready to serve now.

5.Exceedingly good to eat.

We had made the Indians a present first, it is true; but we did not expect any return, except perhaps goodwill. From that time on during the trip,—I may say, for all time since,—I found the Indians of Puget Sound always ready to reciprocate acts of kindness. They hold in high esteem a favor granted, if it is not accompanied by acts showing it to be designed simply to gain an advantage.

Chapter 3

CRUISING ABOUT ON PUGET SOUND

OUR second day's cruise about the Sound took us past historic grounds. We went by old Fort Nisqually, one of the earliest posts of the Hudson's Bay Company on Puget Sound. Some houses had been built on the spot in 1829 or 1830, though the fort, one fourth of a mile back from water, was not constructed until 1833, just twenty years before our visit.

As the tide and wind favored us, we did not stop. Soon we came in sight of a fleet of seven vessels lying at anchor in a large bay, several miles in extent. The sight of those seven vessels lying in the offing made a profound impression upon our minds. We had never before seen so many ships at one place. Curiously enough, among them was the good bark *Mary Melville*, with her gruff mate and big-hearted master, Captain Barston.

Upon the eastern slope of the shores of this bay lay the two towns, Port Steilacoom, and Steilacoom City, both established in 1851. A far larger trade centered here than at any other point on Puget Sound, and we decided on a halt to make ourselves acquainted with the surroundings. A mile and a half from the shore we found also Fort Steilacoom. It was simply the camp of a company of United States soldiers, quartered in wooden shells of houses and log cabins.

Intense rivalry ran between the two towns, upper and lower Steilacoom, at this time. As a result things were booming. We were sorely tempted to accept the flattering offer of four dollars a day for common labor in a timber camp, but concluded not to be swerved from the search for a new homesite.

During this visit we began seeing Indians in considerable numbers. They seemed to be a listless lot, with no thought for the future, or even for the immediate present. The Indians in

those days seemed to work or play by spurts and spells. Here and there we saw a family industriously pursuing some object; but as a class they seemed to me the laziest set of people on earth.

That opinion was materially modified later, as I became better acquainted with their habits. I have found just as industrious people, both men and women, among the Indians as among the whites. The workers, it may be said, are less numerous among the men; the women are all industrious.

Should we camp here and spy out the land, or should we go forward and see what lay before us? After a sober second thought, we realized that we had nothing to trade but labor; and we had not come as far as this to be laborers for hire. We had come to find a place to make a farm, and a farm we were going to have. Again we set about searching for claims, and the more we searched the less we liked the look of things.

Finally, on the fourth day, after a long, wearisome tramp, we cast off at high tide, and in a dead calm, to continue our cruise. Oliver soon dropped into a comfortable afternoon nap, leaving me in full command. As the sun shone warm and the tide was taking us rapidly in the direction we wanted to go, why shouldn't I doze a little too, even if we did miss some of the sightseeing?

I was aroused from my nap by Oliver's exclaiming, "What is that?" Then, half to himself, "As I live, it's a deer swimming out here in the bay!"

"It surely can't be," I responded, three quarters asleep.

"That's what it is!" he asserted.

We were wide awake now and gave chase. Very soon we caught up with the animal and succeeded in throwing a rope over its horns. By this time we had drifted into the Narrows, and we soon found we had something more important to do than to tow a deer.

We were among the tide rips of the Sound. Turning the deer loose, we pulled our best for the shore, and found shelter in an eddy. A perpendicular bluff rose from the highwater mark, leaving no place for camp fire or bed.

The tide seemed to roll in waves and with contending forces of currents and counter currents, yet all moving in a general direction. It was our first introduction to a genuine tide rip.

The waters boiled as if in a veritable caldron, swelling up here and there in centers and whirling with dizzy velocity. A flat-bottomed boat like our little skiff, we thought, could not stay afloat there very long.

Just then some Indian canoes came along, moving with the tide. We expected to see them swamped as they encountered the troubled waters; but to our astonishment they passed right through without taking a drop of water Then there came two well-manned canoes creeping alongshore against the tide. I have said well-manned, but half the paddles, in fact, were wielded by women, and the post of honor, or that where most dexterity was required, was occupied by a woman.

"*Me-si-ka-kwass kopa s'kookum chuck?*"[6] said the maiden in the bow of the first canoe, as it drew alongside our boat, in which we were sitting.

Since our evening's experience at the clambake camp, we had been industriously studying the Chinook language, and we could understand that she was asking if we were afraid of the rough waters. We responded, partly in English and partly in Chinook, that we were, and besides that it was impossible for us to proceed against the strong current.

"*Ne-si-ka mit-lite*,"[7] she replied; that is to say, she told us that the Indians were going to camp with us and wait for the turn of the tide, and accordingly they landed near by.

By the time the tide had turned, night had come. We hardly knew whether to camp in our boat or to start out on unknown waters in the dark. Our Indian visitors made preparations to proceed on their journey, and assured us it was all right ahead. They offered to show us to good camping grounds in a big bay where the current was not strong.

Sure enough, a short pull with a favorable current brought us to the Narrows and into Commencement Bay, in sight of numerous camp fires in the distance. I remember that camp quite vividly; though I cannot locate it exactly, I know that it was on the water front within the present limits of the large and thriving city of Tacoma.

I well remember our supper of fresh salmon. Of all the delicious fish known, give me the salmon caught by trolling in

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6.Are you afraid of the rapid water?
7.I will stay with you.

early summer in the deep waters of Puget Sound, the fish so fat that the excess of oil must be turned out of the pan while cooking. We had scarcely got our camp fire started before a salmon was offered us; I cannot recall what we paid, but I know it was not a high price, else we could not have purchased.

The following day we could see Mt. Rainier, with its reflection in the placid waters of the bay. Theodore Winthrop, the observant traveler who came into these same waters a few months later and wrote of it as Mt. Tacoma, described it as "a giant mountain dome of snow, seeming to fill the aerial spaces as the image displaced the blue deeps of tranquil water." A wondrous sight it was and is, whatever the name.

Next day we entered the mouth of the Puyallup River. We had not proceeded far up this stream before we were interrupted by a solid drift of monster trees and logs, extending from bank to bank up the river for a quarter of a mile or more. The Indians told us that there were two other like obstructions a few miles farther up the river, and that the current was very strong.

We secured the services of an Indian and his canoe to help us up the river, and left our boat at the Indians' camp near the mouth. It took a tugging of two days to go six miles. We had to unload our outfit three times to pack it over cut-off trails, and drag our canoe around the drifts. It was a story of constant toil with consequent discouragement, not ending until we camped on the bank of the river within the present limits of the thriving little city of Puyallup.

The Puyallup valley at that time was a solitude. No white settlers were found, though it was known that two men had staked claims and had made some slight improvements. An Indian trail led up the river from Commencement Bay, and another led westward to the Nisqually plains. Over these pack animals could pass, but wagon roads there were none; and whether a feasible route for one could be found, only time and labor could determine.

We retraced our steps, and in the evening landed again at the mouth of the river after a severe day's toil. We were in no cheerful mood. Oliver did not sing as usual while preparing for camp. Neither did I have much to say; but I fell to work,

mechanically preparing the much-needed meal. We ate in silence and then went to sleep.

We had crossed the two great states of Illinois and Iowa, over hundreds of miles of unoccupied prairie land as rich as anything that ever "lay out of doors," on our way from Indiana to Oregon in search of land on which to make a home. Here, at what we might call the end of our rope, we had found the land, but with conditions that seemed almost too adverse to overcome.

It was a discouraging outlook, even if there had been roads. Such timber! It seemed an appalling undertaking to clear this land, the greater part of it being covered with a heavy growth of balm and alder trees and a thick tangle of underbrush besides. When we fell asleep that night, it was without visions of new-found wealth. And yet later I did tackle a quarter-section of that heaviest timber land, and never let up until the last tree, log, stump, and root had disappeared, though of course, not all cleared off by my own hands.

If we could have known what was coming four months later, we would have remained, in spite of our discouragement, and searched the valley diligently for the choicest locations. For in October following there came the first immigrants over the Natchess Pass Trail into Washington. They located in a body over nearly the whole valley, and before the year was ended had made a rough wagon road out to the prairies and to Steilacoom, the county seat.

We lingered at the mouth of the river in doubt as to what best to do. My thoughts went back to wife and baby in the lonely cabin on the Columbia River, and again to that bargain we had made before marriage, that we were going to be farmers. How could we be farmers if we did not have land? Under the donation act we could hold three hundred and twenty acres, but we must live on it for four years; it behooved us to look out and secure our location before the act expired, which would occur the following year.

With misgivings and doubts, on the fourth day Oliver and I loaded our outfit into our skiff and floated out on the receding tide, whither, we did not know.

As we drew off from the mouth of the Puyallup River, numerous parties of Indians were in sight. Some were trolling for

salmon, with a lone Indian in the bow of each canoe; others with poles were fishing for smelt; still others with nets seemed waiting for fisherman's luck.

Other parties were passing, those in each canoe singing a plaintive chant in minor key, accompanied by heavy strokes of the paddle handles against the sides of the canoe, as if to keep time. There were some fine voices to be heard, and though there were but slight variations in the sounds or words, the Indians seemed never to tire in repeating, and I must confess we never tired of listening.

During the afternoon, after we had traveled some twenty miles, we saw ahead of us larger waters, into which we entered, finding ourselves in a bay five or six miles wide, with no very certain prospect of a camping place. Just then we espied a cluster of cabins and houses on a point to the east. There we made a landing, at what is now known as Alki Point, though it then bore the pretentious name of New York.

We soon pushed on to the east shore, where the steam from a sawmill served as a guide, and landed at a point that cannot be far from the western limit of the present Pioneer Place, in Seattle, near where the totem pole now stands.

As we were not looking for a mill site or town site, we pushed on next day. We had gone but a few miles when a favorable breeze sprang up, bringing with it visions of a happy time sailing; but behind us lay a long stretch of open waters several miles wide, and ahead we could see no visible shelter and no lessening of width; consequently the breeze was not entirely welcome. In a short time the breeze stiffened, and we began to realize that we were in danger. We were afraid to attempt a landing on the surf-beaten shore; but finally, the wind increasing, the clouds lowering, and the rain coming down in torrents, we had to take the risk. Letting down the sail, we headed our frail craft towards the shore. Fortune favored us, for we found a good sandy beach upon which to land, though we got a thorough drenching while so doing.

Here we were compelled to remain two or three days in a dismal camp, until the weather became more favorable. Then launching our boat, we pulled for the head of Whidbey's Island, a few miles to the northwest.

Now I have a fish story to tell. I have always been shy about telling it, lest some smart fellow should up and say I was drawing on my imagination: I am not.

When we had broken camp and were sailing along, we heard a dull sound like that often heard from the tide rips. As we rested on our oars, we could see that there was a disturbance in the water and that it was moving toward us. It extended as far as we could see, in the direction we were going. The sound increased and became like the roar of a heavy fall of rain or hail on water, and we became aware that it was a vast school of fish moving south, while millions were seemingly dancing on the surface of the water or leaping in the air.

We could feel the fish striking against the boat in such vast numbers that they fairly moved it. The leap in the air was so high that we tried tipping the boat to catch some as they fell back, and sure enough, here and there one would drop into the boat. We soon discovered some Indians following the school. They quickly loaded their canoes by using the barbed pole and throwing the impaled fish into their canoes. With an improvised net we too soon obtained all we wanted.

When we began to go on we were embarrassed by the mass of fish moving in the water. As far as we could see there was no end to the school ahead of us; but we finally got clear of the moving mass and reached the island shore in safety, only to become weather-bound in the wilds once more.

This camp did not prove so dreary as the last one, although it was more exposed to the swell of the big waters and the sweep of the wind. To the north we had a view of thirty miles or more, to where horizon and water blended, leaving it doubtful whether land was in sight or not. As we afterwards ascertained, we could see the famous San Juan Island, later the bone of contention between our government and Great Britain, when the northern boundary of the United States was settled.

Port Townsend lay some ten miles from our camp, but was shut out from view by an intervening headland. We did not know the exact location of the town. Like the lost hunters, "we knew where we were, but we didn't know where any place else was." Not lost ourselves, the world was lost from us.

Three ships passed us while we were at this camp, one coming from out of space, as it seemed, a mere speck, and growing

to a full-fledged deep-sea vessel, with all sails set, scudding before the wind. The other two were gracefully beating their way out against the stiff breeze to the open waters beyond. What prettier sight is there than a full-rigged vessel with all sails spread! The enthusiasm that rose as we gazed at the ships, coupled with a spirit of adventure, prompted us to go farther.

It was a calm, beautiful day when we reached Port Townsend. Distance lends enchantment, the old adage says; but in this case the nearer we approached to the place, the greater our admiration. The shining, pebbly beach in front, the clear, level spot adjoining, with the beautiful open and comparatively level plateau in the background, and two or three vessels at anchor in the foreground, made a picture of a perfect city site.

Upon closer examination of the little town we found that the first impression, gained from a distance, was illusory. Many shacks and camps, at first mistaken for the white men's houses, were found to be occupied by natives. They were a drunken, rascally rabble, spending their gains from the sale of fish and oil in a debauch that would last as long as their money held out.

This seemed to be a more stalwart race of Indians than those to the south, doubtless from the buffeting received in the larger waters. They would often go out even to the open sea on their fishing excursions in canoes manned by thirty men or more.

After spending two or three days exploring the country, we turned back to the bay where lay the seven ships we had seen near Steilacoom. We remembered the timber camps, the bustle and stir of the little new village, and the activity that we saw there, greater than anywhere else on the waters of the Sound. Most of all, my thoughts would go on to the little cabin on the Columbia River.

Three days sufficed to land us back in the bay we sought, but the ships were gone. Not a sailing craft of any kind was in sight of the little town, though the building activity was going on as before.

The memory of those ships, however, remained with us and determined our minds on the important question where the trade center was to be. We decided therefore that our new

home should be near Steilacoom, and we finally staked out a claim on an island not far from that place.

Once the claim had been decided upon, my next desire naturally was to get home to my family. The expedition had taken thirty days, and of course there had been no news from my wife, nor had I been able to send back any word to her.

Chapter 4

MOVING FROM THE COLUMBIA TO PUGET SOUND

"CAN I get home tonight?" I asked myself.

It was an afternoon of the last week of June, in 1853, and the sun was yet high. I was well up the left bank of the Cowlitz River; how far I could not tell, for there were no milestones on the crooked, half-obstructed trail leading downstream. At best it would be a race with the sun, but the days were long, and the twilight was long, and I would camp that much nearer home if I made haste.

My pack had been discarded on the Sound. I had neither coat nor blanket. I wore a heavy woolen shirt, a slouch hat, and worn shoes; both hat and shoes gave ample ventilation. Socks I had none; neither had I suspenders, an improvised belt taking their place. I was dressed for the race and was eager for the trial. At Olympia I had parted with my brother, who had returned to stay at the claims we had taken, while I was to go home for the wife and baby, to remove them to our new home.

I did not particularly mind the camping, but I did not fancy the idea of lying out so near home if by extra exertion I could reach the cabin before night. There was no friendly ox to snug up to for warmth, as in so many of the bivouacs on the plains; but I had matches, and there were many mossy places for a bed under the friendly shelter of drooping cedars. We never thought of catching cold from lying on the ground or on cedar boughs, or from getting a good drenching.

After all, the cabin could not be reached, as the trail could not be followed at night. Slackening pace at nightfall to cool my system gradually, I finally made my camp and slept as soundly as if on a bed of down. My consolation was that the night was short and I could see to travel by three o'clock.

I do not look upon those years of camp and cabin life as years of hardship. To be sure, our food was plain as well as our dress; our hours of labor were long and the labor itself was frequently severe; the pioneers appeared rough and uncouth. Yet underlying all this there ran a vein of good cheer, of hopefulness. We never watched for the sun to go down, or for the seven o'clock whistle, or for the boss to quicken our steps. The days were always too short, and interest in our work was always unabated.

The cabin could not be seen until the trail came quite near it. When I caught sight of a curl of smoke I knew I was almost there. Then I saw the cabin and a little lady in almost bloomer dress milking the cow. She never finished milking that cow, nor did she ever milk any cow when her husband was at home.

There were so many things to talk about that we could scarcely tell where to begin or when to stop. Much of the conversation naturally centered on the question of our moving to a new home.

"Why, at Olympia, eggs were a dollar a dozen. I saw them selling at that. The butter you have there would bring you a dollar a pound as fast as you could weigh it out. I saw stuff they called butter sell for that. Potatoes are selling for three dollars a bushel and onions at four. Everything the farmer raises sells high."

"Who buys?"

"Oh, almost everybody has to buy. There are ships and timber camps and the hotels, and—"

"Where do they get the money?"

"Everybody seems to have money. Some take it there with them. Men working in the timber camps get four dollars a day and their board. At one place they paid four dollars a cord for wood to ship to San Francisco, and a man can sell all the shingles he can make at four dollars a thousand. I was offered five cents a foot for piles. If we had Buck and Dandy over there we could make twenty dollars a day putting in piles."

