

The Journal of Julius Rodman
Poe, Edgar Allan

Chapter 1

Introductory

What we must consider an unusual piece of good fortune has enabled us to present our readers, under this head, with a narrative of very remarkable character, and certainly of very deep interest. The Journal which follows not embodies a relation of the first successful attempt to cross the gigantic barriers of that immense chain of mountains which stretches from the Polar Sea in the north, to the Isthmus of Darien in the south, forming a craggy and snow-capped rampart throughout its whole course, but, what is of still greater importance, gives the particulars of a tour, beyond these mountains, through an immense extent of territory, which, at this day, is looked upon as totally untravelled and unknown, and which, in every map of the country to which we can obtain access, is marked as "an unexplored region." It is, moreover, the only unexplored region within the limits of the continent of North America. Such being the case, our friends will know how to pardon us for the slight amount of unction with which we have urged this Journal upon the public attention. For our own parts, we have found, in its perusal, a degree, and a species of interest such as no similar narrative ever inspired. Nor do we think that our relation to these papers, as the channel through which they will be first made known, has had more than a moderate influence in begetting this interest. We feel assured that all our readers will unite with us in thinking the adventures here recorded unusually entertaining and important. The peculiar character of the gentleman who was the leader and soul of the expedition, as well as its historian, has imbued what he has written with a vast deal of romantic fervor, very different from the luke-warm and statistical air which pervades most records of the kind. Mr. James E. Rodman, from whom we obtained the MS., is well

known to many of the readers of this Magazine; and partakes, in some degree, of that temperament which embittered the earlier portion of the life of his grandfather, Mr. Julius Rodman, the writer of the narrative. We allude to an hereditary hypochondria. It was the instigation of this disease which, more than any thing else, led him to attempt the extraordinary journey here detailed. The hunting and trapping designs, of which he speaks himself, in the beginning of his Journal, were, as far as we can perceive, but excuses made to his own reason, for the audacity and novelty of his attempt. There can be no doubt, we think (and our readers will think with us,) that he was urged solely by a desire to seek, in the bosom of the wilderness, that peace which his peculiar disposition would not suffer him to enjoy among men. He fled to the desert as to a friend. In no other view of the case can we reconcile many points of his record with our ordinary notions of human action.

As we have thought proper to omit two pages of the MS., in which Mr. R. gives some account of his life previous to his departure up the Missouri, it may be as well to state here that he was a native of England, where his relatives were of excellent standing, where he had received a good education, and from which country he emigrated to this, in 1784, (being then about eighteen years of age,) with his father, and two maiden sisters. The family first settled in New York; but afterwards made their way to Kentucky, and established themselves, almost in hermit fashion, on the banks of the Mississippi, near where Mills' Point now makes into the river. Here old Mr. Rodman died, in the fall of 1790; and, in the ensuing winter, both his daughters perished of the small-pox, within a few weeks of each other. Shortly afterwards, (in the spring of 1791,) Mr. Julius Rodman, the son, set out upon the expedition which forms the subject of the following pages. Returning from this in 1794, as hereinafter stated, he took up his abode near Abingdon, in Virginia, where he married, and had three children, and where most of his descendants now live.

We are informed by Mr. James Rodman, that his grandfather had merely kept an outline diary of his tour, during the many difficulties of its progress; and that the MS. with which we have been furnished were not written out in detail, from that diary, until many years afterwards, when the tourist was

induced to undertake the task, at the instigation of M. Andre Michau, the botanist, and author of the *Flora Boreali-Americana*, and of the *Histoire des Chenes d'Amerique*. M. Michau, it will be remembered, had made an offer of his services to Mr. Jefferson, when that statesman first contemplated sending an expedition across the Rocky Mountains. He was engaged to prosecute the journey, and had even proceeded on his way as far as Kentucky, when he was overtaken by an order from the French minister, then at Philadelphia, requiring him to relinquish the design, and to pursue elsewhere the botanical inquiries on which he was employed by his government. The contemplated undertaking then fell into the hands of Messieurs Lewis and Clarke, by whom it was successfully accomplished.

The MS. when completed, however, never reached M. Michau, for whose inspection it had been drawn up; and was always supposed to have been lost on the road by the young man to whom it was entrusted for delivery at M. M.'s temporary residence, near Monticello. Scarcely any attempt was made to recover the papers; Mr. Rodman's peculiar disposition leading him to take but little interest in the search. Indeed, strange as it may appear, we doubt, from what we are told of him, whether he would have ever taken any steps to make public the results of his most extraordinary tour; we think that his only object in re-touching his original Diary was to oblige M. Michau. Even Mr. Jefferson's exploring project, a project which, at the time it was broached, excited almost universal comment, and was considered a perfect novelty, drew from the hero of our narrative, only a few general observations, addressed to the members of his family. He never made his own journey a subject of conversation; seeming, rather, to avoid the topic. He died before the return of Lewis and Clarke; and the Diary, which had been given into the hands of the messenger for delivery to M. Michau, was found, about three months ago, in a secret drawer of a bureau which had belonged to Mr. Julius R. We do not learn by whom it was placed there — Mr. R.'s relatives all exonerate him from the suspicion of having secreted it; but, without intending any disrespect to the memory of that gentleman, or to Mr. James Rodman, (to whom we feel under especial obligation,) we cannot help thinking that the supposition of the narrator's having, by some means,

reprocured the package from the messenger, and concealed it where it was discovered, is very reasonable, and not at all out of keeping with the character of that morbid sensibility which distinguished the individual.

We did not wish, by any means, to alter the manner of Mr. Rodman's narration, and have, therefore, taken very few liberties with the MS., and these few only in the way of abridgment. The style, indeed, could scarcely be improved — it is simple and very effective; giving evidence of the deep delight with which the traveller revelled in the majestic novelties through which he passed, day after day. There is a species of affectionateness which pervades his account, even of the severest hardships and dangers, which lets us at once into the man's whole idiosyncrasy. He was possessed with a burning love of Nature; and worshipped her, perhaps, more in her dreary and savage aspects, than in her manifestations of placidity and joy. He stalked through that immense and often terrible wilderness with an evident rapture at his heart which we envy him as we read. He was, indeed, the man to journey amid all that solemn desolation which he, plainly, so loved to depict. His was the proper spirit to perceive; his the true ability to feel. We look, therefore, upon his MS. as a rich treasure — in its way absolutely unsurpassed — indeed, never equalled.

That the events of this narrative have hitherto lain perdu; that even the fact of the Rocky Mountains having been crossed by Mr. Rodman prior to the expedition of Lewis and Clarke, has never been made public, or at all alluded to in the works of any writer on American geography, (for it certainly never has been thus alluded to, as far as we can ascertain,) must be regarded as very remarkable — indeed, as exceedingly strange. The only reference to the journey at all, of which we can hear in any direction, is said to be contained in an unpublished letter of M. Michau's, in the possession of Mr. W. Wyatt, of Charlottesville, Virginia. It is there spoken of in a casual way, and collaterally, as "a gigantic idea wonderfully carried out." If there has been any farther allusion to the journey, we know nothing of it.

Before entering upon Mr. Rodman's own relation, it will not be improper to glance at what has been done by others, in the way of discovery, upon the North-Western portion of our

continent. If the reader will turn to a map of North America, he will be better enabled to follow us in our observations.

It will be seen that the continent extends from the Arctic ocean, or from about the 70th parallel of north latitude, to the 9th; and from the 56th meridian west of Greenwich, to the 168th. The whole of this immense extent of territory has been visited by civilized man, in a greater or less degree; and indeed a very large portion of it has been permanently settled. But there is an exceedingly wide tract which is still marked upon all our maps as unexplored, and which, until this day, has always been so considered. This tract lies within the 60th parallel on the south, the Arctic Ocean on the north, the Rocky Mountains on the west, and the possessions of Russia on the east. To Mr. Rodman, however, belongs the honor of having traversed this singularly wild region in many directions; and the most interesting particulars of the narrative now published have reference to his adventures and discoveries therein.

Perhaps the earliest travels of any extent made in North America by white people, were those of Hennepin and his friends, in 1698 — but as his researches were mostly in the south, we do not feel called upon to speak of them more fully.

Mr. Irving, in his *Astoria*, mentions the attempt of Captain Jonathan Carver, as being the first ever made to cross the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean; but in this he appears to be mistaken; for we find, in one of the journals of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, that two different enterprises were set on foot, with that especial object in view, by the Hudson Bay Fur Company, the one in 1758, the other as early as 1749; both of which are supposed to have entirely failed, as no accounts of the actual expeditions are extant. It was in 1763, shortly after the acquisition of the Canadas by Great Britain, that Captain Carver undertook the journey. His intention was to cross the country, between the forty-third and forty-sixth degrees of north latitude, to the shores of the Pacific. His object was to ascertain the breadth of the continent at its broadest part, and to determine upon some place, on the western coast, where government might establish a post to facilitate the discovery of a north-west passage, or a communication between Hudson's bay, and the Pacific ocean. He had supposed that the Columbia, then termed the Oregon, disemboved itself

somewhere about the straits of Annian; and it was here that he expected the post to be formed. He thought, also, that a settlement in this neighborhood would disclose new sources of trade, and open a more direct communication with China, and the British possessions in the East Indies, than the old route afforded, by the Cape of Good Hope. He was baffled, however, in his attempt to cross the mountains.

In point of time, the next important expedition, in the northern portion of America, was that of Samuel Hearne, who, with the object of discovering copper mines, pushed north-westwardly during the years 1769, '70, '71, and '72, from the Prince of Wales' Fort, in Hudson's bay, as far as the shores of the Arctic ocean.

We have, after this, to record a second attempt of Captain Carver's, which was set on foot in 1774, and in which he was joined by Richard Whitworth, a member of Parliament, and a man of wealth. We only notice this enterprize on account of the extensive scale on which it was projected; for in fact it was never carried into execution. The gentlemen were to take with them fifty or sixty men, artificers and mariners, and, with these, make their way up one of the branches of the Missouri, explore the mountains for the source of the Oregon, and sail down that river to its supposed mouth, near the straits of Annian. Here a fort was to be built, as well as vessels for the purpose of farther discovery. The undertaking was stopped by the breaking out of the American revolution.

As early as 1775, the fur trade had been carried by the Canadian missionaries, north and west to the banks of the Saskatchewan river, in 53 north latitude, 102 west longitude; and, in the beginning of 1776, Mr. Joseph Frobisher proceeded, in this direction, as far as 55, N. and 103, W.

In 1778, Mr. Peter Bond, with four canoes, pushed on to the Elk river, about thirty miles south of its junction with the Lake of the Hills.

We have now to mention another attempt, which was baffled at its very outset, to cross the broadest portion of the continent from ocean to ocean. This attempt is scarcely known by the public to have been made at all, and is mentioned by Mr. Jefferson alone, and by him only in a cursory way. Mr. J. relates that Ledyard called upon him in Paris, panting for some new

enterprise, after his successful voyage with Captain Cook; and that he (Mr. J.) proposed to him that he should go by land to Kamschatka, cross in some of the Russian vessels to Nootka Sound, fall down into the latitude of the Missouri, and then, striking through the country, pass down that river to the United States. Ledyard agreed to the proposal provided the permission of the Russian government could be obtained. Mr. Jefferson succeeded in obtaining this; and the traveller, setting out from Paris, arrived at St. Petersburg after the Empress had left that place to pass the winter at Moscow. His finances not permitting him to make unnecessary stay at St. P., he continued on his route with a passport from one of the ministers, and, at two hundred miles from Kamschatka, was arrested by an officer of the Empress, who had changed her mind, and now forbade his proceeding. He was put into a close carriage, and driven day and night, without stopping, till he reached Poland, where he was set down and dismissed. Mr. Jefferson, in speaking of Ledyard's undertaking, erroneously calls it "the first attempt to explore the western part of our northern continent."

