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Title: In the Early Days along the Overland Trail in Nebraska Territory, in 1852

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Compiler: Mrs. A. S. Hardy

Release Date: February 25, 2010 [EBook #31384]

Language: English

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK IN THE EARLY DAYS ALONG THE
OVERLAND TRAIL IN NEBRASKA TERRITORY, IN 1852 ***

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In the Early Days Along the Overland Trail in Nebraska Territory, in 1852.

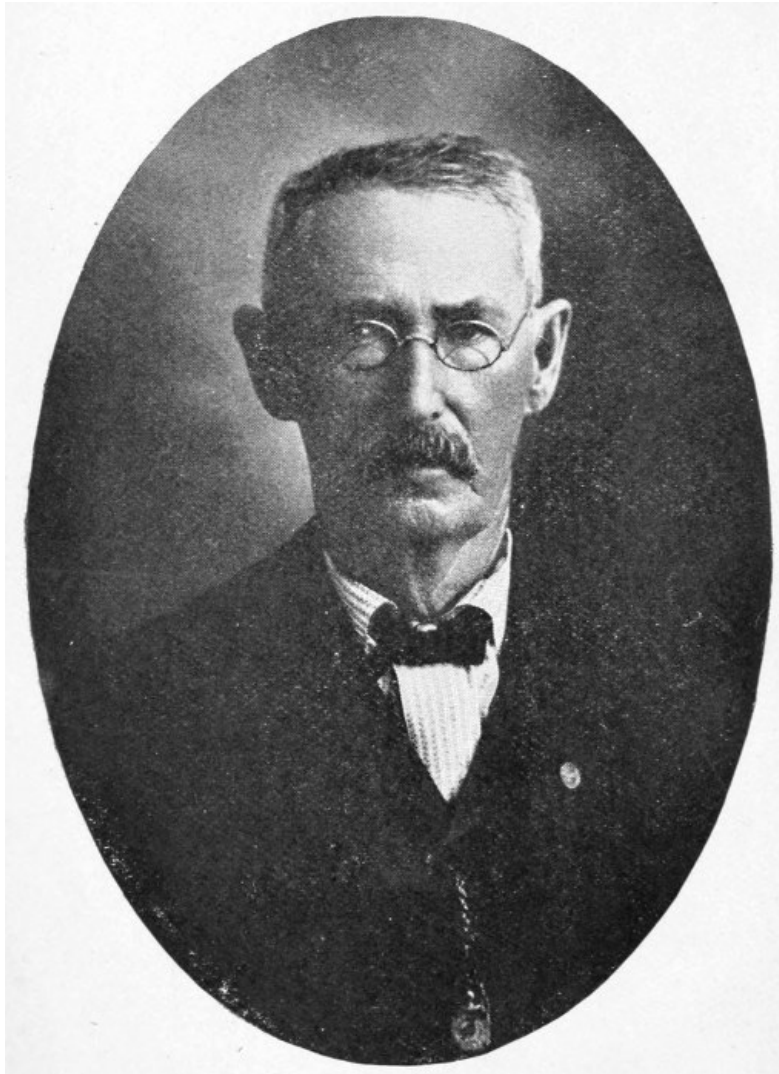
BY

GILBERT L. COLE,

1905.

COMPILED BY MRS. A. HARDY.

**Press of
FRANKLIN HUDSON PUBLISHING COMPANY,
KANSAS CITY, MO.**



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BY
GILBERT L. COLE,
BEATRICE, NEB.**

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TESTIMONIALS.

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A true story plainly told, of immense historical value and fascinating interest from beginning to end.

DR. GEO. W. CROFTS,
Beatrice, Nebraska.

I have read every word of "In the Early Days," written by Mr. Gilbert L. Cole, with great interest and profit. The language is well chosen, the word-pictures are vivid, and the subject-matter is of historic value. The story is fascinating in the extreme, and I only wished it were longer. The story should be printed and distributed for the people in general to read.

July 27, 1905.

C. A. FULMER,
Superintendent of Public Schools,
Beatrice, Neb.

At a single sitting, with intense interest, I have read the manuscript of "In the Early Days." It is a very entertaining narrative of adventure, a vivid portrayal of conditions and an instructive history of events as they came into the personal experience and under the observation of the writer fifty-three years ago. An exceedingly valuable contribution to the too meager literature of a time so near in years, but so distant in conditions as to make the truth about it seem stranger than fiction. [Pg vi]

REV. N. A. MARTIN,
Pastor, Centenary M. E. Church,
Beatrice, Neb.

NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.
LINCOLN, Nebraska, July 28, 1905.

To whom it may concern: The manuscript account of the overland trip by Mr. Gilbert L. Cole of Beatrice, Nebraska, in my opinion is a very carefully written story of great interest to the whole public, and particularly to Nebraskans. It reads like a novel, and the succession of adventures holds the interest of the reader to the end. The records of trips across the Nebraska Territory as early as this one are very incomplete, and Mr. Cole has done a real public service in putting into print so complete a record of these experiences. I predict that it will find a wide circulation among lovers of travel and of Nebraska history.

Very sincerely,

JAY AMOS BARRETT,
Curator and Librarian Nebraska
State Historical Society,

Author of "Nebraska and the Nation";
"Civil Government of Nebraska."

EXECUTIVE CHAMBER,
LINCOLN, Nebraska, July 28, 1905.

To whom it may concern: It gives me great pleasure to say that the publication, "In the Early Days," written by Mr. Gilbert L. Cole, of Beatrice, Nebraska, is a very interesting and profitable work to read. It bears upon many subjects of great historical value and no doubt will prove a very interesting book to all who read it and I take pleasure in recommending the same. [Pg vii]

Very respectfully,

JOHN H. MICKEY,
Governor.

To whom it may concern: It is with pleasure I write a few words of commendation for the book written by Mr. Gilbert L. Cole, of Beatrice, Nebraska, entitled "In the Early Days." It is well prepared and full of interest from beginning to the end. It is of great value to every Nebraskan.

July 28, 1905.

D. L. THOMAS,
Pastor Grace M. E. Church,
Lincoln, Neb.

An interesting, thrilling and delightful bit of prairie history hitherto unwritten and unsung, which most opportunely and completely supplies a missing link in the stories of the great Westland.

MRS. A. HARDY,
President Beatrice Woman's Club,
Beatrice, Neb.

BEATRICE, NEB., July 30, 1905.

I have just read "In the Early Days," by Col. G. L. Cole, and I find it an interesting and instructive narrative, clothed in good diction and pleasing style. Few of the Argonauts took time or trouble to

make note of the events of their journey and our California gold episode is remarkably barren of literature, a fact which makes Col. Cole's book doubly interesting and valuable.

M. T. CUMMINGS

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INTRODUCTORY.

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If one is necessary, the only apology I can offer for presenting this little volume to the public is that it may serve to record for time to come some of the adventures of that long and wearisome journey, together with my impressions of the beautiful plains, mountains and rivers of the great and then comparatively unknown Territory of Nebraska. They were presented to me fresh from the hand of Nature, in all their beauty and glory. And by reference to the daily journal I kept along the trail, the impressions made upon my mind have remained through these long years, bright and clear.

THE AUTHOR.

IN THE EARLY DAYS ALONG THE OVERLAND TRAIL IN NEBRASKA TERRITORY, IN 1852.

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CHAPTER I.

SETTING UP ALTARS OF REMEMBRANCE.

It has been said that once upon a time Heaven placed a kiss upon the lips of Earth and therefrom sprang the fair State of Nebraska.

It was while the prairies were still dimpling under this first kiss that the events related in this little volume became part and parcel of my life and experience, as gathered from a trip made across the continent in the morning glow of a territory now occupying high and honorable position in the calendar of States and nations.

On the 16th day of March, 1852, a caravan consisting of twenty-four men, one woman (our captain, W. W. Wadsworth being accompanied by his wife), forty-four head of horses and mules and eight wagons, gathered itself together from the little city of Monroe, Michigan, and adjacent

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country, and, setting its face toward the western horizon, started for the newly found gold fields of California, where it expected to unloose from the storage quarters of Nature sufficient of shining wealth to insure peace and plenty to twenty-five life-times and their dependencies. As is usual upon such occasions, this March morning departure from home and friends was a strange commingling of sadness and gladness, of hope and fear, for in those days whoever went into the regions beyond the Missouri River were considered as already lost to the world. It was going into the dark unknown and untried places of earth whose farewells always surrounded those who remained at home with an atmosphere of foreboding.

Nothing of importance occurred during our travel through the States, except the general bad roads, which caused us to make slow progress. Crossing the Mississippi River at Warsaw, Illinois, we kept along the northern tier of counties in Missouri, which were heavily timbered and sparsely settled. Bearing south-west, we arrived at St. Joseph, Missouri, on the first day of May. [Pg 15]

The town was a collection of one-story, cheap, wooden buildings, located along the river and Black Snake Hollow.

The inhabitants appeared to be chiefly French and half-breed Indians. The principal business was selling outfits to immigrants and trading horses, mules and cattle. There was one steam ferry-boat, which had several days crossing registered ahead.

The level land below the town was the camping-place of our colony. After two or three days at this point, we drove up to the town of Savannah, where we laid in new supplies and passed on to the Missouri River, where we crossed by hand-ferry at Savannah Landing, now called Amazonia. Here we pressed for the first time the soil of the then unsettled plains of the great West. Working our way through the heavily timbered bottom, we camped under the bluffs, wet and weary.

We remained here over Sunday, it having been decided to observe the Sabbath days as a time of rest. We usually rested Wednesday afternoons also.

Just after crossing the river, we had a number of set-backs; beginning with the crippling of a wheel while passing through a growth of timber. As we examined the broken spokes, we realized that they would soon have to be replaced by new ones, and that the wise thing to do was to provide for them while in the region of timber; so we stopped, cut jack-oak, made it into lengths and stored them in the wagon until time and place were more opportune for wheel-wrighting. This broken wheel proved to be a hoodoo, as will appear at intervals during the story of the next few weeks. [Pg 16]

In attempting to cross the slough which lies near to and parallel with the river for a long distance, my team and wagon, leading the others, no sooner got fairly on to the slough, which was crusted over, than the wagon sank in clear to its bed, and the horses sank until they were resting on their bellies as completely as though they were entirely without legs.

And there we were, the longed-for bluffs just before us, and yet as unapproachable as if they were located in Ireland. A party of campers, numbering some fifty or seventy-five, who were resting near by, came to our relief. The horses were extricated, and, after we had carried the contents of the wagon to the bluff shore, they drew the wagon out with cow-teams, whose flat, broad hoofs kept them from sinking. Cow-teams were used quite extensively in those days, being very docile and also swift walkers. [Pg 17]

Here under the bluffs over-hanging the Missouri, we completed our organization, for it was not only necessary that every man go armed, but also each man knew his special duty and place. W. W. Wadsworth, a brave and noble man, was by common consent made captain. Four men were detailed each night to stand guard, two till 1 o'clock, when they were relieved by two others, who served till daylight.

Monday morning came, and at sunrise we started on the trail that led up the hollow and on to the great plains of Kansas and Nebraska. The day was warm and bright and clear. The sight before us was the most beautiful I had ever seen. Not a tree nor an obstacle was in sight; only the great rolling sea of brightest green beneath us and the vivid blue above. I think it must have been just such a scene as this that inspired a modern writer to pen those expressive and much admired lines: [Pg 18]

"I'm glad the sky is painted blue
And the grass is painted green,
And a lot of nice fresh air
All sandwiched in between."

Sky, air, grass; what an abundance of them! in all the pristine splendor of fifty-three years ago, was ours upon that spring morning. This, then, was the land which in later years was called the "Great American Desert." I have now lived in Nebraska for a quarter of a century and know whereof I speak when I say that in those days the grass was as green and luxuriant as it is today; the rivers were fringed with willow green as they are today; the prairie roses, like pink stars, dotted the trail sides through which we passed; and, later on, clumps of golden-rod smiled upon us with their sun-hued faces; the rains fell as they have been falling all these years, and several kinds of birds sang their praises of it all. This was "the barren, sandy desert," as I saw it more than half a hundred years ago.

Perhaps right here it will be well to ask the reader to bear in mind the fact that the boundary [Pg 19]

lines of Nebraska in 1852, were different from the boundary lines of today. They extended many miles farther south, and so many miles farther west, that we stepped out of Nebraska on to the summit of the Sierra Nevada Mountains into California.

