

MEEKER. 1854. Ezra Meeker, "Trip through the Natchess Pass," Pioneer Reminiscences of Puget Sound. by Ezra Meeker, Seattle, Washington, 1905. Seattle: Lowman and Hanford, 1905. p. 90-131].

http://books.google.com/books?id=vE_r7ClywigC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Pioneer+Reminiscences+of+Puget+Sound.....by+Ezra+Meeker&source=bl&ots=I2Wre8B-tu&sig=dxKBluGmzeRjV8lclua7qGWza54&hl=en&ei=XbKCTKj7Go2WsgONx4GfBQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CBIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Trip%20Throug h%20the%20Natchess%20Pass&f=true

Trip through the Natchess Pass

The latter part of August, 1854, James K. Hurd, of Olympia, sent me word that he had been out on the immigrant trail and heard that some of my relations on the road were belated and short of provisions. He advised that I should go to their assistance, and particularly if I wanted to be sure they should come direct to Puget Sound over the Cascade Mountains, and not go down the Columbia River into Oregon. How it could be, with the experience of my brother Oliver to guide them, that my people should be in the condition described, was past my comprehension. However, I accepted the statement as true and particularly felt the importance of their having certain knowledge as to prevailing conditions of an over-mountain trip through the Natchess Pass. But how could I go and leave wife and two babies on~ our island home? The summer had been spent clearing land and planting crops, and my finances were very low. To remove my family would cost money, besides the abandonment of the season's work to almost certain destruction. The wife said at once, and without a moment's hesitation, to go, and she and Mrs. Darrow, who was with us as nurse and companion friend, would stay "right where we are until you get back," with a confidence in which I did not share. The trip at best was hazardous to an extent, even when undertaken well prepared and with company. So far as I could see, I might have to go on foot and pack my food and blanket on my back, and I knew that I would have to go alone. I knew some work had been done on the road during the summer, but was unable to get definite information as to whether any camps were yet left in the mountains, and did not have that abiding faith in my ability to get back that rested in the breast of the little, courageous wife, but I dared not impart my foreboding to harass and intensify her fears and disturb her peace of mind while absent. The immigration the previous year, as related elsewhere, that encountered formidable difficulties in the mountains, narrowly escaping the loss of everything if not facing actual starvation. Reports were current that the government appropriation for a military road had been expended, and that the road was passable for teams, but a like report had been freely circulated the previous year, with results almost disastrous to those attempting to come through. I could not help feeling that possibly the same conditions yet existed. The only way to determine the question was to go and see for myself; meet my father's party and pilot them through the pass.

It was on the third day of September of 1854 that I left home. I had been planting turnips for two days, and made a memorandum of the date, and by that fix the date of my departure. Of that turnip crop I shall have more to say later, as it had a cheering effect upon the incoming immigrants.

At Steilacoom there was a character then understood by few, and I may say by not many even to the end, in whom somehow, I had implicit confidence. Dr. J. B. Webber, afterwards of the firm of Balch & Webber, of Steilacoom, the largest shipping and mercantile firm on the Sound, was a very eccentric man. Between him and myself, there would seem to be a gulf that could not be closed. Our habits of life were as diametrically opposite as possible for two men to be. He was always drinking; never sober, neither ever drunk. I would never touch a drop while the doctor would certainly drink a dozen times a day, just a little at a time, but seemingly tipping all the time. Then, he openly kept an Indian woman in defiance of the sentiment of all the families of the community. He was addicted to other vices which I will not here relate. It was with this man that I entrusted the safe keeping of my little family. I knew my wife had such an aversion to this class that I did not even tell her with whom I would arrange to look out for her welfare, but suggested another to whom she might apply in case of need. I knew Dr. Webber for long years afterwards, and until the day of his horrible death with delirium tremens, and never had my faith shaken as to the innate goodness of the man. Why these contrary traits of character should be, I cannot say, but so it was. His word was as good as his bond, and his impulses were all directly opposite to his personal habits. Twice a week an Indian woman visited the cabin on the island, always with some little presents and making inquiries about the babies and whether there was anything needed, with the parting "alki nika keelepik" (by and by I will return); and she did, every few days during my absence.

When I spoke to Webber about what I wanted, he seemed pleased to be able to do a kind act, and, to reassure me, got out his field glass and turned it on the cabin across the water, three miles distant. Looking through it intently for a moment and handing the glass to me, said, "I can see everything going on over there, and you need have no uneasiness about your folks while gone," and I did not.

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

McCarty said "you can't get across the streams on foot; I will let you have a pony. He is small, but surefooted, and hardy, and will in any event carry you across the rivers." 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." Upon my expressing a doubt, he said he knew he was correct by the measurement of the mow in the barn and the land. In after years, I came to know he was correct, though at the time, I could not help but believe he was mistaken.

The next day found me on the road with my blanket under the saddle, my sack of hard bread strapped on behind the saddle, and myself mounted to ride on level stretches of the road, or across streams, of which, as will appear later, I had full forty crossings to make, but had only one ahead of me the first day. That one, though, as the Englishman would say, was a "nasty" one, across White River at Porter's place.

White River on the upper reaches is a roaring torrent only at all fordable in low water and in but few places. The rush of waters can be heard for a mile or more from the high bluff overlooking

the narrow valley, or rather canyon, and presented a formidable barrier for a lone traveler. The river bed is full of boulders worn rounded and smooth and slippery, from the size of a man's head to very much larger, thus making footing for animals uncertain.

After my first crossing, I dreaded those to come, which I knew were ahead of me, more than all else of the trip, for a misstep of the pony meant fatal results in all probability. The little fellow, though, 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 and finally reach out carefully until he could find secure footing, and then move up a step or two. The water of the river is so charged with the sediment from the glaciers above, that the bottom could not be seen hence the absolute necessity of feeling one's way.