The next enterprise of moment was the remarkable one of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, which was prosecuted in 1789. He started from Montreal, pushed through the Utawas river, Lake Nipissing, Lake Huron, around the northern shore of Lake Superior, through what is called the Grand Portage, thence along Rain River, the Lake of the Woods, Bonnet Lake, the upper part of Dog-Head Lake, the south coast of Lake Winnipeg, through Cedar Lake and past the mouth of the Saskatchewan, to Sturgeon Lake; thence again, by portage, to the Missinipi, and through Black Bear, Primo's and Buffalo Lakes, to a range of high mountains running N. E. and S. W. — then taking Elk river to the Lake of the Hills — then passing through Slave river to Slave Lake — around the northern shore of this latter to Mackenzie's river, and down this, lastly, to the Polar Sea — an immense journey, during which he encountered dangers innumerable, and hardships of the severest kind. In the whole of his course down Mackenzie's river to its embouchure, he passed along the bottom of the eastern declivity of the Rocky Mountains, but never crossed these barriers. In the spring of 1793, however, starting from Montreal and pursuing the route of his first journey as far as the mouth of the Unjigah or Peace

River, he then turned off to the westward, up this stream, pushed through the Mountains in latitude 56, then proceeded to the south until he struck a river which he called the Salmon (now Frazer's) and following this, finally reached the Pacific in about the 40th parallel of N. L.

The memorable expedition of captains Lewis and Clarke was in progress during the years 1804, '5, and '6. In 1803, the act for establishing trading houses with the Indian tribes being about to expire, some modifications of it (with an extension of its views to the Indians on the Missouri) were recommended to Congress by a confidential Message from Mr. Jefferson, of January 18th. In order to prepare the way, it was proposed to send a party to trace the Missouri to its source, cross the Rocky Mountains, and follow the best water communication which offered itself thence to the Pacific ocean. This design was fully carried out; captain Lewis exploring (but not first "discovering" as Mr. Irving relates) the upper waters of the Columbia river, and following the course of that stream to its embouchure. The head waters of the Columbia were visited by Mackenzie as early as 1793.

Coincident with the exploring tour of Lewis and Clarke up the Missouri, was that of Major Zebulon M. Pike up the Mississippi, which he succeeded in tracing to its source in Itasca Lake. Upon his return from this voyage he penetrated, by the orders of government, from the Mississippi westwardly, during the years 1805, '6, and '7, to the head waters of the Arkansas (beyond the Rocky Mountains in latitude 40 N.) passing along the Osage and Kansas rivers, and to the source of the Platte.

In 1810, Mr. David Thompson, a partner of the North West Fur Company, set out from Montreal, with a strong party, to cross the continent to the Pacific. The first part of the route was that of Mackenzie in 1793. The object was to anticipate a design of Mr. John Jacob Astor's — to wit, the establishment of a trading post at the mouth of the Columbia. Most of his people deserted him on the eastern side of the mountains; but he finally succeeded in crossing the chain, with only eight followers, when he struck the northern branch of the Columbia, and descended that river from a point much nearer its source than any white man had done before.

In 1811, Mr. Astor's own remarkable enterprise was carried into effect — at least so far as the journey across the country is concerned. As Mr. Irving has already made all readers well acquainted with the particulars of this journey, we need only mention it in brief. The design we have just spoken of. The track of the party (under command of Mr. Wilson Price Hunt) was from Montreal, up the Utawas, through Lake Nipissing, and a succession of small lakes and rivers, to Michilimackinac, or Mackinaw — thence by Green Bay, Fox and Wisconsin rivers, to the Prairie du Chien — thence down the Mississippi to St. Louis — thence up the Missouri, to the village of the Arickara Indians, between the 46th and 47th parallels of N. latitude, and fourteen hundred and thirty miles above the mouth of the river — thence, bending to the southwest across the desert, over the mountains about where the head waters of the Platte and Yellowstone take rise, and, along the south branch of the Columbia, to the sea. Two small return parties from this expedition made most perilous and eventful passages across the country.

The travels of major Stephen H. Long are the next important ones in point of time. This gentleman, in 1823, proceeded to the source of St. Peter's river, to Lake Winnipeg, to the Lake of the Woods, etc., etc. Of the more recent journeys of Captain Bonneville and others it is scarcely necessary to speak, as they still dwell in the public memory. Captain B.'s adventures have been well related by Mr. Irving. In 1832, he passed from Fort Osage across the Rocky Mountains, and spent nearly three years in the regions beyond. Within the limits of the United States there is very little ground which has not, of late years, been traversed by the man of science, or the adventurer. But in those wide and desolate regions which lie north of our territory, and to the westward of Mackenzie's river, the foot of no civilized man, with the exception of Mr. Rodman and his very small party, has ever been known to tread. In regard to the question of the first passage across the Rocky Mountains, it will be seen, from what we have already said, that the credit of the enterprise should never have been given to Lewis and Clarke, since Mackenzie succeeded in it, in the year 1793; and that in point of fact, Mr. Rodman was the first who overcame those gigantic barriers; crossing them as he did in 1792. Thus

it is not without good reason that we claim public attention for the extraordinary narrative which ensues.

Chapter 2

After the death of my father, and both sisters, I took no farther interest in our plantation at the Point, and sold it, at a complete sacrifice, to M. Junôt. I had often thought of trapping up the Missouri, and resolved now to go on an expedition up that river, and try to procure peltries, which I was sure of being able to sell at Petite Côte to the private agents of the Northwest Fur Company. I believed that much more property might be acquired in this way, with a little enterprise and courage, than I could make by any other means. I had always been fond, too, of hunting and trapping, although I had never made a business of either, and I had a great desire to explore some portion of our western country, about which Pierre Junôt had often spoken to me. He was the eldest son of the neighbor who bought me out, and was a man of strange manners and somewhat eccentric turn of mind, but still one of the best-hearted fellows in the world, and certainly as courageous a man as ever drew breath, although of no great bodily strength. He was of Canadian descent, and having gone, once or twice, on short excursions for the Fur Company, in which he had acted as voyageur, was fond of calling himself one, and of talking about his trips. My father had been very fond of Pierre, and I thought a good deal of him myself; he was a great favorite, too, with my younger sister, Jane, and I believe they would have been married had it been God's will to have spared her.

When Pierre discovered that I had not entirely made up my mind what course to pursue after my father's death, he urged me to fit out a small expedition for the river, in which he would accompany me; and he had no difficulty in bringing me over to his wishes. We agreed to push up the Missouri as long as we found it possible, hunting and trapping as we went, and not to return until we had secured as many peltries as would be a fortune for us both. His father made no objection, and gave him

about three hundred dollars; when we proceeded to Petite Côte for the purpose of getting our equipments, and raising as many men as we could for the voyage.

Petite Côte¹ is a small place on the north bank of the Missouri, about twenty miles from its junction with the Mississippi. It lies at the foot of a range of low hills, and upon a sort of ledge, high enough above the river to be out of reach of the June freshets. There are not more than five or six houses, and these of wood, in the upper part of the place; but, nearer to the east, there is a chapel and twelve or fifteen good dwellings, running parrallel with the river. There are about a hundred inhabitants, mostly Creoles of Canadian descent. They are extremely indolent, and make no attempt at cultivating the country around them, which is a rich soil; except now and then when a little is done in the way of gardening. They live principally by hunting, and trading with the Indians for peltries, which they sell again to the North-West Company's agents. We expected to meet with no difficulty here in getting recruits for our journey, or equipments, but were disappointed in both particulars; for the place was too poor in every respect to furnish all that we wanted, so as to render our voyage safe and efficient.

We designed to pass through the heart of a country infested with Indian tribes, of whom we knew nothing except by vague report, and whom we had every reason to believe ferocious and treacherous. It was therefore particularly necessary that we should go well provided with arms and ammunition, as well as in some force as regards numbers; and if our voyage was to be a source of profit, we must take with us canoes of sufficient capacity to bring home what peltries we might collect. It was the middle of March when we first reached Petite Côte, and we did not succeed in getting ready until the last of May. We had to send twice down the river to the Point for men and supplies, and neither could be obtained except at great cost. We should have failed at last in getting many things absolutely requisite, if it had not so happened that Pierre met with a party on its return from a trip up the Mississippi, and engaged six of its best men, besides a canoe or piroque; purchasing, at the same time, most of the surplus stores and ammunition.

1. Now St. Charles — Eds. G. M.

This seasonable aid enabled us to get fairly ready for the voyage before the first of June. On the third of this month (1791) we bid adieu to our friends at Petite Côte, and started on our expedition. Our party consisted in all of fifteen persons. Of these, five were Canadians from Petite Côte, and had all been on short excursions up the river. They were good boatmen, and excellent companions, as far as singing French songs went, and drinking, at which they were pre-eminent; although, in truth, it was a rare thing to see any of them so far the worse for liquor, as to be incapable of attending to duty. They were always in a good humor, and always ready to work; but as hunters I did not think them worth much, and as fighting men I soon discovered they were not to be depended upon. There were two of these five Canadians who engaged to act as interpreters for the first five or six hundred miles up the river (should we proceed so far) and then we hoped to procure an Indian occasionally to interpret, should it be necessary; but we had resolved to avoid, as far as possible, any meetings with the Indians, and rather to trap ourselves, than run the great risk of trading, with so small a party as we numbered. It was our policy to proceed with the greatest caution, and expose ourselves to notice only when we could not avoid it.

The six men whom Pierre had engaged from aboard the return Mississippi boat were as different a set from the Canadians as could well be imagined. Five of them were brothers, by the name of Greely (John, Robert, Meredith, Frank, and Poindexter) and bolder or finer looking persons it would have been difficult to find. John Greely was the eldest and stoutest of the five, and had the reputation of being the strongest man, as well as best shot in Kentucky — from which State they all came. He was full six feet in height, and of most extraordinary breadth across the shoulders, with large strongly-knit limbs. Like most men of great physical strength, he was exceedingly good-tempered, and on this account was greatly beloved by us all. The other four brothers were all strong well-built men, too, although not to be compared with John. Poindexter was as tall, but very gaunt, and of a singularly fierce appearance; but, like his elder brother, he was of peaceable demeanor. All of them were experienced hunters and capital shots. They had gladly accepted Pierre's offer to go with us, and we made an

arrangement with them which ensured them an equal share with Pierre and myself in the profits of the enterprise — that is to say, we divided the proceeds into three parts; one of which was to be mine, one Pierre's, and one shared among the five brothers.

The sixth man whom we enlisted from the return boat was, also, a good recruit. His name was Alexander Wormley, a Virginian, and a very strange character. He had originally been a preacher of the gospel, and had afterwards fancied himself a prophet, going about the country with a long beard and hair, and in his bare feet, haranguing every one he met. This hallucination was now diverted into another channel, and he thought of nothing else than of finding gold mines in some of the fastnesses of the country. Upon this subject he was as entirely mad as any man could well be; but upon all others was remarkably sensible and even acute. He was a good boatman and a good hunter, and as brave a fellow as ever stepped, besides being of great bodily strength and swiftness of foot. I counted much upon this recruit, on account of his enthusiastic character, and in the end I was not deceived, as will appear.