It was at this stage of our journey, that, in going out, very early in the morning to catch my horse, I noticed ahead of me something sticking up above the grass. Stepping aside to see what it might be, I found a new-made grave; just a tiny grave; at its head was the object I had seen—a bit of board bearing the inscription,

"Our only child,
Little Mary."

How my heart saddened as I looked upon it! The tiny mound seemed bulging with buried hopes and happiness as the first rays of a new sun fell across it, for well I knew that somewhere on the trail ahead of us there were empty arms, aching hearts, and bitter longings for the baby who was sleeping so quietly upon the bosom of the prairie.

The first Indians we saw were at Wolf Creek, where they had made a bridge of logs and brush, and charged us fifty cents per wagon to pass over it. We paid it and drove on, coming northwest to the vicinity of the Big Blue River, at a point near where Barneston, Gage County, is now located.

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As a couple of horsemen, a comrade and myself, riding in advance, came suddenly to the Big Blue, where, on the opposite bank stood a party of thirty or forty Indians. We fell back, and when the train came up a detail was made of eight men to drive the teams and the other sixteen were to wade the river, rifles in hand.

In making preparations to ford the river, Captain Wadsworth, as a precaution of safety, placed his wife in the bottom of their wagon-bed, and piled sacks of flour around her as a protection in case of a fight.

Being one of the skirmish line, I remember how cold and blue the water was, and that it was so deep as to come into our vest pockets. We walked up to the Indians and said "How," and gave some presents of copper cents and tobacco. We soon saw that they were merely looking on to see us ford the stream. They were Pawnees, and were gaily dressed and armed with bows and arrows. We passed several pipes among them, and, seeing that they were quiet, the train was signalled, and all came through the ford without any mishap, excepting, that the water came up from four to six inches in the wagon-bed, making the ride extremely hazardous and uncomfortable for Mrs. Wadsworth, who was necessarily drawn through the water in an alarming and nerve-trying manner. But she was one of the bravest of women, and in this instance, as in many others of danger and fatigue before we reached our journey's end, she displayed such courage and good temper, as to win the admiration of all the company. The sacks of flour and other contents of the wagons were pretty badly wet, and, after we were again on the open prairie, we bade the Indians good-bye, and all hands proceeded to dismount the wagons, and spread their contents on the grass to dry.

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An "Altar of remembrance," is sure to be established at each of these halting places along life's trail. A company of kin-folk and neighbor-folk hitting the trail simultaneously, having a common goal and actuated by common interests, are drawn wonderfully close together by the varied incidents and conditions of the march, and, at the spots thus made sacred, memory never fails to halt, as in later life it makes its rounds up and down the years. Not fewer in number than the stars, which hang above them at night, are the altars of remembrance, which will forever mark the line of immigration and civilization from east to west across our prairie country.

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CHAPTER II.

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"GOD COULD NOT BE EVERYWHERE AND SO HE MADE MOTHERS."

We now moved on in the direction of Diller and Endicott, where we joined the main line of immigration coming through from St. Joe, and, crossing the Big Blue where Marysville, Kansas, is located, we were soon coming up the Little Blue, passing up on the east side, and about one-half mile this side of Fairbury.

Our trail now lay along the uplands through the day, where we could see the long line of covered wagons, sometimes two or three abreast, drawing itself in its windings like a huge white snake across this great sea of rolling green. This line could be seen many miles to the front and rear so far that the major portion of it seemed to the observer to be motionless.

This immense concourse of travellers was self-divided into trail families or travelling neighborhoods, as it were; and while each party was bound together by local ties of friendship and affection, there still ran through the entire procession a chord of common interest and sympathy, a something which, in a sense, made the whole line kin. This fact was most touchingly exemplified one day in the region of the Blue.

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I was driving across a bad slough, close behind a man who belonged to another party, from

where I did not know. Himself, wife and little daughter lived in the covered wagon he was driving. The piece of ground was an unusually bad one, and both his wagon and mine being heavily loaded, we stopped as soon as we had pulled through, in order that the horses might rest; our wagons standing abreast and about ten or twelve feet apart. In the side of his wagon cover next to me was a flap-door, which, the day being fine, was fastened open. As we sat our loads and exchanged remarks, his little girl, a beautiful child, apparently three or four years old, came from the recesses of the wagon-home, and standing in the opening of the door, looked coyly and smilingly out at her father and myself. She made a beautiful picture, with her curls and dimples, and, as I didn't know any baby talk at that time, I playfully snapped my fingers at her. The thought of moving on evidently came to the father very suddenly, for, without any preliminary symptoms and not realizing that the little one was standing so nearly out of the door, he swung his long whip, and, as it cracked over the horses' backs, they gave a sudden lurch, throwing the little girl out of the door and directly in front of the hind wheel of the heavily laden wagon, which, in an instant had passed over the child's body at the waist line, the pretty head and hands reaching up on one side of the wheel, and the feet on the other, as the middle was pressed down into the still boggy soil. The little life was snuffed out in the twinkling of an eye. The mother, seeing her darling fall, jumped from the door, and such excruciating sobs of agony I hope never to hear again. But why say it in that way when I can hear them still, even as I write? It seemed but a moment of time till men and women were gathered about the wagon, helping to gather the crushed form from the prairie, and giving assistance and sympathy in such measure and earnestness as verified the truth of the words, "A touch of sorrow makes the whole world kin."

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When started again, the trail soon led to a stream, called the Big Sandy; I believe it is in the northwest part of Fillmore County, where, about nine o'clock, A. M., we were suddenly alarmed by the unearthly whoops and yells of one hundred or more Indians (Pawnees), all mounted and riding up and down across the trail on the open upland opposite us, about a good rifle shot distant.

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Our company was the only people there. A courier was immediately sent back for reinforcements. We hastily put our camp in position of defense (as we had been drilled) by placing our wagons in a circle with our stock and ourselves inside. The Indians constantly kept up their noise, and rode up and down, brandishing their arms at us, and every minute we thought they would make a break for us.

We soon had recruits mounted and well armed coming up, when our Captain assumed command, and all were assigned to their positions. This was kept up until about four P. M., when we decided that our numbers would warrant us in making a forward movement.

As a preliminary, skirmishers were ordered forward toward the creek, through some timber and underbrush, I being one of them. My partner and I, coming to the creek first, discovered an empty whiskey barrel, and going a little farther into the brush, discovered two tents. Creeping carefully up to them, we heard groans as of some one in great pain. Peeping through a hole in the tent we saw two white men, who, on entering the tent, we learned were badly wounded by knife and bullet. From them we learned the following facts, which caused all our fear and trouble of the morning: The two white men were post-keepers at that point, and, of course, had whiskey to sell. Two large trains had camped there the night before; the campers got on a drunk, quarreled, and had a general fight, during which the post-keepers were wounded. On the trail over where the Indians were, some immigrants were camped, and a guard had been placed at the roadside. One of the Indians, hearing the noise down at the post, started out to see what was going on. Coming along the trail, the guard called to him to halt, but as he did not do so the guard fired, killing him on the spot. The campers immediately hitched up and moved on. Later the dead Indian was found by the other Indians lying in the road. It was this that aroused their anger and kept us on the ragged edge for several hours.

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The Indians all rode off as we approached them, and as the trail was now clear our train moved ahead, travelling all night and keeping out all the mounted ones as front and rear guards.

We now come to the "last leaving of the Little Blue," and pass on to the upland without wood or water, thirty-three miles east of Ft. Kearney, leading to the great Platte Valley.

Meanwhile my broken wheel had completely collapsed. Having a kit of tools with me, I set about shaping spokes out of the oak wood gathered several days before. While I was doing this others of the men rode a number of miles in search of fuel with which to make a fire to set the tire. It was nearly night and in a drizzling rain when we came to the line of the reservation. A trooper, sitting on his horse, informed us that we would have to keep off of the reservation or else go clear through if once we started. This meant three or four miles' further ride through the darkness and rain, and so we camped right there, without supper or even fire to make some coffee. We hitched up in the morning and drove into the Fort, where we were very kindly treated by the commanding officer, whose name, I think, was McArthur. He tendered us a large room with tables, pen and ink, paper and "envelope paper," where we wrote the first letters home from Nebraska, which, I believe, were all received with much joy. The greater part of the troops were absent from the Fort on a scout.

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After buying a few things we had forgotten to bring with us and getting rested, we moved on our journey again, going up on the south side of the Platte River.

Before leaving this region I want to speak of the marvelous beauty of the Platte River islands, a magnificent view of which could be had from the bluffs. Looking out upon the long stretch of

river either way were islands and islands of every size whatever, from three feet in diameter to those which contained miles of area, resting here and there in the most artistic disregard of position and relation to each other, the small and the great alike wearing its own mantle of sheerest willow-green. There are comparatively few of these island beauty spots in the whole wide world. When the Maker of the universe gathered up his emeralds and then dropped them with careless hand upon a few of earth's waters. He wrought nowhere a more beautiful effect than in the Platte islands of Nebraska. It was well that at this point we had an extra amount of kindness tendered us and so much unusual beauty to look upon, for a great sorrow was about to come upon us.

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Just as we were leaving the Little Blue, thirty-three miles back, one of our party, Robert Nelson, became ill, and in spite of the best nursing and treatment that the company could give he rapidly grew worse, and it soon became evident that his disease was cholera, which was already quite prevalent thereabout. Mrs. Wadsworth, that most excellent woman, gave to him her special care, taking him into the tent occupied by herself and husband, which, in fact, was the only tent in the outfit. It was Lew Wallace who once said that "God couldn't be everywhere, and so He made mothers." Our captain's wife was a true mother to the sick boy, but she couldn't save him. At 3 o'clock Sunday afternoon, May 27th, about sixty miles beyond Kearney, his soul passed on, and we were bowed under our first bereavement. We dug his grave in the sand a little way off the trail. We wrapped his blanket about him and sewed it, and at sunrise Monday morning laid him to rest. The end-gate from my wagon had been shaped into a grave-board and, with his name cut upon it, was planted to mark his resting-place. It was a sorrowful little company that performed these last services for one who was beloved by all.

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Just before dying, Robert had requested that his grave might be covered with willow branches, and so a comrade and myself rode our horses out to one of the islands and brought in big bunches of willows and tucked them about him, as he had desired.

Truly our prairies have been a stage upon which much more of tragedy than of comedy has been enacted.

CHAPTER III.

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"BUT SOMEWHERE THE MASTER HAS A COUNTERPART OF EACH."

"O Lord Almighty, aid Thou me to see my way more clear. I find it hard to tell right from wrong, and I find myself beset with tangled wires. O God, I feel that I am ignorant, and fall into many devices. These are strange paths wherein Thou hast set my feet, but I feel that through Thy help and through great anguish, I am learning."

This modern prayer, as prayed by the hero of a modern tale, would have fitted most completely into the spirit and conditions prevailing in our camp on a certain morning in early June, 1852, as we were completing arrangements preparatory to the extremely dangerous crossing of the Platte River, owing to its treacherous quicksand bottom.

Despite the old proverb, "Never cross a bridge till you get to it," we had, because of the very absence of a bridge, been running ahead of ourselves during the entire trip, to make the dreaded crossing over this deceptive and gormandizing stream. We had now caught up with our imaginings and found them to be realities. There was not much joshing among the boys that morning as we made the rounds of the horses and wagons and saw that every buckle and strap and gear was in the best possible condition, for to halt in the stream to adjust a mishap would mean death. "Once started, never stop," was the ominous admonition of the hour.

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About 9 o'clock, all things being in readiness, two of us were sent out to wade across the river and mark the route by sticking in the sand long willow branches, with which we were laden for that purpose. The route staked, we returned and the train lined up. It need not require any great feat of imagination on the part of the reader to hear how dirge-like the first hoofs and wheels sounded as they parted the waters and led the way. Every man except the drivers waded alongside the horses to render assistance if it should be required. Mrs. Wadsworth was remarkably brave, sitting her wagon with white, but calm face. Scarcely a word was spoken during the entire crossing, which occupied about twenty-five minutes. We passed on the way the remains of two or three wagons standing on end and nearly buried in the sand. They were grewsome reminders of what had been, as well as of what might be. But without a halt or break, we drove clear through and on to dry land. To say that we all felt happy at seeing the crossing behind us does not half express our feelings. The nervous strain had been terrible, and at no time in our journey had we been so nearly taxed to the utmost. One man dug out a demijohn of brandy from his traps and treated all hands, remarking, "That the success of that undertaking merits something extraordinary."