It is wonderful, the sagacity or instinct or intelligence, or whatever we may call it, manifested by the horse. I immediately learned that my pony could be trusted on the fords better than myself, thereafter I held only a supporting, but not a guiding rein, and he carried me safely over the forty crossings on my way out, and my brother as many on the return trip.

Allen Porter then lived near the first crossing, on the farther side, and as this was the last settler I would see and the last place 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 tried to dissuade me from proceeding on my journey. But I would not be turned back, and the following morning cut loose from the settlements and, figuratively speaking, plunged into the deep forest of the mountains.

The road (if it could be properly called a road), lay in the narrow valley of White River, or on the mountains adjacent, in some places (as at Mud Mountain), reaching an altitude of more than a thousand feet above the river bed. Some places the forest was so dense that one could scarcely see to read at mid-day, while in other places large burns gave an opening of daylight.

During the forenoon of this first day, while in one of those deepest of deep forests, where, if the sky was clear, and one could catch a spot you could see out overhead, one might see the stars as from a deep well, my pony stopped short, raised his head with his ears pricked up, indicating something unusual was at hand. Just then, I caught an indistinct sight of a movement ahead, and thought I heard voices, while the pony made an effort to turn and flee in the opposite direction.

Soon there appeared three women and eight children on foot, coming down the road in blissful 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 to, and what are you here for?" was asked by the foremost woman of the party, in such quick succession as to utterly preclude any answer, as she discovered me standing on the road holding my uneasy pony. Mutual explanations soon followed. I soon learned their teams had become exhausted, and that all the wagons but one had been left, and this one was on the road a few miles behind them; that they were entirely out of provisions and had had nothing to eat for twenty hours, except what natural food they had gathered, which was not much.

They eagerly inquired the distance to food, which I thought they might possibly reach that night, but in any event the next morning early. Meanwhile I had opened my sack of hard bread and gave each a cracker, in the eating of which the sound resembled pigs cracking dry, hard corn.

Of those eleven persons, I only know of but one now alive, although, of course, the children soon outgrew my knowledge of them, but they never forgot me.

Mrs. Anne Fawcet, the spokesman of the party, I knew well in after years, and although now eighty years old (she will pardon me for telling her age), is living in good circumstances a mile out from the town of Auburn, nearly twenty miles south of Seattle.

Mrs. Fawcet can scarcely be called a typical pioneer woman, yet there were many approaching her ways. She was of too independent a character to be molded into that class; too self-reliant to be altogether like her neighbor housewives ; and yet was possessed of those sturdy virtues so common with the pioneer industry and frugality, coupled with unbounded hospitality.

The other ladies of the party, Mrs. Herpsberger and Mrs. Hall, I never knew afterwards, and have no knowledge as to their fate, other than that they arrived safely in the settlements.

But we neither of us had time to parley or visit, and so the ladies with their children, barefoot and ragged, bareheaded and unkempt, started down the mountain intent on reaching food, while I started up the road wondering whether or not this scene was to be often repeated as I advanced on my journey.

A dozen biscuits of hard bread is usually a very small matter, but with me it might mean a great deal. How far would I have to go? When could I find out? What would be the plight of my people when found? Or would 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 heavily on my mind as I slowly and gradually ascended the mountain.

Some new work on the road gave evidence that men had recently been there, but the work was so slight one could easily believe immigrants might have done it as they passed. Fifteen thousand dollars had been appropriated by Congress for a military road, which report said would be expended in improving the way cut by the immigrants and citizens through the Natchess Pass during the summer of 1853.

I saw some of the work, but do not remember seeing any of the men, as I stuck close to the old trail, and so my first camp was made alone, west of the summit and without special incident. I had reached an altitude where the night chill was keenly felt, and, with my light blanket, missed the friendly contact of the back of the faithful ox that had served me so well on the plains. My pony had nothing but browse for supper, and was restless. Nevertheless I slept soundly and was up early, refreshed and ready to resume the journey.

It is strange how the mind will vividly retain the memory of some incidents of no particular importance while the recollection of other passing events so completely fades away. I knew I had to cross that ugly stream, White River, five times during the first day's travel, but cannot recall

but one crossing, where my pony nearly lost his balance, and came down on his knees with his nose in the water for the moment, but to recover and bravely carry me out safely.

The lone camp well up on the mountain had chilled me, but the prospect before me and that I had left behind brought a depressed feeling most difficult to describe. I had passed through long stretches of forest so tall and so dense that it seemed incredible that such did exist anywhere on earth. And then, the road; such a road, if it could be called a road.

Curiously enough, the heavier the standing timber, the easier it had been to slip through with wagons, there being but little undecayed or down timber. In the ancient of days, however, great giants had been uprooted lifting considerable earth with the upturned roots, that, as time went on and the roots decayed, formed mounds two, three, or four feet high, leaving a corresponding hollow in which one would plunge, the whole being covered by a dense, short, evergreen growth, completely hiding from view the unevenness of the ground.

Over these hillocks and hollows the immigrants had rolled their wagon wheels, and over the large roots of the fir, often as big as one's body and nearly all of them on top of the ground. I will not undertake to say how many of these giant trees were to be found to the acre, but they were so numerous and so large that in many places it was difficult to find a passage way between them, and then only by a tortuous route winding in various directions. When the timber burns were encountered the situation was worse.

Often the remains of timber would be piled in such confusion that sometimes wagons could pass under logs that rested on others; then again, others were encountered half buried, while still others would rest a foot or so from the ground, these, let the reader remember, oftentimes were five feet or more in diameter, with trunks from two to three hundred feet in length. All sorts of devices had been resorted to in order to overcome these obstructions.