Our other two recruits were a negro belonging to Pierre Junôt, named Toby, and a stranger whom we had picked up in the woods near Mills' Point, and who joined our expedition upon the instant as soon as we mentioned our design. His name was Andrew Thornton, also a Virginian, and I believe of excellent family, belonging to the Thorntons of the northern part of the State. He had been from Virginia about three years; during the whole of which time he had been rambling about the western country, with no other companion than a large dog of the Newfoundland species. He had collected no peltries, and did not seem to have any object in view, more than the gratification of a roving and adventurous propensity. He frequently amused us, when sitting around our camp fires at night, with the relation of his adventures and hardships in the wilderness — recounting them with a strait-forward earnestness which left us no room to doubt their truth; although indeed, many of them had a marvellous air. Experience afterwards taught us that the dangers and difficulties of the solitary hunter can scarcely be exaggerated, and that the real task is to depict them to the

hearer in sufficiently distinct colors. I took a great liking to Thornton, from the first hour in which I saw him.

I have only said a few words respecting Toby; but he was not the least important personage of our party. He had been in old M. Junôt's family for a great number of years, and had proved himself a faithful negro. He was rather too old to accompany such an expedition as ours; but Pierre was not willing to leave him. He was an able-bodied man, however, and still capable of enduring great fatigue. Pierre himself was probably the feeblest of our whole company, as regards bodily strength, but he possessed great sagacity, and a courage which nothing could daunt. His manners were sometimes extravagant and boisterous, which led him to get into frequent quarrels, and had once or twice seriously endangered the success of our expedition; but he was a true friend, and in that one point I considered him invaluable.

I have now given a brief account of all our party, as it was when we left Petite Côte.² To carry ourselves and accoutrements, as well as to bring home what peltries might be obtained, we had two large boats. The smallest of these was a piroque made of birch bark, sewed together with the fibres of the roots of the spruce tree, the seams payed with pine resin, and the whole so light that six men could carry it with ease. It was twenty feet long, and could be rowed with from four to twelve oars; drawing about eighteen inches water when loaded to the gunwale, and, when empty, not more than ten. The other was a keelboat which we had made at Petite Côte (the canoe having been purchased by Pierre from the Mississippi party.) It was thirty feet long, and, when loaded to the gunwale, drew two feet water. It had a deck for twenty feet of its length forward, forming a cuddy-cabin, with a strong door, and of sufficient dimensions to contain our whole party with close crowding, as the boat was very broad. This part of it was

2. Mr. Rodman has not given any description of himself; and the account of his party is by no means complete without a portraiture of its leader. "He was about twenty-five years of age," says Mr. James Rodman in a memorandum now before us, "when he started up the river. He was a remarkably vigorous and active man, but short in stature, not being more than five feet three or four inches high — strongly built, with legs somewhat bowed. His physiognomy was of a Jewish cast, his lips thin, and his complexion saturnine." — EDS. G. M.

bulletproof, being wadded with oakum between two coatings of oak-plank; and in several positions we had small holes bored, through which we could have fired upon an enemy in case of attack, as well as observe their movements; these holes, at the same time, gave us air and light, when we closed the door; and we had secure plugs to fit them when necessary. The remaining ten feet of the length was open, and here we could use as many as six oars — but our main dependance was upon poles which we employed by walking along the deck. We had also a short mast, easily shipped and unshipped, which was stepped about seven feet from the bow, and upon which we set a large square sail when the wind was fair, taking in mast and all when it was ahead.

In a division made in the bow, under deck, we deposited ten kegs of good powder, and as much lead as we considered proportionate, one tenth ready moulded in rifle bullets. We had also stowed away here, a small brass cannon and carriage, dismounted and taken to pieces, so as to lie in little compass, thinking that such a means of defence might possibly come into play at some period of our expedition. This cannon was one of three which had been brought down the Missouri by the Spaniards two years previously, and lost overboard from a piroque, some miles above Petite Côte. A sand-bar had so far altered the channel at the place where the canoe capsized, that an Indian discovered one of the guns, and procured assistance to carry it down to the settlement, where he sold it for a gallon of whiskey. The people at Petite Côte then went up and procured the other two. They were very small guns, but of good metal, and beautiful workmanship, being carved and ornamented with serpents like some of the French field pieces. Fifty iron balls were found with the guns, and these we procured. I mention the way in which we obtained this cannon, because it performed an important part in some of our operations, as will be found hereafter. Besides it, we had fifteen spare rifles, boxed up, and deposited forward with the other heavy goods. We put the weight here, to sink our bows well in the water, which is the best method, on account of the snags and sawyers in the river.

In the way of other arms we were sufficiently provided; each man having a stout hatchet, and knife, besides his ordinary rifle and ammunition. Each boat was provided with a camp

kettle, three large axes, a towing-line, two oil-cloths to cover the goods when necessary, and two large sponges for bailing. The piroque had also a small mast and sail, (which I omitted to mention,) and carried a quantity of gum, birchbark and watape, to make repairs with. She, also, had in charge all the Indian goods which we had thought necessary to bring with us, and which we purchased from the Mississippi boat. It was not our design to trade with the Indians; but these goods were offered us at a low rate, and we thought it better to take them, as they might prove of service. They consisted of silk and cotton handkerchiefs; thread, lines and twine; hats, shoes, and hose; small cutlery and ironmongery; calicoes and printed cottons; Manchester goods; twist and carrot tobacco; milled blankets; and glass toys, beads, etc., etc. All these were done up in small packages, three of which were a man's load. The provisions were also put up so as to be easily handled; and a part was deposited in each boat. We had, altogether, two hundred weight of pork, six hundred weight of biscuit, and six hundred weight of pemmican. This we had made at Petite Côte, by the Canadians, who told us that it was used by the Northwest Fur Company in all their long voyages, when it is feared that game may not prove abundant. It is manufactured in a singular manner. The lean parts of the flesh of the larger animals is cut into thin slices, and placed on a wooden grate over a slow fire, or exposed to the sun, (as ours was) or sometimes to the frost. When it was sufficiently dried in this way, it is pounded between two heavy stones, and will then keep for years. If, however, much of it is kept together, it ferments upon the breaking up of the frost in the spring, and, if not well exposed to the air, soon decays. The inside fat, with that of the rump, is melted down and mixed, in a boiling state, with the pounded meat, half and half; it is then squeezed into bags, and is ready to eat without any farther cooking, being very palatable without salt, or vegetables. The best pemmican is made with the addition of marrow and dried berries, and is a capital article of food.³ Our whiskey was in carboys, of five gallons each, and we had twenty of these, a hundred gallons in all.

When every thing was well on board, with our whole company, including Thornton's dog, we found that there was but little room to spare, except in the big cabin, which we wished

to preserve free of goods, as a sleeping place in bad weather; we had nothing in here except arms and ammunition, with some beaver-traps and a carpet of bear-skins. Our crowded state suggested an expedient which ought to have been adopted at all events; that of detaching four hunters from the party, to course along the river banks, and keep us in game, as well as to act in capacity of scouts, to warn us of the approach of Indians. With this object we procured two good horses, giving one of them in charge of Robert and Meredith Greely, who were to keep upon the south bank; and the other in charge of Frank and Poindexter (Greely) who were to course along the north side. By means of the horses they could bring in what game was shot.

This arrangement relieved our boats very considerably, lessening our number to eleven. In the small boat were two of the men from Petite Côte, with Toby and Pierre Junôt. In the large one were the Prophet (as we called him) or Alexander Wormley, John Greely, Andrew Thornton, three of the Petite Côte men, and myself, with Thomton's dog.

Our mode of proceeding was sometimes with oars, but not generally; we most frequently pulled ourselves along by the limbs of trees on shore; or, where the ground permitted it, we used a tow-line, which is the easiest way; some of us being on shore to haul, while some remained on board, to set the boat off shore with poles. Very often we poled altogether. In this method, (which is a good one when the bottom is not too muddy, or full of quicksands, and when the depth of water is

3.The pemmican here described by Mr. Rodman is altogether new to us, and is very different from that with which our readers have no doubt been familiarised in the journals of Parry, Ross, Back, and other northern voyagers. This, if we remember, was prepared by long continued boiling of the lean meat (carefully excluding fat) until the soup was reduced to a very small proportion of its original bulk, and assumed a pulpy consistency. To this residue, many spices and much salt were added, and great nutriment was supposed to be contained in little bulk. The positive experience of an American surgeon, however, who had an opportunity of witnessing, and experimenting upon, the digestive process through an open wound in the stomach of a patient, has demonstrated that bulk is, in itself, an essential in this process, and that consequently the condensation of the nutritive property of food, involves, in a great measure, a paradox. — EDS. G. M.

not too great) the Canadians are very expert, as well as at rowing. They use long, stiff, and light poles, pointed with iron; with these they proceed to the bow of the boat, an equal number of men at each side; the face is then turned to the stern, and the pole inserted in the river, reaching the bottom; a firm hold being thus taken, the boatmen apply the heads of the poles to the shoulder, which is protected by a cushion, and, pushing in this manner, while they walk along the gunwale, the boat is urged forward with great force. There is no necessity for any steersman, while using the pole; for the poles direct the vessel with wonderful accuracy.

In these various modes of getting along, now and then varied with the necessity of wading, and dragging our vessels by hand, in rapid currents, or through shallow water, we commenced our eventful voyage up the Missouri river. The skins which were considered as the leading objects of the expedition were to be obtained, principally, by hunting and trapping, as privately as possible, and without direct trade with the Indians, whom we had long learned to know as, in the main, a treacherous race, not to be dealt with safely in so small a party as ours. The furs usually collected by previous adventurers upon our contemplated route, included beaver, otter, marten, lynx, mink, musquash, bear, fox, kitt-fox, wolverine, racoon, fisher, wolf, buffalo, deer, and elk; but we proposed to confine ourselves to the more costly kinds.

The morning on which we set out from Petite Côte was one of the most inspiring, and delicious; and nothing could exceed the hilarity of our whole party. The summer had hardly yet commenced, and the wind, which blew a strong breeze against us, at first starting, had all the voluptuous softness of spring. The sun shone clearly, but with no great heat. The ice had disappeared from the river, and the current, which was pretty full, concealed all those marshy, and ragged alluvia which disfigure the borders of the Missouri at low water. It had now the most majestic appearance, washing up among the willows and cotton-wood on one side, and rushing, with a bold volume, by the sharp cliffs on the other. As I looked up the stream (which here stretched away to the westward, until the waters apparently met the sky in the great distance) and reflected on the immensity of territory through which those waters had

probably passed, a territory as yet altogether unknown to white people, and perhaps abounding in the magnificent works of God, I felt an excitement of soul such as I had never before experienced, and secretly resolved that it should be no slight obstacle which should prevent my pushing up this noble river farther than any previous adventurer had done. At that moment I seemed possessed of an energy more than human; and my animal spirits rose to so high a degree that I could with difficulty content myself in the narrow limits of the boat. I longed to be with the Greelys on the bank, that I might give full vent to the feelings which inspired me, by leaping and running in the prairie. In these feelings Thornton participated strongly, evincing a deep interest in our expedition, and an admiration of the beautiful scenery around us, which rendered him from that moment a particular favorite with myself. I never, at any period of my life, felt so keenly as I then did, the want of some friend to whom I could converse freely, and without danger of being misunderstood. The sudden loss of all my relatives by death, had saddened, but not depressed my spirits, which appeared to seek relief in a contemplation of the wild scenes of Nature; and these scenes and the reflections which they encouraged, could not, I found, be thoroughly enjoyed, without the society of some one person of reciprocal sentiments. Thornton was precisely the kind of individual to whom I could unburthen my full heart, and unburthen it of all its extravagant emotion, without fear of incurring a shadow of ridicule, and even in the certainty of finding a listener as impassioned as myself. I never, before or since, met with any one who so fully entered into my own notions respecting natural scenery; and this circumstance alone was sufficient to bind him to me in a firm friendship. We were as intimate, during our whole expedition, as brothers could possibly be, and I took no steps without consulting him. Pierre and myself were also friends, but there was not the tie of reciprocal thought between us — that strongest of all mortal bonds. His nature, although sensitive, was too volatile, to comprehend all the devotional fervor of my own.

