

JOURNAL OF AN EXPLORING TOUR BEYOND THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

IN THE YEARS 1835, '36 AND '37.
BY REVSAMUEL PARKER, A.M.

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ACCIDENT.

1838

CHAPTER II.

Leave St. Louis for Liberty—passage up the Missouri—snags—jwalk
on shore—Jefferson city—River scenery—Steam-Boat Slam—Sand
bars—Lexington—Steam-Boat disaster—Liberty—Navahoe Indians
ride—O. Oankomment, of Leavenworth—annuing dialect—Caravan
commence their journey—first encampment—Jovay Indians—Black
snake Hill—Nodaway river—Elk—crossed the Neeshabotahs—Rich
soil—rapid rise of the north branch of Neeshabotah—mode of living
—hounds of the west—crossing of the Missouri—Bellevue—Missou
aries.

At five o'clock P. M. went on board the steam-boat St.
Charles, Capt. Shellcross, and ascended the river twenty
miles; anchored at the confluence of the Missouri and
Mississippi, and lay by for the night, it being dangerous to
proceed in the night, on account of the many snags and sand
bars in the Missouri.

On the eighth, proceeded up the Missouri by rather slow
progress, and made our first stop at St. Charles, which is
twenty miles above the confluence of this river with the Mis
sissippi, and the same distance north-west from St. Louis.
This is a pleasantly situated village, upon the north side of
the river. The country around is interesting, and the soil
of superior quality. An enterprising Christian population
would make this one of the most desirable places in the
west. Soon after we left the shore, a boy six years old,
fell overboard. The current being swift, and the boat un
der full way, there was no opportunity to save him. He
was seen floating a short time, but before the yawl could
be loosed from its fastening, and manned, he sunk and was
seen no more. His mother was a widow, and with her family
was removing from Kentucky to Franklin, Mo. The moth
er and the children lamented greatly and loudly.

JEFFERSON CITY.

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Near the middle of the day, on the ninth, we struck a snag
or rock, so deep beneath the turbid water, that we could not
tell which it was, and it became necessary to repair one of
the wheels of the boat, which was much injured. This gave
us an opportunity to go on shore. Several of my fellow
voyagers and myself ascended one of those high bluffs,
which frequently skirt this river. This was done by clump
ing on our hands and feet up an elevation of several hundred
feet. Here we had a delightful view of the surrounding
country, with its intermingled prairie and wood land, its
cultivated spots, and its hills and dales. But in attempting
to return, a new difficulty interposed. I said we ascended
on our hands and feet—could we return in the same way?
We were compelled, by descending backwards, to use much
caution, and letting ourselves down by the grass, or some
times by a shrub or tree, and assisting each other, we came
safely to the shore. We also went to a place, some distance
below this, where Lewis and Clark lay by three days, wait
ing a better state of water. They encamped under a shelv
ing rock, which is composed of white quartzose sand of excel
lent quality for making flint glass, equal to that found above
Pittsburgh. Saw many wild turkeys along upon the unin
habited shores.

Stopped, on the 11th, at Jefferson city, the capital of the
state. It is situated on the south side of the river, upon a
high eminence, a little above the Osage river. It has a great
name for so small a place. The state house is of a size, which
would be decent for a small academy, and the govern
or's house would do very well for a common farmer's house
in the country, but not such as we should expect for a gov
ernor in Jefferson City. But the state of Missouri is
comparatively new, and this place may in time support its
name.

Sabbath, twelfth, kept in my state room, and endeavored
to observe the day according to the commandment; thought

of my family, and imagined I could see them in the morning in the sabbath school; and then with the many children and teachers, enter the sanctuary to enjoy the privileges of public divine worship.

Monday, passed Boonerville and Franklin, small villages which have a country of rich land around them, and when brought under good cultivation, these villages must rise in importance. The scenery up this river is sufficiently diversified to excite interest and to charm. The trees along the shores are mostly oak and cotton wood, with some hacherry and buckeye. The soil is free and rich. The river makes nothing of washing away and forming islands. Sand bars and snags are so common, that, by becoming accustomed to them, we hardly think of danger. It is interesting to see how easily and how deep the trees take root in the rich soil along this river. Frequently, where the banks are washing away, the roots of the trees are exposed to full view, and generally there is only a large central root descending ten or twelve feet with small ones branching out, presenting the appearance of an inverted cone.