In many cases, where not too large, cuts had been taken out, while in other places, the larger timber had been bridged up to by piling smaller logs, rotten chunks, brush, or earth, so the wheels of the wagon could be rolled up 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, a chain or rope run to the end of the tongue, a man to drive, one or two to guide the tongue, others to help at the wheels, and so with infinite labor and great care the wagons would gradually be worked down the mountain in the direction of the settlements. Small wonder that the immigrants of the previous year should report they had to cut their way through the timber, while the citizen road workers had reported that the road was opened, and small wonder that the prospect of the road should have as chilling effect on my mind as the chill mountain air had had on my body.

But, the more difficulties encountered, the more determined I became, at all hazards, to push through, for the more the necessity to acquaint myself with the obstacles to be encountered and to be with my friends to encourage and help them. Before me lay the great range or pass, five

thousand feet above sea level, and the rugged mountain climb to get to the summit, and the summit prairies where my pony could have a feast of grass.

It was on this summit hill the immigration of the previous year had encountered such grave difficulties. At the risk of in part repeating, I am tempted to quote some of my own words to a select party of friends, the teachers of the county in which I have lived so long, prepared for that special occasion.

About twenty miles north of the great mountain of the Cascade range is a picturesque, small scope of open country known as Summit Prairie, in the Natchess Pass, some seventy miles southeasterly from this city (Tacoma). In this prairie, fifty years ago this coming autumn, a camp of immigrants was to be seen. * * * Go back they could not; either they must go ahead or starve in the mountains.

"A short way out from the camp a steep mountain declivity lay square across their track. As one of the ladies of the party said, when she first saw it: `Why, Lawsee Masee! We have come to the jumping off place at last!' This lady felt, as many others of the party felt, like they had come to the end of the world (to them), and the exclamation was not for the stage effect, but one of fervent prayer for deliverance.

"Stout hearts in the party were not to be deterred from making the effort to go ahead. Go around this hill they could not; go down it with logs trailed to the wagons, as they had done before, they could not, as the hill was so steep the logs would go end over end and be a danger instead of a help. So the rope they had was run down the hill and found to be too short to reach the bottom.

"One of the leaders of the party (I knew him well) turned to his men and said, `Kill a steer;' and they killed a steer, cut his hide into strips and spliced it to the rope. It was found yet to be 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 spliced to the rope, which then reached the bottom of the hill; and by the aid of that rope and strips of the hides of those three steers, twenty-nine wagons were lowered down the mountain side to the bottom of the steep hill."

"Now, my friends, there is no fiction about this story, it is a true story, and some of the actors are yet alive, and some of them live in this county. Nor were their trials ended when they got their wagons down to the bottom of that hill.

"Does it now seem possible for mortal man to do this? And yet this is only a plain statement of an incident of pioneer life without giving any names and dates, that can yet be verified by living witnesses; but these witnesses are not for here long." James Biles, who afterwards settled near Olympia, was the man who ordered the steers killed to procure the hides to lengthen out the rope. George H. Himes, of Portland, who is still living, was one of the party; so was Stephen Judson, of Steilacoom; also Nelson Sargeant, of Grand Mound, now a very old man. The feat of bringing that train of twenty-nine wagons in with the loss of only one is the greatest of anything I ever knew or heard of in the way of pioneer travel. With snail-like movements, the cattle and men becoming weaker and weaker, progress was made each day until finally it seemed as if the oxen

could do no more, and it became necessary to send them forward on the train ten miles, where it was known plenty of grass could be had.

"Meantime the work on the road continued until the third day, when the last particle of food was gone. The teams were brought back, the trip over the whole ten miles made, and Connell's Prairie reached at dark."The struggle over that ten miles, where to a certain extent each party became so intent on their particular surroundings as to forget all else, left the women and children to take care of themselves while the husbands tugged at the wagons. I now have in mind to relate the experience of one of these mothers with a ten-year-old boy, one child of four years and another of eight months.

"Part of the time these people traveled on the old trail and part on the newly-cut road, and by some means fell behind the wagons, which forded that turbulent, dangerous stream, White River, before they reached the bank, and were out of sight, not knowing but the women and children were ahead."I wish every little boy of ten years of age of this great State, or, for that matter, twenty years old or more, could read and profit by what I am now going to relate, especially if that little or big boy at times thinks he is having a hard time because he is asked to help his mother or father at odd times, or perchance to put in a good solid day's work on Saturday, instead of spending it as a holiday; or if he has a cow to milk or wood to split, or anything that is work, to make him bewail his fate for having such a hard time in life.

"I think the reading of the experience of this little ten-year old boy with his mother and the two smaller children would encourage him to feel more cheerful and more content with his lot.

"As I have said, the wagons had passed on, and there these four people were on the right bank of the river while their whole company was on the opposite bank and had left them there alone.

"A large fallen tree reached across the river, but the top on the further side lay so close to the water that a constant trembling and swaying made the trip dangerous.

"None of them had eaten anything since the previous day, and but a scant supply then; but the boy resolutely shouldered the four year old and safely deposited him on the other side. Then came next the little tot, the baby, to be carried in arms across. Next 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; and so they began to move out sideways on the log, a half step at a time."Hold steady, mother; we are nearly over.'

'Oh, I am gone!' was the only response, as she lost her balance and fell into the river, but happily so near the farther bank that the little boy was able to catch a bush with one hand that hung over the bank, while holding on to his mother with the other, and so she was saved.

"It was then nearly dark, and without any knowledge of how far it was to camp, the little party started on the road, only tarrying long enough on the bank of the river for the mother to wring the water out of her skirts, the boy carrying the baby while the four-year-old walked beside his mother.

"After nearly two miles of travel and ascending a very steep hill, it being now dark, the glimmer of camp lights came in view; but the mother could see nothing, for she fell senseless, utterly prostrated.