"Where could you get the piles?"

"Off the government land, of course. All help themselves to what they want. Then there are the fish and the clams and oysters, and—"

"But what about the land for the claim?"

That question was a stumper. The little wife never lost sight of that bargain made before we were married. Now I found myself praising a country for the agricultural qualities of which I could not say much. But if we could sell produce higher, might we not well lower our standard of an ideal farm? The claim I had taken was described with a touch of apology, in quality falling so far below what we had hoped to acquire. However, we decided to move, and began to prepare for the journey.

The wife, baby, bedding, ox yoke, and log chain were sent up the Cowlitz in a canoe. Buck and Dandy and I took the trail. On this occasion I was ill prepared for a cool night camp, having neither blanket nor coat. I had expected to reach Hard Bread's Hotel, where the people in the canoe would stop overnight. But I could not make it, so again I lay out on the trail. "Hard Bread's," an odd name for a hotel, was so called because the old widower that kept the place fed his patrons on hardtack three times a day.

I found that my wife had not fared any better than I had on the trail, and in fact not so well. The floor of the cabin—that is, the hotel—was a great deal harder than the sand spit where I had passed the night. I had plenty of pure, fresh air, while she, in a closed cabin and in the same room with many others, had neither fresh air nor freedom from creeping things that make life miserable. With her shoes for a pillow, a shawl for covering, small wonder that she reported, "I did not sleep a wink last night."

We soon arrived at the Cowlitz landing, the end of the canoe journey. Striking the tent that had served us so well on the Plains and making a cheerful camp fire, we speedily forgot the hard experiences of the trail.

Fifty miles more of travel lay before us. And such a road! However, we had one consolation,—it would be worse in winter than at that time.

Our wagon had been left at The Dalles and we had never seen or heard of it again. Our cows were gone—given for provender to save the lives of the oxen during the deep December snow. So when we took account of stock, we had the baby, Buck and Dandy, a tent, an ox yoke and chain, enough clothing and bedding to keep us comfortable, a very little food, and no

money. The money had all been expended on the canoe passage.

Should we pack the oxen and walk, and carry the baby, or should we build a sled and drag our things over to the Sound, or should I make an effort to get a wagon? This last proposition was the most attractive, and so next morning, driving my oxen before me and leaving wife and baby to take care of the camp, I began the search for a wagon.

That great-hearted pioneer, John R. Jackson, did not hesitate a moment, stranger though I was, to say, "Yes, you can have two if you need them."

Jackson had settled there eight years before, ten miles out from the landing, and now had an abundance around him. Like all the earlier pioneers, he took a pride in helping others who came later. He would not listen to our proceeding any farther before the next day. He insisted on entertaining us in his comfortable cabin, and sent us on our way in the morning, rejoicing in plenty.

Without special incident we in due time arrived at the falls of the Deschutes (Tumwater) and on the shore of Puget Sound. Here a camp must be established again. The wife and baby were left there while I drove the wagon back over the tedious road to Jackson's and then returned with the oxen to tidewater.

My feelings may well be imagined when, upon returning, I found wife, baby, and tent all gone. I knew that smallpox was raging among the Indians, and that a camp where it was prevalent was less than a quarter of a mile away. The dread disease had terrors then that it does not now possess. Could it be possible my folks had been taken sick and had been removed?

The question was soon solved. It appeared that I had scarcely got out of sight on my trip back with the oxen before one of those royal pioneer matrons had come to the camp. She pleaded and insisted, and finally almost frightened the little wife into going with her and sharing her house, which was near by, but out of danger from the smallpox. God bless those earlier pioneers! They were all good to us, sometimes to the point of embarrassment, in their generous hospitality.

Oliver was to have had the cabin ready by the time I returned. He not only had not done that, but had taken the boat and had left no sign to tell us where either brother or boat

could be found. Not knowing what else to do, I paddled over to the town of Steilacoom. There I found out where the boat and the provisions had been left, and after an earnest parley succeeded in getting possession. With my canoe in tow I soon made my way back to where my little flock was, and speedily transferred all to the spot that was to be our island dwelling. We set up our tent, and felt at home once more.

Steilacoom, three miles across the bay, had grown during my absence, and in the distance it looked like a city in fact as well as in name. Mt. Rainier looked bigger and taller than ever. Even the songs of the Indians sounded better; the canoes looked more graceful, and the paddles seemed to be wielded more expertly. Everything looked cheerful; everything interested us, especially the crows, with their trick of breaking clams by rising in the air and dropping them on the boulders. There were so many new things to observe that for a time we almost forgot that we were nearly out of provisions and money and did not know what had happened to Oliver.

Next morning Oliver returned to the village. Finding that the boat and provisions had been taken and seeing smoke in the bight, he surmised what had happened and came paddling across to the tent. He had received a tempting offer to help load a ship and had just completed his contract. As a result of this work, he was able to exhibit a slug of California gold and other money that looked precious indeed in our eyes.

The building of our second cabin with its stone fireplace, cat-and-clay chimney, lumber floor, real window with glass in it, together with the high-post bedstead made out of tapering cedar saplings, the table fastened to the wall, the rustic chairs, seemed but like a play spell. No eight-hour day there—eighteen would be nearer the mark; we never tired.

It was in this same year, 1853, that Congress cut off from Oregon the region that now comprises the state of Washington and all of Idaho north of the Snake River. The new district was called Washington Territory, so we who had moved out to the Oregon Country found ourselves living in Washington.

Chapter 5

MESSAGES AND MESSENGERS

AT last we were really settled and could begin the business for which we had come West; henceforth the quiet life of the farmer was to be ours, we thought. But again we had not reckoned with the unexpected.

While we were working on our new cabin, we received a letter from father, saying: "Boys, if Oliver will come back to cross with us, we will go to Oregon next year." The letter was nearly three months old when we received it.

Our answer was immediate: "Oliver will be with you next spring."

Then came the question of money. Would Davenport, who had bought the Columbia River claims, pay in the fall? Could he? We decided that we must go to the timber camp to earn the money to pay the expenses of Oliver's journey, that we must not depend altogether on the Columbia River asset.

"What shall we do with the things?" asked my wife.

"Lock them up in the cabin," suggested Oliver.

"And you go and stay with the Dofflemires," I added.

"Not I," she returned. "I'm going along to cook."

All our well-laid plans were thus suddenly changed. Our clearing of the land was deferred; the chicken house, the inmates of which were to make us rich, was not built; the pigs were not bought to fatten on the clams, and many other pet schemes were dropped that Oliver might go back East to bring father and mother across the Plains.

We struck awkward but rapid and heavy strokes in the timber camp established on the bluff overlooking the falls at Tumwater. The little cook supplied the huckleberry pudding for dinner, with plenty of the lightest, whitest bread, and vegetables, meat, and fish served in style good enough for kings. Such

appetites! No coaxing was required to get us to eat a hearty meal. Such sound sleep, such satisfaction! Talk about hardships—it was all pleasure as we counted the eleven dollars a day that the Tullis brothers paid us for cutting logs, at one dollar and seventy cents a thousand. We earned this every day. Yes, we should be able to make money enough together to pay Oliver's passage to Iowa.

It was to be a long journey—over to the Columbia River, out from there by steamer to San Francisco, then to the Isthmus, then to New York. After that, by rail as far west as there was a railroad, then on foot to Eddyville, Iowa, where the start was again to be made. It would take Oliver two months to reach Eddyville, and then at least seven more to lead the newcomers over the trail from Iowa to Puget Sound.

Oliver was soon speeding on his way, and again my wife and I were left without money and with but a scant supply of provisions. How we made out through the winter I can hardly remember, but we managed somehow and kept well and happy. Soon after Oliver's departure our second baby was born.

In the latter part of August, 1854, eight months after Oliver had left us, James K. Hurd, of Olympia, sent me word that he had been out on the immigrant trail and had heard that some of my relatives were on the road, but that they were belated and short of provisions. He advised me to go to their assistance, to make sure of their coming directly over the Cascade Mountains, and not down the Columbia River.

How my people, with Oliver's experience to guide them, should be in the condition described, was past my comprehension. However, I accepted the statement as true. I felt the particular importance of their having certain knowledge as to prevailing conditions of an over-mountain trip through the Natchess Pass. The immigrants of the previous year had encountered formidable difficulties in the mountains, narrowly escaping the loss of everything, if not facing actual starvation. I could not help feeling that possibly the same conditions still prevailed. The only way to determine the question was to go and see for myself, to meet my father's party and pilot them through the pass.

But how could I go and leave wife and two babies on our island home? The summer had been spent in clearing land and

planting crops, and my money was very low. To remove my family would cost something in cash, besides the abandonment of the season's work to almost certain destruction. Without a moment's hesitation my wife said to go; she and Mrs. Darrow, who was with us as nurse and companion, would stay right where they were until I got back.

I was not so confident of the outcome as she. At best the trip was hazardous, even when undertaken well-prepared and with company. As far as I could see, I might have to go on foot and pack my food and blanket on my back. I knew that I should have to go alone. Some work had been done on the road during the summer, but I was unable to learn definitely whether any camps were yet in the mountains.

At Steilacoom there was a certain character, a doctor, then understood by few, and I may say not by many even to the end. Yet, somehow, I had implicit confidence in him, though between him and me there would seem to have been a gulf that could not be closed. Our habits of life were diametrically opposite. I would never touch a drop, while the doctor was always drinking—never sober, neither ever drunk.

It was to this man that I entrusted the safe keeping of my little family. I knew my wife had such an aversion to people of his kind that I did not even tell her with whom I would arrange to look out for her welfare, but suggested another person to whom she might apply in case of need.

When I spoke to the doctor about what I wanted, he seemed pleased to be able to do a kind act. To reassure me, he got out his field glasses and turned them on the cabin across the water, three miles distant. Looking through them intently for a moment he said, "I can see everything going on over there. You need have no uneasiness about your folks while you are gone."

And I did not need to have any concern. Twice a week during all the time I was away an Indian woman visited the cabin on the island, always with some little presents. She would ask about the babies and whether there was anything needed. Then with the parting "*Alki nika keelapie*,"[8] she would leave.

With a fifty-pound flour sack filled with hard bread, or navy biscuit, a small piece of dried venison, a couple of pounds of cheese, a tin cup, and half of a three-point blanket, all made

8.By and by I will return.

into a pack of less than forty pounds, I climbed the hill at Steilacoom and took the road leading to Puyallup. The first night was spent with Jonathan McCarty, whose cabin was near where the town of Sumner now stands.

McCarty said: "You can't cross the streams on foot; I'll let you have a pony. He's small, but sure-footed and hardy, and he'll carry you across the rivers anyhow." McCarty also said: "Tell your folks this is the greatest grass country on earth. Why, I am sure I harvested five tons of timothy to the acre this year."

The next day found me on the road with my blanket under the saddle, my sack of hard bread strapped on behind. I was mounted to ride on level stretches of the road, or across streams, of which I had fully sixty crossings to make.

White River on the upper reaches is a roaring torrent; the rush of waters can be heard for a mile or more from the high bluff overlooking the narrow valley. The river is not fordable except in low water, and then in but few places. The river bed is full of stones worn rounded and smooth and slippery, from the size of a man's head to large boulders, thus making footing for animals uncertain. After my first experience, I dreaded the crossings to come more than all else on the trip, for a misstep of the pony's might be fatal.

The little fellow, Bobby, seemed to be equal to the occasion. If the footing became too uncertain, he would stop stock still and pound the water with one foot, then reach out carefully until he could find secure footing, and finally move up a step or two. The water of the river is so charged with sediment that the bottom cannot be seen; hence the necessity of feeling the way. I soon learned that my pony could be trusted on the fords better than I. Thereafter I held only a supporting, not a guiding, rein and he carried me safely over all the crossings on my way out.

Allan Porter lived near the first crossing. As he was the last settler I should see and his the last place where I could get feed for my pony, other than grass or browse, I put up for the night under his roof.

He said I was going on a "Tom Fool's errand," for my folks could take care of themselves, and he tried to dissuade me from proceeding on my journey. But I would not be turned

back. The following morning I cut loose from the settlements and plunged into the deep forest of the mountains.

The road, if it could be called a road, lay in the narrow valley of White River or on the mountains adjacent. In some places, as at Mud Mountain, it reached more than a thousand feet above the river bed. There were stretches where the forest was so dense that one could scarcely see to read at midday, while elsewhere large burned areas gave an opening for daylight.

During the forenoon of this day, in one of those deepest of deep forests, Bobby stopped short, his ears pricked up. Just then I caught an indistinct sight of a movement ahead, and thought I heard voices; the pony made an effort to turn and bolt in the opposite direction. Soon there appeared three women and eight children on foot, coming down the road in complete ignorance of the presence of any one but themselves in the forest.

"Why, stranger! Where on earth did you come from? Where are you going, and what are you here for?" asked the foremost woman of the party.

Mutual explanations followed. I learned that their teams had become exhausted and all the wagons but one had been abandoned, and that this one was on the road a few miles behind. They were entirely out of provisions and had had nothing to eat for twenty hours except what natural food they had gathered, and that was not much. They eagerly inquired the distance to food, which I thought they might possibly reach that night. Meanwhile I had opened my sack of hard bread and had given each a cracker, at the eating of which the sound resembled pigs cracking dry, hard corn.

Neither they nor I had time to parley long. The women with their children, barefoot and ragged, bareheaded and unkempt, started down the mountain, intent on reaching food, while I went up the road wondering how often this scene was to be repeated as I advanced on my journey.

A dozen biscuits of bread is usually a very small matter, but with me it might mean a great deal. How far should I have to go? When could I find out? What would be the plight of my people when found? Or should I find them at all? Might they not pass by and be on the way down the Columbia River before I could reach the main immigrant trail? These and kindred

questions weighed on my mind as I slowly ascended the mountain.

Chapter 6

BLAZING THE WAY THROUGH NATCHESS PASS

THE Natchess Pass Trail, along which I must make my way, had been blazed by a party of intrepid pioneers during the summer of 1853. Fifteen thousand dollars had been appropriated by Congress to be expended for a military road through the pass. I saw some of the work, but do not remember seeing any of the men who were improving the road.

I stuck close to the old trail, making my first camp alone, just west of the summit. I had reached an altitude where the night chill was keenly felt, and with only my light blanket missed the friendly contact of the faithful ox that had served me so well on the Plains. My pony had nothing but browse for supper, and he was restless. Nevertheless I slept soundly and was up early, refreshed and ready to resume the journey.

Such a road as I found is difficult to imagine. How the pioneer trail-blazers had made their way through it is a marvel. It seemed incredible that forests so tall and so dense could have existed anywhere on earth. Curiously enough, the heavier the standing timber, the easier it had been to slip through with wagons, there being but little undecayed timber or down timber. In the ancient days, however, great giants had been uprooted, lifting considerable earth with the upturned roots. As time went on the roots decayed, making mounds two, three, or four feet high and leaving a corresponding hollow into which one would plunge; for the whole was covered by a dense, short evergreen growth that completely hid from view the unevenness of the ground. Over these hillocks and hollows and over great roots on top of the ground, they had rolled their wagons.

All sorts of devices had been tried to overcome obstructions. In many places, where the roots were not too large, cuts had

been taken out. In other places the large timber had been bridged by piling up smaller logs, rotten chunks, brush, or earth, so that the wheels of the wagon could be rolled over the body of the tree. Usually three notches would be cut on the top of the log, two for the wheels and one for the reach, or coupling pole, to pass through.

In such places the oxen would be taken to the opposite side, and a chain or rope would be run to the end of the wagon tongue. One man drove, one or two guided the tongue, others helped at the wheels. In this way, with infinite labor and great care, the wagons would gradually be worked over all obstacles and down the mountain in the direction of the settlements.

But the more numerous the difficulties, the more determined I became to push through at all hazards, for the greater was the necessity of acquainting myself with the obstacles to be encountered and of reaching my friends to encourage and help them.

Before me lay the summit of the great range, the pass, at five thousand feet above sea level. At this summit, about twenty miles north of Mt. Rainier in the Cascade range, is a small stretch of picturesque open country known as Summit Prairie, in the Natchess Pass.

In this prairie, during the autumn of 1853, a camp of immigrants had encountered grave difficulties. A short way out from the camp, a steep mountain declivity lay squarely across their track. One of the women of the party exclaimed, when she first saw it, "Have we come to the jumping-off place at last?" It was no exclamation for effect, but a fervent prayer for deliverance. They could not go back; they must either go ahead or starve in the mountains.

Stout hearts in the party were not to be deterred from making the effort to proceed. Go around this hill they could not. Go down it with logs trailed to the wagons, as they had done at other places, they dared not, for the hill was so steep the logs would go end over end and would be a danger instead of a help. The rope they had was run down the hill and turned out to be too short to reach the bottom.

James Biles, one of the leaders, commanded, "Kill a steer." They killed a steer, cut his hide into strips, and spliced the

strips to the rope. It was found to be still too short to reach to the bottom.

The order went out: "Kill two more steers!" And two more steers were killed, their hides cut into strips and the strips spliced to the rope, which then reached to the bottom of the hill.