Found the steam-boat Siam, Capt. L. at Chariton, on board of which the St. Charles put her freight and passengers, and returned, both boats having so far discharged their freight that one could proceed with what was remaining. Having got under way, the boat run upon a sand bar, which gave it a sudden whirl about, apparently threatening a disaster, but the quicksand of which the bar was composed, soon washed away, and we went ahead again. Running aground in this river is a very different thing from what it would be in most waters; for the bars are so generally formed of quicksand, that in most instances the current around the boat sets all clear.

Soon after getting under way, on the 16th, we ran upon a bar where we were detained two and a half hours, and so frequently were we upon bars, that we made only five miles

before one o'clock P. M. Called at Lexington. The village is pleasantly situated one mile back from the landing, and is surrounded by a fine country. We made only about fifteen miles headway to-day, which is so slow, that it would be more pleasant traveling by land; and also to be free from imprisonment with such shockingly profane swearers and gamblers, most of whom are intemperate.

Nineteenth, another sabbath on board the steam-boat. How great a contrast to the sacredness of the day when it is enjoyed in the christian family circle; or in the sanctuary where God is worshipped in the great congregation; or in the quiet, unobtrusive sabbath school, where attentive minds sit down to study the word of God, that they may do it; and where the teachers are heard explaining and enforcing divine truth upon the young and tender conscience.

As we passed along, I saw many children standing on the banks of the river. I thought how benevolent persons at the east had desired their religious instruction, and how much had been done for the enterprise; but it had failed to reach these. I also reflected on the examples of infidelity and vice around them, by which they are educated for destruction, and endeavored to ask the Great Benefactor of all, to do that for them, which it was not in my power to do. I contrasted in my mind the difference between kindred souls in sweet communion in the service of God to-day, and the unrestrained wickedness of ungodly men, which my eyes and ears were witnessing, and said, when will the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ.

About the middle of the day, the captain and his men appeared to be given up to blind infatuation. The Siam was a new, well-built boat, had four boilers, and it was her first season. They appeared to regard no bounds in raising and applying steam. Such was the power under which

she labored, that she more than trembled. For a long time I expected some disaster—looked at the captain to see if I could discover any apprehensions of danger. There was no want of evidence that there was a free use of ardent spirits. Soon the disaster came, less extensive than I feared; the main shaft, which was large and made of iron, broke, and all was over as to her going any farther.

Monday, 20. This day was spent in endeavoring to find some remedy for the disaster, but all to no purpose. It only remained to discharge her cargo upon the wilderness shore, let her passengers shift for themselves, and return with one wheel like a crippled winged fowl. Two miles above us lay the steam-boat Nelson, upon a sand bar high and dry. She ran aground upon the sabbath, and being left by a freshet in the river, is waiting for another to take it off. Our captain remarked at dinner to-day, that most of the accidents, which happen to steam-boats, take place on the sabbath; and that he did not believe it would be long before they would not run on that day. We engaged a man to take us in a wagon to Liberty, and towards evening went out into a small neighborhood of Mormons, where we lodged. They had fled from Jackson county, which they call their promised land, and to which they say they shall return. They are a poor, deluded people, and when they speak of their persecutions, they do not imitate the spirit of our Savior, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again and when he suffered, threatened not.

Rode on the 21st, twelve miles to Liberty, through a very pleasant and fertile country, sparsely inhabited, well supplied with woods, and sufficiently undulating and hilly to render it healthy. It was at that opening season of the year, when nature arousing itself from the sleep of winter, appears with renovated beauty. Not only man, but flowers, and trees, and birds, seemed to enjoy the season and the scene. I was much charmed with the wood duck, (A.

Sponges) which here were numerous; the variety of its colors seemed adapted to the beauty of the scenery, which surrounded us. And the sprightly deer did not seem to accelerate its movements more by fear, than by love of flight.