"I have been up and down that hill a number of times, and do not wonder the poor woman fell senseless after the effort to reach the top. The great wonder is that she should have been able to go as far as she did. The incident illustrates how the will power can nerve one up to extraordinary achievements, but when the object is attained and the danger is past, then the power is measurably lost, as in this case, when the good woman came to know they were safe.

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

"Being asked if he did not want something to eat, the boy said 'he had forgot all about it,' and further, 'he didn't see anything to eat, anyway;' whereupon some one with a stick began to uncover some roasted potatoes, which he has decided was the best meal he has ever eaten, even to this day.

"This is a plain recital of actual occurrences, without exaggeration, obtained from the parties themselves and corroborated by numerous living witnesses.

"There were 128 people in that train, and through the indefatigable efforts of Mr. George H. Himes, of Portland, Oregon, who was one of the party, and in fact the ten-year old boy referred to, I am able to give the names in part."I have been thus particular in telling this story to illustrate what trials were encountered and overcome by the pioneers of that day, to the end that the later generations may pause in their hasty condemnation of their present surroundings and opportunities and to ask themselves whether in all candor they do not feel they are blessed beyond the generation that has gone before them, the hardy pioneers of this country.

This book could easily be filled by the recital of such heroic acts, varying only in detail and perhaps in tragic results; yet would only show in fact the ready, resourceful tact of the pioneers of those days. I want to repeat here again that I do not look upon that generation of men and women as superior to the present generation, except in this: The pioneers had lost a large number of physically weak on the trip, thus applying the great law of the survival of the fittest; and further, that the great number were pioneers in the true sense of the word frontiersmen for generations before hence were by training and habits eminently fitted to meet the emergencies of the trip and conditions to follow.

One of the incidents of this trip should be related to perpetuate the memory of heroic actions of the times, that of the famous ride across these mountains and to Olympia, of Mrs. Catherine Frazier, one of this party, on an ox.

Three days after arrival, Mrs. Frazier gave birth to the third white child born in Pierce County, Washington Frazier, named after the great territory that had been chosen for the home of the parents and descendants.

The first report, that the "mother and son were doing well," can again and again be repeated, as both * are yet alive, the mother now past seventy-three and the son fifty, and both yet residing at South Bay, near Olympia, where the parents settled soon after arrival. The curious part of such incidents is the perfect unconsciousness of the parties, of having done anything that would be handed down to posterity as exhibiting any spirit of fortitude or of having performed any heroic act. The young bride could not walk, neither could she be taken into the wagons, and she could ride an ox, and so without ceremony, mounted her steed and fell into the procession without attracting especial attention or passing remark.

Doubtless the lady, at the time, would have shrunk from any undue notice, because of her mount, and would have preferred a more appropriate entry into the future capitol of the future State, but it is now quite probable that she looks upon the act with a feeling akin to pride, and in any event, not with feelings of mortification or false pride that possibly, at the time, might have lurked within her breast.

The birth of children was not an infrequent incident on the plains, the almost universal report following, "doing as well as could be expected," the trip being resumed with but very short interruption, the little ones being soon exhibited with the usual motherly pride.

CHAPTER. XIII.

Readers of previous chapters will remember the lonely camp mentioned and the steep mountain ahead of it to reach the summit. What with the sweat incident to the day's travel, the chill air of an October night in the mountains, with but half of a three point blanket as covering and the ground for a mattress, small wonder my muscles were a little stiffened when I arose and prepared for the ascent to the summit.

Bobby had, as I have said, been restless during the night, and, when the roll of blankets and the hard bread was securely strapped on behind, suddenly turned his face homeward, evidently not relishing the fare of browse for supper. He seemingly had concluded he had had enough of the trip, and started to go home, trotting off gaily down the mountain. I could do nothing else but follow him, as the narrow cut of the road and impenetrable obstructions on either side utterly precluded my getting past to head off his rascally maneuvers.

Finally, finding a nip of grass by the roadside, the gait was slackened so that after several futile attempts I managed to get a firm hold of his tail, after which 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 been master of the situation. The fact was, he did not want to hurt me, but was determined to break up the partnership, and, so far as he was concerned, go no further into the mountains where he could not get a supper.

By dint of persuasion and main strength of muscle the contest was finally settled in my favor, and I secured 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 that failed, rebelled.

It is wonderful, the sagacity of the horse or ox. They know more than we usually think they do. Let one be associated (yes, that's the word, associated), with them for a season alone. Their characteristics come to the front and become apparent without study. Did I talk to my friend, Bobby? Indeed, I did.

There were but few other animate things to talk to. Perhaps one might see a small bird flit across the vision or a chipmunk, or hear the whirr of the sudden flight of the grouse, but all else was solitude, deep and impressive. The dense forest through which I was passing did not supply conditions for bird or animal life in profusion. "You are a naughty lad, Bobby," I said, as I turned his head eastward to retrace the mile or so of the truant's run.

We were soon past our camping ground of the night before, and on our way up the mountain. Bobby would not be led, or if he was, would hold back, till finally making a rush up the steep ascent, would be on my heels or toes before I could get out of the way. "Go ahead, Bobby," I would say, and suiting action to words seize the tail with a firm grasp and follow.

When he moved rapidly, by holding on, 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. So Bobby led me up the mountain 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.

I felt that it was a mean trick to compel the poor brute to pull me up the mountain by his tail, supperless, breakfastless, and discontented. It appeared to me it was just cause to sever our friendship, which by this time seemed cemented closely, but then I thought of the attempted abandonment he had been guilty of, and that perhaps he should submit to some indignities at my hand in consequence.