The incidents of the first day of our voyage had nothing remarkable in them; except that we had some difficulty in forcing our way, towards nightfall, by the mouth of a large cave on the

south side of the river. This cave had a very dismal appearance as we passed it, being situated at the foot of a lofty bluff, full two hundred feet high, and jutting somewhat over the stream. We could not distinctly perceive the depth of the cavern, but it was about sixteen or seventeen feet high, and at least fifty in width.⁴ The current ran past it with great velocity, and, as from the nature of the cliff, we could not tow, it required the utmost exertion to make our way by it; which we at length effected by getting all of us, with the exception of one man, into the large boat. This one remained in the piroque, and anchored it below the cave. By uniting our force, then, in rowing, we brought the large boat up beyond the difficult pass, paying out a line to the piroque as we proceeded, and by this line hauling it up after us, when we had fairly ascended. We passed, during the day, Bonhomme, and Osage Femme Rivers, with two small creeks, and several islands of little extent. We made about twenty-five miles, notwithstanding the head wind, and encamped at night on the north bank, and at the foot of a rapid called Diable.

4. The cave here mentioned is that called the "Tavern" by the traders and boatmen. Some grotesque images are painted on the cliffs, and commanded, at one period, great respect from the Indians. In speaking of this cavern, Captain Lewis says that it is a hundred and twenty feet wide, twenty feet high, and forty deep, and that the bluffs overhanging it are nearly three hundred feet high. We wish to call attention to the circumstance that, in every point, Mr. R.'s account falls short of Captain Lewis's. With all his evident enthusiasm, our traveller is never prone to the exaggeration of facts. In a great variety of instances like the present, it will be found that his statements respecting quantity (in the full sense of the term) always fall within the truth, as this truth is since ascertained. We regard this as a remarkable trait in his mind; and it is assuredly one which should entitle his observations to the highest credit, when they concern regions about which we know nothing beyond these observations. In all points which relate to effects, on the contrary, Mr. Rodman's peculiar temperament leads him into excess. For example, he speaks of the cavern now in question, as of a dismal appearance, and the coloring of his narrative respecting it is derived principally from the sombre hue of his own spirit, at the time of passing the rock. It will be as well to bear these distinctions in mind, as we read his journal. His facts are never heightened; his impressions from these facts must have, to ordinary perceptions, a tone of exaggeration. Yet there is no falsity in this exaggeration, except in view of a general sentiment upon the thing seen and described. As regards his own mind, the apparent gaudiness of color is the absolute and only true tint. — EDS. G. M.

June the fourth. Early this morning, Frank and Poindexter Greely came into our camp with a fat buck, upon which we all breakfasted in high glee, and afterwards pushed on with spirit. At the Diable rapid, the current sets with much force against some rocks which jut out from the south, and render the navigation difficult. A short distance above this we met with several quicksand bars, which put us to trouble; the banks of the river here fall in continually, and, in the process of time, must greatly alter the bed. At eight o'clock we had a fine fresh wind from the eastward, and, with its assistance, made rapid progress, so that by night we had gone perhaps thirty miles, or more. We passed, on the north, the river Du Bois, a creek called Charité,⁵ and several small islands. The river was rising fast as we came to, at night, under a group of cotton-wood trees, there being no ground near at hand upon which we were disposed to encamp. It was beautiful weather, and I felt too much excited to sleep; so, asking Thornton to accompany me, I took a stroll into the country, and did not return until nearly daylight. The rest of our crew occupied the cabin, for the first time, and found it quite roomy enough for five or six more persons. They had been disturbed, in the night, by a strange noise overhead, on deck, the origin of which they had not been able to ascertain; as, when some of the party rushed out to see, the disturber had disappeared. From the account given of the noise, I concluded that it must have proceeded from an Indian dog, who had scented our fresh provisions (the buck of yesterday) and was endeavoring to make off with a portion. In this view I felt perfectly satisfied; but the occurrence suggested the great risk we ran in not posting a regular watch at night, and it was agreed to do so for the future.

Having thus given, in Mr. Rodman's own words, the incidents of the two first days of the voyage, we forbear to follow him minutely in his passage up the Missouri to the mouth of the Platte, at which he arrived on the tenth of August. The character of the river throughout this extent is so well known, and has been so frequently described, that any farther account of it is unnecessary; and the Journal takes note of little else, at this portion of the tour, than the natural features of the country — together with the ordinary boating and hunting occurrences.

5. La Charette? Du Bois is no doubt Wood river. — EDS. G. M.

The party made three several halts for the purpose of trapping, but met with no great success; and finally concluded to push farther into the heart of the country, before making any regular attempts at collecting peltries. Only two events, of moment, are recorded, for the two months which we omit. One of these was the death of a Canadian, Jacques Lauzanne, by the bite of a rattle-snake; the other was the encountering a Spanish commission sent to intercept and turn the party back, by order of the commandant of the province. The officer in charge of the detachment, however, was so much interested in the expedition, and took so great a fancy to Mr. Rodman, that our travelers were permitted to proceed. Many small bodies of Osage and Kansas Indians hovered occasionally about the boats, but evinced nothing of hostility. We leave the voyagers for the present, therefore, at the mouth of the river Platte, on the tenth of August, 1791 — their number having been reduced to fourteen.

Chapter 3

Having reached the mouth of the river Platte, our voyagers encamped for three days, during which they were busily occupied in drying and airing their goods and provisions, making new oars and poles, and repairing the birch canoe, which had sustained material injury. The hunters brought in an abundance of game, with which the boats were loaded to repletion. Deer was had for the asking, and turkeys and fat grouse were met with in great plenty. The party, moreover, regaled on several species of fish, and, at a short distance from the river banks, found an exquisite kind of wild grape. No Indians had been seen for better than a fortnight, as this was the hunting season, and they were doubtless engaged in the prairies, taking buffalo. After perfectly recruiting, the voyagers broke up their encampment, and pushed on up the Missouri. We resume the words of the Journal.

August 14. We started with a delightful breeze from the S. E., and kept along by the Southern shore, taking advantage of the eddy, and going at a great rate, notwithstanding the current, which, in the middle, was unusually full and strong. At noon, we stopped to examine some remarkable mounds on the south-western shore, at a spot where the ground seems to have sunk considerably to an extent of three hundred acres, or more. A large pond is in the vicinity, and appears to have drained the low tract. This is covered with mounds of various sizes, and shapes, all formed of sand and mud, the highest being nearest the river. I could not make up my mind whether these hillocks were of natural or artificial construction. I should have supposed them made by the Indians, but for the general appearance of the soil, which had apparently been subjected to the violent action of water.⁶ We staid at this spot the rest of the day, having made altogether twenty miles.

August 15. To-day we had a heavy, disagreeable head wind, and made only fifteen miles, with great labor; encamping at night beneath a bluff on the north shore, this being the first bluff on that side which we had seen since leaving the Nodaway river. In the night it came on to rain in torrents, and the Greelys brought in their horses, and ensconced themselves in the cabin. Robert swam the river with his horse from the South shore, and then took the canoe across for Meredith. He appeared to think nothing of either of these feats, although the night was one of the darkest and most boisterous I ever saw, and the river was much swollen. We all sat in the cabin very comfortably, for the weather was quite cool, and were kept awake for a long time by the anecdotes of Thornton, who told story after story of his adventures with the Indians on the Mississippi. His huge dog appeared to listen with profound attention to every word that was said. Whenever any particularly incredible circumstance was related, Thornton would gravely refer to him as a witness. "Nep," he would say, "don't you remember that time?" — or "Nep can swear to the truth of that — can't you, Nep?" — when the animal would roll up his eyes immediately, loll out his monstrous tongue, and wag his great head up and down, as much as to say — "Oh it's every bit as true as the Bible." Although we all knew that this trick had been taught the dog, yet for our lives we could not forbear shouting with laughter, whenever Thornton would appeal to him.

August 16. Early this morning passed an island, and a creek about fifteen yards wide, and, at a farther distance of twelve miles, a large island in the middle of the river. We had now, generally, high prairie, and timbered hills on the north, with low ground on the south, covered with cotton-wood. The river was excessively crooked, but not so rapid as before we passed the Platte. Altogether there is less timber than formerly; what there is, is mostly elm, cotton-wood, hickory, and walnut, with some oak. Had a strong wind nearly all day, and by means of

6. These mounds are now well understood to indicate the position of the ancient city of the Ottoes, who were once a very powerful tribe. Being reduced by continual hostilities, they sought protection of the Pawnees, and migrated to the south of the Platte, about thirty miles from its mouth. — EDS. G. M.

the eddy and this, we made twenty-five miles before night. Our encampment was on the south, upon a large plain, covered with high grass, and bearing a great number of plum-trees and currant-bushes. In our rear was a steep woody ridge, ascending which we found another prairie extending back for about a mile, and stopped again by a similar woody ridge, followed by another vast prairie, going off into the distance as far as the eye can reach. From the cliffs just above us we had one of the most beautiful prospects in the world.⁷

August 17. We remained at the encampment all day, and occupied ourselves in various employments. Getting Thornton, with his dog, to accompany me, I strolled to some distance to the southward, and was enchanted with the voluptuous beauty of the country. The prairies exceeded in beauty any thing told in the tales of the Arabian Nights. On the edges of the creeks there was a wild mass of flowers which looked more like Art than Nature, so profusely and fantastically were their vivid colors blended together. Their rich odor was almost oppressive. Every now and then we came to a kind of green island of trees, placed amid an ocean of purple, blue, orange, and crimson blossoms, all waving to and fro in the wind. These islands consisted of the most majestic forest oaks, and, beneath them, the grass resembled a robe of the softest green velvet, while up their huge stems there clambered, generally, a profusion of grape vines, laden with delicious ripe fruit. The Missouri, in the distance, presented the most majestic appearance; and many of the real islands with which it was studded were entirely covered with plum bushes, or other shrubbery, except where crossed in various directions by narrow, mazy paths, like the alleys in an English flowergarden; and in these alleys we could always see either elks or antelopes, who had no doubt made them. We returned, at sun-set, to the encampment, delighted with our excursion. The night was warm, and we were excessively annoyed by mosquitoes.

August 18. To-day passed through a narrow part of the river, not more than two hundred yards wide, with a rapid channel, much obstructed with logs and drift wood. Ran the large boat on a sawyer, and half filled her with water before we could extricate her from the difficulty. We were obliged to halt, in

7.The Council Bluffs. — EDS. G. M.

consequence, and overhaul our things. Some of the biscuit was injured, but none of the powder. Remained all day — having only made five miles.

August 19. We started early this morning and made great headway. The weather was cool and cloudy, and at noon we had a drenching shower. Passed a creek on the south, the mouth of which is nearly concealed by a large sand-island of singular appearance. Went about fifteen miles beyond this. The highlands now recede from the river, and are probably from ten to twenty miles apart. On the north is a good deal of fine timber, but on the south very little. Near the river are beautiful prairies, and along the banks we procured four or five different species of grape, all of good flavor and quite ripe; one is a large purple grape of excellent quality. The hunters came into camp, at night, from both sides of the river, and brought us more game than we well knew what to do with — grouse, turkies, two deer, an antelope, and a quantity of yellow birds with black-striped wings — these latter proved delicious eating. We made about twenty miles during the day.