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The crossing was made at the South Fork of the Platte, immediately where it flows into the main river. What is now known as North Platte and South Platte was then known as North Fork and South Fork of Platte River.

It was at the South Fork and just before we crossed that I shot and killed my first buffalo. It was

also very early in the morning, and while I was still on guard duty. A bunch of five of them came down to the river to drink, buffalo being as plentiful in that region, and time, as domestic cattle are here today. My first shot only wounded the creature, who led me quite a lively chase before I succeeded in killing him. We soon had his hide off, and an abundance of luscious, juicy steak for breakfast. I remember that we sent some to another company that was camping not far distant. This was our first and last fresh meat for many a day.

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A few days after this an incident occurred in camp that bordered on the tragic, but finally ended in good feeling. My guard mate, named Charley Stewart, and myself were the two youngest in the company, and, being guards together, were great friends. He was a native of Cincinnati, well educated, and had a fund of stories and recitations that he used to get off when we were on guard together. This night we were camped on the side of some little hills near some ravines. The moon was shining, but there were dark clouds occasionally passing, so that at times it was quite dark. It was near midnight and we would be relieved in an hour. We had been the "grand rounds" out among the stock, and came to the nearest wagon which was facing the animals that were picketed out on the slope. Stewart was armed with a "Colt's Army," while I had a double-barreled shot-gun, loaded with buckshot. I was sitting on the double-tree, on the right side of the tongue, which was propped up with the neck-yoke. Stewart sat on the tongue, about an arm's length ahead of me, I holding my gun between my knees, with the butt on the ground. Stewart was getting off one of his stories, and, had about reached the climax, when I saw something running low to the ground, in among the stock. Thinking it was an Indian, on all fours, to stampede the animals, I instantly leveled my gun, and, as I was following it to an opening in the herd, my gun came in contact with Stewart's face at the moment of discharge, Stewart falling backward, hanging to the wagon-tongue by his legs and feet. My first thought was that I had killed him. He recovered in a moment, and began cursing and calling me vile names; accusing me of attempting to murder him, etc. During these moments, in his frenzy, he was trying to get his revolver out from under him, swearing he would kill me. Taking in the situation, I dropped my gun, jumped over the wagon tongue, as he was getting on to his feet, and engaged in what proved to be a desperate fight for the revolver. We were both sometimes struggling on the ground, then again on our knees, he repeatedly striking me in the face and elsewhere, still accusing me of trying to murder him. As I had no chance to explain things, the struggle went on. Finally I threw him, and held him down until he was too much exhausted to continue the fight any longer, and, having wrested the revolver from him, I helped him to his feet. In trying to pacify him, I led him out to where the object ran that I had fired at, and there lay the dead body of a large gray wolf, with several buckshot holes in his side.

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Stewart was speechless. Looking at the wolf, and then at me, he suddenly realized his mistake, and repeatedly begged my pardon. We agreed never to mention the affair to any one in the company. Taking the wolf by the ears, we dragged him back to the wagon, where I picked up my gun, and gave Stewart his revolver. I have often thought what would have been the consequence of that shot, had I not killed the wolf.

Along in this vicinity, the bluff comes down to the river, and, consequently, we had to take to the hills, which were mostly deep sand, making heavy hauling. This trail brought us into Ash Hollow, a few miles from its mouth. Coming down to where it opened out on the Platte, about noon, we turned out for lunch. Here was a party of Sioux Indians, camped in tents made of buffalo skins. They were friendly, as all of that tribe were that summer. This is the place where General Kearney, several years later, had a terrific battle with the same tribe, which was then on the war-path along this valley.

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My hoodoo wheel had recently been giving me trouble. The spokes that I made of green oak, having become dry and wobbly, I had been on the outlook for a cast-off wheel, that I might appropriate the spokes. Hence it was, that, after luncheon I took my rifle, and started out across the bottom, where, within a few rods of the river, and about a half a mile off the road which turned close along the bluff, I came upon an old broken-down wagon, almost hidden in the grass. Taking the measure of the spokes, I found to my great joy, that they were just the right size and length. Looking around, I saw the train moving on, at a good pace, almost three-quarters of a mile away. I was delayed some time in getting the wheel off the axle-tree. Succeeding at last, I fired my rifle toward the train, but no one looked around, all evidently supposing that I was on ahead.

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It was an awful hot afternoon, and I was getting warmed up myself. I reloaded my rifle, looked at the receding train, and made up my mind to have that wheel if it took the balance of the day to get it into camp. I started by rolling it by hand, then by dragging it behind me, then I ran my rifle through the hub and got it up on my shoulder, when I moved off at a good pace. The sun shining hot, soon began to melt the tar in the hub, which began running down my back, both on the inside and outside of my clothes, as well as down along my rifle. I finally got back to the road, very tired, stopping to rest, hoping a wagon would come along to help me out, but not one came in sight that afternoon. In short, I rolled, dragged and carried that wheel; my neck, shoulders and back daubed over with tar, until the train turned out to camp, when, I being missed, was discovered away back in the road with my wheel. When relief came to me, I was nearly tired out with my exertions, and want of water to drink.

Some of the men set to work taking the wheel apart and fitting the spokes and getting the wheel ready to set the tire. Others had collected a couple of gunny-sacks full of the only fuel of the Platte Valley, viz., "buffalo-chips," and they soon had the job completed. The boys nearly wore themselves out, laughing and jeering at me, saying they were sorry they had no feathers to go

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with the tar, and calling me a variety of choice pet names.

The wheel, when finished and adjusted, proved to be the best part of the wagon, and, better than all else, had provided a season of mirth to the whole company, which, considering the all too serious environments of our march, was really a much needed tonic and diversion.

We learned so many wonderful lessons in those days, lessons that have never been made into books. We learned from nature; we learned from animal nature; we learned from human nature; and where are they who studied from the same page as did I? So often and so completely have the slides been changed, that among all the faces now shown by life's stereopticon, mine alone remains of the original twenty-five, of the trail of '52. But somewhere the Master has a counterpart of each.

CHAPTER IV.

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OUR PRAIRIES ARE A BOOK, WHOSE PAGES HOLD MANY STORIES.

We have just been passing through an extremely interesting portion of Nebraska, a portion which today is known as Western Nebraska, where those wonderful formations, Scott's Bluff, Courthouse Rock and Chimney Rock, are standing now, even as they did in the early '50's. Courthouse Rock a little way off really looked a credit to its name. It was a huge affair, and, in its ragged, irregular outline, seemed to impart to the traveller a sense of protection and fair dealing.

Scott's Bluff was an immense formation, and sometime during its history nature's forces had cleft it in two parts, making an avenue through its center at least one hundred feet wide, through which we all passed, as the trail led through instead of around the bluff.

Chimney Rock in outline resembled an immense funnel. The whole thing was at least two hundred feet in height, the chimney part, starting about midway, was about fifty feet square; its top sloped off like the roof of a shanty. Beginning at the top, the chimney was split down about one quarter of its length. On the perpendicular part of this rock a good many names had been cut by men who had scaled the base, and, reaching as far on to the chimney as they could, cut their names into its surface. So clear was the atmosphere that when several miles distant we could see the rock and men who looked like ants as they crept and crawled up its sides.

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As one stops to decipher the inscriptions upon this boulder the sense of distance is entirely lost, and the traveller finds himself trying to compare it with that other obelisk in Central Park, New York. As he thinks about them, the truth comes gradually to him that there can be no comparison, since the one is a masterpiece from the hand of Nature and the other is but a work of art.

These formations are not really rock, but of a hard marle substance, and while each is far remote from the others, the same colored strata is seen in all of them, showing conclusively that once upon a time the surface of the ground in that region was many feet higher than it was in 1852 or than it is today, and that by erosion or upheaval large portions of the soil were displaced and carried away, these three chunks remaining intact and as specimens of conditions existing many centuries ago.

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I have been through the art galleries of our own country and through many of those in Europe; I have seen much of the natural scenery in the Old World as well as in the New; but not once have I seen anything which surpassed in loveliness and grandeur the pictures which may be seen throughout Nature's gallery in Nebraska and through which the trail of '52 led us. Landscapes, waterscapes, rocks, and skies and atmosphere were here found in the perfection of light, shadow, perspective, color, and effect. Added to these fixed features were those of life and animation, contributed by herds of buffalo grazing on the plains, here and there a bunch of antelope galloping about, and everywhere wolf, coyote, and prairie dog, while a quaint and picturesque charm came from the far-reaching line of covered wagons and the many groups of campers, each with its own curl of ascending smoke, which, to the immigrant, always indicated that upon that particular patch of ground, for that particular time, a home had been established.

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In this connection I find myself thinking about the various modes of travel resorted to in those primitive days, when roads and bridges as we have them today were still far in the future. The wagons were generally drawn by cattle teams, from two to five yokes to the wagon. The number of wagons would be all the way from one to one hundred. The larger trains were difficult to pass, as they took up the road for so long a distance that sometimes we would move on in the night in order to get past them. Among the smaller teams we would frequently notice that one yoke would be of cows, some of them giving milk right along. The cattle teams as a rule started out earlier in the morning and drove later at night than did the horse and mule teams; hence, we would sometimes see a certain train for two or three days before we would have an opportunity to get ahead of them. This was the cause of frequent quarrels among drivers of both cattle and horse teams; the former being largely in the majority and having the road, many of them seemed to take delight in keeping the horse teams out of the road and crowding them into narrow places. These little pleasantries were indulged in generally by people from Missouri, as many of them seemed to think their State covered the entire distance to California.

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As to classes and conditions constituting the immigration, they might be divided up somewhat as

follows: There were the proprietors or partners, owners of the teams and outfits; then there were men going along with them who had bargained with the owners before leaving home, some for a certain amount paid down, some to work for a certain time or to pay a certain amount at the journey's end. This was to pay for their grub and use of tents and wagons. These men were also to help drive and care for the stock, doing their share of camp and guard duty. There were others travelling with a single pack animal, loaded with their outfits and provisions. These men always travelled on foot. Then there were some with hand-carts, others with wheelbarrows, trudging along and making good time. Occasionally we would see a man with a pack like a knapsack on his back and a canteen strapped on to him and a long cane in either hand. These men would just walk away from everybody. A couple of incidents along here will serve to show how these conditions sometimes worked.

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We were turned into camp one evening, and as we were getting supper there came along a man pushing a light handcart, loaded with traps and provisions, and asked permission to camp with us, which was readily granted. He was a stout, hearty, good-natured fellow, possessed of a rich Irish accent, and in the best of humor commenced to prepare his supper. Just about this time there came into camp another lone man, leading a diminutive donkey, not much larger than a good-sized sheep. The donkey, on halting, gave us a salute that simply silenced the ordinary mule. The two men got acquainted immediately, and by the time their supper was over they had struck a bargain to put their effects together by way of hitching the donkey to the cart, and so move on together. They made a collar for the donkey out of gunny-sack, and we gave them some rope for traces. Then, taking off the hand-bar of the cart, they put the donkey into the shafts and tried things on by leading it around through the camp till it was time to turn in.

Everything went first-rate, and they were so happy over their transportation prospects that they scarcely slept during the whole night. In the morning they were up bright and early, one making the coffee and the other oiling the iron axle-trees and packing the cart. Starting out quite early, they bade us goodbye with hearty cheer, saying they would let the folks in California know that we were coming, etc. About 10 o'clock we came to a little narrow creek, the bottom being miry and several feet below the surface of the ground. There upon the bank stood the two friends who had so joyously bidden us goodbye only a few hours before. The cart was a wreck, with one shaft and one spindle broken. It appeared that the donkey had got mired in crossing the creek and in floundering about had twisted off the shaft and broken one of the wheels. We left them there bewailing their misfortune and blaming each other for the carelessness which worked the mishap. We never saw them again.

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This incident is an illustration of those cases where a man obtained his passage by contributing something to the outfit and working his way through. There were quite a number of this class, they having no property rights in the train.

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At the usual time we turned in for dinner near by a camp of two or three wagons. On the side of one wagon was a doctor's sign, who, we afterwards learned, was the proprietor of the train. As we were quietly eating and resting we suddenly heard some one cursing and yelling in the other camp, and saw two men, one the hired man and the other the doctor, the latter being armed with a neck-yoke and chasing the hired man around the wagon, and both running as fast as they could. They had made several circuits, the doctor striking at the man with all his might at each turn, when some of us went over to try to stop the fight. Just at this point, the hired man, as he turned the rear of the wagon, whipped out an Allen revolver and turning shot the doctor in the mouth, the charge coming out nearly under the ear. The doctor and the neckyoke struck the ground about the same time. His eyes were blinded by powder and he had the appearance of being dangerously if not fatally wounded. Everybody was more or less excited except the hired man. From expressions all around in both trains, the hired man seemed to have the most friends. There were many instances of this kind, though none quite so tragic, the quarrels usually arising from the owner of the wagons constantly brow-beating and finding fault with the hired man.