By the aid of that rope and the strips of the hides of those three steers, twenty-nine wagons were lowered down the mountain side to the bottom of the steep hill. Only one broke away; it crashed down the mountain and was smashed into splinters.

The feat of bringing that train of wagons in, with the loss of only one out of twenty-nine, is the greatest I ever knew or heard of in the way of pioneer travel.

Nor were the trials ended when the wagons had been brought down to the bottom of that hill. With snail-like movements, the cattle and men becoming weaker and weaker, the train crept along, making less progress each day, until finally it seemed that the oxen could do no more. It became necessary to send them forward on the trail ten miles, to a place where it was known that plenty of grass could be had. Meanwhile the work on the road continued until the third day, when the last particle of food was gone. Then the teams were brought back, the trip over the whole ten miles was made, and Connell's Prairie was reached at dark.

In the struggle over that ten miles the women and children had largely to take care of themselves while the men tugged at the wagons. One mother and her children, a ten-year old boy, a child of four years, and a babe of eight months, in some way were passed by the wagons. These four were left on the right bank of the river when the others had crossed.

A large fallen tree reached across the river, but the top on the farther side lay so close to the water that a constant trembling and swaying made it a dangerous bridge to cross on. None of the four had eaten anything since the day before, and but a scant supply then; but the boy resolutely shouldered the four-year-old child and deposited him safely on the other side. Then came the little tot, the baby, to be carried across in his arms. Last came the mother.

"I can't go!" she exclaimed. "It makes me so dizzy!"

"Put one hand over your eyes, mother, and take hold of me with the other," said the boy. They began to move out sidewise on the log, half a step at a time.

"Hold steady, mother; we are nearly over."

"Oh, I am gone!" she cried, as she lost her balance and fell into the river. Happily, they were so near the farther bank that the little boy was able to catch with one hand a branch that hung over the bank while he held on to his mother with the other hand, and so she was saved.

It was then nearly dark, and without knowing how far it was to camp, the little party started on the road, tarrying on the bank of the river only long enough for the mother to wring the water out of her skirts. The boy carried the baby, while the four-year-old child walked beside his mother. After nearly two miles of travel and the ascent of a very steep hill, they caught the glimmer of camp lights; the mother fell senseless, utterly prostrated.

The boy hurried his two little brothers into camp, calling for help to rescue his mother. The appeal was promptly responded to; she was carried into camp and tenderly cared for until she revived.

There were one hundred and twenty-eight people in that train. Among them, as a boy, was George Himes, who for many years has been Secretary of the Oregon Historical Society. To him we are indebted for most of this story of pioneer heroism.

Chapter 7

CLIMBING THE CASCADE MOUNTAINS

UP through the Natchess Pass Bobby and I took our lonely way, to reach and bring over this same difficult trail the party in which were my parents and my brothers and sisters.

From the first chill night, following the sweat due to the climb of the day before, my muscles were a bit stiffened; but I was ready for the climb to the summit. Bobby was of a different mind. As I have said, he had been restless during the night. I had just strapped the roll of blankets and hard bread securely behind the saddle, when he suddenly turned his face homeward and trotted off gaily, down the mountain.

I could do nothing but follow him. The narrow cut of the road and impenetrable obstructions on either side prevented my heading off his rascally maneuvers. Finally, on finding a nip of grass by the roadside, he slackened his gait, and after several futile attempts I managed to get a firm hold of his tail. After this we went down the mountain together, much more rapidly than we had come up the evening before.

Bobby forgot to use his heels, else he might for a longer time have been master of the situation. The fact was he did not want to hurt me, but was determined to go no farther into mountains where he could not get a supper. The contest was finally settled in my favor when I managed to catch hold of the rein. Did I chastise him? Not a bit. I did not blame him; we were partners, but it was a one-sided partnership, as he had no interest in the enterprise other than to get enough to eat as we went along, and when he saw no prospect of food, he rebelled.

We were soon past our camping ground of the night before, and on our way up the mountain. Bobby would not be led; if I tried to lead him, he would hold back for a while, then, making a rush up the steep ascent, he would be on my heels or toes

before I could get out of the way. I would seize his tail with a firm grasp and follow. When he moved rapidly, I was helped up the mountain. When he slackened his pace, then came the resting spell. The engineering instinct of the horse tells him how to reduce grades by angles, and Bobby led me up the mountains in zig-zag courses, I following always with the firm grasp of the tail that meant we would not part company, and we did not.

By noon we had surmounted all obstacles and stood upon the summit prairie—one of them, for there are several. Here Bobby feasted to his heart's content, while for me it was the same old story—hardtack and cheese, with a small allotment of dried venison.

To the south, apparently but a few miles distant, the old mountain, Rainier, loomed up into the clouds fully ten thousand feet higher than where I stood, a grand scene to behold, worthy of all the effort expended to reach this point. But I was not attuned to view with ecstasy the grandeur of what lay before me; rather I scanned the horizon to ascertain, if I could, what the morrow might bring forth.

This mountain served the pioneer as a huge barometer to forecast the weather. "How is the mountain this morning?" the farmer asked in harvest time. "Has the mountain got his nightcap on?" the housewife inquired before her wash was hung on the line. The Indian would watch the mountain with intent to determine whether he might expect *snass* (rain), or *kull snass* (hail), or *t'kope snass* (snow), and seldom failed in his conclusions. So that day I scanned the mountain top, partially hid in the clouds, with forebodings verified at nightfall.

A light snow came on just before night, which, with the high mountains on either side of the river, spread darkness rapidly. I was loath to camp. If I could safely have found my way, I would have traveled all night. The trail in places was very indistinct and the canyon was but a few hundred yards wide, with the tortuous river striking first one bluff and then the other, making numerous crossings necessary.

Finally I saw that I must camp. I crossed the river to an opening where the bear tracks were so thick that the spot seemed a playground for all these animals roundabout. The black bears on the western slope were timid and not dangerous; but I did not know about this species of the eastern slope.

I found two good-sized trees that had fallen obliquely across each other. With my pony tethered as a sentinel, and my fire as an advance post, I went to bed, nearly supperless. I felt lonesome; but I kept my fire burning all night, and I slept soundly.

Early next morning found Bobby and me on the trail. We were a little chilled by the cold mountain air and very willing to travel. Towards nightfall I heard the welcome tinkling of a bell, and soon saw first the smoke of camp fires, and then a village of tents and grime-covered wagons. How I tugged at Bobby's halter to make him go faster and then mounted him, without getting much more speed, can better be imagined than told.

Could it be the camp I was searching for? It had about the number of wagons and tents that I expected to meet. No; I was doomed to disappointment. Yet I rejoiced to find some one to camp with and talk to other than the pony.

The greeting given me by those tired and almost discouraged travelers could not have been more cordial had they been my relatives. They had been toiling for nearly five months on the road across the Plains, and now there loomed up before them this great mountain range to cross. Could they do it? If they could not get over with their wagons, could they get the women and children through safely? I was able to lift a load of doubt and fear from their jaded minds.

Before I knew what was happening, I caught the fragrance of boiling coffee and fresh meat cooking. The good matrons knew without telling that I was hungry and had set to work to prepare me a meal, a sumptuous meal at that, taking into account the whetted appetite incident to a diet of hard bread straight, and not much of that either, for two days.

We had met on the Yakima River, at the place where the old trail crosses that river near the site of the present flourishing city of North Yakima.

In this party were some of the people who next year lost their lives in the White River massacre. They were Harvey H. Jones, his wife, and three children, and George E. King, his wife, and one child. One of the little boys of the camp, John I. King, lived to write a graphic account of the tragedy in which his mother and stepfather and their neighbors lost their lives. Another boy, a five-year-old child, was taken off, and after being held

captive for nearly four months was then safely delivered over by the Indians to the military authorities at Fort Steilacoom.

I never think of those people but with sadness. Their struggle, doubtless the supreme effort of their lives, was only to go to their death. I had pointed out to them where to go to get good claims, and they had lost no time, but had gone straight to the locality recommended and had set immediately to work preparing shelter for the winter.

"Are you going out on those plains alone?" Mrs. Jones asked me anxiously.

When I told her that I would have the pony with me, she insisted, "Well, I don't think it is safe."

Mr. Jones explained that his wife was thinking of the danger from the ravenous wolves that infested the open country. The party had lost weakened stock from their forages right close to the camp. He advised me not to camp near the watering places, but to go up on the high ridge. I followed his advice with the result, as we shall see, of missing my road and losing considerable time, which meant not a little trouble and anxiety.

Chapter 8

FINDING MY PEOPLE

ON leaving my newly found friends I faced a discouraging prospect. The start for the high, arid table-lands bordering the Yakima valley cut me loose from all communication. No more immigrants were met until I reached the main-traveled route beyond the Columbia River.

The road lay through a forbidding sage plain, or rather an undulating country, covered by shifting sands and dead grass of comparatively scant growth. As the sun rose, the heat became intolerable. The dust, in places, brought vivid memories of the trip across the Plains.

Strive against it as I might, my eyes would strain at the horizon to catch a glimpse of the expected train. Then an intolerable thirst seized upon me and compelled me to leave the road and descend into the valley for water.

I dared not linger off the trail and take chances of missing the expected train. So I went through another stretch of travel, of heat, and of thirst, that lasted until during the afternoon, when I found water on the trail. Tethering my pony for his much-needed dinner, I opened my sack of hard bread to count the contents; my store was half gone. I lay down in the shade of a small tree near the spring to take an afternoon nap. Rousing before sundown, refreshed, Bobby and I took the trail with new courage.

When night came, I could not find it in my heart to camp. The cool of the evening invigorated the pony, and we pushed on. Finding that the road could be followed, though but dimly seen, I kept on the trail until a late hour, when I unsaddled and hobbled the pony. The saddle blanket was brought into use, and I was soon off in dreamland forgetting all about the dust, the trail, or the morrow.

In the morning I awoke to find that the pony had wandered far off on the hillside, so far, in fact, that it required close scanning to discover him. To make matters worse, his hobbles had become loosened, giving him free use of all his feet, and he was in no mood to take the trail again. Coaxing was of no avail, driving would do no good. Taking an opportunity to seize his tail, I followed him around about over the plain and through the sage brush at a rapid gait; finally he slackened pace and I again became master.

For the life of me I could not be sure of the direction of the trail after all this roaming over the plain at Bobby's heels, but I happened to take the right course. When the trail was found, there was the saddle to look for, and this was located with some difficulty.

The sun was high when we started on our journey. A few hundred yards of travel brought uneasiness, as it was evident that we were not on the regular trail. Not knowing but this was some cut-off, I went on until the Columbia River bluff was reached and the great river was in sight, half a mile distant and several hundred feet lower. Taking a trail down the bluff that seemed more promising than the wagon tracks, I began to search for the road at the foot of the bluff, only to find every semblance of a road gone. I lost more than a half-day's precious time, and again was thrown into anxiety lest I had missed the long-sought train.

The next incident that I remember vividly was my attempt to cross the Columbia, just below the mouth of the Snake River. I had seen but few Indians on the whole trip and, in fact, the camp I found there on the bank of the great river was the first I distinctly remember coming upon. I could not induce the Indians to cross me over; they seemed surly and unfriendly. Their behavior was so in contrast to that of the Indians on the Sound that I could not help wondering what it meant. No one, to my knowledge, lost his life at the hands of the Indians that season, but the next summer all or nearly all the travelers who ventured into that country unprotected were murdered.

That night I camped late, opposite Wallula (old Fort Walla Walla), in a sand storm of great fury. I tethered my pony this time, and rolled myself up in the blanket, only to find myself fairly buried in the drifting sand in the morning. It required a

great effort to creep out of the blanket, and an even greater effort to free the blanket from the accumulated sand. By this time the wind had gone down and comparative calm prevailed.

Then came the attempt to make myself heard across the wide river by the people of the fort. I traveled up and down the river bank for half a mile or so, in the hope of catching a favorable breeze to carry my voice to the fort, yet all to no avail. I sat upon the bank hopelessly discouraged, not knowing what to do. I must have been two hours hallooing at the top of my voice, until I was hoarse from the violent effort.

Finally, while sitting there wondering what to do, I spied a blue smoke arising from a cabin on the other side. Soon after I saw a man; he immediately responded to my renewed efforts to attract attention. The trouble had been that the people were all asleep, while I was there in the early morning expending my breath for nothing.

The man was Shirley Ensign, of Olympia, who had established a ferry across the Columbia River and had lingered to set over belated immigrants, if any should come along. He came across the river and gave me glad tidings. He had been out on the trail fifty miles or more and had met my people. They were camped some thirty miles away, he thought, and they would reach the ferry on the following day.

But I could not wait there for them. Procuring a fresh horse, I started out in a cheerful mood, determined to reach camp that night if I could possibly do so. Sundown came, and there were no signs of camp. Dusk came on, and still no signs. Then I spied some cattle grazing on the upland, and soon came upon the camp in a ravine that had shut it from view.

Rejoicing and outbursts of grief followed. I inquired for my mother the first thing. She was not there. Months before she had been buried in the sands of the Platte valley. My younger brother also lay buried on the Plains, near Independence Rock. The scene that followed is of too sacred memory to write about.

When we came to consider how the party should proceed, I advised the over-mountain trip. But I cautioned them to expect some snow and much hard work.

"How long will it take?" they asked.

"About three weeks."

This brought disappointment; they had thought they were about through with the journey.

"You came to stay with us, didn't you?"

"I want to; but what about my wife and the two babies, at the island?"

Father said some one must go and look after them. So Oliver was sent ahead, while I was to take his place and help the immigrants through the Natchess Pass.

In our train were fifty or more head of stock, seven wagons, and seventeen people. We made the trip across the divide in twenty-two days without serious mishap or loss. This was good time, considering the difficulties that beset our way at every step. Every man literally "put his shoulder to the wheel." We were compelled often to take hold of the wheels to boost the wagons over the logs or to ease them down steep places. Our force was divided into three groups,—one man to each wagon to drive; four to act as wheelmen; father and the women, on foot or horseback, to drive the stock. God bless the women folks of the Plains! Nobler, braver, more uncomplaining souls were never known. I have often thought that some one ought to write a just tribute to their valor and patience, a book of their heroic deeds.

One day we encountered a newly fallen tree, cocked up on its own upturned roots, four feet from the ground. Go around it we could not; to cut it out with our dulled, flimsy saw seemed an endless task.

"Dig down, boys," said father, and in short order every available shovel was out of the wagons. Very soon the way was open fully four feet deep, and oxen and wagons passed under the obstruction.

Do you say that we endured great hardships? That depends upon the point of view. As to this return trip, I can truly say for myself that it was not one of hardship. I enjoyed overcoming the difficulties, and so did the greater number of the company. Many of them, it is true, were weakened by the long trip across the Plains; but better food was obtainable, and the goal was near at hand. It was a positive pleasure, therefore, to pass over the miles, one by one, assured that final success was a matter of only a very short time.

When our little train at last emerged from the forests and came out into the Nisqually plains, it was almost as if we had come into a noonday sun from a dungeon, so marked was the contrast. Hundreds of cattle, sheep, and horses were quietly grazing, scattered over the landscape as far as one could see. The spirits of the tired party rose as they looked upon this scene, indicating a contentment and prosperity in which they might participate if they so desired.

Our cabin, eighteen feet square, could not hold all the visitors. However, it was an easy matter to set up the three tents they had brought with them, and for several days we held a true reunion. Great was the feasting, with clam bakes, huckleberry pies and puddings, venison for meat, and fresh vegetables from our garden, at which the newcomers could not cease from marveling. The row of sweet peas that my wife had planted near the cabin helped to put heart into those travel-weary pioneers; where flowers could be planted, a home could be made.

For a short time the little party halted to take breath and to look over the new country. This rest, however, could not last long. Preparations must be made without delay for shelter from the coming storms of winter; the stock must be cared for, and other beginnings made for a new life of independence.

After surveying the situation, father said the island home would not do. He had come two thousand miles to live neighbors; I must give up my claim and take up another near his, on the mainland. Abandoning the results of more than a year's hard work, I acted upon his request, and across the bay we built our third cabin.

Chapter 9

INDIAN WAR DAYS

ONE of the saddest chapters in the early history of Washington Territory was the trouble with the Indians, which led finally to open war.

On October 28, 1855, word came that all the settlers living on White River had been killed by the Indians and that the next day those in the Puyallup valley would be massacred. At the risk of his life a friendly Indian brought this news to us in the dead hours of the night.

The massacre had occurred less than twenty miles from where we lived. For all we knew the Indians might be on us at any moment. There were three men of us, and each had a gun.

The first thing we did was to harness and hitch the team to the wagon. Then we opened the gates to let the calves get to their mothers, turned the pigs loose, and opened the chicken-house door—all this without light. Then the drive for our lives began, the women and babies lying close to the bottom of the wagon, the men with guns ready for action.

We reached Fort Steilacoom unmolested. But we could not in safety stop there. The place was really no fort at all, only an encampment, and it was already filled with refugees from the surrounding settlements. So we pushed on into the town and stayed there until a blockhouse was built.