August 20. The river, this morning, was full of sand-bars and other obstructions; but we proceeded with spirit, and reached the mouth of a pretty large creek, before night, at a distance of twenty miles from our last encampment. The creek comes in from the north, and has a large island opposite its mouth. Here we made our camp, with the resolution of remaining four or five days to trap beaver, as we saw great signs of them in the neighborhood. This island was one of the most fairy-looking situations in the world, and filled my mind with the most delightful and novel emotions. The whole scenery rather resembled what I had dreamed of when a boy, than an actual reality. The banks sloped down very gradually into the water, and were carpeted with a short soft grass of a brilliant green hue, which was visible under the surface of the stream for some distance from the shore; especially on the north side, where the clear creek fell into the river. All round the island, which was probably about twenty acres in extent, was a complete fringe of cotton-wood; the trunks loaded with grape vines in full fruit, and so closely-interlocking with each other, that we could scarcely get a glimpse of the river between the leaves. Within this circle the grass was somewhat higher, and

of a coarser texture, with a pale yellow or white streak down the middle of each blade, and giving out a remarkably delicious perfume, resembling that of the Vanilla bean, but much stronger, so that the whole atmosphere was loaded with it. The common English sweet grass is no doubt of the same genus, but greatly inferior in beauty, and fragrance. Interspersed among it in every direction, were myriads of the most brilliant flowers, in full bloom, and most of them of fine odor — blue, pure white, bright yellow, purple, crimson, gaudy scarlet, and some with streaked leaves like tulips. Little knots of cherry trees and plum bushes grew in various directions about, and there were many narrow winding paths which circled the island, and which had been made by elk or antelopes. Nearly in the centre, was a spring of sweet and clear water, which bubbled up from among a cluster of steep rocks, covered from head to foot with moss and flowering vines. The whole bore a wonderful resemblance to an artificial flower garden, but was infinitely more beautiful — looking rather like some of those scenes of enchantment which we read of in old books. We were all in extacy with the spot, and prepared our camp in the highest glee, amid its wilderness of sweets.

[The party remained here a week, during which time, the neighboring country to the north was explored in many directions, and some peltries obtained, especially upon the creek mentioned. The weather was fine, and the enjoyment of the voyagers suffered no alloy, in their terrestrial Paradise. Mr. Rodman, however, omitted no necessary precautions, and sentries were regularly posted every night, when all hands assembled at camp, and made merry. Such feasting and drinking were never before known; the Canadians proving themselves the very best fellows in the world at a song, or over a flagon. They did nothing but eat, and cook, and dance, and shout French carols at the top of their voice. During the day they were chiefly entrusted with the charge of the encampment, while the steadier members of the party were absent upon hunting or trapping expeditions. In one of these Mr. Rodman enjoyed an excellent opportunity of observing the habits of the beaver; and his account of this singular animal is highly interesting — the more so as it differs materially, in some points, from the ordinary descriptions.

He was attended, as usual, by Thornton and his dog, and had traced up a small creek to its source in the highlands about ten miles from the river. The party came at length to a place where a large swamp had been made by the beavers, in damming up the creek. A thick grove of willows occupied one extremity of the swamp, some of them overhanging the water at a spot where several of the animals were observed. Our adventurers crept stealthily round to these willows, and making Neptune lie down at a little distance, succeeded in climbing, unobserved, into a large and thick tree, where they could look immediately down upon all that was going on.

The beavers were repairing a portion of their dam, and every step of their progress was distinctly seen. One by one the architects were perceived to approach the edge of the swamp, each with a small branch in his mouth. With this he proceeded to the dam, and placed it carefully, and longitudinally, on the part which had given way. Having done this, he dived immediately, and in a few seconds reappeared above the surface with a quantity of stiff mud, which he first squeezed so as to drain it of its moisture in a great degree, and then applied with its feet and tail (using the latter as a trowel) to the branch which he had just laid upon the breach. He then made off among the trees, and was quickly succeeded by another of the community, who went through precisely the same operation.

In this way the damage sustained by the dam was in a fair way of being soon repaired. Messieurs Rodman and Thornton observed the progress of the work for more than two hours, and bear testimony to the exquisite skill of the artizans. But as soon as a beaver left the edge of the swamp in search of a branch, he was lost sight of among the willows, much to the chagrin of the observers, who were anxious to watch his farther operations. By clambering a little higher up in the tree, however, they discovered every thing. A small sycamore had been felled, apparently, and was now nearly denuded of all its fine branches, a few beavers still nibbling off some that remained, and proceeding with them to the dam. In the mean time a great number of the animals surrounded a much older and larger tree, which they were busily occupied in cutting down. There were as many as fifty or sixty of the creatures around the trunk, of which number six or seven would work at

once, leaving off one by one, as each became weary; a fresh one stepping in to the vacated place. When our travellers first observed the sycamore, it had been already cut through to a great extent, but only on the side nearest the swamp, upon the edge of which it grew. The incision was nearly a foot wide, and as cleanly made as if done with an axe; and the ground at the bottom of the tree was covered with fine longitudinal slips, like straws, which had been nibbled out, and not eaten; as it appears that these animals only use the bark for food. When at work some sat upon the hind legs, in the posture so common with squirrels, and gnawed at the wood; their fore feet resting upon the edge of the cut, and their heads thrust far into the aperture. Two of them, however, were entirely within the incision; lying at length, and working with great eagerness for a short time, when they were relieved by their companions.

Although the position of our voyagers was any thing but comfortable, so great was their curiosity to witness the felling of the sycamore, that they resolutely maintained their post until sunset, an interval of eight hours from the time of ascending. Their chief embarrassment was on Neptune's account, who could with difficulty be kept from plunging in the swamp after the plasterers who were repairing the dam. The noise he made had several times disturbed the nibblers at the tree, who would every now and then start, as if all actuated by one mind, and listen attentively for many minutes. As evening approached, however, the dog gave over his freaks, and lay quiet; while the beavers went on uninterruptedly with their labor.

Just as the sun began to set, a sudden commotion was observed among the wood-cutters, who all started from the tree, and flew round to the side which was untouched. In an instant afterwards it was seen to settle down gradually on the gnawed side, till the lips of the incision met; but still it did not fall, being sustained partially by the unsundered bark. This was now attacked with zeal by as many nibblers as could find room to work at it, and very quickly severed; when the huge tree, to which the proper inclination had already been so ingeniously given, fell with a tremendous crash, and spread a great portion of its topmost branches over the surface of the swamp. This matter accomplished, the whole community seemed to think a holiday was deserved, and, ceasing work at once, began to

chase each other about in the water, diving, and slapping the surface with their tails.

The account here given of the method employed by the beaver in its wood-cutting operations, is more circumstantial than any we have yet seen, and seems to be conclusive in regard to the question of design on the animal's part. The intention of making the tree fall towards the water appears here to be obvious. Captain Bonneville, it will be remembered, discredits the alleged sagacity of the animal in this respect, and thinks it has no farther aim than to get the tree down, without any subtle calculation in respect to its mode of descent. This attribute, he thinks, has been ascribed to it from the circumstance that trees in general, which grow near the margin of water, either lean bodily towards the stream, or stretch their most ponderous limbs in that direction, in search of the light, space, and air, which are there usually found. The beaver, he says, attacks, of course, those trees which are nearest at hand, and on the banks of the stream or pond, and these, when cut through, naturally preponderate towards the water. This suggestion is well-timed; but by no means conclusive against the design of the beaver; whose sagacity, at best, is far beneath that which is positively ascertained in respect to many classes of inferior animals — infinitely below that of the lion-ant, of the bee, and of the coralliferi. The probability is that, were two trees offered to the choice of the beaver, one of which preponderated to the water, and the other did not, he would, in felling the first, omit, as unnecessary, the precautions just described, but observe them in felling the second.

In a subsequent portion of the Journal other particulars are given respecting the habits of the singular animal in question, and of the mode of trapping it employed by the party, and we give them here for the sake of continuity. The principal food of the beavers is bark, and of this they put by regularly a large store for winter provision, selecting the proper kind with care and deliberation. A whole tribe, consisting sometimes of two or three hundred, will set out together upon a foraging expedition, and pass through groves of trees all apparently similar, until a particular one suits their fancy. This they cut down, and, breaking off its most tender branches, divide them into short slips of equal length and divest these slips of their bark, which

they carry to the nearest stream leading to their village, thence floating it home. Occasionally the slips are stored away for the winter without being stripped of the bark; and, in this event, they are careful to remove the refuse wood from their dwellings, as soon as they have eaten the rind, taking the sticks to some distance. During the spring of the year the males are never found with the tribe at home, but always by themselves, either singly, or in parties of two or three, when they appear to lose their usual habits of sagacity, and fall an easy prey to the arts of the trapper. In sununer they return home, and busy themselves, with the females, in making provision for winter. They are described as exceedingly ferocious animals when irritated.

Now and then they may be caught upon shore; especially the males in spring, who are then fond of roving to some distance from the water in search of food. When thus caught, they are easily killed with a blow from a stick; but the most certain and efficacious mode of taking them is by means of the trap. This is simply constructed to catch the foot of the animal. The trapper places it usually in some position near the shore, and just below the surface of the water, fastening it by a small chain to a pole stuck in the mud. In the mouth of the machine is placed one end of a small branch; the other end rising above the surface, and well soaked in the liquid bait whose odor is found to be attractive to the beaver. As soon as the animal scents it, he rubs his nose against the twig, and, in so doing, steps upon the trap, springs it, and is caught. The trap is made very light, for the convenience of portage, and the prey would easily swim off with it but for its being fastened to the pole by a chain — no other species of fastening could resist his teeth. The experienced trapper readily detects the presence of beaver in any pond or stream; discovering them by a thousand appearances which would afford no indication to the unpractised observer.

Many of the identical woodcutters whom the two voyagers had watched so narrowly from the tree-top, fell afterwards a victim to trap, and their fine furs became a prey to the spoilers, who made sad havoc in the lodge at the swamp. Other waters in the neighborhood also afforded the travellers much sport; and they long remembered the island at the creek's mouth, by the name of Beaver Island, in consequence. They left this little

Paradise in high spirits on the twenty-seventh of the month, and, pursuing their hitherto somewhat uneventful voyage up the river, arrived, by the first of September, without any incident of note, at the mouth of a large river on the south, to which they gave the name of Currant River, from some berries abounding upon its margin, but which was, beyond doubt, the Quicourre. The principal objects of which the Journal takes notice in this interval, are the numerous herds of buffalo which darkened the prairies in every direction, and the remains of a fortification on the south shore of the river, nearly opposite the upper extremity of what has been since called Bonhomme Island. Of these remains a minute description is given, which tallies in every important particular with that of Captains Lewis and Clarke. The travellers had passed the Little Sioux, Floyd's, the Great Sioux, White-Stone, and Jacques rivers on the North; with Wawandyscnche creek, and White-Paint river on the south, but at neither of these streams did they stop to trap for any long period. They had also passed the great village of the Omahas, of which the Journal takes no notice whatever. This village, at the time, consisted of full three hundred houses, and was inhabited by a numerous and powerful tribe; but it is not immediately upon the banks of the Missouri, and the boats probably went by it during the night — for the party had begun to adopt this mode of progress, through fear of the Sioux. We resume the narrative of Mr. Rodman, with the second of September.]