Liberty is a small village, situated three miles north of the river, and is the county town of Clay. Has a courthouse built of brick—several stores, which do considerable business, a rope-walk, and a number of decent dwelling houses.

Continued in this place about three weeks, waiting for the caravan to get in readiness. At this place it forms—men, horses and mules, and wagons, are collected and put in readiness; and from this place commences the long journey for the west. While we remained here, we had an opportunity to collect much information from those who have been to and beyond the Rocky Mountains, in regard to the country, mode of traveling, and concerning the various Indian tribes on the way. Saw Capt. Ford and Lieut. Stein from Fort Leavenworth. They are both professors of religion, and appear to be well acquainted with the Indian country. Lieut. S. has been much among the Indians, was out with the Dragoons the last year—was among the Pawnee Pies; gives a very favorable account of them, and thinks the way is prepared to establish a mission among them with fair prospects of success. He also thinks the way is prepared, or is preparing, for a mission among the Camanches, who heretofore have been hostile, but now wish for peace and trade with the Americans. Saw also a Mr. Vaun of this place, a Baptist professor, who has made two trips to Santa Fe, and has resided two years in that place. He gives a very favorable account of the Navahoes, a tribe who number about two thousand warriors. Their country lies between the head waters of the Rio Del Norte and the eastern branches of Rio Colorado. They carry on agriculture to a very considerable extent; have large herds of cat-

ble and horses, and flocks of sheep; and do much in domestic manufactures; and have houses of good construction. They are friendly to the Americans, but not to the Spaniards. Mr. V. thinks they would readily receive protestant missionaries, and would prefer them to Roman Catholics, because of their hostility to the Spaniards. He also speaks well of the Paches, or Apaches, a small tribe on the Del Norte towards old Mexico. These have been at war three years with the Spaniards.

Saturday, May 9th, rode twenty-six miles to Cantonment Leavenworth, which is situated on the west side of the Missouri river, nearly twenty miles out of the United States. The way is through a fertile section of country, part of the distance is an open prairie, other parts are handsomely wooded, and all well adapted to cultivation. I had an introduction to several of the officers, and put up at Lieut. S.'s, an agreeable and religious family.

I preached three times on the sabbath, and most of the people of the garrison assembled, and gave good attention. There are a very considerable number of professors of religion attached to this station, but they have no chaplain to teach and lead them in their devotions, which is a deficiency in our military establishments. Col. Dodge and some of the other officers appear disposed to maintain good order, and I should think they exert a salutary influence. I had an opportunity, before I returned to liberty, to take a view of the fort and adjacent country. There is much here to captivate. The buildings of the Fort are situated within an inclosure around a large, beautiful square, which is covered with green grass, and adorned with shade trees. The whole is on an elevation of a few hundred feet, and has an interesting prospect of the majestic river flowing on silently below. The fertile country around presents a wide and fine prospect, and when settled by an industrious population, will equal the most favored parts of the earth.

Liberty, and the country around, is inhabited by people of considerable enterprise, and when it shall be brought under christian influence, there will be but a few places more inviting. There is but one presbyterian minister in this county, Rev. J. S. V. a man of talents and very respectable attainments, and who is exerting a good influence. The baptists in this section of country are unlike those of the east. They are opposed to the benevolent operations of the day. Elder H. the pastor of the church in this place, invited Rev. Mr. Merrill, a baptist missionary, located among the Otoe Indians of the Platte, and myself, to preach for him the first sabbath after our arrival. His people objected, for fear Mr. Merrill would say something about the cause of temperance, or missionary efforts, and Elder H. had to withdraw his invitation. They profess to act from christian principles in refusing to give their minister any thing for support, but they should make him a hireling.