By noon we had surmounted all obstacles, and stood upon the summit Prairie (one of them, for there are several) where Bobby feasted to his heart's content, while I, well, it was the same old story, hard tack and cheese, with a small allotment of dried venison.

To the south apparently but a few miles distant, the old mountain, Rainier of old, Tacoma by Winthrop, loomed up into the clouds full ten thousand feet higher than where I stood, a grand scene to behold, worthy of all the effort expended to attain this view point. But I was not attuned to view with ecstasy the grandeur of what lay before me, but rather to scan the horizon to ascertain if I could, what the morrow might bring forth. The mountain to the pioneer has served as a huge barometer to foretell the weather.

"How is the mountain this morning?" the farmer asks in harvest time. "Has the mountain got his night cap on?" the housewife inquires before her wash is hung on the line. The Indian would watch the mountain with intent to determine whether he might expect "snass" (rain), or "kufl

snass" (hail), or "t'kopc snass" (snow), and seldom failed in his conclusions, and so I scanned the mountain top that day partially hid in the clouds, with foreboding verified at night fall, as will be repeated later.

The next camp was in the Natchess Canyon. I had lingered on the summit prairie to give the pony a chance to fill up on the luxuriant but rather washy grass, there found in great abundance. For myself, I had had plenty of water, but had been stinted in hard bread, remembering my experience of the day before, with the famishing women and children.

I began to realize more and more, the seriousness of my undertaking, particularly so, because I could hear no tidings. A light snow storm came on just before nightfall, which, with the high mountains on either side of the river, spread approaching darkness rapidly. I was loth to camp; somehow I just wanted to go on, and doubtless would have traveled all night if I could have safely found my way.

The canyon was but a few hundred yards wide, with the tortuous river first striking one bluff and then the other, necessitating numerous crossings; the intervening space being glade land of large pine growth with but light undergrowth and few fallen trees. The whole surface was covered with coarse sand, in which rounded boulders were imbedded so thick in places as to cause the trail to be very indistinct, particularly in open spots, where the snow had fallen unobstructed.

Finally, I saw that I must camp, and after crossing the river, came out in an opening where the bear tracks were so thick that one could readily believe the spot to be a veritable play ground for all the animals round about. I found two good sized trunks of trees that had fallen; one obliquely: across the other, and, with my pony tethered as a sentinel and my fire as an advance post, I slept soundly, but nearly supperless. The black bears on the west slope of the mountain I knew were timid and not dangerous, but I did not know so much about the mountain species, and can but confess that I felt lonesome, though placing great reliance upon my fire, which I kept burning all night.

Early next morning found Bobby and me on the trail, a little chilled with the cold mountain air and very willing to travel. In a hundred yards or so, we came upon a ford of ice cold water to cross, and others following in such quick succession, that I realized that we were soon to leave the canyon.

I had been told that at the 32nd crossing I would leave the canyon and ascend a high mountain, and then. travel through pine glades, and that I must then be careful and not lose the trail. I had not: kept strict account of the crossings like one of the men I had met, who cut a notch in his goad stick at every crossing, but I knew instinctively we were nearly out, and so I halted to eat what I supposed would be the only meal of the day, not dreaming what lay in store for me at nightfall.

It would be uninteresting to the general reader to relate the details of that day's travel, and in fact I cannot recall much about it, except going up the steep mountain; so steep that Bobby again practiced his engineering instincts and I mine, with my selfish hand having a firm hold of the tail of my now patient comrade. From the top of the mountain grade I looked back in wonderment

about how the immigrants had taken their wagons down; I found out by experience afterwards. Toward nightfall I heard a welcome sound of the tinkling of a bell, and soon saw the smoke of camp fires, and finally the village of tents and grime covered wagons. How I tugged at Bobby's halter to make him go faster, and then mounted him with not much better results, can better be imagined than told.

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

It is not easy to describe the cordial greeting accorded me by those tired and almost discouraged immigrants. If we had been near and dear relatives, the rejoicing could not have been mutually greater. 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 we cannot get over with our wagons, can we get the women and children through in safety? I was able to lift a load of doubt and fear from off their jaded minds. Before I knew what was happening, I caught the fragrance of boiling coffee and of fresh meat cooking. It seemed the good matrons knew without telling that I was hungry (I doubtless looked it), 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 hither bank of the Yakima River, where the old trail crosses that river near where the flourishing city of North Yakima now is. These were the people, a part of them, that are mentioned elsewhere in the chapter on the White River massacre. Harvey H. Jones, wife and three children, and George E. King, wife and one child. One of the little boys of the camp is the same person John I. King who has written the graphic account of the tragedy that follows, in which his mother and step father and their neighbors lost their lives that horrible massacre on White River a year later, and the other, George E. King, (but no relation) the little five-year-old who was taken and held captive for nearly four months, and then safely delivered over by the Indians to the military authorities at Fort Steilacoom.

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

"Are you going out on those plains alone?" asked Mrs. Jones, anxiously. When informed that I would have the pony with me, a faint, sad smile spread over her countenance as she said, "Well, I don't think it is safe." Mr. Jones explained that what his wife referred to was the danger from the ravenous wolves that infested the open country, and from which they had lost weakened stock from their bold forages, "right close to the camp," he said, and advised me not to camp near the watering places, but up on the high ridge. I followed his advice with the result as we shall see of missing my road and losing considerable time, and causing me not a little trouble and anxiety.

CHAPTER XIV. Trip Through the Natchess Pass Continued.

The start for the high table desert lands bordering the Yakima valley cut me loose from all communication, for no more immigrants were met until I reached the main traveled route beyond the Columbia River. I speak of the "desert lands" adjacent to the Yakima from the standpoint of that day. We all thought these lands were worthless, as well as the valley, not dreaming of the untold wealth the touch of water would bring out.