September 2. We had now reached a part of the river where, according to all report, a great deal of danger was to be apprehended from the Indians, and we became extremely cautious in our movements. This was the region inhabited by the Sioux, a warlike and ferocious tribe, who had, upon several occasions, evinced hostility to the whites, and were known to be constantly at war with all the neighboring tribes. The Canadians had many incidents to relate respecting their savage propensities, and I had much apprehension lest these cowardly creatures should take an opportunity of deserting, and retracing their way to the Mississippi. To lessen the chances of this, I removed one of them from the piroque, and supplied his place by Poindexter Greely. All the Greelys came in from the shore, turning loose the horses. Our arrangement was now as follows:

— In the piroque, Poindexter Greely, Pierre Junôt, Toby, and one Canadian — in the large boat, myself; Thornton; Wormley; John, Frank, Robert, and Meredith Greely; and three Canadians, with the dog. We set sail about dusk, and, having a brisk wind from the south, made good head-way, although, as night came on, we were greatly embarrassed by the shoals. We continued our course without interruption, however, until a short time before day-break, when we ran into the mouth of a creek, and concealed the boats among the underwood.

September 3 and 4. During both of these days it rained and blew with excessive violence, so that we did not leave our retreat at all. The weather depressed our spirits very much, and the narratives of the Canadians about the terrible Sioux did not serve to raise them. We all congregated in the cabin of the large boat, and held a council in regard to our future movements. The Greelys were for a bold push through the dangerous country, maintaining that the stories of the voyagers were mere exaggerations, and that the Sioux would only be a little troublesome, without proceeding to hostility. Wormley and Thornton, however, as well as Pierre (all of whom had much experience in the Indian character) thought that our present policy was the best, although it would necessarily detain us much longer on our voyage than would otherwise be the case. My own opinion coincided with theirs — in our present course we might escape any collision with the Sioux — and I did not regard the delay as a matter of consequence.

September 5. We set off at night, and proceeded for about ten miles, when the day began to appear, and we hid the boats as before, in a narrow creek, which was well adapted to the purpose, as its mouth was almost blocked up by a thickly wooded island. It again came on to rain furiously, and we were all drenched to the skin before we could arrange matters for turning in, in the cabin. Our spirits were much depressed by the bad weather, and the Canadians especially were in a miserable state of dejection. We had now come to a narrow part of the river where the current was strong, and the cliffs on both sides overhung the water, and were thickly wooded with lynn, oak, black-walnut, ash, and chesnut. Through such a gorge we knew it would be exceedingly difficult to pass without observation, even at night, and our apprehensions of attack were

greatly increased. We resolved not to re-commence our journey until late, and then to proceed with the most stealthy caution. In the meantime we posted a sentry on shore, and one in the piroque, while the rest of us busied ourselves in overhauling the arms and ammunition, and preparing for the worst.

About ten o'clock we were getting ready to start, when the dog gave a low growl, which made us all fly to our rifles; but the cause of the disturbance proved to be a single Indian of the Ponca tribe, who came up frankly to our sentry on shore, and extended his hand. We brought him on board, and gave him whiskey, when he became very communicative, and told us that his tribe, who lived some miles lower down the river, had been watching our movements for several days past, but that the Poncas were friends and would not molest the whites, and would trade with us upon our return. They had sent him now to caution the whites against the Sioux, who were great robbers, and who were lying in wait for the party at a bend of the river, twenty miles farther up. There were three bands of them, he said, and it was their intention to kill us all, in revenge for an insult sustained by one of their chiefs, many years previously, at the hands of a French trapper.

Chapter 4

We left our travellers, on the fifth of September, apprehending a present attack from the Sioux. Exaggerated accounts of the ferocity of this tribe had inspired the party with an earnest wish to avoid them; but the tale told by the friendly Ponca made it evident that a collision must take place. The night voyages were therefore abandoned as impolitic, and it was resolved to put a bold face upon the matter, and try what could be effected by blustering. The remainder of the night of the fifth was spent in warlike demonstration. The large boat was cleared for action as well as possible, and the fiercest aspect assumed which the nature of the case would permit. Among other preparations for defence, the cannon was got out from below, and placed forward upon the cuddy deck, with a load of bullets, by way of cannister shot. Just before sunrise the adventurers started up the river in high bravado, aided by a heavy wind. That the enemy might perceive no semblance of fear or mistrust, the whole party joined the Canadians in an uproarious boat song at the top of their voices, making the woods reverberate, and the buffaloes stare.

The Sioux, indeed, appear to have been Mr. Rodman's bugbears par excellence, and he dwells upon them and their exploits with peculiar emphasis. The narrative embodies a detailed account of the tribe — an account which we can only follow in such portions as appear to possess novelty, or other important interest. Sioux is the French term for the Indians in question — the English have corrupted it into Sues. Their primitive name is said to be Darcotas. Their original seats were on the Mississippi, but they had gradually extended their dominions, and, at the date of the Journal, occupied almost the whole of that vast territory circumscribed by the Mississippi, the Saskatchewan, the Missouri, and the Red River of Lake Winnipeg. They were sub-divided into numerous clans. The

Darcotas proper were the Winowacants, called the Gens du Lac by the French — consisting of about five hundred warriors, and living on both sides of the Mississippi, in the vicinity of the Falls of St. Anthony. Neighbors of the Winowacants, and residing north of them on the river St. Peters', were the Wappatomies, about two hundred men. Still farther up the St. Peters' lived a band of one hundred, called the Wappytooties, among themselves, and by the French the Gens des Feuilles. Higher up the river yet, and near its source, resided the Sissytoonies, in number two hundred or thereabouts. On the Missouri dwelt the Yanktons and the Tetons. Of the first tribe there were two branches, the northern and southern, of which the former led an Arab life in the plains at the sources of the Red, Sioux, and Jacques rivers, being in number about five hundred. The southern branch kept possession of the tract lying between the river Des Moines on the one hand, and the rivers Jacques and Sioux on the other. But the Sioux most renowned for deeds of violence are the Tetons; and of these there were four tribes — the Saonies, the Minnakenozzies, the Okydandies, and the Bois-Brulés. These last, a body of whom were now lying in wait to intercept the voyagers, were the most savage and formidable of the whole race, numbering about two hundred men, and residing on both sides of the Missouri near the rivers called by Captains Lewis and Clarke, The White and Teton. Just below the Chayenne river were the Okydandies, one hundred and fifty. The Minnackenzoosies — two hundred and fifty — occupied a tract between the Chayenne and the Watarhoo; and the Saonies, the largest of the Teton bands, counting as many as three hundred warriors, were found in the vicinity of the Warreconne.

Besides these four divisions — the regular Sioux — there were five tribes of seceders called Assiniboins; the Menatopæ Assiniboins, two hundred, on Mouse river, between the Assiniboin and the Missouri; the Gens de Feuilles Assiniboins, two hundred and fifty, occupying both sides of White river; the Big Devils, four hundred and fifty, wandering about the heads of Porcupine and Milk rivers; with two other bands whose names are not mentioned, but who roved on the Saskatchewan, and numbered together, about seven hundred men. These seceders were often at war with the parent or original Sioux.

In person, the Sioux generally are an ugly ill-made race, their limbs being much too small for the trunk, according to our ideas of the human form — their cheek bones are high, and their eyes protruding and dull. The heads of the men are shaved, with the exception of a small spot on the crown, whence a long tuft is permitted to fall in plaits upon the shoulders; this tuft is an object of scrupulous care, but is now and then cut off, upon an occasion of grief or solemnity. A full dressed Sioux chief presents a striking appearance. The whole surface of the body is painted with grease and coal. A shirt of skins is worn as far down as the waist, while round the middle is a girdle of the same material, and sometimes of cloth, about an inch in width; this supports a piece of blanket or fur passing between the thighs. Over the shoulders is a white-dressed buffalo mantle, the hair of which is worn next the skin in fair weather, but turned outwards in wet. This robe is large enough to envelope the whole body, and is frequently ornamented with porcupine quills (which make a rattling noise as the warrior moves) as well as with a great variety of rudely painted figures, emblematical of the wearer's military character. Fastened to the top of the head is worn a hawk's feather, adorned with porcupine quills. Leggings of dressed antelope skin serve the purpose of pantaloons, and have seams at the sides, about two inches wide, and bespotted here and there with small tufts of human hair, the trophies of some scalping excursion. The moccasins are of elk or buffalo skin, the hair worn inwards; on great occasions the chief is seen with the skin of a polecat dangling at the heel of each boot. The Sioux are indeed partial to this noisome animal; whose fur is in high favor for tobacco-pouches and other appendages.

The dress of a chieftain's squaw is also remarkable. Her hair is suffered to grow long, is parted across the forehead, and hangs loosely behind, or is collected into a kind of net. Her moccasins do not differ from her husband's; but her leggings extend upwards only as far as the knee, where they are met by an awkward shirt of elk-skin depending to the ancles, and supported above by a string going over the shoulders. This shirt is usually confined to the waist by a girdle, and over all is thrown a buffalo mantle like that of the men. The tents of the Teton Sioux are described as of neat construction, being formed of

white-dressed buffalo hide, well secured and supported by poles.

The region infested by the tribe in question extends along the banks of the Missouri for some hundred and fifty miles or more, and is chiefly prairie land, but is occasionally diversified by hills. These latter are always deeply cut by gorges or ravines, which in the middle of summer are dry, but form the channels of muddy and impetuous torrents during the season of rain. Their edges are fringed with thick woods, as well at top, as at bottom; but the prevalent aspect of the country is that of a bleak low land, with rank herbage, and without trees. The soil is strongly impregnated with mineral substances in great variety — among others with glauber salts, copperas, sulphur, and alum, which tinge the water of the river and impart to it a nauseous odor and taste. The wild animals most usual are the buffalo, deer, elk, and antelope. We again resume the words of the Journal.]

September 6. The country was open, and the day remarkably pleasant: so that we were all in pretty good spirits notwithstanding the expectation of attack. So far, we had not caught even a glimpse of an Indian, and we were making rapid way through their dreaded territory. I was too well aware, however, of the savage tactics to suppose that we were not narrowly watched, and had made up my mind that we should hear something of the Tetons at the first gorge which would afford them a convenient lurking-place.

About noon a Canadian bawled out "The Sioux! — the Sioux" — and directed attention to a long narrow ravine, which intersected the prairie on our left, extending from the banks of the Missouri as far as the eye could reach, in a southwardly course. This gully was the bed of a creek, but its waters were now low, and the sides rose up like huge regular walls on each side. By the aid of a spy glass I perceived at once the cause of the alarm given by the voyageur. A large party of mounted savages were coming down the gorge in Indian file, with the evident intention of taking us unawares. Their calumet feathers had been the means of their detection; for every now and then we could see some of these bobbing up above the edge of the gulley, as the bed of the ravine forced the wearer to rise higher than usual. We could tell that they were on horseback by the

motion of these feathers. The party was coming upon us with great rapidity; and I gave the word to pull on with all haste so as to pass the mouth of the creek before they reached it. As soon as the Indians perceived by our increased speed that they were discovered, they immediately raised a yell, scrambled out of the gorge, and galloped down upon us, to the number of about one hundred.