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Again I saw an instance where two men were equal partners all around, in four horses, harness and wagon. They seemed to have quarreled so much that they agreed to divide up and quit travelling together. They divided up their horses and provisions, and then measured off the wagon-bed and sawed it in two parts, also the reach, and then flipped a copper cent to see which should have the front part of the wagon. After the division they each went to work and fixed up his part of the wagon as best he could, and drove on alone.

The entire trip from Monroe, Michigan, our starting-point, to Hangtown, the point of landing in California, covered 2,542 miles, and we were five months, lacking six days, in making it. Today the same trip can be made in a half week, with every comfort and luxury which money and invention can provide. There is probably nothing that marks the progress of civilization more distinctly than do the perfected modes and conveniences of travel. It is strange, but true, however, that so long as our prairies shall stretch themselves from river to ocean the imprint of the overland trail can never be obliterated. Today, after a lapse of over fifty years, whoever passes within seeing distance of the old trail can, upon the crest of grain and grass, note its serpentine windings, as marked by a light and sickly color of green. I myself have followed it from a car-window as traced in yellow green upon an immense field of growing corn. No amount of cultivation can ever restore to that long-trodden path its pristine vigor and productiveness.

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Our prairies are a book,
Whose pages hold many stories
Writ by many people.

Tragedy, comedy, pathos,
Love and valor, duly
Punctuated by life's
Rests and stops,
Whose interest shall appeal
To human hearts as long as
Their green cover enfolds them.

CHAPTER V.

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A WORTHY OBJECT REACHED FOR AND MISSED IS A FIRST STEP TOWARD SUCCESS.

Who, among the many persons contributing for a wage, to the convenience of everyday life in these latter times, is more waited and watched for, and brings more of joy, and more of sorrow when he comes, than the postman.

In the days of trailing, our post accommodations were extremely few and very far between. There were no mailing points, except at the government forts, Fort Kearney and Laramie being the only two on the entire trip, soldiers carrying the mail to and from the forts either way. After leaving Fort Kearney, the next mailing point east, was Fort Laramie.

Before leaving home, I had been entrusted with a package of letters by Hon. Isaac P. Christiancy, from his wife, to her brother, James McClosky, who had been on the plains some fourteen years, and who was supposed to be living near Fort Laramie. When within a couple of days' drive of the fort we came to a building which proved to be a store, and which was surrounded by several wigwams. Upon halting and going into the store, we found ourselves face to face with the man we were wanting to meet, Mr. McClosky. He was glad to see us, and overjoyed to receive the package of letters. He stepped out of doors and gave a whoop or two, and immediately Indians began to come in from all directions. He ordered them to take our stock out on the ranch, feed and guard it, and bring it in in the morning. He treated us generously to supper and breakfast, including many delicacies to which we had long been strangers. In consideration of my bringing the letters to him, he invited me to sleep in his store, and, in the morning, introduced me to his Indian wife and two sons, also, to several other women who were engaged in an adjoining room, in cutting and making buckskin coats, pants and moccasins, presenting me with an elegant pair of the latter. His wife was a bright and interesting woman, to whom he was deeply attached. His two boys were bright, manly fellows, the oldest of whom, about ten years old, was soon to be taken to St. Joe or Council Bluffs and placed in school.

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At an early hour in the morning, the Indians brought in the stock, in fine condition, and we hitched up and bade our host goodbye. He sent word to his sister at home, and seemed much affected at our parting. This was the first morning when, in starting out, we knew anything about what was ahead of us; what we would meet, or what the roads and crossings would be. In fact, every one we saw, were going the same as ourselves, consequently, all were quite ignorant of what the day might bring forth. On this morning, we knew the conditions of the roads for several days ahead, and, that Fort Laramie was thirty-six miles before us.

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Shortly after going into camp toward sunset, a party of horsemen was seen galloping toward us, who, on nearer approach, proved to be a band of ten or twelve Indians. When within about one hundred yards, they halted and dismounted, each holding his horse. The chief rode up to us, saluted and dismounted. He was a sharp-eyed young fellow, showing beneath his blanket the dress-coat of a private soldier and non-commissioned officer's sword. He gave us to understand that they were Sioux, and had been on the warpath for some Pawnees, also that they were hungry and would like to have us give them something to eat. After assuring him that we would do so, he ordered his men to advance, which they did after picketing their ponies, coming up and setting themselves on the grass in a semi-circle.

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We soon noticed that they carried spears made of a straight sword-blade thrust into the end of a staff. On two or three of the spears were dangling one or more fresh scalps, on which the blood was yet scarcely dry. On pointing to them, one of the Indians drew his knife, and taking a weed by the top, quickly cut it off, saying as he did so, "Pawnees." His illustration of how the thing was done was entirely satisfactory.

We gave the grub to the chief, who in turn, handed it out to the men as they sat on the ground. When through eating, they mounted their ponies, waved us a salute and were off.

The balance of the day was spent in writing home letters, which we expected to deliver on the morrow at the post.

About 9 o'clock the next morning, we came to Laramie River, near where it empties into the North Platte, which we crossed on a bridge, the first one we had seen on the whole route. At this point a road turns off, leading up to the fort, about one mile distant. Being selected to deliver the mail, I rode out to the fort, which was made up of a parade-ground protected by earth-works, with the usual stores, quarters, barracks, etc., the sutler and post-office being combined. On entering the sutler's, about the first person I saw was the young leader of the Indians, who had

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lunched at our camp the afternoon before. He was now dressed in the uniform of a soldier, recognizing me as soon as we met with a grunt and a "How."

Delivering the mail, I rode out in another direction to intercept the train. When about one-half mile from the fort I came to a sentinel, pacing his beat all alone. He was just as neat and clean as though doing duty at the general's headquarters, with his spotless white gloves, polished gun, and accoutrements. In a commanding tone of voice, he ordered me to halt. Asking permission to pass, which was readily granted, I rode on a couple of miles, when I met some Indians with their families, who were on the march with ponies, dogs, women, and papooses.

Long spruce poles were lashed each side of the ponies' necks, the other ends trailing on the ground. The poles, being slatted across, were made to hold their plunder or very old people and sometimes the women and children. The dogs, like the ponies, were all packed with a pole or two fastened to their necks; the whole making an interesting picture.

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Overtaking the train about noon, we camped at Bitter Cottonwood Creek, the location being beautifully described by the author of the novel, "Prairie Flower."

Our standard rations during these days consisted of hardtack, bacon, and coffee; of course, varying it as we could whenever we came to a Government fort. I recall how, on a certain Sunday afternoon, we men decided to make some doughnuts, as we had saved some fat drippings from the bacon. Not one of us had any idea as to the necessary ingredients or the manner of compounding them, but we remembered how doughnuts used to look and taste at home. So we all took a hand at them, trying to imitate the pattern as well as our ignorance and poor judgment would suggest. Well, they looked a trifle peculiar, but we thoroughly enjoyed them, for they were the first we had since leaving home, and proved to be the last until we were boarding in California.

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One thing was sure; our outdoor mode of living gave us fine appetites and a keen relish for almost anything. And then again, persons can endure almost any sort of privation as long as they can see a gold mine ahead of them, from which they are sure to fill their pockets with nuggets of the pure stuff. What a happy arrangement it is on the part of Providence that not too much knowledge of the future comes to us at any one time! Just enough to keep us pushing forward and toward the ideal we have set for ourselves, which, even though we miss it, adds strength to purpose as well as to muscle. A worthy object reached for and missed is a first step towards success.

CHAPTER VI.

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"'TIS ONLY A SNOWBANK'S TEARS, I WEEN."

We are now approaching the foot-hills of the Rocky Mountains. The fertile plains through which we have been passing are being merged into rocky hills, the level parts being mostly gravelly barrens. The roads are hard and flinty, like pounded glass, which were making some of the cattle-teams and droves very lame and foot-sore. When one got so it could not walk, it was killed and skinned. Other lame ones were lashed to the side of a heavy wagon, partially sunk in the ground, their lame foot fastened on the hub of a wheel, when a piece of the raw hide was brought over the hoof and fastened about the fet-lock, protecting the hoof until it had time to heal. This mode of veterinary treatment, although crude, lessened the suffering among the cattle very materially.

The streams along here, the La Barge, La Bonte, and Deer Creek, were all shallow with rocky bottoms and excellent water. Here we frequently took the stock upon the hills at night, where the bunch-grass grows among the sage brush. This grass, as its name indicates, grows in bunches about a foot high and about the same in diameter, bearing a profusion of yellow seeds about the size of a kernel of wheat. This makes excellent feed, and the stock is very fond of it.

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At this point Mother Nature is gradually changing the old scenes for new ones. The big brawny mountains with their little ones clustered at their feet are just before us; while the Platte River, which for many miles has been our constant companion, will soon be a thing of the past, as we are close to the crossing, and once over we shall see the river no more. This river which stretches itself in graceful curves across an entire State, is one of peculiar construction and characteristics. At a certain point it is terrifying, even to its best friends. In curve, color, contour, and graceful foliage, it is a magnificent stretch of beauty; while as a stream of utility its presence has ever been a benediction to the country through which it passes. As a tribute to its general excellence, I place here the beautiful lines (name of author unknown to me), entitled:

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IN THE CRADLE OF THE PLATTE.

A little stream in the cañon ran,
In the cañon deep and long,
When a stout old oak at its side began
To sing to it this song,

"Oh, why do you laugh and weep and sing,

And why do you hurry by,
For you're only a noisy little thing,
While a great strong oak am I;
A hundred years I shall stand alone,
And the world will look at me;
While you will bubble and babble on
And die at last in the sea."

"So proud and lofty," the stream replied,
"You're a king of the forest true;
But your roots were dead and your leaves all dried
Had I not watered you."

The oak tree rustled its leaves of green
To the little stream below;
"'Tis only a snowbank's tears, I ween,
Could talk to a monarch so.
But where are you going so fast, so fast,
And what do you think to do?
Is there anything in the world at last
For a babbling brook like you?"

"So fast, so fast,—why should I wait,"
The hurrying water said,
"When yonder by the cañon gate
The farmer waits for bread?"

Out on the rainless desert land
My hurrying footsteps go;
I kiss the earth, I kiss the sand,
I make the harvest grow.

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"And many a farmer, when the sky
Has turned to heated brass,
And all the plain is hot and dry,
Gives thanks to see me pass.
By many a sluice and ditch and lane
They lead me left and right,
For it is I who turns the plain
To gardens of delight."

Then hurrying on, the dashing stream
Into a river grew,
And rock and mountain made a seam
To let its torrent through;
And where the burning desert lay,
A happy river ran;
A thousand miles it coursed its way,
And blessed the homes of man.

Vain was the oak tree's proud conceit,
Dethroned the monarch lay;
The brook that babbled at its feet
Had washed its roots away.
Still in the cañon's heart there springs
The desert's diadem,
And shepherds bless the day that brings
The snow-bank's tears to them.

We crossed the river on a ferry-boat that was large enough to hold four wagons and some saddle-horses. The boat was run by a cable stretched taut up stream fifteen or twenty feet from the boat. A line from the bow and stern of the boat connected it with a single block which ran on the cable. When ready to start, the bow-line was hauled taut, the stern line slacked off to the proper angle, when, the current passing against the side of the boat, it was propelled across very rapidly. The river here was rapid, the water cold and deep, with a strong undercurrent.