This building was about fifty feet wide and nearly a hundred feet long. It was bullet-proof, without windows, and two stories high. A heavy door swung at the front entrance to the lower story, while an inclined walk from higher ground in the rear enabled us to reach the upper story; inside, a ladder served the purpose of a stairway between the two stories.

The blockhouse proved a haven of safety during the Indian trouble, not only to our own family but to many of our

neighbors besides. Seventy-five such houses were built during these troublous times. Numbers of settlers did not go back to their homes for several years.

The Indians finally came in force just across the Sound and defied the troops. They also prevented the soldiers from landing from the steamer sent against them. A few days later we heard the guns from Fort Nisqually, which, however, I have always thought was a false alarm. It was when a captive child was brought in that we began to feel the gravity of the situation.

Yet many of our fears turned out to be baseless. For instance, one day Johnny Boatman, a little boy not quite four years old, was lost. His mother was almost crazed, for word went out that the Indians had stolen him. A day later the lad was found under a tree, asleep. He had simply wandered away.

A perplexing feature of the whole affair came from the fact that there were two warring camps among the forces of both the Indians and the whites. Some of the Indians were friendly; we had ample proof of that fact. Some of the whites were against the harsh measures taken by those in charge. This dissension led to much unnecessary trouble and bloodshed.

The war was brought on by the fact that the Indians had been wronged. This seems certain. They had been robbed of their lands, by the treaties made in 1854, and there had been atrocious murders of Indians by irresponsible white men. The result was suffering and trouble for all of us.

The war brought troops, many of whom were reckless men; the army then was not up to the standard of today. Besides, there came in the wake of the soldiers a trail of gamblers and other disreputable people to vex and perplex us. In the blockhouses could be seen bullet marks which we knew did not come from Indians.

I remember a little drummer boy, known as Scotty, who used frequently to come over to our home. He was a bright little fellow, and the Colonel, finding it was agreeable to us, encouraged him to make these visits, perhaps to get him away a little from the rough life of the post. Scotty had been living with a soldier there who, as report had it, used to get drunk and beat his wife. When my wife asked Scotty one day if the soldier abused his wife, he replied, "Well, I can't say exactly that he

abuses her. He only cuffs and kicks her around the house sometimes." Poor boy! he had seen so much rough living that he didn't know what abuse meant.

Not all the soldiers were of this drunken cast, of course. Many brave and noble men were among the military forces. The Indians, naturally, did not discriminate between good and bad soldiers. They hated and fought the troops, while at the same time they would often protect the pioneers, with whom they had been generally friendly.

I had lived in peace with these Indians and they had gained my confidence. As events subsequently showed, I held their friendship and confidence. At one time, during the war, a party of Indians held me harmless within their power. They had said they would not harm those who had advocated their cause at the time the treaties were made.

Soon after the outbreak noted, I disregarded the earnest entreaties of many persons and went back to my stock and to the cabin to care for the abandoned dairy and young cattle.

I did not believe the Indians would molest me, but took the precaution of having my rifle in a convenient place. I did not need to use it. When nightfall came I did withdraw from my cabin, not from fear of war parties, but of individual outlaws.

The sole military experience of my life consisted in an expedition to the Puyallup valley with a company of seventeen settlers soon after the outbreak described. The settlers of Puyallup had left their homes the day after the massacre in such haste that they were almost destitute of clothing, bedding, and food, as well as shelter. A strong military force had penetrated the Indian country—the upper Puyallup valley and beyond. We knew of this, but did not know that the soldiers had retreated by another road, virtually driven out, the very day we went in armed with all sorts of guns and with scarcely any organization.

We had gone into the Indian stronghold not to fight Indians, but to recover property. Nevertheless, there would have been hot work if we had been attacked. The settlers knew the country as well as did the Indians and were prepared to meet them on their own ground and in their own way.

The Indians were in great force but a few miles distant. They had scouts on our tracks, but did not molest us. We visited

every settler's cabin and secured the belongings not destroyed. On the sixth day we came away with great loads of "plunder." All the while we were in blissful ignorance that the troops had been withdrawn, and that no protection lay between us and the Indian forces.

After this outbreak, Indians and settlers about our neighborhood lived in peace, on the whole. To anyone who treated them fairly, the Indians became loyal friends.

Mowich Man, an Indian whom I was to know during many years, was one of our neighbors. He frequently passed our cabin with his canoe and people. He was a great hunter, a crack shot, and an all-round Indian of good parts. Many is the saddle of venison that he brought me in the course of years. Other pioneers likewise had special friends among the Indians.

Some of Mowich Man's people were fine singers. His camp, or his canoe if he was traveling, was always the center for song and merriment. It is a curious fact that one seldom can get the Indian music by asking for it, but rather must wait for its spontaneous outburst. Indian songs in those days came from nearly every nook and corner and seemed to pervade the whole country. We often could hear the songs and accompanying stroke of the paddle long before we saw the floating canoes.

Chapter 10

THE STAMPEDE FOR THE GOLD DIGGINGS

HARDLY had we got fairly over the Indian War when another wave of excitement broke up our pioneer plans again. On March 21, 1858, the schooner *Wild Pigeon* arrived at Steilacoom with the news that the Indians had discovered gold on Fraser River, that they had traded several pounds of the precious metal with the Hudson's Bay Company, and that three hundred people had left Victoria and its vicinity for the new land of El Dorado. Furthermore, the report ran, the mines were exceedingly rich.

The wave of excitement that went through the little settlement upon the receipt of this news was repeated in every town and hamlet of the whole Pacific Coast. It continued even around the world, summoning adventurous spirits from all civilized countries of the earth.

Everybody, women folk and all, wanted to go, and would have started pell mell had there not been that restraining influence of the second thought, especially powerful with people who had just gone through the mill of adversity. My family was still in the blockhouse that we had built in the town of Steilacoom during the Indian War. Our cattle were peacefully grazing on the plains a few miles away.

One of the local merchants, Samuel McCaw, bundled up a few goods, made a flying trip up Fraser River, and came back with fifty ounces of gold dust and the news that the mines were all that had been reported and more, too. This of course, added fuel to the flame. We all believed a new era had dawned upon us, similar to that of ten years before in California, which changed the world's history. High hopes were built, most of them to end in disappointment.

Not but that there were extensive mines, and that they were rich, and that they were easily worked; how to get to them was the puzzling question. The early voyagers had slipped up the Fraser before the freshets came down from the melting snows to swell the torrents of that river. Those going later either failed altogether and gave up the unequal contest, or lost an average of one canoe or boat out of three in the persistent attempt. How many lives were lost never will be known.

Contingents began to arrive in Steilacoom from Oregon, from California, and finally from "the States." Steamers great and small began to appear, with little cargo but with passenger lists that were said to be nothing compared to those of ships coming in less than a hundred miles to the north of us. These people landing in Whatcom in such great numbers must be fed, we agreed. If the multitude would not come to us to drink the milk of our cows and eat their butter, what better could we do than to take our cows to the place where we were told the multitude did not hesitate to pay a dollar a gallon for milk and any price one might ask for fresh butter!

But how to get even to Whatcom was the rub. All space on the steamers was taken from week to week for freight and passengers, and no room was left for cattle. In fact, the run on provisions for the gold rush was so great that at one time we were almost threatened with famine. Finally our cattle, mostly cows, were loaded in an open scow and taken in tow alongside the steamer, the *Sea Bird*, I think it was.

All went well enough until we arrived off the head of Whidby Island. Here a choppy sea from a light wind began slopping over the scow and evidently would sink us despite our utmost efforts at bailing. When the captain would slow down the speed of his steamer, all was well; but the moment greater power was applied, over the gunwales would come the water.

The dialogue that ensued between the captain and me was more emphatic than elegant. He dared not risk letting go of us, however, or of running us under, for fear of incurring the risk of heavy damages. I would not consent to be landed. So about the twentieth of June we were set adrift in Bellingham Bay and, tired and sleepy, landed on the beach.

Our cows must have feed, they must be milked, the milk must be marketed. There was no rest for us during another

thirty-six hours. In fact, there was but little sleep for anybody on that beach at the time. Several ocean steamers had just dumped three thousand people on the beach, and there was still a scramble to find a place to build a house or stretch a tent, or even to spread a blanket, for there were great numbers already there, landed by previous steamers. The staking of lots on the tide flats at night, when the tide was out, seemed to be a staple industry.

A few days after my arrival four steamers came with an aggregate of more than two thousand passengers. Many of these, however, did not leave the steamer; they took passage either to their port of departure—San Francisco or Victoria—or to points on the Sound. The ebb tide had set in, and although many steamers came later and landed passengers, their return lists soon became large and the population began to diminish.

Taking my little dory that we had with us on the scow, I rowed to the largest steamer lying at anchor. So many small boats surrounded the steamer that I could not get within a hundred feet of it. All sorts of craft filled the intervening space, from the smallest Indian canoe to large barges, the owner of each craft striving to secure customers.

The great difficulty was to find a trail to the gold fields. This pass and that pass was tried without success. I saw sixty men with heavy packs on their backs start out in one company. Every one of these had to come back after floundering in the mountains for weeks. The Indians, among whom the spirit of war still smouldered, headed off some of the parties. The snows kept back others; and finally the British, watching their own interests, blocked the way through their land. As a result the boom burst, and people resought their old homes.

It is doubtful if another stampede of such dimensions as that to the Fraser in 1858 ever occurred where the suffering was so great, the prizes so few, and the loss of life proportionately so great. Probably not one in ten that made the effort reached the mines, and of those who did the usual percentage drew the blanks inevitable in such stampedes. And yet the mines were immensely rich; many millions of dollars of gold came from the find in the lapse of years, and gold is still coming, though now more than sixty years have passed.

While the losses of the people of the Puget Sound country were great, nevertheless good came out of the great stampede in the large accession of population that remained after the return tide was over. Many people had become stranded and could not leave the country, but went to work with a will to make a living there. Of these not a few are still honored citizens of the state that has been carved out of the territory of that day.

Chapter 11

MAKING A PERMANENT HOME IN THE WILDS

THE days that followed our venture in the gold field were more peaceful and prosperous. Soon after the Indian War we had moved to a new claim. We began now to realize to the full our dream of earlier days, to settle on a farm and build a home.

Three neighbors were all we had, and the nearest lived nearly two miles away. Two of them kept bachelor's hall. The thick, high timber made it impossible for us to see any of our neighbors' houses. We could reach only one by a road; to the others we might go by a trail. Under such conditions we could not have a public school. This, however, did not keep us from having a school of our own.

One day one of our farther-off neighbors, who lived more than four miles away, came to visit us. Naturally the children flocked around him to hear his stories in broad Scotch and to ply him with questions. In his turn, he began to ask them questions. One of these was, "When do you expect to go to school?"

"Oh, we have school now," responded the children. "We have school every day."

"And pray, who is your teacher, and where is your schoolhouse?"

"Father teaches us at home every morning before breakfast. He hears the lessons then, and mother helps us too."

"Your father told me a while ago that you had your breakfast at six o'clock. What time do you get up?"

"Why, father sets the clock for half-past four, and that gives us an hour while mother gets breakfast, you know."

Boys and girls of today may pity those poor pioneer children who had to get up so early. They may as well dismiss such feelings from their hearts. The children were cheerful and healthy;

they did some work during the day in addition to studying their lessons; and besides they went to bed earlier than some boys and girls do these days.

In January 1861 the wreck of the steamer *Northerner* brought great sorrow to us, for my brother Oliver was among those lost. The ship struck on an uncharted rock.

During the stay at Steilacoom in the time of the Indian troubles, we had begun a trading venture, in a small way. The venture having proved successful, we invested all our savings in a new stock of merchandise, and this stock, not all paid for, went down with the ship. Again we must start in life, and we moved to a new location, a homestead in the Puyallup valley. Here we lived and farmed for forty-one years, seeing the town of Puyallup grow up on and around the homestead.

In the Puyallup valley there were more neighbors—two families to the square mile. Yet no neighbors were in sight, because the timber and underbrush were so thick we could scarcely see two rods from the edge of our clearing. But the neighbors were near enough for us to provide a public school and build a schoolhouse.

Some of the neighbors took their axes to cut the logs, some their oxen to drag them, others their saws and cleaving tools to make clapboards for the roof. Others again, more handy with tools, made the benches out of split logs, or, as we called them, puncheons. With willing hands to help, the schoolhouse soon received the finishing touches.

The side walls were scarcely high enough for the doorway, so one was cut in the end. The door hung on wooden hinges, which squeaked a good deal when the door was opened or shut; but the children did not mind that. The roof answered well enough for the ceiling overhead, and a cut in one of the logs on each side made two long, narrow windows for light. The children sat with their faces to the walls, with long shelves in front of them, while the smaller tots sat on low benches near the middle of the room. When the weather would permit, the teacher left the door open to admit more light. There was no need to let in more fresh air, as the roof was quite open and the cracks between the logs let in plenty of it.

Sometimes we had a woman for teacher, and then the salary was smaller, as she boarded around. That meant some

discomfort for her during part of the time, where the surroundings were not pleasant.

One day little Carrie, my daughter, started to go to school, but soon came running back out of breath.

"Mamma! Mamma! I saw a great big cat sharpening his claws on a great big tree, just the way pussy does!" she said as soon as she could catch her breath.

Sure enough, upon examination, there were the marks of a cougar as high up on the tree as I could reach. It must have been a big one to reach so far up the tree. But the incident soon dropped out of mind and the children went to school on the trail as if nothing had happened.

Afterwards I met a cougar on a lonely trail in the woods near where Auburn now stands. I had been attempting to drive some wild cattle home, but they were so unruly that they scattered through the timber and I was obliged to go on without them late in the day. The forest was so dense that it was hard to see the road even when the sun was shining; on a cloudy day it seemed almost like night, though I could see well enough to keep on the crooked trail.

Just before I got to Stuck River crossing I came to a turn in the trail where it crossed the top of a big fir that had been turned up by the roots and had fallen nearly parallel with the trail. The big roots held the butt of the tree up from the ground. I think the tree was four feet in diameter a hundred feet from the butt, and the whole body, from root to top, was eighty-four steps long, or about two hundred and fifty feet.

I didn't stop to step it then. But you may be sure I took some pretty long strides about that time; for just as I stepped over the fallen tree near the top, I saw something move on the big body near the roots. The thing was coming right towards me. In an instant I realized that it was a great cougar. He was pretty, but he did not look especially pleasing to me.

I didn't know what to do. I had no gun with me, and I knew perfectly well there was no use to run. Was I scared, did you say? Did you ever have creepers run up your back and right to the roots of your hair, and nearly to the top of your head?

Did the cougar hurt me? If I had been hurt I shouldn't have been here to tell you this story. The fun of it was that the cougar hadn't seen me yet, but as soon as he did he scampered off

as if the Old Harry himself were after him, while I sped off down the trail as if old Beelzebub were after me.

But no wild animals ever harmed us, and we did not die for want of food, clothing, or shelter, although we did have some experiences that were trying. Before the clearings were large we sometimes were pinched for both food and clothing. I will not say we suffered much for either, though I know that some families at times lived on potatoes, straight. Usually fish could be had in abundance, and there was considerable game—some bear and plenty of deer.

The clothing gave us more trouble, as but little money came to us for the small quantity of produce we had to spare. I remember one winter when we were at our wits' ends for shoes. We just could not get money to buy shoes enough to go around, but we managed to get leather to make each member of the family one pair. We killed a pig to get bristles for the wax-ends, cut the pegs from alder log and seasoned them in the oven, and made the lasts out of the same timber. Those shoes were clumsy, to be sure; but they kept our feet dry and warm, and we felt thankful for them and sorry for some neighbors' children, who had to go barefooted even in quite cold weather. Carrie once had a pair of nice white shoes "for best," I remember, that one of her brothers made for her, with buckskin uppers and light tan-colored soles.

You must not think that we had no recreation and that we were a sorrowful set. There was never a happier lot of people than these same hard-working pioneers and their families. We had joy in our home life, and amusements as well as labor.

Music was our greatest pleasure. We never tired of it. "Uncle John," as every one called him, the old teacher, was constantly teaching the children music; so it soon came about they could read their music as readily as they could their school books.

No Christmas ever went by without a Christmas tree, at which the whole neighborhood joined. The Fourth of July was never passed without a celebration. We made the presents for the tree if we could not buy them, and supplied the musicians, reader, and orator for the celebration. Everybody had something to do and a voice in saying what should be done, and that very fact made all happy.

It was sixteen miles to our market town, Steilacoom, over the roughest kind of road. Nobody had horse teams at the start; we had to go with ox teams. We could not make the trip out and back in one day, and we did not have money to pay hotel bills. We managed in this way: we would drive out part of the way and camp; the next morning we would drive into town very early, do our trading, and if possible, drive back home the same day. If not able to do this, we camped on the road again. But if the night was not too dark we would reach home that night. And oh, what an appetite we would have, and how bright the fire would be, and how joyous the welcome in the cabin home!