Our situation was now somewhat alarming. At almost any other part of the Missouri which we had passed during the day, I should not have cared so much for these freebooters; but, just here, the banks were remarkably steep and high, partaking of the character of the creek banks, and the savages were enabled to overlook us completely, while the cannon, upon which we had placed so much reliance, could not be brought to bear upon them at all. What added to our difficulty was that the current in the middle of the river was so turbulent and strong that we could make no headway against it except by dropping arms, and employing our whole force at the oars. The water near the northern shore was too shallow even for the piroque, and our only mode of proceeding, if we designed to proceed at all, was by pushing in within a moderate stone's throw of the left or southern bank, where we were completely at the mercy of the Sioux, but where we could make good headway by means of our poles and the wind, aided by the eddy. Had the savages attacked us at this juncture I cannot see how we could have escaped them. They were all well provided with bows and arrows, and small round shields, presenting a very noble and picturesque appearance. Some of the chiefs had spears, with fanciful flags attached, and were really gallant-looking men. The portrait here annexed is that of the commander-in-chief of the party which now interrupted us, and was sketched by Thornton, at a subsequent period.

Either good luck upon our own parts, or great stupidity on the parts of the Indians, relieved us very unexpectedly from the dilemma. The savages, having galloped up to the edge of the cliff just above us, set up another yell, and commenced a variety of gesticulations, whose meaning we at once knew to be that we should stop and come on shore. I had expected this demand, and had made up my mind that it would be most prudent to pay no attention to it at all, but proceed on our

course. My refusal to stop had at least one good effect, for it appeared to mystify the Indians most wonderfully, who could not be brought to understand the measure in the least, and stared at us, as we kept on our way without answering them, in the most ludicrous amazement. Presently they commenced an agitated conversation among themselves, and at last finding that nothing could be made of us, fairly turned their horses' heads to the southward and galloped out of sight, leaving us as much surprised as rejoiced at their departure.

In the meantime we made the most of the opportunity, and pushed on with might and main, in order to get out of the region of steep banks before the anticipated return of our foes. In about two hours we again saw them in the south, at a great distance, and their number much augmented. They came on at full gallop, and were soon at the river; but our position was now much more advantageous, for the banks were sloping, and there were no trees to shelter the savages from our shot. The current, moreover, was not so rapid as before, and we were enabled to keep in mid-channel. The party, it seems, had only retreated to procure an interpreter, who now appeared upon a large gray horse, and, coming into the river as far as he could without swimming, called out to us in bad French to stop, and come on shore. To this I made one of the Canadians reply that, to oblige our friends the Sioux, we would willingly stop, for a short time, and converse, but that it was inconvenient for us to come on shore, as we could not do so without incommoding our great medicine (here the Canadian pointed to the cannon) who was anxious to proceed on his voyage, and whom we were afraid to disobey.

At this they began again their agitated whisperings and gesticulations among themselves, and seemed quite at a loss what to do. In the meantime the boats had been brought to anchor in a favorable position, and I was resolved to fight now, if necessary, and endeavor to give the freebooters so warm a reception as would inspire them with wholesome dread for the future. I reflected that it was nearly impossible to keep on good terms with these Sioux, who were our enemies at heart, and who could only be restrained from pillaging and murdering us by a conviction of our prowess. Should we comply with their present demands, go on shore, and even succeed in purchasing

a temporary safety by concessions and donations, such conduct would not avail us in the end, and would be rather a palliation than a radical cure of the evil. They would be sure to glut their vengeance sooner or later, and, if they suffered us to go on our way now, might hereafter attack us at a disadvantage, when it might be as much as we could do to repel them, to say nothing of inspiring them with awe. Situated as we were here, it was in our power to give them a lesson they would be apt to remember; and we might never be in so good a situation again. Thinking thus, and all except the Canadians agreeing with me in opinion, I determined to assume a bold stand, and rather provoke hostilities than avoid them. This was our true policy. The savages had no fire arms which we could discover, except an old carabine carried by one of the chiefs; and their arrows would not prove very effective weapons when employed at so great a distance as that now between us. In regard to their number, we did not care much for that. Their position was one which would expose them to the full sweep of our cannon.

When Jules (the Canadian) had finished his speech about incommoding our great medicine, and when the consequent agitation had somewhat subsided among the savages, the interpreter spoke again and propounded three queries. He wished to know, first, whether we had any tobacco, or whiskey, or fire-guns — secondly, whether we did not wish the aid of the Sioux in rowing our large boat up the Missouri as far as the country of the Ricarees, who were great rascals — and, thirdly, whether our great medicine was not a very large and strong green grass-hopper.

To these questions, propounded with profound gravity, Jules replied, by my directions, as follows. First, that we had plenty of whiskey, as well as tobacco, with an inexhaustible supply of fire-guns and powder — but that our great medicine had just told us that the Tetons were greater rascals than the Ricarees — that they were our enemies — that they had been lying in wait to intercept and kill us for many days past — that we must give them nothing at all, and hold no intercourse with them whatever; we should therefore be afraid to give them anything, even if so disposed, for fear of the anger of the great medicine, who was not to be trifled with. Secondly, that, after the character just given the Sioux Tetons, we could not think of

employing them to row our boat — and, thirdly, that it was a good thing for them (the Sioux) that our great medicine had not overheard their last query, respecting the "large green grasshopper;" for, in that case, it might have gone very hard with them (the Sioux). Our great medicine was anything but a large green grasshopper, and that they should soon see, to their cost, if they did not immediately go, the whole of them, about their business.

Notwithstanding the imminent danger in which we were all placed, we could scarcely keep our countenances in beholding the air of profound admiration and astonishment with which the savages listened to these replies; and I believe that they would have immediately dispersed, and left us to proceed on our voyage, had it not been for the unfortunate words in which I informed them that they were greater rascals than the Ricarees. This was, apparently, an insult of the last atrocity, and excited them to an uncontrollable degree of fury. We heard the words "Ricaree! Ricaree!" repeated, every now and then, with the utmost emphasis and excitement; and the whole band, as well as we could judge, seemed to be divided into two factions; the one urging the immense power of the great medicine, and the other the outrageous insult of being called greater rascals than the Ricarees. While matters stood thus, we retained our position in the middle of the stream, firmly resolved to give the villains a dose of our cannistershot, upon the first indignity which should be offered us.

Presently, the interpreter on the gray horse came again into the river, and said that he believed we were no better than we should be — that all the pale faces who had previously gone up the river had been friends of the Sioux, and had made them large presents — that they, the Tetons, were determined not to let us proceed another step unless we came on shore and gave up all our fire-guns and whiskey, with half of our tobacco — that it was plain we were allies of the Ricarees, (who were now at war with the Sioux,) and that our design was to carry them supplies, which we should not do — lastly, that they did not think very much of our great medicine, for he had told us a lie in relation to the designs of the Tetons, and was positively nothing but a great green grasshopper, in spite of all that we thought to the contrary. These latter words, about the great

green grasshopper, were taken up by the whole assemblage as the interpreter uttered them, and shouted out at the top of the voice, that the great medicine himself might be sure to hear the taunt. At the same time, they all broke into wild disorder, galloping their horses furiously in short circles, using contemptuous and indecent gesticulations, brandishing their spears, and drawing their arrows to the head.

I knew that the next thing would be an attack, and so determined to anticipate it at once, before any of our party were wounded by the discharge of their weapons — there was nothing to be gained by delay, and every thing by prompt and resolute action. As soon as a good opportunity presented itself, the word was given to fire, and instantly obeyed. The effect of the discharge was very severe, and answered all our purposes to the full. Six of the Indians were killed, and perhaps three times as many badly wounded. The rest were thrown into the greatest terror and confusion, and made off into the prairie at full speed, as we drew up our anchors, after reloading the gun, and pulled boldly in for the shore. By the time we had reached it, there was not an unwounded Teton within sight.

I now left John Greely, with three Canadians, in charge of the boats, landed with the rest of the men, and, approaching a savage who was severely but not dangerously wounded, held a conversation with him, by means of Jules. I told him that the whites were well disposed to the Sioux, and to all the Indian nations; that our sole object in visiting his country was to trap beaver, and see the beautiful region which had been given the red men by the Great Spirit; that when we had procured as many furs as we wished, and seen all we came to see, we should return home; that we had heard that the Sioux, and especially the Tetons, were a quarrelsome race, and that therefore we had brought with us our great medicine for protection; that he was now much exasperated with the Tetons on account of their intolerable insult in calling him a green grasshopper (which he was not); that I had had great difficulty in restraining him from a pursuit of the warriors who had fled, and from sacrificing the wounded who now lay around us; and that I had only succeeded in pacifying him by becoming personally responsible for the future good behavior of the savages. At this portion of my discourse the poor fellow appeared much

relieved, and extended his hand in token of amity. I took it, and assured him and his friends of my protection as long as we were unmolested, following up this promise by a present of twenty carrots of tobacco, some small hardware, beads, and red flannel, for himself and the rest of the wounded.

While all this was going on, we kept a sharp look out for the fugitive Sioux. As I concluded making the presents, several gangs of these were observable in the distance, and were evidently seen by the disabled savage; but I thought it best to pretend not to perceive them, and shortly afterwards returned to the boats. The whole interruption had detained us full three hours, and it was after three o'clock when we once more started on our route. We made extraordinary haste, as I was anxious to get as far as possible from the scene of action before night. We had a strong wind at our back, and the current diminished in strength as we proceeded, owing to the widening of the stream. We therefore made great way, and by nine o'clock, had reached a large and thickly wooded island, near the northern bank, and close by the mouth of a creek. Here we resolved to encamp, and had scarcely set foot on shore, when one of the Greelys shot and secured a fine buffalo, many of which were upon the place. After posting our sentries for the night, we had the hump for supper, with as much whiskey as was good for us. Our exploit of the day was then freely discussed, and by most of the men was treated as an excellent joke; but I could by no means enter into any merriment upon the subject. Human blood had never, before this epoch, been shed at my hands; and although reason urged that I had taken the wisest, and what would no doubt prove in the end the most merciful course, still conscience, refusing to hearken even to reason herself, whispered pertinaciously within my ear — "it is human blood which thou hast shed." The hours wore away slowly — I found it impossible to sleep. At length the morning dawned, and with its fresh dews, its fresher breezes, and smiling flowers, there came a new courage, and a bolder tone of thought, which enabled me to look more steadily upon what had been done, and to regard in its only proper point of view the urgent necessity of the deed.

September 7. Started early, and made great way, with a strong cold wind from the east. Arrived about noon at the

upper gorge of what is called the Great Bend, a place where the river performs a circuit of full thirty miles, while by land the direct distance is not more than fifteen hundred yards. Six miles beyond this is a creek about thirty-five yards wide, coming in from the south. The country here is of peculiar character; on each side of the river the shore is strewn thickly with round stones washed from the bluffs, and presenting a remarkable appearance for miles. The channel is very shallow, and much interrupted with sand-bars. Cedar is here met with more frequently than any other species of timber, and the prairies are covered with a stiff kind of prickly pear, over which our men found it no easy matter to walk in their moccasins.

About sunset, in endeavoring to avoid a rapid channel, we had the misfortune to run the larboard side of the large boat on the edge of a sand-bar, which so heeled us over that we were very near getting filled with water, in spite of the greatest exertion. As it was, much damage was done to the loose powder, and the Indian goods were all more or less injured. As soon as we found the boat careering, we all jumped into the water, which was here up to our arm-pits, and by main force held the sinking side up. But we were still in a dilemma, for all our exertions were barely sufficient to keep from capsizing, and we could not spare a man to do any thing towards pushing off. We were relieved, very unexpectedly, by the sinking of the whole sand-bar from under the boat, just as we were upon the point of despair. The bed of the river in this neighborhood is much obstructed by these shifting sands, which frequently change situations with great rapidity, and without apparent cause. The material of the bars is a fine hard yellow sand, which, when dry, is of a brilliant glass-like appearance, and almost impalpable.