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We had to wait nearly a whole day before it came our turn to take our wagons over. In the meantime we were detailed as follows: Ten men were selected to get the wagons aboard the boat, cross over with them and guard them until all were carried over; three or four men were sent across and up the river to catch and care for the stock as it came out of the river near a clump of cottonwoods. One of the company, named Owen Powers, a strong, courageous young man and a good swimmer, volunteered to ride the lead horse in and across to induce the other animals to follow, the balance of the company herding them, as they were all loose near the edge of the river. When everything was ready, Powers stripped off, and mounting the horse he had selected, rode out into the stream. The other animals, forty-seven of them followed, and when a few feet from the shore had to swim. Everything was going all right until Powers reached the

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middle of the river, when an undercurrent struck his horse, laying him over partly on his side. Powers leaned forward to encourage his horse, when the animal suddenly threw up his head, striking him a terrible blow squarely in the face. He was stunned and fell off alongside the horse. It now seemed as though both he and his horse would be drowned, as all the other stock began to press close up to them. He soon recovered, however, and as he partially pulled himself on to his horse, we could plainly see that his face and breast were covered with blood. We shouted at him words of encouragement, cheering him from both sides of the river. While his struggling form was hanging to the horse's mane, the other animals all floundered about him, pulling for the shore for dear life. The men on the other side were ready to catch him as he landed, nearly exhausted by his struggles and the blow he had received. They carried him up the bank and leaned him against a tree, one man taking care of him while the others caught the animals, or rather corralled them, until the rest of us got across and went to their assistance. We brought the young man's clothes with us and fixed him up, washing him and stanching his bleeding nose and mouth. He had an awful looking face; his eyes were blackened, nose flattened and mouth cut. However, he soon revived and was helped by a couple of the men down to the wagons. We then gathered the stock, went down to the train, hitched up, and drove into camp.

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We now soon came to the Sweetwater River. The country here is more hilly and rocky, and the valleys narrower and more barren. The main range of Wind River Mountains could be plainly seen in the distance, while close upon our left were the Sweetwater Mountains. The difference in scenery after leaving the river and plains was such as to awaken new emotions and fire one with a new kind of admiration. The immensity and fixedness of the mountains awakened a keener sense of stability, of firmness of purpose, and a sort of *expect great things and do great things spirit*; while the sense of beauty appreciation was in no wise narrowed as it followed the lights and shades of jut and crevice, and the rosy, scintillating bits of sun as a new day dropped them with leisure hand upon summit and sides, or later the tender glow of crimson and blue and gold, as the gathered sun-bits trailed themselves behind the mountains for the night.

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When making up our outfit back in the States, by oversight or want of knowledge of what we would need, we had neglected to lay in a supply of horse-nails, which we now began to be sorely in need of, as the horses' shoes were fast wearing out and becoming loose. It was just here that we came one day to a man sitting by the roadside with a half-bushel measure full of horse nails to sell at the modest price of a "bit" or twelve and one-half cents apiece. No amount of remonstrance or argument about taking advantage of one's necessity could bring down the price; so I paid him ten dollars in gold for eighty nails. I really wanted to be alone with that man for awhile, I loved him so. He, like some others who had crossed the plains before, knew of the opportunity to sell such things as the trailers might be short of at any price they might see fit to ask.

It was here, too, that we came upon the great Independence Rock, an immense boulder, lying isolated on the bank of the Sweetwater River. It was oblong, with an oval-shaped top, as large as a block of buildings. It was of such form that parties could walk up and over it lengthwise, thereby getting a fine view of the surrounding country.

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About a mile beyond was the Devil's Gate, a crack or rent in the mountain, which was probably about fifty feet wide, the surface of the walls showing that by some sort of force they had been separated, projections on one side finding corresponding indentations on the other. The river in its original course had run around the range, but now it ran leaping and roaring through the Gate.

There was considerable alkali in this section. We had already lost two horses from drinking it, and several others barely recovered from the effects.

CHAPTER VII.

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WE STEPPED OVER THE RIDGE AND COURTED THE FAVOR OF NEW AND UNTRIED WATERS.

Between Independence Rock and Devil's Gate we cross the river, which is about four feet deep and thirty or forty feet wide. There was a man lying down in the shade of his tent, who had logs enough fastened together to hold one wagon, which he kindly loaned the use of for fifty cents for each wagon, we to do the work of ferrying. Rather than to wet our traps, we paid the price. The stock was driven through the ford.

We camped at the base of some rocky cliffs, and while we were getting our supper an Indian was noticed peering from behind some rocks, taking a view of the camp. One of the boys got his rifle from the wagon and fired at him. He drew in his head and we saw no more of him, but kept a strong guard out all night.

The trail that followed up the Sweetwater was generally a very good road, with good camping-place's and fair grass for stock; while grass and sage brush for fuel and excellent water made the trip of about ninety miles very pleasant, as compared with some of the former route.

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We now came to the last-leaving of the Sweetwater, which is within ten miles of the highest elevation of the South Pass. The springs and the little stream on which we were camped, across

which one could have stepped, was the last water we saw that flowed into the Atlantic. We were upon the summit or dividing line of the continent. With our faces to the southward, the stream at our left flowed east and into the Atlantic, while that upon our right flowed west into the Pacific.

There was something not altogether pleasant in considering the conditions. Following and crossing and studying the streams as we had so long been doing, it was not without a tinge of regret and broken fellowship that we stepped over the ridge and courted the favor of new and untried waters.

The abrupt ending of the great Wind River Mountain range was at our right. These mountains are always more or less capped with snow. To the south, perhaps one hundred miles, could be seen the main ridge of the Rocky Mountains looming up faintly against the sky. The landscape, looking at it from the camp, was certainly pleasing, if not beautiful. During the day there could be seen bunches of deer, antelope, and elk grazing and running about on the ridges, the whole making a picture never to be forgotten. The sky was clear, the air pure and invigorating, the sun shone warm by day and the stars bright at night.

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The spot proved to be a "parting of the ways" in more than one sense, for it was here, before the breaking of camp, that the company decided to separate, not as to interests, but as to modes of travel.

Some of our wagons were pretty nearly worn out, and, as we had but little in them, there were sixteen men who that night decided to give up their five wagons and resort to "packing." Consequently the remaining three wagons, including Captain and Mrs. Wadsworth, bade us goodby and pulled out in the morning. This parting of the trail, as had been the case in the parting of the waters, was not without its smack of regret. For four months we had travelled as one family, each having at heart the interest and comfort of the others. There had been days of sickness and an hour of death; there was a grave at the roadside; there had had been times of danger and disheartenment; all of which marshalled themselves to memory's foreground as the question of division was talked *pro* and *con* by the entire family while camped at the base of the snow-capped mountains on that midsummer night.

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After the departure of the three wagons we who remained resolutely set ourselves to work to prepare, as best we could, ourselves and our belongings for the packing mode of travel. For three days and nights we remained there busily engaged. We took our wagons to pieces, cutting out such pieces as were necessary to make our pack saddles. One bunch of men worked at the saddles, another bunch separated the harnesses and put them in shape for the saddles, while others made big pouches or saddle-bags out of the wagon covers, in which to carry provisions and cooking utensils.

The spot upon which our camp was located was in the vicinity of what is now known as Smith's Pass, Wyoming. During one of our afternoons here Nature treated us to one of the grandest spectacles ever witnessed by mortal eyes. We first noticed a small cloud gathering about the top of the mountain, which presently commenced circling around the peak, occasionally reaching over far enough to drop down upon us a few sprinkles of water, although the sun was shining brightly where we were. As the cloud continued to circle, it increased in size, momentum, and density of color, spreading out like a huge umbrella. Soon thunder could be heard, growing louder and more frequent until it became one continuous roar, fairly shaking the earth. Long, vivid flashes of lightning chased each other in rapid succession over the crags and lost themselves in crevice and ravine. All work was forgotten. In fact, one would as soon think of making saddles in the immediate presence of the Almighty as in the presence of that terrific, but sublime spectacle upon the mountain heights. Every man stood in reverential attitude and gazed in speechless wonder and admiration. David and Moses and the Christ had much to do with mountains in their day; and, as we watched the power of the elements that afternoon, we realized as never before how David could hear the floods clap their hands and see expressions of joy or anger upon the faces of the mountains; and how Mount Sinai might have looked as it became the meeting-place of the Lord and Moses and the tables of stone. The storm lasted about an hour, and when at last Nature seemed to have exhausted herself the great mountain-top stood out again in the clear sunlight, wearing a new mantle of the whitest snow.

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During our three-days' camp we had a number of callers from other trains, also six or eight Indians, among whom we divided such things as we could not take with us.

In the evening of the last day, we made a rousing camp-fire out of our wagon wheels, which we piled on top of each other, kindling a fire under them, around which we became reminiscent and grew rested for an early start on the morrow.

All things finally ready, we brought up the animals in the morning to fit their saddles and packs to them. One very quiet animal was packed with some camp-kettles, coffee-pots, and other cooking traps. As soon as he was let loose and heard the tinware rattle he broke and ran, bringing up in a quagmire up to his sides. The saddle had turned, and his hind feet stepping into the pack well nigh ruined all our cooking utensils.

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We managed to pull him out of the mire and quieted him down, but we could never again put anything on him that rattled. We took our guns and provisions and only such clothing as we had on, leaving all else behind. I remember putting on a pair of new boots that I had brought from home, which I did not take off until I had been some time in California, nor any other of my clothes, lying down in my blanket on the ground, like the rest of the animals.

As we turned out for noon, we saw off toward the mountain a drove of eleven elk. I took my rifle and creeping behind rocks and through ravines, tried to get in range of them, but with all my caution, they kept just beyond my reach. But I had a little luck toward night just as we were turning into camp. Out by a bunch of sagebrush sat the largest jack rabbit I ever saw. I raised my rifle and hit him squarely in the neck, killing him. I took him by the hind feet and slung him over my shoulder, and as I hung hold of his feet in front, his wounded neck came down to my heels behind. His ears were as long as a mule's ears. We dressed it and made it into rabbit stew by putting into the kettle first a layer of bacon and then one of rabbit, and then a layer of dumpling, which we made from flour and water, putting in layer after layer of this sort until our four camp-kettles were filled. We had a late supper that night. It was between 9 and 10 o'clock before our stews were done to a turn, but what a luscious feast was ours when they were finally ready. I can think of no supper in my whole life that I have enjoyed so much as I did that one. We had plenty left over for our sixteen breakfasts the next morning, and some of the boys packed the remainder as a relish for the noon meal.

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Soon after our start in the morning, we came to the Big Sandy, a stream tributary to Green River. The land here had more of the appearance of a desert than any we had yet seen. Out on the plain the trail forked, the left hand leading via Fort Bridges and Salt Lake City, while the right hand led over what is known as Sublett's Cut-off. Being undecided as to which fork to follow, we finally submitted it to vote, which proved to be a large majority in favor of the Cut-off, it having been reported that the Mormons were inciting the Indians to attack immigrants.

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The road here was hard and flinty, and, for more than a mile passed down a steep hill, at the bottom of which we noticed that wagon tires were worn half through owing to the wheels being locked for such a long distance.

This was Green River valley, and, where we made our crossing, the water being deep and cold, with a swift current. There was a good ferry boat, on which, after nearly a day's waiting, we ferried over our pack animals at one dollar per head; the balance of the stock we swam across. A short way on we had to ford a fork of the same river, and were then in an extremely mountainous country, up one side and down the other, until we reached Bear River valley.

We came down off the uplands into the valley and beside the river to camp, where we had an experience as exasperating as it was unexpected. Seeing some fine looking grass, half knee high, we started for it, when all at once clouds of the most persistent and venomous mosquitos filled the air, covering the animals, which began stamping and running about, some of them lying down and rolling in great torment. We hurried the packs and saddles off them and sent a guard of men back to the hills with them. The rest of us wrapped ourselves head and ears and laid down in the grass without supper or water for man or beast. About 3 o'clock in the morning, the mosquitos having cooled down to some extent, the guard brought in the pack animals, which we loaded, and, like the Arab, "silently stole away." Returning to the road and getting the balance of the stock, we moved along the base of the hills, and about sunrise came to a beautiful spring branch, which crossed the trail, refreshing us with its cool, sparkling water. Here we went up into the hills and into camp for a day and a night, to rest and recuperate from our terrible experience of the night before.

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It was now the first of July. By keeping close to the base of the hills we found good travelling and an abundance of clear spring-water. At nights we camped high up in the hills, where the mosquito was not.

CHAPTER VIII.

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WE HAD NO FLAG TO UNFURL, BUT ITS SENTIMENT WAS WITHIN US.

"It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, bells, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward for evermore."

These words, written by John Adams to his wife the day following the Declaration of Independence, and regarding that act and day, were evidently the sounding of the key-note of American patriotism.

It has long been one of Uncle Sam's legends that "he who starts across the continent is most sure to leave his religion on the east side of the Missouri river." Conditions in Nebraska to-day refute the truth of this statement, however. Whatever may be the rule or exception concerning an American traveller's religion, the genuineness of his patriotism and his fidelity to it are rarely questioned. Hence it was that during the early July days the varied events of the past few months betook themselves to the recesses of our natures, and patriotism asserted its right of pre-emption.

