

AN
OVERLAND JOURNEY

72.57

ROUND THE WORLD,



DURING

THE YEARS 1841 AND 1842.

BY

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GOVERNOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY'S TERRITORIES.

PHILADELPHIA:
LEA AND BLANCHARD.
1847.

plained all that we saw; but, as our knowledge of their language was limited to *kammass* and *patac*, we profited very little by their communicativeness. Thinking that we might like a ride, they caught horses for us; and, at the same time, they made a still greater sacrifice in offering us a share of their scanty stock of food. But the most agreeable evidence of their politeness was, the fact that many of them washed themselves, but more especially their hands, before they came to salute us. After rewarding them for their civility, with presents of tobacco, ammunition, provisions, &c., we parted with mutual expressions of friendship.

The Pend' d'Oreilles are generally called the Flat Heads, the two clans, in fact, being united. They do not muster, in all, more than a hundred and fifty families. Like their neighbors, the Kootonais, they are noted for the bravery with which they defend themselves, and also for their attachment to the whites. Still the two races are entirely distinct, their languages being fundamentally different. The variety of tongues on the west side of the mountains is almost infinite, so that scarcely any two tribes understand each other perfectly. They have all, however, the common character of being very guttural; and, in fact, the sentences often appear to be mere jumbles of grunts and croaks, such as no alphabet could express in writing.

Early in the afternoon our people arrived from the Kulespelm Lake, bringing us such a report of the roads as made us doubly thankful for the accommodation of the boat. Leaving our old band of horses under the charge of the Indians, we immediately started with thirty-two fresh steeds. After crossing a prairie of two or three miles in length, we spent two hours in ascending a steep mountain, from whose summit we gained an extensive view of ranges of rocky hills; and, while the shadows of evening had already fallen on the valley at our feet, the rays of the setting sun were still tinging the highest peaks with a golden hue.

We encamped at the foot of the mountain with wolfish appetites, for, though we had had a good deal of exercise during the day, yet we had eaten nothing since seven in the morning; but what was our disappointment to find that six horses,—one of them, as a matter of course, being the commissariat's steed,—were missing. Having exhausted our patience, we went supperless to bed about midnight; but hardly had we turned in, when a distant shout made us turn out again in better spirits. The horses quickly arrived; and, before an hour had elapsed, we had dispatched a very tolerable allowance of venison and buffalo tongues.

This had been a very hot day, the thermometer standing at 85° in the shade. The nights, however, were chilly, while in exposed situations there was even a little frost. The power of the sun was very strikingly evinced by the gradual rise of the temperature during this forenoon. At eight the mercury was still down at 45°; by ten it had mounted to 67°; and in two hours more it stood, as already mentioned, at 18° higher. In consequence of these rapid changes, we felt the

heat so much more oppressive, that we were obliged to throw off nearly all our clothing.

Next morning, as Fort Colvile was only fifty miles distant from our encampment, we resolved, in reliance on fresh horses and tolerable roads, to wind up with a gallop. We accordingly raced along, raising from the parched prairie such a cloud of dust as concealed everything from our view. In about five hours we reached a small stream, on the banks of which four or five hundred of the company's horses were grazing. Not to lose so fine an opportunity of changing our sweating steeds, we allowed our cavalcade to proceed, while each of us caught the animal that pleased him best; and then, dashing off at full speed, we quickly overtook our party at a distance of six miles. Being again united, we here halted for breakfast. Meanwhile Mr. McDonald, who had received my letter at Fort Colvile on the preceding evening, had met our people, before we came up with them, but, by mistaking the road, had missed us. Sending a messenger after him, we had him with us in half an hour, and along with him such materials for a feast as we had not seen since leaving Red River. Just fancy, at the base of the Rocky Mountains, a roasted turkey, a sucking pig, new bread, fresh butter, eggs, ale, &c.; and then contrast all these dainties with short allowance of pemmican and water. No wonder that some of our party ate more than what was good for them.