The trees and stumps are all gone now and brick buildings and other good houses occupy much of the land. As many people now live in that school district as lived both east and west of the mountains when the Territory was created in March of 1853. Instead of going in ox teams, or even sleds, the people have carriages or automobiles; they can travel on any of the eighteen passenger trains that pass daily through Puyallup, or on street cars to Tacoma, and also on some of the twenty to twenty-four freight trains, some of which are a third of a mile long. Such are some of the changes wrought in fifty years since pioneer life began in the Puyallup valley.

Chapter 12

FINDING AND LOSING A FORTUNE

OUR youthful dream of becoming farmers was now realized in fullest measure. The clearing was gradually enlarged, and abundant crops came to reward our efforts. The comfort and plenty we had hoped and struggled for was attained. Next came a development in the family fortunes that we had not dreamed of. Never had we thought to see the Meeker family conducting a business that would require a London office.

This unexpected prosperity came to us through the hop-growing industry, upon which we entered with all our force. The business was well started by the time of my father's death in 1869, and in the fifteen years following the acreage planted to hops was increased until the crop-yield of 1882, a yield of more than seventy-one tons, gave the Puyallup valley the banner crop, as to quantity, of the United States—and, some persons asserted, of the world.

The public, generally, gave me the credit of introducing hop culture into the Northwest. Therefore it seems fitting to tell here the story of the beginnings of an industry that came to have great importance.

In March of 1865, Charles Wood of Olympia sent about three pecks of hop roots to Steilacoom for my father, Jacob R. Meeker, who then lived on his claim in the Puyallup valley. John V. Meeker, my brother, passed by my cabin when he carried the sack of roots on his back from Steilacoom to my father's home, a distance of about twenty miles, and from the sack I took roots enough to plant six hills of hops. As far as I know those were the first hops planted in the Puyallup valley. My father planted the remainder, and in the following September harvested the equivalent of one bale of hops, 180 pounds.

This was sold for eighty-five cents a pound, or a little more than a hundred and fifty dollars for the bale.

This sum was more money than had been received by any of the settlers in the Puyallup valley, except perhaps two, from the products of their farms for that year. My father's near neighbors obtained a barrel of hop roots from California the next year, and planted them the following spring—four acres. I obtained what roots I could get that year, but not enough to plant an acre. The following year (1867) I planted four acres, and for twenty-six successive years thereafter we added to the area planted, until our holdings reached past the five-hundred-acre mark and our production was more than four hundred tons a year.

None of us knew anything about the hop business, and it was entirely by accident that we engaged in it. But seeing that there were possibilities of great gain, I took pains to study hop culture, and found that by allowing our hops to mature thoroughly, curing them at a low temperature, and baling them while hot, we could produce hops that would compete with any product in the world. Others of my neighbors planted them, and so did many people in Oregon, until soon there came to be a field for purchasing and shipping hops. But the fluctuations in price were so great that in a few years many growers became discouraged and lost their holdings.

Finally, during the failure of the world's hop crop in the year 1882, there came to be unheard-of prices for hops, and fully one third of the crop of the Puyallup valley was sold for a dollar a pound. I had that year nearly one hundred thousand pounds, which brought an average of seventy cents a pound.

My first hop house was built in 1868—a log house. It still stands in Pioneer Park in Puyallup. We frequently employed more than a thousand people during harvest time. Many of these were Indians, some of whom would come for a thousand miles down the coast from British Columbia and even the confines of Alaska; they came in the great cedar-log canoes manned with twenty paddlers or more. For the most part I managed my Indian workers very easily. Once I had to tie up two of them to a tree for getting drunk; their friends came and stole away the prisoners—which was what I intended they should do.

It was in 1870, eighteen years after my arrival from across the Plains, that I made my first return journey to the States. I had to go through the mud to the Columbia River, then out over the bar to the Pacific Ocean, and down to San Francisco. Then there was the seven days' journey over the Central and Union Pacific and connecting lines; this meant sitting bolt upright all the way, for there were no sleeping cars then, and no diners either.

About 1882 I had come to realize that the important market for hops was in England, and E. Meeker & Co. began sending trial shipments, first seven bales, then the following year five hundred bales, then fifteen hundred. Finally our annual shipments reached eleven thousand bales a year, or the equivalent in value of half a million dollars—said at that time to be the largest export hop business of any one concern in the United States. At one time I had two full trainloads between the Pacific and the Atlantic, on their way to London. I spent four winters in London dealing in the hop market.

Little as I had thought ever to handle an international business, still less had I thought ever to write a book. My first publication was an eighty-page pamphlet descriptive of Washington Territory, printed in 1870. My first real book, *Hop Culture in the United States*, was published in 1883. I mention this fact simply as one instance out of the many that could be given of the unexpected lines of development that life in the new land opened out to the pioneers.

The hop business could not be called a venture; it was simply a growth. The conditions were favorable to us in that we could produce hops for the world's market at the lowest prices. We actually pressed the English growers so closely that more than fifteen thousand acres of hops were destroyed in that country.

Our great prosperity was not to last. One evening in 1892, as I stepped out of my office and cast my eyes toward one group of hop houses, it struck me that the hop foliage of a field near by was off color—did not look natural. One of my clerks from the office said the same thing—the vines did not look natural. I walked down to the yards, a quarter of a mile away, and there first saw the hop louse. The yard was literally alive with lice, and they were destroying at least the quality of the hops. I issued a hop circular, sending it to more than six hundred

correspondents all along the coast in California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, and before the week was out I began to receive samples from them, and letters asking what was the matter with the hops.

It appeared that the attack of lice was simultaneous in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, extending over a distance coastwise of more than five hundred miles, and even inland up the Skagit River, where there was an isolated yard. This plague was like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky to us.

I sent my second son, Fred Meeker, to London to learn the English methods of fighting the pest and to import some spraying machinery. We found to our cost, however, in the course of time, that the English methods did not suit our different conditions; for while we could kill the lice, we had to use so much spraying material on the dense foliage that, in killing them, we virtually destroyed the hops. Instead of being able to sell our hops at the top price of the market, we saw our product fall to the foot of the list. The last crop I raised cost me eleven cents a pound and sold for three under the hammer at sheriff's sale.

At that time I had advanced to my neighbors and others upon their hop crops more than a hundred thousand dollars, which was lost. These people simply could not pay, and I forgave the debt, taking no judgments against them, and I have never regretted the action. All my accumulations were swept away, and I quit the business—or, rather, the business quit me.

After a long struggle with the hop plague, nearly all the hops were plowed up and the land in the Puyallup valley and elsewhere was used for dairy farming, fruit growing, and general crops. It is actually of a higher value now than when it was bearing hops.

Chapter 13

TRYING FOR A FORTUNE IN ALASKA

AFTER the failure of the hop business, I was left more or less at sea for some years. I tried various other projects—among them the raising of sugar beets. The country, we soon found, was not adapted to this industry. Then I tried banking, likewise with little success. Finally I decided to strike out for the mines of Alaska. This adventure, taken when I was nearly three score and ten years of age, was full of exciting experiences. Indeed, it left me richer only in experience.

I had lived in the old Oregon country forty-four years and had never seen a mine. Mining had had no attraction for me. But when my accumulations had all been swallowed up, I decided to take a chance. In the spring of 1898 I made my first trip over the Chilkoot Pass, went down the Yukon river to Dawson in a flatboat, and ran the famous White Horse Rapids with my load of vegetables for the Klondike miners.

One may read most graphic descriptions of Chilkoot Pass; but the difficulties met by those earlier fortune-seekers who tried it were worse than the wildest fancy can picture. I started in with fifteen tons of freight and got through with nine. On one stretch of two thousand feet, I paid forty dollars a ton. Some others paid even more.

The trip part of the way reminded me of the scenes on the Plains in 1852, when the people and teams crowded each other on the several parallel trails. At the pass, most of the travel came upon one track, and that so steep the ascent could be made only by cutting steps in the ice and snow—fifteen hundred steps in all. Frequently every step would be full, while crowds jostled each other at the foot of the ascent to get into the single file, each man carrying a hundred-pound pack on his back.

After all sorts of trying experiences, I finally arrived in Dawson, where I sold my fresh potatoes at thirty-six dollars a bushel and other things at proportionate prices. In two weeks I started up the river, homeward bound, with two hundred ounces of Klondike gold in my belt. But four round trips in two years satisfied me that I did not want any more of such experiences.

Once, fortunately, I was detained for a couple of days, and thereby escaped an avalanche that buried fifty-two other people in the snow. I passed by the morgue the second day after the catastrophe on my way to the summit, doubtless over the bodies of many unknown dead, embedded so deeply in the snow that it was utterly impossible to recover them.

The good ducking I received in my first passage through the White Horse Rapids made me resolve I would not go through there again. But I did it on the very next trip that same year, and came out of it dry. Again, when going down the Thirty-Mile River, it did seem that we could not escape being dashed upon the rocks. But somehow or other we got through safely, though the bank was strewn with wrecks and the waters had swallowed up many victims.

When the Yukon proper was reached, the current was less swift, but the shoals were numerous. More than once we were "hung up" on the bar, each time uncertain how we should get off. No mishap resulted, except once when a hole was jammed into the scow, and we thought we were "goners" for sure; but we effected a landing so quickly that we unloaded our cargo dry.

While I now blame myself for taking such risks, I must admit that I enjoyed it. I was sustained, no doubt, by high hopes of coming out with my "pile." But fate or something else was against me, for mining ventures swept all my gains away "slick as a mitten," as the old phrase goes. I came out over the rotten ice of the Yukon in April of 1901 to stay, and to vow I never wanted to see another mine or visit another mining country.

In two weeks after my arrival home my wife and I celebrated our golden wedding. There was nothing but a golden welcome home, even if I had not returned with my pockets filled with gold.

Since I was then past my allotted three score years and ten, it naturally seemed that my ventures were at an end. But for many of these years I had been cherishing a dream that I felt must come true to round out my days most satisfactorily. I longed to go back over the old Oregon Trail and mark it for all time for the children of the pioneers who blazed it, and for the world. How that dream was made to come true is the story to be told in the succeeding part of this book of pioneer stories.

Part 3
RETRACING THE OLD OREGON TRAIL

Chapter 1

A PLAN FOR A MEMORIAL TO THE PIONEERS

THE ox is passing—in fact, has passed. The old-time spinning wheel and the hand loom, the quaint old cobbler's bench with its handmade lasts and shoe pegs, the heavy iron mush pot on the crane in the chimney corner,—all have gone. The men and women of sixty years or more ago are passing, too. All are laid aside for what is new in the drama of life. While these old-time ways and scenes and actors have had their day, yet the experiences and the lessons they taught are not lost to the world.

The difference between a civilized and an untutored people lies in the application of experiences. The civilized man builds upon the foundations of the past, with hope and ambition for the future. The savage has neither past nor aspiration for the future. To keep the flame of patriotism alive, we must keep the memory of the past vividly before us.

It was with these thoughts in mind that the expedition to mark the old Oregon Trail was undertaken. There was this further thought, that on this trail heroic men and women had fought a veritable battle—a battle that wrested half a continent from the native race and from another mighty nation contending for mastery in unknown regions of the West. To mark the field of that battle for future generations was a duty waiting for some one; I determined to be the one to fulfill it.

The journey back over the old Oregon Trail by ox team was made during my seventy-seventh year. On January 29, 1906, I left my home in Puyallup, Washington, and on November 29, 1907, just twenty-two months later to the day, I reached Washington, our national capital, with my cattle and my old prairie schooner. Not all of this time was spent in travel, of course; a good deal of it was taken up in furthering the purpose of the

trip by arranging for the erection and dedication of monuments to mark the Trail.

To accomplish the purpose of marking the trail would have been enough to make the journey worth while to me, besides all the interest of freshening my recollections of old times and reviving old memories. There is not space in this book to dwell on all the contrasts that came to my mind constantly,—of the uncleared forests with the farms and orchards of today, of the unbroken prairie lands with the ranches and farms and cities that now border the old trail from the Rockies to the Mississippi. There is nothing like an ox-team journey, I maintain, to make a person realize this country, realize its size, the number of its people, and the variety of conditions in which they live and of occupations by which they live. I wish I could share with every boy and girl in the country the panorama view that unrolled itself before me in this journey from tidewater to tidewater.

The ox team was chosen as a typical reminder of pioneer days. The Oregon Trail, it must be remembered, is essentially an ox-team trail. No more effective instrument, therefore, could have been chosen to attract attention, arouse enthusiasm, and secure aid in forwarding the work, than this living symbol of the old days.

Indeed, too much attention, in one sense, was attracted. I had scarcely driven the outfit away from my own dooryard before the wagon and wagon cover, and even the map of the old trail on the sides of the cover, began to be defaced. First I noticed a name or two written on the wagon bed, then a dozen or more, all stealthily placed there, until the whole was so closely covered that there was no room for more. Finally the vandals began carving initials on the wagon bed and cutting off pieces to carry away. Eventually I put a stop to such vandalism by employing special police, posting notices, and nabbing some offenders in the very act.

Give me Indians on the Plains to contend with; give me fleas or even the detested sage-brush ticks to burrow into the flesh; but deliver me from cheap notoriety seekers!

I had decided to take along one helper, and a man by the name of Herman Goebel went as far as The Dalles with the outfit. There William Marden joined me for the journey across the

Plains. Marden stayed with me for three years, and proved to be faithful and helpful.

And now a word as to my oxen. The first team consisted of one seven-year-old ox, Twist, and one unbroken five-year-old range steer, Dave. When we were ready to start, Twist weighed 1,470 pounds and Dave 1,560. This order of weight was soon changed. In three months' time Twist gained 130 pounds and Dave lost 80. All this time I fed them with a lavish hand all the rolled barley I dared give and all the hay they would eat.

Dave would hook and kick and perform every other mean trick. Besides, he would stick his tongue out from the smallest kind of exertion. He had just been shipped in off the Montana cattle range and had never had a rope on him, unless it was when he was branded. Like a great over-grown booby of a boy, he was flabby in flesh, and he could not endure any sort of exertion without discomfort. At one time I became very nearly discouraged with him.

Yet this was the ox that made the round trip. He bore his end of the yoke from the tidewaters of the Pacific to the tidewaters of the Atlantic, at the Battery, New York City, and on to Washington City to meet the President. He finally became subdued, though not conquered. At times he became threatening with his horns, and I never did trust his heels.

The other ox, Twist, died suddenly on August 9, 1906, and was buried within a few rods of the trail. It was two months to a day after his death before I could find a mate for the Dave ox, and then I had to take another five-year-old steer off the cattle range of Nebraska. This steer, Dandy, evidently had never been handled; but he came of good stock and, with the exception of awkwardness, gave me no serious trouble. Dandy was purchased out of the stockyard at Omaha. He then weighed 1,470 pounds, and the day before he went to see the President he tipped the scales at the 1,760-pound notch. Dandy proved to be a faithful, serviceable ox.

On the journey Dave had to be shod fourteen times, I think, and he always struggled to get away. Once, on the summit of the Rocky Mountains, we had to throw Dave and tie him hard and fast before we could shoe him. It takes two shoes to one foot for an ox, instead of one as for a horse, though the fastening is the same; that is, by nailing into the hoof. At one time

Dandy's hoofs became so worn that I could not fasten a shoe on him, and so I had what we called leather boots put on, that left a track like an elephant's; but he could not pull well with them on.

Besides the oxen we had a dog, Jim. More will be told of him later.

An authentic prairie schooner, a true veteran of the Plains, was out of the question. In building the new one, use was made of parts of three old wagons. The woodwork of the wagon had to be new throughout except for one hub, which had done service across the Plains in 1853. This hub and the bands, boxes, and other iron parts were from two old-time wagons that had crossed the Plains in 1853. They differed somewhat in size and shape; hence the hubs of the fore and hind wheels did not match.

The axles were of wood, with the old-time linchpins and steel skeins, which called for the use of tar and the tar bucket instead of axle grease. Why? Because if grease were used, the spokes would work loose, and soon the whole wheel would collapse. The bed was of the old prairie-schooner style, with the bottom boat-shaped and the ribs on the outside.

My first camp for the return journey over the old trail was made in my own dooryard at Puyallup. This was maintained for several days to give the wagon and team a trial. After the weak points had been strengthened and everything pronounced to be in order, I left home for the long trip.

The first drive was to Seattle through the towns of Sumner, Auburn, and Kent. In Seattle I had a host of friends and acquaintances, and I thought that there I could arouse interest in my plan and secure some aid for it. Nothing came of the effort. My closest friends, on the contrary, tried to dissuade me from going; and, I may say, actually tried to convince others that it would be an act of friendship not to lend any aid to the enterprise. I knew, or thought I knew, that my strength would warrant undertaking the ordeal; I felt sure I could make the trip successfully. But my friends remained unconvinced; so after spending two weeks in Seattle I shipped my outfit by steamer to Tacoma, only to meet the same spirit there.

One pleasant incident broke the monotony. Henry Hewitt, of Tacoma, drove up alongside my team and said, "Meeker, if you

get broke out there on the Plains, just telegraph me for money to come back on."

"No," I said, "I'd rather hear you say to telegraph for money to go on with."

"All right," came the response, "have it that way, then."