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The day of July 3d was somewhat eventful and perhaps somewhat preparatory to the 4th, in that I did a bit of horse-trading, as my riding-horse, through a hole in his shoe, had got a gravel into his foot, which made him so lame that I had been walking and leading him for the last ten days. We

had just come to Soda Springs, where there was a village of Shoshone Indians, numbering about one thousand, among whom was an Indian trader named McClelland, who was buying or trading for broken-down stock. I soon struck him for a trade. He finally offered me, even up, a small native mule for my lame horse, and we soon traded. I then bought an Indian saddle for two dollars, and, mounting, rode back to camp with great joy to myself and amusement of the balance of the company. I had walked for the last two hundred miles, keeping up with the rest of them, and consequently was nearly broken down; and now that I had what proved to be the toughest and easiest riding animal in the bunch, I was to be congratulated. I afterwards saw the horse I had traded for the mule in Sacramento, hitched to a dray. His owner valued him at four hundred dollars.

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We had gone into camp close to the Indians, right among their wigwams, in fact, and, though it was Independence eve, the weather was cool and chilling, which, together with the jabbering and grunting of the Indians and their papooses, made sleeping almost impossible.

We had not been in camp more than an hour when three or four packers rode up on their way to the "States." They were the first persons travelling eastward that we had met since leaving the Missouri River. One of the men had been wounded with a charge of buckshot a few hours before, and there being no surgeon present, some of us held him while others picked out the shot and dressed his wounds.

Soda Springs was in the extreme eastern part of what is now the State of Idaho, at which point there is a town bearing the same name, Soda Springs. Indeed, the 4th of July found us in a settlement of springs, Beer Spring and Steamboat Spring being in close proximity to Soda Springs. Beer Spring is barrel-shaped, its surface about level with the ground surface. It was always full to the top, and we could look down into the water at least twenty feet and see large bubbles that were constantly rising, a few feet apart, one chasing another to the surface, where they immediately collapsed. The peculiarity of the water was that one could sip down a gallon at a time without any inconvenience. The celebrated Steamboat Spring came out of a hole in a level rock. The water was quite hot, and the steam, puffing out at regular intervals, presented an interesting sight.

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We remained in camp during the forenoon and celebrated the 4th of July as best we could. I am quite positive that we could not have repeated in concert the memorable words which open this chapter, but, while the letter of the injunction was absent, the spirit was with us and we carried it out in considerable detail, the Indians joining with us. We shot at a mark, we ran horse-races with the Indians and also foot-races. We had no bells to ring, but we had plenty of noise and games and sports. We had no flag to unfurl, but its sentiment was within us; and when we had finished we were prouder than ever to be Americans.

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After dinner we packed up and started out again, our trail leading us up in the top of the mountains, where, after going into camp for the night, it began to snow, so I had to quit writing in my diary. We spent a very uncomfortable night, and got out of the place early, going down into a warmer atmosphere and to a level stretch of deep sand covered with a thick growth of sagebrush. Having neglected to fill our canteens while on the mountain, we had to travel all day in the sand, under a scorching sun, without a drop of water. This was our first severe experience in water-hunger, and we thought of the deserts yet to be crossed.

At night we were delighted with coming to a stream, by the side of which we made camp, ourselves and our animals quite exhausted with the day's experiences. The country along here was very rough and mountainous, making travelling very difficult, so much so that two or more men dropped out to rest up.

We were soon in the region of the "City of Rocks," which was not a great distance south of Fort Hall, in Oregon. This place, to all appearance, was surrounded by a range of high hills, circular in form and perhaps a quarter mile in diameter. A small stream of mountain water ran through it, near which we made our noon meal.

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From about the center of this circle arose two grand, colossal steeples of solid rock, rising from two hundred to three hundred feet high; in outline they resembled church steeples. From the base of these great turrets, allowing the eyes to follow the circular mountains, could be seen a striking resemblance to a great city in ruins. Tall columns rose with broad facades and colossal archings over the broad entrances, which seemed to lead into those great temples of nature. Many of the formations strongly resembled huge lions crouched and guarding the passageways. Altogether the spot was one of intense interest and stood as strong evidence that

"The manuscript of God remains
Writ large in waves and woods and rocks."

In crossing the valley of Raft River, which is tributary to the Snake River, and finally empties into the Columbia, we came to a deep, ditch-like crack in the earth, partly filled with water and soft mud. It was about a rod in width, but so long that we could not see its end either up or down the valley as far as the eye could reach, so there was no possible show to head it or go around it. Scattered along its length we could see a dozen or more wagons standing on their heads, as it were, in this almost bottomless ditch of mud and water, each waiting for the bank to be dug out in front of it, when a long cattle-team would haul it out. After looking the situation over, we put our wits to work for some means of crossing, and finally hit upon what proved to be a feasible plan. A part of the men stripped off, plunged in and made their way through to the opposite bank.

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We then led the animals up, one at a time, secured a good strong lariat around its neck, and threw the end of it across to the men on the other side. Then we just pushed the brute into the ditch and the men ahold of the lariat pulled him through. We then did up our traps in light bundles and threw them across. After everything else was over, we took turns in being pulled through at the end of the lariat. This was a successful way of getting over, but, O my! we were the dirtiest lot of men and animals one ever saw. We were little more than one-quarter mile from Raft River, and we lost no time in getting there and wading out in the clear, running water, about two feet deep, with rocky bottom, where we and the animals were washed sleek and clean.

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Leaving the river we entered a narrow defile in the mountain, where horses and men were crowded close together. One of the men having a rifle with the hammer underneath the barrel attempted to mount his horse without stopping and accidentally discharged his gun, the shot taking effect in the horse's side. As I happened to be walking on the other side of the wounded horse I was fortunate in not getting some part of the discharge. We pulled the pack off the horse and led him a few steps off the road, where he soon fell dead.

We camped for the night farther up this ravine. It was the same place where, a few years afterward, some immigrants were massacred, when a part of the Wright family was killed and others badly wounded. Years afterward I became well acquainted with the survivors. Their description of the place and its surroundings left no doubt in my mind that our ravine camping-spot was identical with that of their massacre.

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Our passage up Goose Creek Valley was extremely slow and difficult, the valley in places being no wider than the road, while in other places rocks and streams were so thick and close together that the way was almost impassible. We camped in this valley at nightfall, and, as there was no feed in sight for the animals, several of us took them up on the mountain side and gave them a feed of bunch grass, one man and myself remaining to guard them.

Very soon a storm came up, dark clouds, deep thunder, sharp lightning, and a perfect deluge of rain were sweeping through the mountains. We brought the animals as close together as we could, tied them to the sagebrush, and kept going among them, talking to them and quieting them as best we could, for they were whinnying and trembling with fear. It was an awful night. Over and above the roaring storm could be heard the howling of wolves, which added much terror to the situation. On being relieved at daylight and going down to camp, the men were trying to find themselves and a lot of traps that were missing. It seemed that the men had lain down in a bunch on a narrow bit of ground close to the creek, and when the rain began to fall they drew a canvas wagon cover over them for protection, when, without any sound or warning that could be heard above the storm, a tide of water came down upon them which fairly washed them off the earth. They got tangled up in the wagon cover and were being washed down the creek, not knowing in the darkness when or where they were going to land. They kept together by all keeping hold of the wagon cover, but for which some or all of them might have lost their lives. They were finally washed up against a rocky projection and pulled themselves ashore. We were a sorry-looking lot—wet, cold, dilapidated, and suffering from the terror and fright of the night.

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After breakfast we went out to hunt for our missing goods, some of which we found caught in the brush; some was washed beyond finding.

This was Sunday morning and the weather had cleared up bright. All Nature seemed anxious to make amends for her outrageous conduct of the night before. We concluded to stop here until Monday morning, and spread our traps out to dry, and cook some rice, and rest and replenish in a general sense.

CHAPTER IX.

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WE LISTENED TO EACH OTHER'S REHEARSALS AND BECAME MUTUAL SYMPATHIZERS AND ENCOURAGERS.

We travelled up Goose Creek for several days till we got to its head, on the great divide that separates the Snake River from the Humboldt. The second or third day up the creek we had a genuine surprise that put us all in the best of humor again. It was no less than the overtaking of the three wagons that left us in the South Pass, where we commenced packing. Captain Wadsworth's wagon was mired down and part of the team. We all turned in and soon had him out. We were all glad to meet again, and all our men were delighted to meet and shake hands with Mrs. Wadsworth, who was equally as joyful as ourselves. We camped together that night and had a good visit. It was a genuine family reunion. How thoroughly we listened to each other's rehearsals and became mutual sympathizers and encouragers! This was the last time the original company ever met together.

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Some of our boys, whose stock was nearly worn out, concluded that they would join the three wagons and take more time to get through. This move reduced our little company of packers to six men and ten animals. In the morning we bade them all goodby (some of them for the last time), swung into our saddles, and moved on.

After crossing the divide we entered Pleasant Valley, which, with its level floor, abundant grass, and willow-fringed stream of cool water, was very appropriately named. As our provisions were now getting short, I was on the lookout for game of any sort that would furnish food. After dinner, taking my rifle, I went along down the stream as it led off the road, when a pair of ducks flew up and alighted a short distance below. These were the first ducks I had seen since leaving the Platte, and, being out for something to eat, I was particularly glad to see them. I watched them settle, and then creeping up through tall wild rice I got a shot and killed one of them. I quickly reloaded. As I was out there alone I was necessarily on my guard. The duck was about twenty-five feet from the bank, and as the water was deep and cold and no one with me I concluded not to go in after it. So I took out the ramrod, screwed the wormer to it, lengthened it out with willow cuttings fastened one to another, and then shoved it out on the water until the wormer touched the duck, which I managed to twist into the game and draw it ashore. We had an elegant supper that night.

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The next day or two I came to a pond where were sitting five snipe. I killed the whole bunch, and they helped to make another square meal. We were now near the border of the Great Desert proper, where, out of the midst of a level plain, stood a lone mountain known as the "Old Crater," which, together with its surroundings, had all the appearance of an extinct volcano. The plain round about this mountain had been rent in narrow cracks or crevices leading in various directions from the mountain off on to the plain, some of them crossing the trail, where we had to push and jump the stock across them. In dropping a rock into them there seemed to be no bottom. All about them the ground was covered with pieces of broken lava, largely composed of gravel stones that had been welded together by intense heat. A half mile or so from the mountain stood a block of the same material, which was nearly square in shape and larger than a thirty-by-forty-foot barn.

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We made good time here after coming off the mountain, although we suffered intensely for want of water, the sun being very hot. However, we soon found ourselves in the "Thousand Spring Valley," and, being influenced by its name, expected to have, for that day at least, all the water we could drink. But, as is sometimes the case, there was

"Water, water everywhere,
But not a drop to drink."

Near the entrance of the valley, which is about thirty miles long, is the Great Rock Spring, deriving its name, I presume, from its flowing out from under an immense rock, forming a pool or basin of the brightest and clearest of water, but so warm that neither man nor beast could drink it. We all waded around through the basin, the water being about two feet deep. After a few more miles, we could see ahead of us clouds of steam vapor rising from the earth in various places. We came to the first group of boiling springs at noon, nearly famished for water that one could drink. We turned out for a resting-while. Some went to look for cool water, and found none, while others made some coffee with boiling water from a spring, of which there were hundreds on a very few acres of ground. Some of the springs were six to ten feet across and three or four inches deep. We set our coffee-pots right in a spring and made coffee in a very short time. The hot sun pouring down on us, and boiling springs all about us, and no cold water to drink, made the place desirable for only one thing—to get away from.

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Toward night we turned off into the hills and looked for water, where, tramping over the rocks and brush, supperless, until nearly midnight, we found a most delicious spring. We all drank together, men and animals, and together laid down and slept.