It is amusing to observe the provincialisms which are common in this part of the country. If a person intends to commence a journey some time in the month, for instance, in May; he says, "I am going in all the month of May." For a large assembly of people, they say, "a smart spiritlike of people." The word "balance," comes into almost every transaction—"will you not have a dessert for the balance of your dinner?"—"to make out the balance of his night's rest, he slept until eight in the morning." If your baggage is to be carried, it will be asked, "shall I tote your plunder?" This use of the word plunder, is said to have originated in the early predatory habits of the borderers. They also speak of a "mighty pleasant day"—"a mighty beautiful flower"—"mighty weak." A gentleman, with whom I formed some acquaintance, invited me, when I should make "an outing" for exercise, to call at his house; for his family would be "mighty glad" to see me.

During our continuance in this place, we were hospitably

entertained at the house of J. B. Esq. one of the judges of the county court. We felt under many obligations to him and Mrs. B. not only for their liberality, but also for the privilege of retirement in so kind and intelligent a family. Nor would we be unmindful of the hospitality shown us by Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Y.

May fifteenth, all things being in readiness, we commenced our journey for Council Bluffs, directing our course north-west. We did not get to-day beyond the boundaries of the United States, and for the last time, for a long period to come, I lodged in the house of a civilized family.

Sixteenth, traveled to-day twenty miles, which brought us beyond the limits of civilization, and into the Indian country. Encamped on a prairie surrounded with wood. The sensations excited by the circumstances of our situation were peculiar, and such as I had not before felt:—in a wilderness, inhabited by unseen savages and wild beasts, engaged in setting out tent, preparing supper with only a few articles of furniture, the ground for our chairs, table, and bed. But all was conducted in good style; for I would not dispense with attention to decencies, because beyond the boundaries of civilization; and having adjusted every thing in good order, and offered up our evening devotions, we retired to rest. But how to adjust all the anxieties and feelings of the mind, so as to obtain the desired repose, was a more difficult task.

On the 17th, crossed over the east, or little, Platte, which is a very considerable river, and spent the sabbath with Mr. Gilmore, a Methodist professor, and governmental blacksmith for the Iowa Indians. Saw many Indians of the Iowa, Sioux, and Fox tribes. Among these a Fox Indian and his wife were noble-looking persons, having their faces painted, the man's entirely, and the woman's in stripes, with unmingled vermilion. They felt too important to be seen

noticing what was transpiring around, and seemed to think themselves the only objects to be noticed. Here is an excellent fertile tract of country, and nothing discouraging for a missionary station, except the contaminating influence of vicious white men. They wish to cultivate their land, probably more from necessity than on any other account; for their game is mostly gone. One of them came to Mr. G. to get some ploughs, and remarked, "it is hard work to dig up our ground for corn by hand." The Sioux here are only a small band who would not join Black Hawk in his war against the United States, and who are now afraid to return to their own country. The condition of these Indians is becoming more and more wretched; for while they have not the knowledge, the means, nor much of the inclination, necessary to cultivate their lands advantageously, they have an insatiable thirst for ardent spirits; and there are enough of unprincipled men on our frontiers, who, for the sake of gain, will supply them with the means of drunkenness and destruction.

On Monday, rode only twelve miles to Blacksnake Hills. Left Mr. G. with kind feelings, and shall gratefully remember his hospitality. At Blacksnake Hills, Mr. Rubedoux has a trading post, and an uncommonly fine farming establishment on the Missouri river. His buildings are on a small rise of land, having a delightful prospect in front of more than a thousand acres of open bottom land, lying along down the river; and hills on the north and east partially covered with woods. What has not nature wrought without the labor of man? The herds of cattle, and other domestic animals, have as wide a range as they choose, and fences are only necessary to prepare fields for cultivation. The Indians here have a new mode of disposing of their dead. A scaffold is raised about eight feet high, upon which the dead are placed in rudely-constructed coffins overspread with skins.

I preferred encamping out to sleeping in the house, where I might have been subjected to many kinds of annoyances. Obtained a good supply of milk.