While breakfast was preparing, we went, according to our custom, to bathe; but, after our hard and dusty ride, we were so much more impatient than usual, that Mr. Rowand, after plashing about for some time and descanting on the pleasures of swimming, struck against his watch. Handing ashore the luckless chronometer, he cast off his inexpressibles on the bank; but, as misfortunes never come alone, he found, on attempting to dress, that the soaked garment had drifted away of its own accord to complete its bath. In order to supply Mr. Rowand's indispensable wants, a quarter of an hour elapsed in searching for a superfluous pair of trowsers, the enthusiastic swimmer enjoying all this additional time in the water.

As soon as we had finished our morning's meal, we set out for the fort, having an hour's good ride before us. On reaching the summit of a hill, we obtained a fine view of the pretty little valley in which Colvile is situated. In a prairie of three or four miles in length, with the Columbia River at one end, and a small lake in the centre, we descried the now novel scene of a large farm,—barns, stables, &c., fields of wheat under the hands of the reaper, maize, potatoes, &c. &c., and herds of cattle grazing at will beyond the fences. By the time that we reached the establishment, we found about eighty men, whites and savages, all ready in their Sunday's best, to receive us at the gate.

Here then terminated a long and laborious journey of nearly two thousand miles on horseback, across plains, mountains, rivers and forests. For six weeks and five days we had been constantly riding, or at least as constantly as the strength of our horses would allow, from early dawn to sunset; and we had on an average been in the saddle about eleven hours and a half a day. From Red River to Edmonton, one day's

work with another amounted to about fifty miles; but from Edmonton to Colvile, we more generally than otherwise fell short of forty. We had great cause to be thankful that no serious accident had occurred to man or beast, more particularly as we had traversed every kind of ground, rocks and swamps, rugged mountains and rapid rivers, tangled brush and burning forests. Our clothes were the only sufferers; and, in fact, we made our appearance among the men, who waited at the gate to do us honor, with tattered garments and crownless hats, such as many of them would not have deigned to pick up at their feet. The weather had been such as we could hardly have anticipated, an almost unbroken spell of cloudless skies. During seven weeks we had not had one entire day's rain, and we had been blessed with genial days, light winds and cool nights.

Colvile is a wooden fort of large size, enclosed with pickets and bastions. The houses are of cedar, neatly built and well finished; and the whole place bears a cleaner and more comfortable aspect than any establishment between itself and Red River. It stands about a mile from the nearest point of the Columbia, and about two miles from the Chaudière Falls, where salmon are so abundant, that as many as a thousand, some of them weighing upwards of forty pounds, have been caught in one day with a single basket. Between the salmon of this river and the fish of the same name in England there appears to be a slight difference. The flesh of the former is whiter, while its head is more bulky and less pointed; but its flavor, in the proper season, is delicious.

The soil around Colvile is sandy; and the climate is so hot and dry, that there a fine season means a wet one, hardly any rain falling, with the exception of occasional showers, in spring and autumn. Notwithstanding these disadvantages, the farm is remarkably productive. Cattle thrive well, while the crops are abundant. The wheat, which weighs from sixty-three to sixty-five pounds a bushel, yields twenty or thirty returns; maize also flourishes, but does not ripen till the month of September; potatoes, peas, oats, barley, turnips, melons, cucumbers, &c., are plentiful. A grist mill, which is driven by water, is attached to the establishment, and the bread that we ate was decidedly the best that we had seen in the whole country.

Colvile stands in lat. 48° 37' N., the winter being many degrees milder than that of the same parallel on the east side of the mountains. Amongst the wild flowers in the neighborhood of the fort, we noticed the helianthus, the lupin, the monkshood, and the fuchsia, in great abundance. In the afternoon we took a ride around the farm, and were much gratified by an inspection of the buildings, crops, and cattle. The Indians had now commenced agricultural operations on a small scale; but, having made a beginning, they might be expected to extend their labors in proportion to the benefit which they might reap from their new pursuit.