A little farther along, one day at noon, while we were drinking our coffee, two wild geese flew over and down the river. Watching them sail along as if to light at a certain point, I took my rifle and followed. The trail led to the right and over a range of hills, coming into the valley again several miles ahead, and the direction in which I was pursuing the geese being a tangent, I soon lost sight of the company. I went hurriedly on down the river bottom, much of which was covered with wild rice, very thick and almost as high as my head. The course and windings of the river here were, as elsewhere, marked by the willows along the banks. I was now a mile or so from the trail, and coming quite near where I expected to find the game. Passing cautiously by a clump of willows I noticed something white on the dead grass, which, upon investigation, proved to be a human skeleton in a perfect state of preservation. I picked up the skull, looked it over, and picked off the under jaw which was filled with beautiful teeth. Putting these in my pocket and replacing the skull, I moved carefully forward, expecting to soon see the geese. Picking my way through the stiff mud, I saw several moccasin tracks. I was just on the point of turning back when I saw the head of an Indian to my left, within easy range of my rifle. Looking hurriedly about me, I saw another at my right and quite a distance to the rear. In a moment they drew their heads down into the grass. I immediately realized the danger of retreating back into open ground, so I plunged forward into the wild rice, gripping my rifle with one hand and making a path through the rice with the other. I ran along in this way until my strength was nearly gone and the hand I worked the rice with was lacerated and bleeding. I faced about, dropped to my knees, and, with rifle cocked, awaited developments. After resting a few minutes and getting over my scare I started in the direction of the trail, hoping to get out of the rice and the willows into the open. Again I had to rest. My hands and arms were now both so lame and sore I could scarcely use them. When I finally got out of the rice, I straightened up and ran like a deer, expecting at every jump I made to be pursued and shot. I made straight for a bend in the slough which was partly filled with water. The opposite bank being lined with willows, some of them began to move a little

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In nearly all lifetimes and in nearly all undertakings, there will occur seasons which severally try not merely one's faith and courage, but one's power of physical endurance as well; seasons when one's spirits are fagged and stand in need of a reveille, or "Boots and Saddles" call.

The march of our little company during these mid-July days, with their privations and sufferings, could scarcely have been maintained, but for the notes of cheer which, by memory's route, came to us from out the silent places of the past, or, on the wings of hope, alighted among us from off the heights of the future.

The Humboldt River, which by this time had become to us quite a memorable stream, was winding and crooked after coming out of the cañon, and could be traced through the desert only by the willows that grew along its banks and around its shallow pools. Our route lay on the left bank all the way down to the "sink."

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It was the middle of July, with never a cloud in the sky, not a tree or shade of any kind. The ground was heated like an oven and covered more or less by an alkali sand, which parched our lips while the sun was blistering our noses.

The river from here down to its sink is like all desert streams in the dry season. It does not have a continuous current, but the water lies in pools, alternating with places where the bed is dry and bare. In its windings it averaged about twenty-five miles from one bend to another, the trail leading a straight line like a railroad from one point to another. These points were our camping-places. As it was useless to stop between them we had to make the river or perish.

The willows were already browsed down to mere stubs, consequently there was little or no feed for the stock. Wherever we could find any grass, there we took the animals and tended them until they got their fill. There was no game to be seen nor anything that had life, except horned toads and lizards. The former could be seen in the sand all day. They were of all sizes, ranging from a kernel of corn to a common toad, each ornamented with the same covering of horns, beginning with a Turk's crescent on the tip of the nose. As to the lizards, none could be seen during the day, but at night there would be a whole family of them lying right against one, having crept under the blankets to keep warm, I suppose, as the nights were quite cool. Upon getting up in the morning we would take our blankets by one end and give a jerk, and the lizards would roll out like so many links of weinerwurst.

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About midway to the river we began to get uncomfortably short of provisions, having only some parched coffee, a little sugar, and a few quarts of broken hardtack. We had neither flour nor meat for more than two weeks. But of all our sufferings the greatest was that of thirst. It was so intense that we forgot our hunger and our wearied and wornout condition. Our sole thought was of water, and when we talked about what amount we would drink when we came to a good spring no one ever estimated less than a barrel full, and we honestly believed we could drink that much at a single draught. We had, in a degree, become "loony" on the subject, particularly in the middle of the day, when one could not raise moisture in his mouth to even spit. For about ten days the only water we had was obtained from the pools by which we would camp. These pools were stagnant and their edges invariably lined with dead cattle that had died while trying to get a drink. Selecting a carcass that was solid enough to hold us up, we would walk out into the pool on it, taking a blanket with us, which we would swash around and get as full of water as it would hold, then carrying it ashore, two men, one holding each end, would twist the filthy water out into a pan, which in turn would be emptied into our canteens, to last until the next camping-place. As the stomach would not retain this water for even a moment, it was only used to moisten the tongue and throat.

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One afternoon we noticed on the side of a mountain spur off to our left a green spot part way up its side. We looked at the spot and then at the bend to which we were going, and as each seemed to be about equi-distant we concluded to go to the mountains, believing we would find water.

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Well, if any of you have had any experience in travelling toward a mountain you, as did we, probably under-estimated the distance. We left the trail at 3 o'clock and tramped until nearly sundown before we began to make the ascent, always keeping our eyes on that green spot. About an hour after dark we came into the bed of a dry creek, and believing that it would eventually lead us to water, we followed it up until about midnight, when we came to water in a ditch about two feet wide and a few inches deep.

Ourselves and animals being nearly exhausted, we just laid down in that stream, and I guess each one came pretty near drinking his barrel of water. We pulled off the packs and let the animals go loose in the feed, which was very good, while we were soon stretched out and sound asleep. When we woke in the morning the sun was well up and sending down its scorching rays into our faces. We made some coffee, drank it and felt better. We stayed there until noon, as the animals were still getting good feed, and we—well, we were getting all the water we wanted. We filled our canteens with it, and after making necessary preparations started to strike the river again, which we could plainly see from our mountain perch, also slow moving trains, as they plod their weary way over the plain.

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We reached the river about sundown and as we looked against the western horizon, began to see quite distinctly the snow-capped range of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. They looked grand and formidable to us, knowing that we must climb up and over them before we could reach our journey's end. They held no terror for us, however, for we knew that we should suffer neither from heat nor thirst during our trail over their broad, friendly sides.

For a couple of days we had been trying the experiment of camping during the day and travelling at night, but we soon got enough of that way of getting along. The traveling at night was all right, but to camp all day with a scorching sun overhead and a burning sand under our feet was more than we could endure, so we again worked by day and slept at night.

There was no fuel along here except willows, and they were so green it was impossible to coax them into a blaze. We finally resorted to a willow crane, which we made by sticking a couple of willows into the sand, arching them over toward each other and tying them together, hanging our coffee-pot between them, underneath which we made a fire of dead grass tied in knots. For a long time we laid on the sand and fed that fire with knotted grass, but *boil* the coffee would not. [Pg 104]

We had now reached the sink of the Humboldt, which was a small lake, perhaps ten or twelve miles long and two or three miles wide. The upper half was quite shallow, with soft, miry bottom covered with flags and rushes. The lower half was clear, open water, rounding off at its lower end with a smooth, sandy beach, making it a very pretty thing to look at, but its water was so brackish as to be unpalatable for drinking purposes.

We camped for the night near its flags and rushes, a large quantity of which we cut and brought in for the animals, which seemed to give them new life and ambition. We also cut as many bundles as we could carry away bound to the backs of our loose stock, for we still had forty-two miles more of desert, without wood, water or grass, before reaching the Carson River. While camping in this vicinity two pelicans sailed around and lighted in the clear lake, beyond reach of rifle-shot. These were the first birds of the kind I had ever seen outside of a showman's cage, and I was determined to have one of them if possible; so, with rifle in hand, I waded out till the water came up under my arms, and, not being able to go any farther, I fired, but without avail. [Pg 105]

In looking about me as I waded back, I saw a little white tent a short way off, just on the edge of the lake. Going to it, I found a lone man about half drunk. I asked him what he was doing there, and he said he had some alcohol to sell at five dollars a quart. I bought a quart, my canteen full, and went back to camp. We succeeded in making coffee of the strongest kind and enough of it to fill our six canteens. We divided the alcohol equally among us and mixed it with the coffee. This arrangement was an experiment, but we found upon trial that one swallow of this mixture would make a person bat his eyes and step about quite lively, while two of them would make a man forget most of his troubles.

I remember that it was about mid-afternoon when we finally packed and left the Humboldt River for the last time, which we did with but few regrets. It was our intention to make as much as possible of the Humboldt desert during the night. [Pg 106]

A few miles out the trail forked, the one to the right being "Truckee Route" and the other "Carson Route"; we decided upon the latter. Near the forks were some campers, two sets of them, who were quarreling as to which route was the better. They finally began to shoot at each other and were still at it when we passed out of hearing, not knowing or caring how the duel might end. Toward sundown we came to the salt wells, twelve miles from the sink, the water in them being as salt as the strongest brine. This was the last salt water we saw on our journey. About midnight we came to some tents, wagons, and a corral of stock; we were then nearly half the distance across the desert.

At the tent water was sold at the very low price of "six bits" a gallon. We bought one gallon apiece for each of the animals and as much as we needed to drink at the time for ourselves. We did not care to dilute the contents of our canteens. We gave the stock a feed and moved on. The night was moonlighted, very bright and pleasant, but awfully still, rendered so seemingly by the surroundings, or perhaps by the lack of surroundings, for there could be heard no rushing of waters, no murmuring of forests no rustling of grasses. All of Nature's music-pieces had been left far behind. There was nothing but sand, and it was at rest except as our footfalls caused it to vibrate. The broad and barren expanse, the white light of the full moon full upon it, the curvings and windings of the trail upon the sand, the steady onward march of our caravan, all combined to make a subject worthy the brush of a Millet. [Pg 107]

We travelled in silence mostly. There was reverence in the atmosphere and we could not evade it. We did not even try.

Akin to this scene must have been the one which inspired Longfellow to write:

"Art is the child of Nature; yes,
Her darling child, in whom we trace
The features of the mother's face,
Her aspect and her mien."

CHAPTER XI.

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"BUT ALL COMES RIGHT IN THE END."

From this point on to Carson River the route was continuously strewn with the carcasses of stock that had perished there, some of them years before. Owing probably to the dry climate and the

fact that the greater part of the desert was covered with alkali and crystalized soda, the bodies of these animals remained perfect, as they had fallen. The sand glistening in their eyes gave them a very lifelike appearance. At intervals could be seen wagons, all complete except the cover, with two to four yoke of cattle lying dead, with the yokes on their necks, the chains still in the rings, just as they fell and died, most of them with their tongues hanging from their mouths.

Daylight came just as we got to the loose sand. The moment the sun rose above the horizon its influence could be seen and felt, and in an hour or two several cattle-teams had perished near us. First one ox would drop as though he were shot, and in a few minutes others would sink down, and almost before the owner could realize the condition of things, a part or the whole of his team would lie dead.

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For the want of vegetables or acid of some kind, I had been troubled for a week or so with an attack of scurvy in my mouth, the gums being swollen because of the alkali dust. This not only caused me pain and misery, but created a strong and constant desire for something sour. While riding past an ox team I noticed a jug in the front end of the wagon. Upon inquiry of the driver, I found that the jug contained vinegar. I offered him a silver dollar for a cupful, but he refused to part with any of it, saying that he might need it himself before he got through. He was afoot on the off side of the wagon, where the jug was setting. I was sort of crazy mad and drawing my revolver, I rode around the rear of the wagon, thinking I would kill the fellow and take his jug of vinegar. But when he began to run for his life around the front yoke of cattle I came to my senses and hastened away from his outfit.

We could now see a few scattering, tall trees outlining the Carson River, also long mountain spurs reaching almost out into the sand, covered with a short growth of pine timber. In leaving the sand about 11 o'clock A. M. I noticed a large open tent near by. I rode up and into the tent, and, looking about, saw among other things one bottle of gherkin pickles about one quart of them. I asked the price. It was five dollars, and I paid it gladly as the owner passed the bottle over to me. I saw in that bottle of pickles my day of deliverance and salvation, and drawing my long knife from my bootleg soon drew the cork and filled my fevered mouth with pickles. I assure my readers that I can taste those gherkins to this day. The proprietor, who evidently thought that I was a "little off," brought me to a sense of realization by telling me that his tent was not a mule stable and that I had better get out. His voice and expression made me feel that I might be in danger of losing my pickles, so I waited not on ceremony, but beat a hasty and complete retreat.

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We had now finished the desert which, with all its events and experiences, was already behind us. We had travelled more than one thousand miles with no tree in sight, and our feelings can easily be imagined when, in looking a short distance ahead, we saw a clump of trees—real trees, green trees, shade-giving trees. We instantly became, as it were, initiated into the tree-worshipping sect. We were soon, men and beasts, within the cooling shade, and the packs stripped from the poor, tired animals, when they were led into the shallow water of the Carson, where they drank and bathed to their heart's content, and were then turned loose into a stretch of good grass.

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We couldn't treat ourselves as well as we had treated our animals, for we had only a bite of hardtack crumbs, which we washed down with some of the "elixir of life" from our canteens. But we stretched ourselves underneath the friendly trees and, just letting loose of everything, slept until nearly noon the next day.