The road lay through a forbidding sage plain, or rather an undulating country, seemingly of shifting sands and dead grass of comparatively scant growth. As the sun rose the heat became intolerable. The dust brought vivid memories of the trip across the plains in places. The heated air trembling in the balance brought the question of whether or not something was the matter with my eyes or brain; whether this was an optical illusion, or real, became a debatable question in my mind.

Strive against it with all my might, my eyes would feast on the farther horizon to catch the glimpse of the expected train, till they fairly ached. Added to this, an intolerable thirst seized upon me, and compelled leaving the road and descending into the valley for water. Here I found as fat cattle as ever came to a butcher's stall, fed on this self same dead grass, cured without rain. These cattle belonged to the Indians, but there were no Indians in sight.

The incident, though, set me to thinking about the possibilities of a country that could produce such fat cattle from the native grasses. I must not linger off the trail, and take chances of missing the expected train, and so another stretch of travel, of thirst, and suffering came until during the afternoon, I found water on the trail, and tethered my pony for his much needed dinner, and opened my sack of hard bread to count the contents, with the conclusion that my store was half gone, and so lay down in the shade of a small tree or bush near the spring to take an afternoon nap.

Rousing up before sun down, refreshed, we (pony and I), took the trail in a much better mood than before the nooning. 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. Without having intended to travel in the night, I had, so to speak, drifted into it and finding the road could be followed, though but dimly seen, kept on the way until a late hour, when I unsaddled and hobbled the pony. The saddle blanket was brought into use, and I was soon off in dream land, and forgot all about the dust, the train or the morrow.

Morning brought a puzzling sense of helplessness that for the time, seemed overpowering. I had slept late, and awoke to find the pony had wandered far off on the hill side, in fact, so far, 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 in no mood to take the trail again. Coaxing was of no avail, driving would do no good, so embracing an opportunity to seize his tail again, we went around about over the plain and through the sage brush in a rapid gait, which finally lessened and I again became master of him. For the life of me I could not be sure as to the direction of the trail, but happened to take the right course. When the trail was found, the

question came as to the whereabouts of the saddle. It so happened that I took the wrong direction and had to retrace my steps. The sun was high when we started on our journey.

A few hundred yards travel brought feelings of uneasiness, as it was evident that we were not on the regular trail. Not knowing but this was some cut off, so continued until the Columbia River bluff was reached, and the great river was in sight, half a mile distant, and several hundred feet of lower level. 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 to find the tracks scattered, and any resemblance of a road gone; in a word, I was lost I never knew how those wagon tracks came to be there, but I know that I lost more than a half day's precious time, and again was thrown in a doubting mood as to whether I had missed the long sought for train. The next incident I remember vividly, was my attempt to cross the Columbia just below the mouth of Snake River. I had seen but very 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. I could not induce them to cross me over. From some cause they seemed surly and unfriendly.

The treatment was so in contrast to what I had received from the Indians on the Sound, that I could not help wondering what it meant. No one, to my knowledge, lost his life by the hands of the Indians that season, but the next summer all, or nearly all, were ruthlessly murdered that ventured into that country unprotected.

That night I camped late, opposite Wallula (old Fort Walla Walla), in a sand storm of great fury. I tethered my pony this time, 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 greater work to relieve the blanket from the accumulated sand. By this time the wind had laid and comparative calm prevailed, and then came the effort to make myself heard across the wide river to the people of the fort. It did seem as though I would fail. Traveling up and down the river bank for half a mile, or so, in the hopes 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 think I must have been two hours halloaing at the top of my voice until hoarse from the violent effort. Finally, while sitting there, cogitating as to what to do, I spied a blue smoke arising from the cabin, and soon after a man appeared who immediately responded to my renewed efforts to attract attention. The trouble had been they were all asleep, while I was in the early morning expending my breath.

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

But I would not wait, and, procuring a fresh horse, I started out in a cheerful mood, determined to reach camp that night if my utmost exertions would accomplish it. Sundown came and no signs of camp; dusk drew on, and still no signs; finally, I spied some cattle grazing on the upland, and soon came upon the camp in a ravine that had shut them out from view. Rejoicing and outbursts of grief followed. I inquired for my mother the first thing. She was not there, she had been buried

in the sands of the Platte Valley, months before; also a younger brother lay buried near Independence rock. The scene that followed is of too sacred memory to write about, and we will draw the veil of privacy over it.

Of that party, all are under the sod save two, Mrs. Leila Packard, now of Portland, Oregon, and Mrs. Amanda O. Spinning, then the wife of the elder brother so often heretofore mentioned.

With fifty odd head of stock, seven wagons, and seventeen people, the trip was made to the Sound without serious mishap or loss. We were twenty-two days on the road, and thought this was good time to make, all things considered.

Provisions were abundant, the health of the party good, and stock in fair condition. I unhesitatingly advised the over-mountain trip; meanwhile cautioning them to expect some snow, a goodly amount of hard labor, and plenty of vexation. How long will it take? Three weeks. Why, we thought we were about through. Well, you came to stay with us, did you? But what about the little wife and the two babies on the island home? Father said some one must go and look after them. So, the elder brother was detailed to go to the island folks, whilst I was impressed into service to take his place with the immigrants. It would hardly be interesting to the general reader to give a detailed account, even if I remembered it well, which I do not. So intent did we all devote our energies to the one object, to get safely over the mountains, that all else was forgotten. It was a period of severe toil and anxious care, but not more so than to others that had gone before us, and what others had done we felt we could do, but there was no eight-hour-a-day labor, nor any drones; all were workers. I had prepared the minds of the new-comers for the worst, not forgetting the steep hills, the notched logs, and rough, stony fords, by telling the whole story.