For several days nothing special occurred. On the twenty-second, we crossed the Nodaway river with a raft; to construct which, and get all things over, took most of the day. To construct a raft, we collect a number of dry logs, fasten them together, side by side, with barks stripped from elm trees; some few men swim across the river, taking with them one end of a rope, while the other end is fastened to the raft; it is then shoved off, the men upon the ether side of the river pulling upon the rope. The raft is generally drifted considerably down stream before it is brought to land upon the opposite shore. In this manner they crossed, and re-crossed, until the baggage was carried over. Then follows the swimming over of the horses, which is attended with noise enough—hallooing of men, snorting of the horses, and throwing sticks and stones to prevent them, after having gone part of the way over, from returning.

We saw many elk, but they were too wary to be approached and too fleet to be chased, and our hunters were not sufficiently successful to obtain any. They are very large, and when their horns are on, make a very majestic appearance. We frequently found their horns on the prairie, some of which were four feet long, with large wide-spreading branches.

Sabbath, twenty-fourth, passed over a brook near which we had encamped the evening before, and remained for the day, while the caravan went on. The movements of the caravan are so slow, that we felt confident we could overtake them without any difficulty, and there being no danger from hostile Indians, we considered it our duty to rest on this holy day. The day was very warm for May, the thermometer standing at two in the afternoon, at 89°. Monday, twenty-fifth, overtook the caravan before night.

Crossed the south branch of the Neshabotana on a raft. Some of the men of the caravan, if not all, were much displeased, because we did not travel with them on the sabbath. To express their displeasure, they cut some of the barks with which the raft they had made was bound together, and set it adrift. Providentially it did not drift far before it lodged against a tree, and, without much loss of time, we repaired it and passed over.

On the twenty-sixth, came to the main branch of the Neshabotana, and commenced making a raft, the finishing of which and crossing took most of the following day. The soil of this part of the country is rich, and the grass for our horses excellent; but there are none here to till the ground, nor to gather in the ten thousand tons of hay, which might be made from the spontaneous growth. This part of the country does not yet answer the end for which it was created. The time will come, when a dense population will cover this country, who will render the sacrifice of prayer and praise to our God.

On the 28th, we rode eleven miles and came to the north branch of the N. After we had made a raft, we had a very difficult time of crossing. The water was continually and rapidly rising, and before we finished crossing, the banks were overflowed to considerable depth; and the alluvial soil was rendered too soft to sustain our horses, and they sunk so deep that they could not get along. After searching for a long time, a place was found sufficiently hard to bear up our animals when unloaded. We had to carry our baggage upon our shoulders about fifteen rods, part of the way in water mid deep, going forward and returning, until all was carried to better ground; and then we had to ride one mile to the dry prairie in water one and two feet deep. We rejoiced to find ourselves once more on firm footing. Encamped by a stream of clear water, which is rare in this part of the country, and especially at this season of the

year. The waters of all this portion of country, especially of the Missouri river and its large tributary streams, are very turbid, owing to the nature of the soil over which they pass. A pail full of water, standing half an hour at the seasons of freshets, will deposit three eighths of an inch of sediment; and yet the water, when settled, appears to be of good quality and healthy.

Our mode of living, from day to day, had already necessarily become uniform. Dry bread and bacon constituted our breakfast, dinner, and supper. Our bacon we cooked, when we could obtain wood for fire; but when "out of sight of land," that is, when nothing but green grass could be seen, we eat our bacon without cooking. A very few of the simplest articles of furniture were sufficient for our culinary purposes. The real wants of life are few, artificial ones are numerous.

Thirtieth, drew near to Council Bluffs, and passed down from the high rolling prairie, through a vale two or three miles long, and a half mile wide, into the rich alluvial, and widely extended valley of the Missouri, through a section of country of uncommonly interesting scenery. The mounds, which some have called the work of unknown generations of men, were scattered here in all varieties of forms and magnitudes; and thousands in number, and perhaps I may say ten thousands. Some of these mounds were conical, some elliptical, some square, and some were parallelograms. One group of these attracted my attention more than any others. They were twelve in number, of conical form, with their bases joined, and twenty or thirty feet high. They formed about two-thirds of a circle, with an area of two hundred feet in diameter. If these were isolated, who would not say they are artificial? But when they are only a group of ten thousand others, which have as much the appearance of being artificial, who will presume to say they are the work of man? But if they are the work of art,