The vicinity in which we camped seemed to have been pre-empted by a number of parties, who lived in tents and sold provisions to the immigrants. The settlement was called "Ragtown."

After coming out of our long sleep and taking in the situation of our whereabouts we were soon ready to take up our westward march, which, in two days, brought us to the first real house we had seen since leaving the Missouri. This house was known as "Mormon Station." It was a good-sized story and half building, with a lean-to on one side and a broad porch on the other, along which was a beautiful little stream of cold, clear water. Cups were hanging on the porch columns for the use of immigrants. There were also long benches for them to sit and rest on. Connected with this house was a stock ranch and a cultivated farm of sixty acres, mostly all in vegetables. Within was a large store of supplies. Well, we didn't stop long for compliments, for our mouths were watering for some of those onions, lettuce, cabbage, new potatoes, pickles, steak and bacon, etc. We laid in a generous supply of the whole thing, including soft and hard bread and a bucket of milk. We also got a new coffeepot, as our old one had neither spout nor handle.

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After making our purchases we selected our camping-site and proceeded to make ourselves comfortable, after disposing of the stock in grass up to its eyes. We were going to have a supper fit for the gods, and everybody became busy. The boss coffee-maker attended strictly to his business, and some others cut and sliced an onion that was as large as a plate, covering it with salt and pepper and vinegar, which we ate as a "starter." We had an elegant supper and appetites to match. After supper some of the men went back to the store and laid in a supply of fresh bread and steak for breakfast. They brought back some pipes and tobacco, and for a long time we sat around our campfire smoking and reciting many experiences incident to our journey across the continent. With pangs of hunger and thirst appeased, our pipes filled to the brim and the smoke therefrom curling and twisting itself into cloud-banks, we were a supremely happy lot, and with the poet was ready to sing:

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"The road is rough and the day is cold,
And the landscape's sour and bare,

And the milestones, once such charming friends,
Half-hearted welcomes wear.
There's trouble before and trouble behind,
And a troublesome present to mend,
And the road goes up and the road goes down,
But it all comes right in the end."

We decided to remain in this place another day, thereby giving ourselves and the stock time to secure the rest which we so greatly needed. It was during our stay here that in loading my rifle for a duck the stock broke in two. In making this little book, I cannot pass the incident by without a few parting words in memory of my faithful old friend and protector.

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In make and style the gun was known as a Kentucky rifle, with curled maple stock the entire length of the barrel, underneath which was a "patch box," set lock, and a brass plate. Since we began to pack I had carried it continually on my shoulders, exposed to weather and elements, hot air and desert heat, until the varied exposures had so weakened it that it broke while being loaded. I had carried it on my shoulders for such a long time that my shirt and vest became worn through, and the brass plate, heated by the scorching sun, did a remarkable piece of pyro-sculpture by burning into my bare shoulders a pair of shoulder straps that continued with me more than a year.

Carson valley, through which our route lay, seemed to be twenty or more miles wide when we first entered it, but it narrowed as it continued toward the Sierras until it became not more than a mile in width at the point where it pushed itself far into the mountain range. Upon the morning of our departure, we were early astir, and, turning to the right, left the valley that had been to us a Mecca of rest and replenishment, and entered the Dark Cañon, which is but a few rods wide, with perpendicular sides of rock so high that daylight seemed to be dropped down from overhead. Through this cañon flowed a rushing, roaring torrent of water, and as the bed of the cañon is very steep and made up mostly of round stones and boulders ranging in size from a marble to a load of hay, one can imagine something of the difficulties we had to encounter during the first four miles of our ascent.

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In addition to the well-nigh impassable track, was the most deafening and distracting accumulation of noises ever heard since the time of Babel. The water as it roared and rushed and dropped itself from boulder to boulder, the rattling and banging of empty wagons, the cracking of the drivers' whips, the shouting of the men, and the repetitions and reverberations of it all as the high walls caught them up and tossed them back and forth on their way to the exit, gave an impression that the cañon was engaged in grand opera with all stops open.

After spending one entire day here we emerged into what is known as Hope Valley, and its name in no wise belied its nature. In its quietude we took a new hold of ourselves, remaining in camp within its enclosure during the night. The valley is a large estuary or basin upon the first great bench of the range. Its center seemed to consist of a quagmire, as one could not walk far out on it and stock could not go at all.

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Some of us took our knives and 'twixt rolling and crawling on our stomachs, got to where the grass was and cut and brought in enough to bait our horses and mules.

We started again at daylight next morning, and as the roads were fairly good we made twelve miles, which brought us to the shore of Mountain Lake. The weather here was cold during the night, the water near the edge of the lake freezing to the thickness of window glass. We were among quite heavy timber of pine and fir. This place might be called the second point in line of ascent. About one-half mile distant was the region of perpetual snow, in full sight, toward which we climbed and worked most assiduously, the line being very steep and the trail exceedingly zigzagged. Resting-places were only to be had on the upper side of the great trees. It was here that a four mule team, hitched to a splendid carry-all, got started backward down the mountain, the driver jumping from his seat. The whole outfit going down the mountain end over end and brought up against a large tree, the vehicle completely wrecked. The mules landed farther down.

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Arriving at the snow line, we found grass and even flowers growing and blooming in soil moistened by the melting snow. The notch in the summit of the mountains through which we had to pass was four miles distant from this point. The trail leading up was of a circular form, like a winding stair, turning to the left, and the entire distance was completely covered with snow, or more properly ice crystals as coarse as shelled corn, which made the road-bed so hard that a wheel or an animal's foot scarcely made an impression on it.

We reached the summit about noon, August 7th, where we halted to rest and, as did Moses, "to view the landscape o'er." Looking back and down upon the circular road we could plainly see many outfits of men, animals, and wagons, as they slowly worked their way up and around the great circle which we had just completed.

Thinking we might see the Missouri River or some eastern town from our great altitude, we looked far out to the east; but the fact was we could see but a very little way as compared with our view on the plains. On a point high up on the rocks I spied a flag, which proved to be a section from a red woolen shirt. Upon going to it I found in a small cavity in the highest peak a bottle having upon its label the inscription, "Take a drink and pass on."

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We went down to the edge of the timber on the California side and spent a night on the hard

snow. We had wood for fire, snow for water, and pine boughs for beds, but no feed for our hungry beasts. Having laid in a good supply of provisions at Mormon Station, among which was a big sack of hard bread, we gave the animals a ration apiece of the same, promising them something better as soon as it could be had. This was our first night in California, having heretofore been travelling, since leaving the Missouri River Valley, in the Territory of Nebraska, except as we passed through a little corner of Oregon, near Ft. Hall.

After an early breakfast, we left the region of snow and went down among the timber and into a milder atmosphere. We passed through a place called Tragedy Springs, whose history, we afterwards learned, was indicated by its name. Leek Springs was the name of our next stopping place, which, from its appearance, evidently a favorite resort of all who passed that way. It so happened, however, that we were the only parties camping there that night. Realizing that we were very near our journey's end, we made these last evenings together as pleasant and as restful as possible. I remember this evening in particular, also the following morning, when, upon bestirring ourselves, we found that our sack of hard bread had been eaten and the sack torn to pieces. The frying pan had been licked clean, and things generally disturbed. Upon investigation we soon found that the camp had been invaded by two grizzly bears. They had walked all around us while we slept, evidently smelling of each one, as was indicated by the large, plain tracks which they had left, not only in the camp, but across the road also as they took their departure.

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During the day we had opportunity to buy some hay for our stock, and at night we made ourselves at home among the heaviest white pine timber I ever saw. To test the size of the trees, we selected one that was representative of more than half the trees in that vicinity, and four of us joined hands and tried to circle the tree, but could not. They were so large and so near together that it seemed as though more than one-half of the ground and air was taken up by them. They had only a few stub branches for a top. Their bodies were as straight and as smooth as a ship's mast, and so tall that in looking at them one usually had to throw one's head back twice before seeing their tops.

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The western slope of the Sierras was much more gradual in its descent than on the eastern side, the former reaching from the summit to the Valley of the Sacramento, about one hundred miles, while the ascent on the eastern side, from the leaving of Carson Valley, is about twenty-four miles.

The travel along here was quiet and easy, and as we had reason to believe that we were in close proximity to the gold mines, we were constantly looking out for them. We found a sort of restaurant on the hillside, where we treated ourselves to sardines and vinegar, coffee and crackers; and a little later we came upon some men actually engaged in gold-digging, the first we had ever seen. The place was called Weber Creek Diggings. There were several Chinamen in the group, who, with their broad bamboo hats and their incessant chatter, were certainly a great curiosity to us.

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We passed on and soon came to Diamond Spring Diggings, where we spent the night under an immense lone tree. The ground was rich with gold here, and if we had gone to digging and washing the very spot on which we slept we could all of us have made a snug fortune; but it was not for us to get rich so quickly.

This was our last night together, Hangtown, or Placerville, Eldorado County, as it is to-day, being but a few miles distant. We reached Hangtown in time for breakfast, after which we all rode up the dividing ridge, from the top of which we looked down upon the busiest town and richest mining district in that country.

The hill was long and steep, and thereby hangs a tale. The saddle had worked up on my mule's shoulders, which I had not noticed, my mind being so wholly given to our new surroundings. In a second of time, and with no admonition whatever, that mule kicked both hind feet into the air, and I was made to turn a complete somersault over his head landing on the flat of my back just in front of him. He stopped and looked at me with a malicious smile in his eye, as much as to say: "We will now quit even." The breath was knocked out of me. The boys picked me up and brushed the dirt off, but I never mounted the mule again. We closed our social relations right there. To think he should be so ungrateful as to treat me in that way after I had watched over him with so much care and tenderness! We had swam many a stream together; I had even divided my bread with him; I had reposed so much confidence in him that many a night had I slept with the loose end of his lariat tied to my wrist. When we returned to town I sold both my mule and pony.

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After we had treated ourselves to a bath, shave, haircut, and some new clothes we started out to prospect for individual interests, and became separated. Two of the company I have never seen since we parted that afternoon, August 10, 1852.

CHAPTER XII.

[Pg 123]

EACH DAY MAKES ITS OWN PARAGRAPHS AND PUNCTUATION MARKS.

"I am dreaming to-night of the days gone by,
When I camped in the open so free and grand.

Those days have gone; each passing year
 Has made the buoyant steps grow slow,
 But the pictures stay to comfort and cheer
 The days that come and the days that go."

During the preparation of the previous chapters I have once again been twenty-four years old. Once again I have lived over those five months, so alternated with lights and shadows, but above which the star of hope never for a moment lacked luster or definiteness. The entire route from Monroe, Michigan, to Hangtown, was one great book, having new lessons and illustrations for each day. Some of them were beautiful beyond description; others were terrible beyond compare, and so hard to understand.

Each day made its own paragraphs and punctuation marks, and how surprising and unexpected many of them were! Commas would become semicolons and periods give place to exclamation points, in the most reckless sort of fashion. The event which had been planned as a period to a day's doings would often instead become a hyphen, leading into and connecting us with conditions wholly undreamed of.

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To-day as I look back upon the more than fifty intervening years I realize that the wealth that I gathered from the wayside of each day's doings has enriched my whole after-life far beyond the nuggets which I digged from the mines. Nature never does anything half-heartedly. Her every lesson, picture, and song is an inspirer and enricher to all who would learn, look, and listen aright.

All of our company, excepting the one who still sleeps in his prairie bed, eventually reached the "promised land." Captain and Mrs. Wadsworth, then as before, were noted and esteemed for their noble manhood and womanhood. The Captain in time was made Marshal of Placerville and did much for the advancement of its interests. Both he and his wife died after being in California about seven years. Charley Stewart, the young man with whom I had the midnight tussle, returned to his home in a few months, dying shortly thereafter. He had made the trip hoping to benefit his impaired health, but was disappointed in the result. I kept in touch with several of the others for some time.

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After two years I returned home by way of the Isthmus, when other and new interests claimed my time and attention, and I would only hear now and again that one and then another and yet others had left the trail and passed over the dividing ridge into the land where camps neither break nor move on.

The story of our trail has of necessity been told in monologue, as only I of all the number am here to tell it.

The pictures upon memory's walls, a few relics, and a golden band upon my wife's finger, made into a wedding-ring from gold that I myself had dug, are the links which unite *these* days to *those* days.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK IN THE EARLY DAYS ALONG THE OVERLAND TRAIL IN NEBRASKA TERRITORY, IN 1852 ***

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