But do you really think we can get through? said father. Yes, I know we can, if every man will put his shoulder to the wheel. This latter expression was a phrase in use to indicate doing one's duty without flinching, but in this case, it had a more literal meaning, for we were compelled often to take hold of the wheels to boost the wagons over logs, and ease them down on the opposite side, as likewise, on the steep mountain side. We divided our force into groups; one to each wagon to drive, four as wheel men as we called them, and father with the women folks on foot, or on horseback, with the stock.

God bless the women folks of the plains; the immigrant women, I mean. A nobler, braver, more uncomplaining people 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. I know this word valor, is supposed to apply to men and not to women, but I know that the immigrant women earned the right to have the word, and all it implies, applied to them.

Such a trip with all its trials is almost worth the price to bring out these latent virtues of the so called weaker sex. Strive, however, as best we could, we were unable to make the trip in the allotted time, and willing hands came out with the brother to put their shoulders to the wheels, and to bring the glad tidings that all was well on the island home, and to release the younger brother and the father from further duty, when almost through to the settlements.

Do you say this was enduring great hardships? That depends upon the point of view. As to this return trip, for myself, I can truly say that it was not I enjoyed the strife to overcome all difficulties, and so did the greater number of the company. They felt that it was a duty and enjoyed doing their duty. Many of them, it is true, were weakened by the long trip across the plains, but with the better food obtainable, and the goal so near at hand, there was a positive pleasure to pass over the miles, one by one, and become assured that final success was only a matter of a very short time.

One day, we encountered a new fallen tree, as one of the men said, a whopper, cocked up on its own upturned roots, four feet from the ground. Go around it, we could not; to cut it out seemed an endless task with our dulled, flimsy saw. Dig down, boys, said the father, and in short order every available shovel was out of the wagons and into willing hands, with others standing by to take their turn. In a short time the way was open fully four feet deep, and oxen and wagons passed through under the obstruction.

CHAPTER XV. Trip Through the Natchess Pass Continued.

People now traversing what is popularly known as Nisqually Plains, that is, the stretch of open prairie, interspersed with clumps of timber, sparkling lakes, and glade lands, from the heavy timber bordering the Puyallup to a like border of the Nisqually, will hardly realize that once upon a time these bare gravelly prairies supplied a rich grass of exceeding fattening quality of sufficient quantity to support many thousand head of stock, and not only support but fatten them ready for the butcher's stall. Nearly half a million acres of this land lie between the two rivers, from two to four hundred feet above tide level and beds of the rivers mentioned, undulating and in benches, an ideal park of shade and open land of rivulets and lakes, of natural roads and natural scenery of splendor.

So, when our little train emerged from the forests skirting the Puyallup Valley, and came out on the open at Montgomery's, afterwards Camp Montgomery, of Indian war times, twelve miles southeasterly of Fort Steilacoom, the experience was almost as if one had come into a noonday sun from a dungeon prison, so marked was the contrast. Hundreds of cattle, sheep and horses were quietly grazing, scattered over the landscape, as far as one could see, fat and content. It is not to be wondered that the spirits of the tired party should rise as they saw this scene of content before them, and thought they could become participants with those who had come before them, and that for the moment rest was theirs if that was what they might choose.

Fort Nisqually was about ten miles south-westerly from our camp at Montgomery's, built, as mentioned elsewhere, by the Hudson Bay Company, in 1833.

In 1840-41, this company's holdings at Nisqually and Cowlitz were transferred to the Puget Sound Agricultural Company. This latter company was organized in London at the instance of Dr. William F. Tolmie, who visited that city to conduct the negotiations in person with the directors of the Hudson Bay Company. He returned clothed with the power to conduct the affairs of the new company, but under the direction of the Hudson Bay Company, and with the restriction not to enter into or interfere with the fur trade; he later became the active agent of both companies at Nisqually.

It was principally the stock of this company that we saw from our camp and near by points.. At that time, the Agricultural Company had several farms on these plains, considerable pasture land enclosed, and fourteen thousand head of stock running at large; sheep, cattle, and horses.

The United States government actually paid rent to this foreign company for many years for the site where Fort Steilacoom was located for account of the shadowy title of the company under the treaty of 1846.

During this lapse of time, from 1833 to the time our camp was established' many of the company's servants time had expired and in almost every case, such had taken to themselves Indian wives and bad squatted on the choice locations for grazing or small farming. Montgomery himself, near whose premises we were camping, was one of these. A few miles to the south of this place, ran the small creek "Muck," on the surface for several miles to empty into the Nisqually. Along this little creek, others of these discharged servants had settled, and all taken Indian wives. These were the settlers that were afterwards denounced by Governor Stevens, and finally arrested for alleged treason, as is fully set out in other chapters. Each of these had abundance of stock and farm produce, and was living in affluence and comfort. One of these, reputed to be the rightful owner of thirteen cows, : one summer raised thirty-three calves, the handy lasso rope having been brought into play among the company's herds in secluded places; yet, as the rule, these people were honorable, upright men, though as a class, not of high intelligence, or of sober habits.

Added to this class just mentioned, was another; the discharged United States soldiers. The men then comprising the United States army were far below in moral worth and character than now. Many of these men had also taken Indian wives and settled where they had chosen to select. Added to these were a goodly number of the previous' years' immigrants. By this recital the reader will be apprised of the motley mess our little party were destined to settle among, unless they should choose to go to other parts of the Territory. I did not myself fully realize the complications to be met until later years.

All this while, as we have said, settlers were crowding into the district, taking up donation claims until that act expired by limitation in 1854, and afterwards by squatter's rights, which to all appearances, seemed as good as any. My own donation claim afterwards was involved in this controversy, in common with many others. Although our proofs of settlement were made and all requirements of the law complied with, nevertheless, our patents were held up and our title questioned for twenty years, and so, after having made the trip across the plains, because Uncle Sam had promised to give us all a farm, and after having made the required improvements and resided on the land for the four years, then to be crowded off without title did seem a little rough on the pioneers.