Henry drove off, perhaps not giving the conversation a second thought until he received my telegram two months later, telling him that I had lost an ox and wanted him to send me two hundred dollars. The money was immediately wired to me.

Somehow no serious thought of turning back ever entered my mind. When I had once resolved to make the trip, nothing but utter physical disability could deter me. I felt on this point just as I did when I first crossed the Plains in 1852.

From Tacoma I shipped again by steamer to Olympia. The end of the old trail is but two miles distant from Olympia at Tumwater, the extreme southern point of Puget Sound. Here the first American party of homeseekers to Washington rested and settled in 1845. At this point I set a post, and afterwards arranged for a stone to be placed to mark the spot.

On the twentieth of February I went to Tenino, south of Olympia, on the train. My outfit was drawn to this place by a horse team, the oxen being taken along under yoke. Dave was still not an ox, but an unruly steer. I dared not intrust driving him to other hands, yet I had to go ahead to arrange for the monument and the lecture.

The twenty-first of February was a red-letter day. At Tenino I had the satisfaction of helping to dedicate the first monument erected to mark the old trail. The stores were closed, and the school children in a body came over to the dedication. The monument was donated by the Tenino Quarry Company; it is inscribed "Old Oregon Trail: 1843-57."

In the evening I addressed a good-sized audience, and sixteen dollars was received to help on the good work. The spirit of the people, more than the money, was encouraging.

At Chehalis, Washington, the Commercial Club undertook to erect and dedicate a monument. John R. Jackson was the first American citizen to settle north of the Columbia River. One of the daughters, Mrs. Ware, accompanied by her husband, indicated the spot where the monument should be erected, and a

post was planted. A touching incident was that Mrs. Ware was requested to put the post in place and hold it while her husband tamped the earth around it.

At Toledo, the place where the pioneers left the Cowlitz River on the trail to the Sound, another marker was placed by the citizens.

From Toledo I shipped the whole outfit by steamer down the Cowlitz River, and took passage with my assistants to Portland, thus reversing the order of travel in 1853. We used steam instead of the brawn of stalwart pioneers and Indians to propel the boat. On the evening of March the first I pitched my tent in the heart of the city of Portland, on a grassy vacant lot.

On the morning of the tenth of March I took steamer with my outfit, bound up the Columbia for The Dalles. How wondrous the change! Fifty-four years before, I had come floating down this same stream in a flatboat with a party of poor, heartsick pioneers; now I made the trip enjoying cushioned chairs, delicious foods, fine linens, magazines and books—every luxury of civilized life.

That night I arrived at The Dalles, and drove nearly three quarters of a mile to a camping ground near the park. The streets were muddy, and the cattle were impatient and walked very fast, which made it necessary for me to tramp through the mud at their heads. We had no supper or even tea, as we did not build a fire. It was clear that night, but raining in the morning.

Prior to leaving home I had written to the ladies of the Landmark Committee at The Dalles. What should they do but provide a monument already inscribed and in place, and notify me that I had been selected to deliver the dedicatory address!

The weather of the next day treated us to some hardships that I had missed on the first overland journey. Ice formed in the camp half an inch thick, and the high wind joined forces with the damper of our stove, which had got out of order, to fill the tent with smoke and make life miserable.

The fierce, cold wind also made it necessary to postpone the dedication for a day and finally to carry it out with less ceremony than had been planned. Nevertheless, I felt that the expedition was now fairly started. We had reached the point where the real journey would begin, and the interest shown in

the plan by the towns along the way had been most encouraging.

Chapter 2

ON THE OVERLAND TRAIL AGAIN

IT was the fourteenth of March when I drove out of The Dalles to make the long overland journey. By rail, it is 1734 miles from The Dalles to Omaha, where our work of marking the old trail was to end. By wagon road the distance is greater, but not much greater—probably 1800 miles.

The load was very heavy, and so were the roads. With a team untrained to the road and one of the oxen unbroken, with no experienced ox driver to assist me, and the grades heavy, small wonder if a feeling of depression crept over me. On some long hills we could move only a few rods at a time, and on level roads, with the least warm sun, the unbroken ox would poke out his tongue.

We were passing now through the great farming district of eastern Oregon. The desert over which we had dragged ourselves in those long-ago days has been largely turned into great wheat fields. As we drew into camp one night a young man approached, driving eight harnessed horses. He told me that he had harrowed in thirty-five acres of wheat that day, and that it was just a common day's work to plow seven acres of land.

I recalled my boyhood days when father spoke approvingly if I plowed two acres a day, and when to harrow ten acres was the biggest kind of a day's work. I also recalled the time when we cut the wheat with a sickle, or maybe with a hand cradle, and threshed it out with horses on the barn floor. Sometimes we had a fanning mill, and how it would make my arms ache to turn the crank! At other times, if a stiff breeze sprang up, the wheat and chaff would be shaken loose and the chaff would be blown away. If all other means failed, two stout arms at either end of a blanket or a sheet would move the sheet as a fan to

clean the wheat. Now we see the great combination harvester garner thirty acres a day, and thresh it as well and sack it ready for the mill or warehouse. There is no shocking, no stacking or housing: all in one operation, the grain is made ready for market.

As we journeyed eastward, the Blue Mountains came into distant view. Half a day's brisk travel brought us well up toward the snow line. The country became less broken, the soil seemed better, the rainfall had been greater. We began to see red barns and comfortable farmhouses, still set wide apart, though, for the farms are large.

In the Walla Walla valley the scene is different. Smaller farms are the rule and orchards are to be seen everywhere. We now passed the historic spot where the Whitman massacre occurred in 1847. Soon afterward we were in camp in the very heart of the thriving city of Walla Walla. It was near here that I had met my father when I crossed by the Natchess Pass Trail in 1854.

Another day's travel brought us to Pendleton, Oregon. Here the Commercial Club took hold with a will and provided funds for a stone monument. On the last day of March it was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies.

That evening I drove out to the Indian school in a fierce rainstorm to talk to the teachers and pupils about the Oregon Trail. A night in the wagon without fire and with only a scant supper sent my spirits down to zero. Nor did they rise when I learned next morning that the snow had fallen eighteen inches deep in the mountains. However, with this news came a warm invitation from the school authorities to use a room they had allotted to us, with a stove, and to help ourselves to fuel. That cheered us up greatly.

There was doubt whether we could cross the Blue Mountains in all this snow. I decided to investigate; so I took the train. About midnight I was landed in the snow at Meacham, with no visible light in the hotel and no track beaten to it.

Morning confirmed the report of the storm; twenty inches of snow had fallen in the mountains.

An old mountaineer told me, "Yes, it is possible to cross, but I warn you it will be a hard job."

It was at once arranged that the second morning thereafter his team should leave Meacham on the way to meet me.

"But what about a monument, Mr. Burns?" I said. "Meacham is a historic place, with Lee's encampment in sight." (It was in 1834 that the Reverend Jason Lee had crossed the continent with Wyeth's second expedition.)

"We have no money," came the quick reply, "but we've got plenty of muscle. Send us a stone and I'll warrant you the foundation will be built and the monument put in place."

A belated train gave opportunity to return at once to Pendleton, where an appeal for aid to provide an inscribed stone for Meacham was responded to with alacrity. The stone was ordered, and a sound night's sleep followed.

I quote from my journal. "Camp No. 31, April 4, 1906. We are now on the snow line of Blue Mountains (8 P.M.), and am writing this by our first really out-of-doors camp fire, under the spreading boughs of a friendly pine tree. We estimate we have driven twelve miles; started from the school at 7 A.M. The first three or four miles over a beautiful farming country; then we began climbing the foothills, up, up, up, four miles, reaching first snow at three o'clock."

True to promise, the mountaineer's team met us on the way to Meacham, but not till we had reached the snow. We were axle-deep in it and had the shovel in use to clear the way, when Burns came upon us. By night we were safely encamped at Meacham, with the cheering news that the monument had arrived and could be dedicated the next day.

The summit of the mountain had not been reached, and the worst tug lay ahead of us. But casting thoughts of this from mind, all hands turned to the monument, which by eleven o'clock was in place. Twist and Dave stood near it, hitched up, and ready for the start as soon as the order was given. Everybody in town was there, the little school coming in a body. After the speech we moved on to battle with the snow, and finally won our way over the summit.

The sunshine that was let into our hearts at La Grande was also refreshing. "Yes, we will have a monument," the people responded. And they got one, too, dedicating it while I tarried.

We had taken with us an inscribed stone to set up at an intersection near the mouth of Ladd's Canyon, eight miles out of La

Grande. The school near by came in a body. The children sang "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," after which I talked to the assemblage for a few moments, and the exercises closed with all singing "America." Each child brought a stone and cast it upon the pile surrounding the base of the monument.

The citizens of Baker City lent a willing ear to the suggestion to erect a monument on the high-school grounds, although the trail is six miles off to the north, and a fine granite shaft was provided for the high-school grounds and was dedicated. A marker was set on the trail. Eight hundred school children contributed an aggregate of sixty dollars to place a children's bronze tablet on this shaft. Two thousand people participated in the ceremony of dedication.

News of these events was now beginning to pass along the line ahead. As a result the citizens in other places began to take hold of the work with a will. Old Mount Pleasant, Durkee, Huntington, and Vale were other Oregon towns that followed the good lead and erected monuments to mark the old trail. A most gratifying feature of the work was the hearty participation in it of the school children.

Chapter 3

TRAILING ON TO THE SOUTH PASS

THE Snake River was crossed just below the mouth of the Boise, about where, almost fifty-four years before, we had made our second crossing of the river.

We were landed on the historic site of old Fort Boise, established by the Hudson's Bay Company in September, 1834. This fort was established for the purpose of preventing the success of the American venture at Fort Hall, a post established earlier in 1834 by Nathaniel J. Wyeth. Wyeth's venture proved a failure, and the fort soon passed to his rival, the Hudson's Bay Company. Thus for the time being the British had rule of the whole of that vast region known as the Inland Empire, then the Oregon Country.

Some relics of the old fort at Boise were secured. Arrangements were made for planting a doubly inscribed stone to mark the trail and the site of the fort, and afterwards, through the liberality of the citizens of Boise City, a stone was ordered and put in place.

At Boise, the capital of Idaho, there were nearly twelve hundred contributions to the monument fund by the pupils of the public schools. The monument stands on the State House grounds and is inscribed as the children's offering to the memory of the pioneers. More than three thousand people attended the dedication service.

The spirit of coöperation and good will towards the enterprise that was manifested at the capital city prevailed all through Idaho. From Parma, the first town we came to on the western edge, to Montpelier, near the eastern boundary, the people of Idaho seemed anxious to do their part in marking the old trail. Besides the places already named, Twin Falls,

American Falls, Pocatello, and Soda Springs all responded to the appeal by erecting monuments to mark the Old Trail.

One rather exciting incident happened near Montpelier. A vicious bull attacked my ox team, first from one side and then the other. Then he got in between the oxen and caused them nearly to upset the wagon. I was thrown down in the mix-up, but fortunately escaped unharmed.

This incident reminded me of a scrape one of our neighboring trains got into on the Platte in 1852, with a wounded buffalo. The train had encountered a large herd of these animals, feeding and traveling at right angles to the road. The older heads of the party, fearing a stampede of their teams, had ordered the men not to molest the buffaloes, but to give their whole attention to the care of the teams. One impulsive young fellow would not be restrained; he fired into the herd and wounded a large bull. The maddened bull charged upon a wagon filled with women and children and drawn by a team of mules. He became entangled in the harness and was caught on the wagon-tongue between the mules. The air was full of excitement for a while. The women screamed, the children cried, and the men began to shout. But the practical question was how to dispatch the bull without shooting the mules as well. Trainmen forgot their own teams and rushed to the wagon in trouble. The guns began to pop and the buffalo was finally killed. The wonder is that nobody was harmed.

From Cokeville to Pacific Springs, just west of the summit of the Rocky Mountains at South Pass, by the road and trail we traveled, is one hundred and fifty-eight miles. Ninety miles of this stretch is away from the sound of the locomotive, the click of the telegraph, or the voice of the "hello girl." The mountains here are from six to seven thousand feet above sea level, with scanty vegetable growth. The country is still almost a solitude, save as here and there a sheep herder or his wagon may be discerned. The sly coyote, the simple antelope, and the cunning sage hen still hold sway as they did when I first traversed the country. The old trail is there in all its grandeur.

"Why mark that trail!" I exclaimed. Miles and miles of it are worn so deep that centuries of storm will not efface it; generations may pass and the origin of the trail may become a legend, but these marks will remain.

We wondered to see the trail worn fifty feet wide and three feet deep, and we hastened to photograph it. But after we were over the crest of the mountain, we saw it a hundred feet wide and fifteen feet deep. The tramp of thousands upon thousands of men and women, the hoofs of millions of animals, and the wheels of untold numbers of vehicles had loosened the soil, and the fierce winds had carried it away. In one place we found ruts worn a foot deep into the solid rock.

The mountain region was as wild as it had been when I first saw it. One day, while we were still west of the Rocky Mountains, in Wyoming, two antelopes crossed the road about a hundred yards ahead of us, a buck and a doe. The doe soon disappeared, but the buck came near the road and stood gazing at us in wonderment, as if to ask, "Who the mischief are you?"

Our dog Jim soon scented him, and away they went up the mountain side until Jim got tired and came back to the wagon. Then the antelope stopped on a little eminence on the mountain, and for a long distance we could see him plainly against a background of sky.

At another time we actually got near enough to get a shot with our kodaks at two antelopes; but they were too far off to make good pictures. Our road was leading us obliquely up a gentle hill, gradually approaching nearer to one of the antelopes. I noticed that he would come toward us for a while and then turn around and look the other way for a while. Then we saw what at first we took to be a kid, or young antelope; but soon we discovered that it was a coyote wolf, prowling on the track of the antelope, and watching both of us. Just after the wagon had stopped, I saw six big, fat sage hens feeding not more than twice the length of the wagon away, just as I had seen them in 1852.

The dog, Jim, had several other adventures with animals on the way. First of all, he and Dave did not get along very well. Once Dave caught Jim under the ribs with his right horn, which was bent forward and stood out nearly straight, and tossed him over some sage brush near by. Sometimes, if the yoke prevented him from getting a chance at Jim with his horn, he would throw out his nose and snort, just like a horse that has been running at play and stops for a moment's rest. But Jim would manage to get even with him. Sometimes we put loose hay

under the wagon to keep it out of the storm, and Jim would make a bed on it. Then woe betide Dave if he tried to get any of that hay! I saw Jim one day catch the ox by the nose and draw blood. You may readily imagine that the war was renewed between them with greater rancor than ever. They never did become friends.

One day Jim got his foot under the wheel of our wagon, and I was sure it was broken, but it was not; yet he nursed it for a week by riding in the wagon. He never liked to ride in the wagon except during a thunderstorm. Once a sharp clap of thunder frightened Jim so that he jumped from the ground clear into the wagon while it was in motion and landed at my feet. How in the world he could do it I never could tell.

Jim had some exciting experiences with wild animals, too. He was always chasing birds, jack rabbits, squirrels, or anything in the world that could get into motion. One day a coyote crossed the road just a few rods behind the wagon, and Jim took after him. It looked as if Jim would overtake him, and, being dubious of the result of a tussle between them, I called Jim back. No sooner had he turned than the coyote turned, too, and made chase, and there they came, nip and tuck, to see who could run the faster. I think the coyote could, but he did not catch up until they got so near the wagon that he became frightened and scampered away up the slope of a hill.

At another time a young coyote came along, and Jim played with him awhile. But by and by the little fellow snapped at Jim and made Jim angry, and he bounced on the coyote and gave him a good trouncing.

Before we sheared him, Jim would get very warm when the weather was hot. Whenever the wagon stopped he would dig off the top earth or sand that was hot, to have a cool bed to lie in; but he was always ready to go when the wagon started.

Cokeville was the first town reached in Wyoming. It stands on Smith's Fork, near where that stream empties into Bear River. It is also at the western end of the Sublette Cut-off Trail from Bear River to Big Sandy Creek, the cut-off that we had taken in 1852.

The people of the locality resolved to have a monument at this fork in the old trail, and arrangements were made to erect one out of stone from a local quarry. This good beginning made

in the state, we went on, climbing first over the rim of the Great Basin, then up and across the Rockies.

I quote again from my journal: "Pacific Springs, Wyoming, Camp No. 79, June 20, 1906. Odometer, 958. [Miles registered from The Dalles, Oregon.] Arrived at 6 P.M., and camped near Halter's store and the post office. Ice found in camp during the night."

On June 22 we were still camped at Pacific Springs. I had searched for a suitable stone for a monument to be placed on the summit of the range, and, after almost despairing of finding one, had come upon exactly what was wanted. The stone lay alone on the mountain side; it is granite, I think, but mixed with quartz, and is a monument hewed by the hand of Nature.

Immediately after dinner we hitched the oxen to Mr. Halter's wagon. With the help of four men we loaded the stone, after having dragged it on the ground and over the rocks a hundred yards or so down the mountain side. We estimated its weight at a thousand pounds.