and attest the number, the genius, and perseverance, of departed nations whose works have survived the lapse of ages, we would interrogate the authors; but no voice replies to ours. All is silent as the midnight grave. "The mind seeks in vain for some clue to assist it in unravelling the mystery. Was their industry stimulated by the desire to protect themselves against invasions of invaders, or were they themselves the aggressors?" Are they the monuments of western Pharaohs, and do they conceal treasures which may yet be brought to light? There is nothing plainer than that they were never designed as works of defence. But some while they admit they were not designed for offensive or defensive operations of belligerent powers, suppose they were erected as "mausoleums, and that the difference in their size was intended to convey an idea of the difference in the relative importance of those whose bones they cover." If this theory is true, the La Trappe on the Mississippi, which I had an opportunity of examining on my northern tour, which is as much as one hundred and fifty feet high, and covering about six acres, must inclose mighty bones, or the bones of a mighty monarch. I would not be understood to dissent from the belief that there are any artificial mounds in the great valley of the west, but I believe there is a great mistake upon this subject. It is said, by those who advocate the belief that they are the work of ancient nations, that they present plain evidence of this, from the fact, that they contain human bones, articles of pottery, and the like, which evince that they were constructed for burying places of the dead. That some of them have been used for burying places, is undoubtedly true; but may it not be questionable whether they were made, or only selected for burying places. No one, who has ever seen the thousands and ten thousands scattered through the valley of the Mississippi, will ever be so credulous as to believe, that a five hundredth part of them are the work of man.

Crossed the Margine river, which, though very deep, was not so wide, but that we constructed a bridge over it. Made our way many miles through the rich bottom lands of the Missouri, and crossed this noble river over against Bellevue, in a large canoe, and swam our horses and mules across, which, considering the width of the river and the strength of the current, required much effort. Went to the agency house, where I was happy to find brethren Dunbar and Allis, missionaries of the Pawnees, under the direction of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. There is a baptist mission here composed of Rev. Moses Merrill and wife, Miss Brown, and a christian Indian woman, a descendant of Rev. D. Brainard's Indians. They are appointed by the Baptist Board to labor among the Otoe Indians, about twenty-five miles from this place, on the river Platte. These Indians are away from their intended residence, about half the time, on the hunting excursions.

A little more than a half a mile below the agency, the American Fur Company have a fort, and in connexion with which, they have a farming establishment and large numbers of cattle and horses, a horse power mill for grinding corn, &c.

CHAPTER III.

Continuance at Council Bluffs—interesting scenery—Indian curiosity—information obtained about several Indian tribes—Spasmodic Cholera—an Indian chief killed—leave Bellevue for the Black Hills—storm of rain—heavy thunder storm—Elkhorn river, the country around—Loops fork of the Platte—manner of encamping—Big Axe, Pawnee chief—Indian feasting—fourth of July—Messrs. Dunbar and Allis—thunder storm—Indian ornaments—effects of drunkenness—bite of a rattlesnake—buffalo seen—Prairie horse—dy-forks of the Platte—want of wood—swiftness of Antelopes—climate—thousands of buffalo—Badgers—prairie dog—interesting bluffs—old castle—the chimney or beacon—an alarm—Ogallala Indians, their lodges—Black Hills.

COURTNEY in this place three weeks, waiting the movements of the caravan, who made slow progress in preparing their packages for the mountains. During our continuance here, I frequently walked over the hills bordering upon the west of the valley of the Missouri, to enjoy the pure air of the rolling prairies, and to view the magnificent prospects unfolded in the vale below. From the summit of those prominences, the valley of the Missouri may be traced until lost in its winding course among the bluffs. Six miles below, is seen the Papillon, a considerable stream from the north-west, winding its way round to the east, and uniting with the Missouri, six miles above the confluence of the Platte, coming from the west. These flow through a rich alluvial plain, opening to the south and south-west as far as the eye can reach. Upon these meadows are seen feeding some few hundreds of horses and mules, and a herd of cattle, and some fields of corn diversify the scenery. The north is covered with woods, which are not less important than the rich vales. But few places can present a prospect