I have before me one of the notices served upon the settlers by the company's agent which tells the whole story.*¹ The then thriving town of Steilacoom was involved, as likewise part of the lands set apart for the Indian Reservation, and it did seem as though it would be hard to get a more thorough mix-up as to titles of the land, than these knotty questions presented.

All this while, as was natural there should be, there was constant friction between some settler and the company, and had it not been for the superior tact of such a man as Dr. Tolmie in charge of the company's affairs, there would have been serious trouble.

As it was, there finally came a show of arms when the company undertook to survey the boundary line to inclose the land claimed, although the acreage was much less than claimed on paper. But the settlers, (or some of them), rebelled, and six of them went armed to the party of surveyors at work and finally stopped them. An old-time friend, John McLeod, was one of the party (mob, the company called it), but the records do not show whether he read his chapter in: the Bible that day, or whether instead, he took a double portion of whiskey to relieve his conscience.

It is doubtful whether the old man thought he was doing wrong or thought anything about it, except that he had a belief that somehow or other a survey might make against him getting a title to his own claim.

I had similar experience at a later date with the Indians near, the Muckleshute Reservation, as elsewhere related, while attempting to extend the sub-divisional lines of the township near where the reserve was located. I could not convince the Indians that the survey meant no harm to them.

The case was different in the first instance, as in fact, neither party was acting within the limits of their legal rights, and for the time being, the strongest and most belligerent prevailed, but only to be circumvented at a little later date by a secret completion of the work, sufficient to platting the whole.

All this while the little party was halting. The father said the island home would not do, and as he had come two thousand miles to live neighbors, I must give up my claim and take' another near

*¹ ORIGINAL WARNING TO THOMAS HADLEY.

We hereby certify that a correct copy of the within notice was presented to T. Hadley by Mr. William Greig this 6th day. of April, 1857.

WILLIAM GREIG.
ALFRED McNEILL.
AMBROSE SKINNER.

Nisqually, W. T., 12th March, 1857.

To Mr. Thomas Hadley.—Sir: I hereby warn you that, in cultivating land and making other improvements on your present location in or near the Talentire precinct, Pierce County, Washington Territory, you are trespassing on the lands confirmed to the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company by the Boundary Treaty, ratified in July, 1846, between Great Britain and the United States of America. very Respectfully

Your Obed't Servt.,
W. F. TOLMIE.

Agent Puget's Sound Agricultural Company.

theirs, and so, abandoning over a year's hard work, I acted upon his request with the result: told elsewhere, of fleeing from our new chosen home, `as we supposed, to save our lives, upon the outbreak of the Indian War in less than a year from the time of the camp mentioned.

One can readily see that these surroundings did not promise that compact, staid settlement of energetic, wide awake pioneers we so coveted, nevertheless, the promise of money returns was good, and that served to allay any discontent that would otherwise arise. I remember the third year we began selling eighteen months' old steers at fifty dollars each, off the range that had never been fed a morsel. Our butter sold for fifty cents a pound, and at times, seventy-five cents, and many other things at like prices. No wonder all hands soon became contented; did not have time to be otherwise.

It came about though, that we were in considerable part a community within ourselves, yet, there were many excellent people in the widely scattered settlements. The conditions to some extent encouraged lawlessness, and within the class already mentioned, .a good deal of drunkenness and what one might well designate as loose morals, incident to the surroundings. A case in point:

A true, though one might say a humorous, story is told on Doctor Tolmie, or one of his men, of visiting a settler where they knew one of their beeves had been slaughtered and appropriated. To get direct evidence he put himself in the way of an invitation to dinner, where, sure enough, the fresh, fat beef was smoking on the table.

The good old pioneer (I knew him well), asked a good, old-fashioned Methodist blessing over the meat, giving thanks for the bountiful supply of the many good things of the world vouchsafed to him and his neighbors, and thereupon in true pioneer hospitality, cut a generous sized piece of the roast for his guest, the real owner of the meat.

This incident occurred just as here related, and although the facts are as stated, yet we must not be too ready to scoff at our religious friend and condemn him without a hearing. To me, it would have been just as direct thieving as any act could have been, and yet, to our sanctified friend I think it was not, and upon which thereby hangs a tale.

Many of the settlers looked upon the company as interlopers, pure and simple, without any rights they were bound to respect. There had been large numbers of cattle and sheep run on the range and had eaten the feed down, which they thought was robbing them of their right of eminent domain for the land they claimed the government had promised to give them.

The cattle become very wild, in great part on account of the settlers' actions, but the curious part was they afterwards justified themselves from the fact that they were wild, and so it happened there came very near being claim of common property of the company's stock, with not a few of the settlers.

One lawless act is almost sure to breed another, and there was no exception to the rule in this strange community, and many is the settler that can remember the disappearance of stock which could be accounted for in but one way gone with the company's herd, In a few years, though, all

this disappeared. The incoming immigrants from across the plains were a sturdy set as a class, and soon frowned down such a loose code of morals.

For a moment let us turn to the little camp on the edge of the prairie, of seven wagons and three tents. There came a time it must be broken up. No more camp fires, with the fragrant coffee morning and evening; no more smoking the pipe together over jests, or serious talk; no more tucks in the dresses of the ladies, compelled first by the exigencies of daily travel and now to be parted with under the inexorable law of custom or fashion; no more lumps of butter at night, churned during the day by the movement of wagon and the can containing the morning's milk. We must hie us off to prepare shelter from the coming storms of winter; to the care of the stock; the preparations for planting; to the beginning of a new life of independence.