There being no stonecutter at Pacific Springs to inscribe the monument, the clerk at the store formed the letters on stiff pasteboard. He then cut them out to make a paper stencil, through which the shape of the letters was transferred to the stone by crayon marks. The letters were then cut out with a cold chisel, deep enough to make a permanent inscription. The stone was so hard that it required steady work all day to cut the twenty letters and figures: THE OREGON TRAIL, 1843-57.

We drove out of Pacific Springs at a little after noon and stopped at the summit to dedicate the monument. Then we left the summit and drove twelve miles to the point called Oregon Slough, where we put up the tent after dark.

The reader may think of the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains as a precipitous defile through narrow canyons and deep gorges. Nothing is farther from the fact. One can drive through this Pass for several miles without realizing that the dividing line between the waters of the Pacific and those of the Atlantic has been passed. The road is over a broad, open, undulating prairie, the approach is by easy grades, and the descent, going east, is scarcely noticeable.

All who were toiling west in the old days looked upon this spot as the turning point of their journey. There they felt that

they had left the worst of the trip behind them. Poor souls that we were! We did not know that our worst mountain climbing lay beyond the summit of the Rockies, over the rugged Western ranges.

Chapter 4

REVIVING OLD MEMORIES OF THE TRAIL

THE sight of Sweetwater River, twenty miles out from South Pass, revived many pleasant memories and some that were sad. I could remember the sparkling, clear water, the green skirt of undergrowth along the banks, and the restful camps, as we trudged along up the stream so many years ago. And now I saw the same channel, the same hills, and apparently the same waters swiftly passing. But where were the camp fires? Where was the herd of gaunt cattle? Where the sound of the din of bells? The hallooing for lost children? Or the little groups off on the hillside to bury the dead? All were gone.

An oppressive silence prevailed as we drove to the river and pitched our camp within a few feet of the bank, where we could hear the rippling waters passing and see the fish leaping in the eddies. We had our choice of a camping place just by the skirt of a refreshing green brush with an opening to give full view of the river. It had not been so fifty-four years before, with hundreds of camps ahead of you. The traveler then had to take what he could get, and in many cases that was a place far back from the water and removed from other conveniences.

The sight and smell of carrion, so common in camping places during that first journey, also were gone. No bleached bones, even, showed where the exhausted dumb brute had died. The graves of the dead pioneers had all been leveled by the hoofs of stock and the lapse of time.

The country remains as it was in '52. There the trail is to be seen miles and miles ahead, worn bare and deep, with but one narrow track where there used to be a dozen, and with the beaten path that vegetation has not yet recovered from the scourge of passing hoofs and tires of wagons years ago.

As in 1852, when the summit was passed I felt that my task was much more than half done, though half the distance was scarcely compassed.

On June 30, at about ten o'clock, we encountered a large number of big flies that ran the cattle nearly wild. I stood on the wagon tongue for miles to reach them with the whipstock. The cattle were so excited that we did not stop at noon, but drove on. By half-past two we camped at a farmhouse, the Split Rock post office, the first we had found in a hundred miles of travel since leaving Pacific Springs.

The Devil's Gate, a few miles distant, is one of the two best-known landmarks on the trail. Here, as at Split Rock, the mountain seems to have been split apart, leaving an opening a few rods wide, through which the Sweetwater River pours in a veritable torrent. The river first approaches to within a few hundred feet of the gap, then suddenly curves away from it, and after winding through the valley for half a mile or so, a quarter of a mile away, it takes a straight shoot and makes the plunge through the canyon. Those who have had the impression that the emigrants drove their teams through this gap are mistaken, for it's a feat no mortal man has done or can do, any more than he could drive up the falls of the Niagara.

This year, on my 1906 trip, I did clamber through on the left bank, over boulders head high, under shelving rocks. I ate some ripe gooseberries from the bushes growing on the border of the river, and plucked some beautiful wild roses, wondering the while why those wild roses grew where nobody would see them.

The gap through the mountains looked familiar as I spied it from the distance, but the roadbed to the right I had forgotten. I longed to see this place; for here, somewhere under the sands, lies all that was mortal of my brother, Clark Meeker, drowned in the Sweetwater in 1854.

Independence Rock is the other most famous landmark. We drove over to the Rock, a distance of six miles from the Devil's Gate, and camped at ten o'clock for the day. This famous boulder covers about thirty acres. We groped our way among the inscriptions, to find some of them nearly obliterated and many legible only in part. We walked all the way around the stone, nearly a mile. The huge rock is of irregular shape, and it

is more than a hundred feet high, the walls being so precipitous that ascent to the top is possible in only two places.

Unfortunately, we could not find Fremont's inscription. Of this inscription Fremont writes in his journal of the year 1842: "August 23. Yesterday evening we reached our encampment at Rock Independence, where I took some astronomical observations. Here, not unmindful of the custom of early travelers and explorers in our country, I engraved on this rock of the Far West a symbol of the Christian faith. Among the thickly inscribed names, I made on the hard granite the impression of a large cross. It stands amidst the names of many who have long since found their way to the grave and for whom the huge rock is a giant gravestone."

On Independence Day, 1906, we left Independence Rock. Our noon stop was on Fish Creek, eleven miles away. The next night we camped on the North Platte River. Fifty-four years before, I had left the old stream about fifteen miles below here on my way to the West.

Next day, while nooning several miles out from Casper, we heard the whistle of a locomotive. It was the first we had heard for nearly three hundred miles. As soon as lunch was over, I left the wagon and walked to Casper ahead of the team to select a camping ground, secure feed, and get the mail.

A special meeting of the Commercial Club of Casper was held that evening, and I laid the matter of building a monument before the members. They resolved to build one, opened the subscription at once, and appointed a committee to carry the work forward. Since then a monument twenty-five feet high has been erected at a cost of fifteen hundred dollars.

Glen Rock is a small village, but the ladies there met and resolved they would have "as nice a monument as Casper's." One enthusiastic lady said, "We will inscribe it ourselves, if no stonecutter can be had."

At Douglas also an earnest, well-organized effort to erect the monument was well in hand before we drove out of town.

As we journeyed on down the Platte, we passed thrifty ranches and thriving little towns. It was haying time, and the mowers were busy cutting alfalfa. The hay was being stacked. Generous ranchers invited us to help ourselves to their garden

stuff. All along the way was a spirit of good cheer and hearty welcome.

Fort Laramie brings a flood of reminiscences to the western pioneer and his children. This old post, first a trappers' stockade, then in 1849 a soldiers' encampment, stood at the end of the Black Hills and at the edge of the Plains. Here the Laramie River and the Platte meet.

The fort was a halfway station on the trail. From the time we crossed the Missouri in May, 1852, until we reached the old fort, no place name was so constantly in the minds of the emigrants as that of Fort Laramie. Here, in '52, we eagerly looked for letters that never came. Perhaps our friends and relatives had not written; perhaps they had written, but the letters were lost or sidetracked somewhere in "the States." As for hearing from home, for that we had to wait patiently until the long journey should end; then a missive might reach us by way of the Isthmus, or maybe by sailing vessel around Cape Horn.

There is no vestige of the old traders' camp or the first United States fort left. The new fort—not a fort, but an encampment—covers a space of thirty or forty acres, with all sorts of buildings and ruins. One of the old barracks, three hundred feet long, was in good preservation in 1906, being utilized by the owner, Joseph Wilde, for a store, post office, hotel, and residence. The guard house with its grim iron door and twenty-inch concrete walls is also fairly well preserved. One frame building of two stories, we were told, was transported by ox team from Kansas City at a cost of one hundred dollars a ton. The old place is crumbling away, slowly disappearing with the memories of the past.

From Fort Laramie onward into western Nebraska we passed through a succession of thriving cities. The Platte has been turned to splendid service through the process of irrigation. Great canals lead its life-giving waters out to the thirsty plains that now "blossom as the rose." Rich fields of grain and hay and beets cover the valley. Great sugar factories, railroads, business blocks, and fine homes tell of the prosperity that has leaped out of the parched plains we trailed across.

Scott's Bluff, however, is one of the old landmarks that has not changed. It still looms up as of old on the south side of the river about eight hundred feet above the trail. The origin of the

name, Scott's Bluff, is not definitely known. Tradition says: "A trapper named Scott, while returning to the States, was robbed and stripped by the Indians. He crawled to these Bluffs and there famished. His bones were afterwards found and buried." These quoted words were written by a passing emigrant on the spot, June 11, 1852. Another version of the tale is that Scott fell sick and was abandoned by his traveling companions. After having crawled almost forty miles, he finally died near the bluff that bears his name. This occurred prior to 1830.

From the bluff we drove as directly as possible to a historic grave, two miles out from the town and on the railroad right of way. In this grave lies a pioneer mother who died August 15, 1852, nearly six weeks after I had passed over the ground. Some thoughtful friend had marked her grave by standing a wagon tire upright in it. But for this, the grave, like thousands and thousands of others, would have passed out of sight and mind.

The tire bore this simple inscription: "Rebecca Winters, aged 50 years." The hoofs of stock tramped the sunken grave and trod it into dust, but the arch of the tire remained to defy the strength of thoughtless hands that would have removed it.

Finally the railroad surveyors came along. They might have run the track over the lonely grave but for the thoughtfulness of the man who wielded the compass. He changed the line, that the resting place of the pioneer mother should not be disturbed, and the grave was protected and enclosed.

The railroad officials did more. They telegraphed word of the finding of this grave to their representative in Salt Lake City. He gave the story to the press; the descendants of the pioneer mother read it, and they provided a monument, lovingly inscribed, to mark the spot.

About twenty miles from Scott's Bluff stands old Chimney Rock. It is a curious freak of nature, and a famous landmark on the trail. It covers perhaps twelve acres, and rises coneshaped for two hundred feet to the base of the spire-like rock, the "chimney," that rests upon it and rises a full hundred feet more.

A local story runs that an army officer trained a cannon on this spire, shot off about thirty feet from the top, and for this was court-martialed and dishonorably discharged from the

army. I could get no definite confirmation of the story, though it was repeated again and again. It seems incredible that an intelligent man would do such an act, and if he did it, he deserved severe punishment.

It is saddening to think of the many places where equally stupid things have been done to natural wonders. Coming through Idaho, I had noticed that at Soda Springs the hand of the vandal had been at work. That interesting phenomenon, Steamboat Spring, the wonderment of all of us in 1852, with its intermittent spouting, had been tampered with and had ceased to act.

Chapter 5

A BIT OF BAD LUCK

"OLD Oregon Trail Monument Expedition, Brady Island, Nebraska, August 9, 1906, Camp No. 120. Odometer, 1,536 5/8. Yesterday morning Twist ate his breakfast as usual and showed no signs of sickness until we were on the road two or three miles, when he began to put his tongue out and his breathing became heavy. But he leaned on the yoke more heavily than usual and determined to pull the whole load. I finally stopped, put him on the off side, gave him the long end of the yoke, and tied his head back with the halter strap to the chain; but to no purpose, for he pulled by the head very heavily. I finally unyoked, gave him a quart of lard, a gill of vinegar, and a handful of sugar, but all to no purpose, for he soon fell down and in two hours was dead."

Such is the record in my journal of this noble animal's death. I think he died from eating some poisonous plant.

When we started, Twist weighed 1470 pounds. After we had crossed two ranges of mountains, had wallowed in the snows of the Blue Mountains, followed the tortuous, rocky canyon of Burnt River, and gone through the deep sands of the Snake, this ox had gained 137 pounds, and weighed 1607 pounds. While laboring under the short end of the yoke that gave him fifty-five per cent of the draft and an increased burden, he would keep his end of the yoke a little ahead, no matter how much the mate might be urged to keep up.

There are pronounced individualities in animals as well as in men. I might have said virtues, too—and why not? If an animal always does his duty and is faithful and industrious, why not recognize this character, even if he is "nothing but an ox"?

To understand the achievements of this ox it is necessary to know the burden that he carried. The wagon weighed 1430

pounds, had wooden axles and wide track, and carried an average load of 800 pounds. Along with an unbroken four-year old steer, a natural-born shirk, Twist had hauled the wagon 1776 miles, and he was in better working trim just before he died than when the trip began. And yet, am I sure that at some points I did not abuse him? What about coming up out of Little Canyon, or rather up the steep, rocky steps of stones like stairs, when I used the goad, and he pulled a shoe off his feet? Was I merciful then, or did I exact more than I ought?

I can see him yet, in my mind, on his knees, holding the wagon from rolling into the canyon till the wheel could be blocked and the brakes set. Then, when bidden to start the load, he did not flinch. He was the best ox I ever saw, without exception, and his loss nearly broke up the expedition. His like I could not find again. He had a decent burial. A headboard marks his grave and tells of the aid he rendered in this expedition to perpetuate the memory of the old Oregon Trail.

What should I do—abandon the work? No. But I could not go on with one ox. So a horse team was hired to take us to the next town, Gothenburg, thirteen miles distant. The lone ox was led behind the wagon.

Again I hired a horse team to haul the wagon to Lexington. At Lexington I thought the loss of the ox could be repaired by buying a pair of heavy cows and breaking them in to work, so I purchased two out of a band of two hundred cattle.

"Why, yes, of course they will work," I said, in reply to a bystander's question. "I have seen whole teams of cows on the Plains in '52. Yes, we will soon have a team," I declared with all the confidence in the world, "only we can't go very far in a day with a raw team, especially in this hot weather."

But one cow would not go at all! We could neither lead her nor drive her. Put her in the yoke, and she would stand stock still, just like a stubborn mule. Hitch the yoke by a strong rope behind the wagon with a horse team to pull, and she would brace her feet and actually slide along, but would not lift a foot. I never saw such a brute before, and hope I never shall again. I have broken wild, fighting, kicking steers to the yoke and enjoyed the sport, but from a sullen, tame cow, deliver me!

"Won't you take her back and give me another?" I asked the seller.

"Yes, I will give you that red cow,"—one I had rejected as unfit,—"but not one of the others."

"What is this cow worth to you?"

"Thirty dollars."

So I dropped ten dollars, having paid forty for the first cow. Besides, I had lost the better part of a day and experienced a good deal of vexation. If I could only have had Twist back again!

The fact gradually became apparent that the loss of that fine ox was almost irreparable. I could not get track of an ox anywhere, nor even of a steer large enough to mate the Dave ox. Besides, Dave always was a fool. Twist would watch my every motion, and mind by the wave of the hand, but Dave never minded anything except to shirk hard work. Twist seemed to love his work and would go freely all day. It was brought home to me more forcibly than ever that in the loss of the Twist ox I had almost lost the whole team.

When I drove out from Lexington behind a hired horse team that day, with the Dave ox tagging on behind and sometimes pulling on his halter, and with an unbroken cow in leading, it may easily be guessed that the pride of anticipated success died out, and deep discouragement seized upon me. I had two yokes, one a heavy ox yoke, the other a light cow's yoke; but the cow, I thought, could not be worked alongside the ox in the ox yoke, nor the ox with the cow in the cow yoke. I was without a team, but with a double encumbrance.

Yes, the ox has passed, for in all Nebraska I was unable to find even one yoke.

I trudged along, sometimes behind the led cattle, wondering in my mind whether or not I had been foolish to undertake this expedition to perpetuate the memory of the old Oregon Trail. Had I not been rebuffed at the first by a number of business men who pushed the subject aside with, "I have no time to look into it"? Hadn't I been compelled to pass several towns where not even three persons could be found to act on the committee? And then there was the experience of the constant suspicion that there was some graft to be discovered, some lurking speculation. All this could be borne in patience; but when coupled with it came the virtual loss of the team, is it strange that my spirits went down below a normal point?

Then came the compensatory thought of what had been accomplished. Four states had responded cordially. Back along the line of more than fifteen hundred miles already stood many sentinels, mostly granite, to mark the trail and keep alive the memory of the pioneers. Moreover, I recalled the enthusiastic reception in so many places, the outpouring of contributions from thousands of school children, the willing hands of the people that built these monuments, and the more than twenty thousand people attending the dedication ceremonies. These heartening recollections made me forget the loss of Twist, the recalcitrant cow, and the dilemma that confronted me. I awakened from my reverie in a more cheerful mood.

"Do the best you can," I said to myself, "and don't be cast down." My spirits rose almost to the point of exultation again.

We soon reached the beautiful city of Kearney, named after old Fort Kearney, which stood across the river, and were given a fine camping place in the center of the town. It was under the shade trees that line the streets, and we had a fresh-cut greensward upon which to pitch our tents. People came in great numbers to visit the camp and express their appreciation of our enterprise. Later a monument was erected in this city.

At Grand Island I found public sentiment in favor of taking action. It was decided, however, that the best time for the dedication would be in the following year, upon the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the settlement. I was a little disappointed in the delay, but felt that good seed was sown.

Grand Island, with its stately rows of shade trees, its modest, tasteful homes, the bustle and stir on its business streets, with the constant passing of trains, shrieking of whistles, and ringing of bells, presented a striking contrast to the scene I saw that June day in 1852 when I passed over the ground near where the city stands. Vast herds of buffalo then grazed on the hills or leisurely crossed our track and at times obstructed our way, and herds of antelope watched from vantage points.