The tribe in the vicinity is known as the Chaudière, whose territory reaches as far up as the Columbia Lakes. The fort has dealings also with the Kootonais, the Spokans, the Pend' d'Oreilles, &c., who either

visit the establishment, or trade, as in the case of Berland, at some distant rendezvous. Next morning, being the nineteenth of August, many of the Chaudières came to visit me. Among them was an aged chief, with a name far too guttural to be written, who, in the year 1824, had made me a formal cession of the neighboring soil. On that occasion he had given the company the land and the woods, because the whites would make a better use of them than himself; but he had reserved the Chaudière Falls as necessary to his own people, remarking, that the strangers being able to get food out of stones and sand, could manage to live very well without fish. During his visit he recited the terms of the contract with perfect accuracy; and, at the close of half an hour, the old fellow, whose whole wardrobe was the hide of a buffalo, was sent away as happy as a king, with a carpet, a shirt, a knife, and a small stock of ammunition and tobacco. Finding that speeches were so well paid, the chief's heir apparent and several others, came to have their talk out, taking care, of course, to continue the palaver till the equivalents were forthcoming.

At Colvile we left our guide Peechee, whom I made the happiest of men by presenting him with a telescope, to which he took a mighty fancy. The old fellow afterwards came to Vancouver, where, unaccustomed as he was to any scene of such various occupations, he used to complain bitterly that the unusual smells would kill him. Poor Peechee, however, lived to die in a very different way. Having lost a horse at gambling, and refused to give it up, he was shot through the head for his pains by the winner. How truly may every man, in the savage state, be said to hold his life in his hand. Peechee's own previous experience suggests another instance of this. A medicine man, having dunned Peechee in vain for a present of a fine horse, told him that thenceforward all his stud would have large feet; and when Peechee, suspecting foul play, found the knave hammering away at the hoofs of his horses with a stone, he very quietly sent a bullet through his head.

As the canoe, in which we were to descend the river, was waiting us below the Chaudière Falls, we set out on horseback, on the morning of the twentieth, for the place of embarkation. These falls might more properly be called a rapid, inasmuch as the highest of the three leaps appeared to be barely ten feet, while the whole length of the broken water was about a furlong. The name, which is to be found over the whole country, is derived not from any supposed resemblance to the boiling of a kettle, but from the shape into which the perpetual eddy of the torrent moulds the stones. In the Chaudière Falls, on the Ottawa, for instance, there is a countless number of these water-worn cauldrons.

Our canoe was worked by six oars, besides bowsman and steersman, being of the same construction as that in which we had descended the Pend' d'Oreille River. As the water was high and the current strong, we glided quickly down the stream. We were soon obliged to lighten our craft, to enable her to run a rapid; and thence we proceeded without any interruptions, save that of dining ashore near the

with Snow. Passed the Grand Rapid about 10 A. M. where a Portage was made with Craft and Cargo of about 100 Yards. At 2 O'Clock got to the Kettle Falls where we made a portage of about a Mile with Craft and Cargo. While the people were carrying I went to the Chiefs Lodge about a Mile above the Carrying place; had an interview with him and some of his principal followers and intimated my wish to form an Establishment on his Lands provided he undertook to protect it and assured us of his Friendly disposition. He received the proposal with much satisfaction and offered me the choice of his Lands in regard to situation or quantity. We selected a beautiful point on the South side about $\frac{3}{4}$ ths of a Mile above the Portage where there is abundance of fine Timber and the situation eligible in every point of view. An excellent Farm can be made at this place where as much Grain and potatoes may be raised as would feed all the Natives of the Columbia and a sufficient number of Cattle and Hogs to supply his Majesty's Navy with Beef and Pork. My reasons for abandoning the Establishment of Spokane House and forming one here in its stead are explained under Date the 8th Inst. Lined out the Site of the Establish^t 150 feet Square on a bank facing and commanding a view of the River and I have taken the liberty of naming it Fort Colvile¹⁸⁹ as both the Establishments that bore that Gentleman's Name were abandoned at the Coalition; likewise marked out the Garden and wrote M^r Birnie to Spokane House directing him to send a couple of Men across immediately to plant 5 or 6 Bushels of Potatoes, and to make the necessary preparations to remove the property on the arrival of the Brigade from Fort Vancouver. The Spokane Chief known by the name of "M^r Frazer" came here to meet me hearing of my fame and previous to parting with him and the Kettle Fall Chief I made them a present of Ammunition and Tobacco with a Speech of about an hours length as they estimate harangues by measurement; they said in return every

¹⁸⁹ Fort Colvile was built in the autumn and spring of 1825-26, and Spokane House was immediately after dismantled. Andrew Colvile, the person after whom the fort was named, was a director and later a governor of the Hudson's Bay Company.