But now the buffalo and antelope have disappeared; the Indian likewise is gone. Instead of the parched plain of 1852, with its fierce clouds of dust rolling up the valley and engulfing whole trains, we saw a landscape of smiling, fruitful fields, inviting groves of trees, and contented homes.

From Grand Island I went to Fremont, Nebraska, to head the procession in the semi-centennial celebration in honor of the founding of that city. In the procession I worked the ox and cow together. From Fremont I went on to Lincoln.

All the while I was searching for an ox or a steer large enough to mate the Dave ox, but without avail. Finally, after looking over a thousand head of cattle in the stockyards of Omaha, I found a five-year-old steer, Dandy, which I broke in on the way to Indianapolis. This ox proved to be very satisfactory. He never kicked or hooked, and was always in good humor. Dave and Dandy made good team-mates.

"As dumb as an ox" is a very common expression, dating back as far as my memory goes. In fact, the ox is not so "dumb" as a casual observer might think. Dave and Dandy knew me as far as they could see; sometimes when I went to them in the morning, Dave would lift his head, bow his neck, stretch out his body, and perhaps extend a foot, as if to say, "Good morning to you; glad to see you." Dandy was driven on the streets of a hundred cities and towns, and I never knew him to be at a loss to find his way to the stable or watering-trough, once he had been there and was started on a return trip.

I arrived at Indianapolis on January 5, 1907, eleven months and seven days from the date of departure from my home at Puyallup, twenty-six hundred miles away.

Chapter 6

DRIVING ON TO THE CAPITAL

AFTER passing the Missouri, and leaving the trail behind me, I somehow had a foreboding that I might be mistaken for a faker and looked upon as an adventurer, and I shrank from the ordeal. My hair had grown long on the trip across; my boots were somewhat the worse for wear, and my old-fashioned clothes (understood well enough by pioneers along the trail) were dilapidated. I was not the most presentable specimen for every sort of company. Already I had been compelled to say that I was not a "corn doctor" or any kind of doctor; that I did not have patent medicine to sell; and that I was not soliciting contributions to support the expedition.

The first of March, 1907, found me on the road going eastward from Indianapolis. I had made up my mind that Washington should be the objective point. For my main purpose—to secure the building of a memorial highway—Congress, I felt, would be a better field to work in than out on the hopelessly long stretch of the trail, where one man's span of life would certainly pass before the work could be accomplished. But I thought it well to make a campaign of education to get the work before the general public so that Congress might know about it. Therefore a route was laid out to occupy the time until the first of December, just before Congress would again assemble. The route lay through Indianapolis, Dayton, Cleveland, Columbus, Buffalo, Albany, New York, Trenton, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, to Washington.

For the most part I received a warm welcome all along the route. Dayton treated me generously. Mayor Badger of Columbus wrote giving me the freedom of the city; and Mayor Tom Johnson wrote to his chief of police to "treat Mr. Meeker as the guest of the city of Cleveland," which was done.

At Buffalo, a benefit performance for one of the hospitals, in the shape of a circus, was in preparation. A part of the elaborate program was an attack by Indians on an emigrant train, the "Indians" being representative young men of the city. At this juncture I arrived in the city, and was besought to go and represent the train, for which they would pay me.

"No, not for pay," I said, "but I will go."

So there was quite a realistic show in the ring that afternoon and evening, and the hospital received more than a thousand dollars' benefit.

Near Oneida some one said that I had better take to the towpath on the canal to save distance and to avoid going over the hill. It was against the law, he added, but everybody did it and no one would object. So, when we came to the forks of the road, I followed the best-beaten track and was soon traveling along on the level, hard, but narrow way, the towpath. All went well that day.

We were not so fortunate the next day, however, when a boat with three men, two women, and three long-eared mules was squarely met, the mules being on the towpath. The mules took fright, got into a regular mixup, broke the harness, and went up the towpath at a two-forty gait.

As I had walked into Oneida the night before, I did not see the sight or hear the war of words that followed. The men ordered Marden to "take that outfit off the towpath." His answer was that he could not do it without upsetting the wagon. The men said if he couldn't they would do it quick enough. They started toward the wagon, evidently intent upon executing their threat, meanwhile swearing at the top of their voices while the women scolded in chorus, one of them fairly shrieking.

My old muzzle-loading rifle that we had carried across the Plains lay handy. When the men started toward him, Marden picked up the rifle to show fight and called on the dog Jim to take hold of the men. As he raised the gun to use it as a club, one of the boatmen threw up his hands, bawling at the top of his voice, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" He forgot to mix in oaths and slunk out of sight behind the wagon. The others also drew back. Jim showed his teeth, and a truce followed. With but little

inconvenience the mules were taken off the path, and the ox team was driven past.

The fun of it was that the gun that had spread such consternation hadn't been loaded for more than twenty-five years. The sight of it alone was enough for the three stalwart braves of the canal.

It took New York to cap the climax—to bring me all sorts of experiences, sometimes with the police, sometimes with the gaping crowds, and sometimes at the City Hall.

Mayor McClellan was not in the city when I arrived; but the acting mayor said that while he could not grant me a permit to come in, he would have the police commissioner instruct his men not to molest me. Either the instructions were not general enough, or else the men paid no attention; for when I got down as far as 161st Street on Amsterdam Avenue, a policeman interfered and ordered my driver to take the team to the police station, which he very properly refused to do.

It was after dark and I had just gone around the corner to engage quarters for the night when this occurred. Returning, I saw the young policeman attempt to move the team, but as he didn't know how, they wouldn't budge a peg, whereupon he arrested my driver and took him away.

Another policeman tried to coax me to drive the team down to the police station. I said, "No, sir, I will not." He couldn't drive the team to the station, and I wouldn't, and so there we were. To arrest me would make matters worse, for the team would be left on the street without any one to care for it. Finally the officer got out of the way, and I drove the team to the stable. He followed, with a large crowd tagging after him. Soon the captain of the precinct arrived, called his man off, and ordered my driver released.

It appeared that there was an ordinance against allowing cattle to be driven on the streets of New York. Of course, this was intended to apply to loose cattle, but the policemen interpreted it to mean any cattle, and they had the clubs to enforce their interpretation. I was in the city and couldn't get out without subjecting myself to arrest, according to their view of the law; and in fact I didn't want to get out. I wanted to drive down Broadway from one end to the other, and I did, a month later.

All hands said nothing short of an ordinance by the board of aldermen would clear the way; so I tackled the aldermen. The *New York Tribune* sent a man over to the City Hall to intercede for me; the *New York Herald* did the same thing. And so it came about that the aldermen passed an ordinance granting me the right of way for thirty days, and also endorsed my work. I thought my trouble was over when that ordinance was passed. Not so; the mayor was absent, and the acting mayor could not sign an ordinance until after ten days had elapsed. The city attorney came in and said the aldermen had exceeded their authority, as they could not legally grant a special privilege.

Then the acting mayor said he would not sign the ordinance; but if I would wait until the next meeting of the aldermen, if they did not rescind the ordinance, it would be certified, as he would not veto it. Considering that no one was likely to test the legality of the ordinance, he thought I would be safe in acting as though it were legal. Just thirty days from the time I had the bother with the policemen, and having incurred two hundred and fifty dollars of extra expense, I drove down Broadway from 161st Street to the Battery, without getting into any serious scrape, except with one automobilist who became angered, but afterwards was "as good as pie."

Thirty days satisfied me with New York. The crowds were so great that congestion of traffic always followed my presence, and I would be compelled to move. One day when I went to City Hall Park to have my team photographed with the Greeley statue, I got away only by the help of the police, and even then with great difficulty.

A trip across Brooklyn Bridge to Brooklyn was also made, and then, two days before leaving the city, I came near to meeting a heavy loss. Somehow I got sandwiched in on the East Side of New York in the congested district of the foreign quarter and at nightfall drove into a stable, put the oxen in the stalls and, as usual, the dog Jim in the wagon. The next morning Jim was gone. The stableman said he had left the wagon a few moments after I had and had been stolen. The police accused the stablemen of being parties to the theft, in which I think they were right.

Money could not buy that dog. He was an integral part of the expedition: always on the alert; always watchful of the wagon during my absence, and always willing to mind what I bade him do. He had had more adventures on this trip than any other member of the outfit. First he was tossed over a high brush by the ox Dave; then, shortly after, he was pitched headlong over a barbed wire fence by an irate cow. Next came a fight with a wolf; following this, came a narrow escape from a rattlesnake in the road. Also, a trolley car ran on to him, rolling him over and over again until he came out as dizzy as a drunken man. I thought he was a "goner" that time for sure, but he soon straightened up. Finally, in the streets of Kansas City, he was run over by a heavy truck while fighting with another dog. The other dog was killed outright, while Jim came near to having his neck broken. He lost one of his best fighting teeth and had several others broken. I sent him to a veterinary surgeon, and curiously enough he made no protest while having the broken teeth repaired or extracted.

There was no other way to find Jim than to offer a reward. I did this, and feel sure I paid twenty dollars to one of the parties to the theft. The fellow was brazen enough, also, to demand pay for keeping him. That was the time when I got up and talked pointedly.

But I had my faithful dog back, and I kept him more closely by me while I was making the rest of my tour. Six years later it chanced that I lost Jim. While we were waiting at a station, I let him out of the car for a few minutes. The train started unexpectedly and Jim was left behind. A good reward was offered for him, but nobody ever came to collect it.

Chapter 7

THE END OF THE LONG TRAIL

I WAS glad enough to get out of the crowds of New York. It had given me some rich experiences, but that big city is no place for ox teams. It was good to get away from the jam and the hurry out on to the country roads.

On the way to Philadelphia, between Newark and Elizabeth City, New Jersey, at a point known as Lyon's Farm, the old Meeker homestead stood, built in the year 1676. Here the Meeker Tribe, as we call ourselves, came out to greet me, nearly forty strong.

On the way through Maryland we saw a good many oxen, some of them driven on the road. The funny part of it was to have the owners try to trade their scrawny teams for Dave and Dandy, offering money to boot, or two yoke for one. They had never before seen such large oxen as Dave and Dandy, and for that matter I never had myself. Dandy was of unusual size, and Dave was probably the largest trained ox in the United States then; he was sixteen hands high and eight feet in girth.

I reached Washington, the capital, just twenty-two months to the day from the time I left home in Washington, the state. As soon as arrangements could be made I went to see President Roosevelt. Senator Piles and Representative Cushman, of the Washington Congressional delegation, introduced me to the President in the cabinet room.

Mr. Roosevelt manifested a lively interest in the work of marking the trail. He did not need to be told that the trail was a battlefield, or that the Oregon pioneers who moved out and occupied the Oregon Country while it was yet in dispute between Great Britain and the United States were heroes. When I suggested that they were "the winners of the Farther West," he fairly snatched these words from my lips. He went

even further than I had dreamed of or hoped for, in invoking Government aid to carry on the work. Addressing Senator Piles, the President said with emphasis: "I am in favor of this work to mark this trail. If you will bring before Congress a measure to accomplish it, I am with you and will give my support to do it thoroughly."

Mr. Roosevelt thought the suggestion of a memorial highway should first come from the states through which the trail runs. However, it would be possible to get Congressional aid to mark the trail. In any event, he felt it ought to be done speedily.

Unexpectedly the President asked, "Where is your team? I want to see it."

Upon being told that it was nearby, without ceremony, and without his hat, he was soon alongside, asking questions faster than they could be answered, not idle questions, but such as showed his intense desire to get real information, bottom facts.

President Roosevelt was a man who loved the pioneers and who understood the true West. His warm welcome remains in my heart as one of the richest rewards of the many that have come as compensation for my struggle to carry out my dream.

On the eighth of January, 1908, I left Washington, shipping my outfit over the Allegheny Mountains to McKeesport, Pennsylvania. From McKeesport I drove to Pittsburgh, and there put the team into winter quarters to remain until the fifth of March. Thence I shipped by boat on the Ohio River to Cincinnati, stopping in that city but one day, and from there I shipped by rail to St. Louis, Missouri.

My object now was to retrace the original trail from its beginnings to where it joined the Oregon Trail, over which I had traveled. This trail properly ran by water from St. Louis to Independence, thence westward along the Platte to Fort Laramie.

At Pittsburgh and adjacent cities I was received cordially and encouraged to believe that the movement to make a great national highway had taken a deep hold in the minds of the people.

I was not so much encouraged in St. Louis. The city officers were unwilling to do anything to further the movement, but before I left the city, the Automobile Club and the Daughters of the American Revolution did take formal action indorsing the

work. St. Louis had really been the head and center of the movement that finally established the original Oregon Trail. It was from here that Lewis and Clark started on the famous expedition of 1804-05 that opened up the Northwest. Here was where Wyeth, Bonneville, and others of the early travelers on the trail had outfitted.

The drive from St. Louis to Jefferson City, the capital of the State of Missouri, was tedious and without result other than that of reaching the point where actual driving began in early days. Governor Folk signified his approval of the work, and I was given a cordial hearing by the citizens.

On the fourth of April I arrived at Independence, Missouri, which is generally understood to be the eastern terminus of the Santa Fé Trail. I found, however, that many of the pioneers had shipped farther up the Missouri, some driving from Atchison, some from Leavenworth, others from St. Joseph. At a little later period, multitudes had set out from Kanesville (now Council Bluffs), where Whitman and Parker made their final break with civilization and boldly turned their faces westward for the unknown land of Oregon.

The Santa Fé and Oregon trails from Independence and Kansas City were identical for forty miles or thereabouts, out to the town of Gardner, Kansas. From there the Santa Fé Trail bore on to the west and finally to the southwest, while the Oregon Trail bore steadily on to the northwest and encountered the Platte valley below Grand Island in what is now Nebraska. At the forks of the road, the historian Chittenden says, "a simple signboard was seen which carried the words 'Road to Oregon,' thus pointing the way for two thousand miles. No such signboard ever before pointed the road for so long a distance, and probably another such never will."

I determined to make an effort to find the spot where this historic sign once stood, and if possible to plant a marker there. Friends in Kansas City, one of whom I had not met for sixty years, took me by automobile to Gardner, where, after a search of a couple of hours, two old residents were found who were able to point out the spot. These men were Mr. V. R. Ellis and Mr. William J. Ott, aged respectively seventy-seven and eighty-two years, whose residence in the near vicinity dated

back nearly fifty years. The point is at the intersection of Washington Street and Central Street in the town of Gardner.

I planned to drive up the Missouri and investigate the remaining five prongs of the trail—Leavenworth, Atchison, St. Joseph, Kanesville, and Independence. I drove to Topeka, the capital city of Kansas, where I arrived the eleventh of May (1908). There the trail crosses the Kansas River under the very shadow of the State House, not three blocks away; yet only a few knew of it.

On the twenty-third of May the team arrived at St. Joseph, Missouri, a point where many pioneers had outfitted in early days. While public sentiment there was in hearty accord with the work of marking the trail, yet plainly it would be a hard tug to get the people together on a plan to erect a monument. "Times were very tight to undertake such a work," came the response from so many that no organized effort was made.

The committee of Congress in charge of the bill appropriating fifty thousand dollars to mark the trail, by this time had taken action and had made a favorable report. Such a report was held to be almost equivalent to the passage of a bill. So, all things considered, the conclusion was reached to suspend operations, ship the team home, and for the time being take a rest from the work. I had been out from home twenty-eight months, lacking but five days; hence it is small wonder that I concluded to listen to the inner longings to get back to home and home life. On the twenty-sixth of May I shipped the outfit by rail from St. Joseph to Portland, Oregon, where I arrived on the sixth day of June, 1908, and went into camp on the same grounds I had used in March, 1906, on my outward trip.

As I returned home over the Oregon Short Line I crossed the old trail in many places. This time, however, it was with Dave and Dandy quietly chewing their cud in the car, while I enjoyed all the luxuries of an overland train.

I began vividly to realize the wide expanse of country covered, as we passed first one and then another of the camping places. I was led to wonder whether or not I should have undertaken the work if I could have seen the trail stretched out, as I saw it like a panorama from the car window. I sometimes think not. All of us at times undertake things that look bigger after completion than they did in our vision of them. We

go into ventures without fully counting the cost. Perhaps that was the case, to a certain extent, in this venture; the work did look larger from the car window than from the camp.

Nevertheless, I have no regrets to express or exultation to proclaim. The trail has not yet been fully or properly marked. We have made a good beginning, however, and let us hope the end will soon become an accomplished fact. Monumenting the old Oregon Trail means more than the mere preservation in memory of that great highway; it means the building up of loyalty, of patriotism, as well as the teaching of our history in a form never to be forgotten.

Words can not express my deep feeling of gratitude for the royal welcome given me by the citizens of Portland. I was privileged to attend the reunion of the two thousand pioneers who had just assembled for their annual meeting.

The drive from Portland to Seattle is also one long to be remembered; my friends and neighbors met me with kindliest welcome. On the eighteenth day of July, 1908, I drove into the city of Seattle and the long journey was ended. My dream of retracing the way over the Old Trail had come true.