September 8. We were still in the heart of the Teton country, and kept a sharp look-out, stopping as seldom as possible, and then only upon the islands, which abounded with game in great variety — buffaloes, elk, deer, goats, black-tailed deer, and antelopes, with plover and brant of many kinds. The goats are uncommonly tame, and have no beard. Fish is not so abundant here as lower down the river. A white wolf was killed by John Greely in a ravine upon one of the smaller islands. Owing to the difficult navigation, and the frequent necessity of

employing the tow-line, we did not make great progress this day.

September 9. Weather growing sensibly colder, which made us all anxious of pushing our way through the Sioux country, as it would be highly dangerous to form our winter encampment in their vicinity. We aroused ourselves to exertion, and proceeded rapidly, the Canadians singing and shouting as we went. Now and then we saw, in the extreme distance, a solitary Teton, but no attempt was made to molest us, and we began to gather courage from this circumstance. Made twenty-eight miles during the day, and encamped at night, in high glee, on a large island well stocked with game, and thickly covered with cotton-wood.

(We omit the adventures of Mr. Rodman from this period until the tenth of April. By the last of October, nothing of importance happening in the interval, the party made their way to a small creek which they designated as Otter creek, and, proceeding up this about a mile to an island well adapted for their purpose, built a log fort and took up their quarters for the winter. The location is just above the old Ricara villages. Several parties of these Indians visited the voyagers, and behaved with perfect friendliness — they had heard of the skirmish with the Tetons, the result of which hugely pleased them. No farther trouble was experienced from any of the Sioux. The winter wore away pleasantly, and without accident of note. On the tenth of April the party resumed their voyage.)

Chapter 5

April 10, 1792. The weather was now again most delicious, and revived our spirits exceedingly. The sun began to have power, and the river was quite free of ice, so the Indians assured us, for a hundred miles ahead. We bade adieu to Little Snake (a chief of the Ricarees who had shown the voyagers many evidences of friendship during the winter] and his band, with unfeigned regret, and set out, after breakfast, on our voyage. Perrine [an agent of the Hudson Bay fur company on his way to Petite Côte) accompanied us with three Indians for the first ten miles, when he took leave of us and made his way back to the village, where (as we afterwards heard) he met with a violent death from the hands of a squaw, to whom he offered some insult. Upon parting with the agent, we pushed on vigorously up the river, and made great way, notwithstanding a rapid current. In the afternoon, Thornton, who had been complaining for some days past, was taken seriously ill; so much so that I urged the return of the whole party to the hut, there to wait until he should get better; but he resisted this offer so strongly that I was forced to yield. We made him a comfortable bed in the cabin, and paid him every attention; but he had a raging fever, with occasional delirium, and I was much afraid that we should lose him. In the meantime we still pushed ahead with resolution, and by night had made twenty miles — an excellent day's work.

April 11. Still beautiful weather. We started early, and had a good wind, which aided us greatly; so that, but for Thornton's illness, we should all have been in fine spirits. He seemed to grow much worse, and I scarcely knew how to act. Every thing was done for his comfort which could be done; Jules, the Canadian, made him some tea, from prairie herbs, which had the effect of inducing perspiration, and allayed the fever very sensibly. We stopped at night on the main land to the north, and

three hunters went out into the prairie by moonlight, returning at one in the morning, without their rifles, and with a fat antelope.

They related that, having proceeded many miles across the country, they reached the banks of a beautiful rivulet, where they were much surprised and alarmed at discovering a large war-party of the Saonie Sioux, who immediately took them prisoners, and carried them a mile on the other side of the stream to a kind of park, or enclosure, walled with mud and sticks, in which was a large herd of antelopes. These animals were still coming into the park, the gates of which were so contrived as to prevent escape. This was an annual practice of the Indians. In the autumn, the antelopes retire for food and shelter from the prairie to the mountainous regions on the south of the river. In the spring they re-cross it in great numbers, and are then easily taken by being enticed into a strong enclosure as above described.

The hunters, (John Greely, the Prophet, and a Canadian) had scarcely any hope of escape from the clutches of the Indians, (who numbered as many as fifty,) and had well nigh made up their minds to die. Greely and the Prophet were disarmed and tied hand and foot; the Canadian, however, was suffered, for some reason not perfectly understood, to remain unbound, and was only deprived of his rifle, the savages leaving him in possession of his hunter's knife, (which, possibly they did not perceive, as it was worn in a sort of sheath in the side of his legging) and treating him otherwise with a marked difference from their demeanor to the others. This circumstance proved the source of the party's deliverance.

It was, perhaps, nine o'clock at night when they were first taken. The moon was bright, but, as the air was unusually cool for the season, the savages had kindled two large fires at a sufficient distance from the park not to frighten the antelopes, who were still pouring into it continually. At these fires they were occupied in cooking their game when the hunters so unexpectedly came upon them from round a clump of trees. Greely and the Prophet, after being disarmed and bound with strong thongs of buffalo hide, were thrown down under a tree at some distance from the blaze; while the Canadian was permitted to seat himself, in charge of two savages, by one of the

fires, the rest of the Indians forming a circle round the other and larger one. In this arrangement, the time wore away slowly, and the hunters were in momentary expectation of death; the cords of the two who were bound caused them, also, infinite pain, from the tightness with which they were fastened. The Canadian had endeavored to hold a conversation with his guards, in the hope of bribing them to release him, but could not make himself understood. About midnight, the congregation around the large fire were suddenly disturbed by the dash of several large antelopes in succession through the midst of the blaze. These animals had burst through a portion of the mud wall which confined them, and, mad with rage and affright, had made for the light of the fire, as is the habit of insects at night in like circumstances. It seems, however, that the Saonies had never heard of any similar feat of these usually timid creatures, for they were in great terror at the unexpected interruption, and their alarm increased to perfect dismay, as the whole captured herd came rushing and bounding upon them, after the lapse of a minute or so from the outbreak of the first few. The hunters described the scene as one of the most singular nature. The beasts were apparently frantic, and the velocity and impetuosity with which they flew, rather than leaped, through the flames, and through the midst of the terrified savages, was said by Greely (a man not in the least prone to exaggerate) to have been not only an imposing but even a terrible spectacle. They carried every thing before them in their first plunges; but, having cleared the large fire, they immediately dashed at the small one, scattering the brands and blazing wood about; then returned, as if bewildered, to the large one, and so backwards and forwards until the decline of the fires, when, in small parties, they scampered off like lightning to the woods.

Many of the Indians were knocked down in this furious mêlée, and there is no doubt that some of them were seriously, if not mortally, wounded by the sharp hoofs of the agile antelopes. Some threw themselves flat on the ground, and so avoided injury. The Prophet and Greely, not being near the fires, were in no danger. The Canadian was prostrated at the first onset by a kick which rendered him senseless for some minutes. When he came to himself he was nearly in darkness;

for the moon had gone behind a heavy thundercloud, and the fires were almost out, or only existed in brands scattered hither and thither. He saw no Indians near him, and instantly arousing himself to escape, made, as well as he could, for the tree where his two comrades were lying. Their thongs were soon cut, and the three set off at full speed in the direction of the river, without stopping to think of their rifles, or of any thing beyond present security. Having run for some miles, and finding no one in pursuit, they slackened their pace, and made their way to a spring for a draught of water. Here it was they met with the antelope which, as I mentioned before, they brought with them to the boats. The poor creature lay panting, and unable to move, by the border of the spring. One of its legs was broken, and it bore evident traces of fire. It was no doubt one of the herd which had been the means of deliverance. Had there been even a chance of its recovery the hunters would have spared it in token of their gratitude, but it was miserably injured, so they put it at once out of its misery, and brought it home to the boats, where we made an excellent breakfast upon it next morning.

April 12, 13, 14, and 15. During these four days we kept on our course without any adventure of note. The weather was very pleasant during the middle of the day, but the nights and mornings were exceedingly cold, and we had sharp frosts. Game was abundant. Thornton still continued ill, and his sickness perplexed and grieved me beyond measure. I missed his society very much, and now found that he was almost the only member of our party in whom I could strictly confide. By this I merely mean that he was almost the only one to whom I could, or would, freely unburthen my heart, with all its wild hopes, and fantastic wishes — not that any individual among us was unworthy of implicit faith. On the contrary, we were all like brothers, and a dispute, of any importance, never occurred. One interest seemed to bind all; or rather we appeared to be a band of voyagers without interest in view — mere travellers for pleasure. What ideas the Canadians might have held upon this subject I cannot, indeed, exactly say. These fellows talked a great deal, to be sure, about the profits of the enterprise, and especially about their expected share of it; yet I can scarcely think they cared much for these points, for they were the most

simple-minded, and certainly the most obliging set of beings upon the face of the earth. As for the rest of the crew, I have no doubt in the world that the pecuniary benefit to be afforded by the expedition was the last thing upon which they speculated. Some singular evidences of the feeling which more or less pervaded us all occurred during the prosecution of the voyage. Interests, which, in the settlements, would have been looked upon as of the highest importance, were here treated as matters unworthy of a serious word, and neglected, or totally discarded upon the most frivolous pretext. Men who had travelled thousands of miles through a howling wilderness, beset by horrible dangers, and enduring the most heart-rending privations for the ostensible purpose of collecting peltries, would seldom take the trouble to secure them when obtained, and would leave behind them without a sigh an entire cache of fine beaver skin rather than forego the pleasure of pushing up some romantic-looking river, or penetrating into some craggy and dangerous cavern, for minerals whose use they knew nothing about, and which they threw aside as lumber at the first decent opportunity.

In all this my own heart was very much with the rest of the party; and I am free to say that, as we proceeded on our journey, I found myself less and less interested in the main business of the expedition, and more and more willing to turn aside in pursuit of idle amusement — if indeed I am right in calling by so feeble a name as amusement that deep and most intense excitement with which I surveyed the wonders and majestic beauties of the wilderness. No sooner had I examined one region than I was possessed with an irresistible desire to push forward and explore another. As yet, however, I felt as if in too close proximity to the settlements for the full enjoyment of my burning love of Nature, and of the unknown. I could not help being aware that some civilized footsteps, although few, had preceded me in my journey — that some eyes before mine own had been enraptured with the scenes around me. But for this sentiment, ever obtruding itself, I should no doubt have loitered more frequently on the way, turning aside to survey the features of the region bordering upon the river, and perhaps penetrating deeply, at times, into the heart of the country to the north and south of our route. But I was anxious to go on

— to get, if possible, beyond the extreme bounds of civilization — to gaze, if I could, upon those gigantic mountains of which the existence had been made known to us only by the vague accounts of the Indians. These ulterior hopes and views I communicated fully to no one of our party save Thornton. He participated in all my most visionary projects, and entered completely into the spirit of romantic enterprise which pervaded my soul. I therefore felt his illness as a bitter evil. He grew worse daily, while it was out of our power to render him any effectual assistance.

April 16. To-day we had a cold rain with a high wind from the north, obliging us to come to anchor until late in the afternoon. At four o'clock, P. M., we proceeded, and made five miles by night. Thornton was much worse.

April 17, and 18. During both these days we had a continuance of raw unpleasant weather, with the same cold wind from the north. We observed many large masses of ice in the river, which was much swollen and very muddy. The time passed unpleasantly, and we made no way. Thornton appeared to be dying, and I now resolved to encamp at the first convenient spot, and remain until his illness should terminate. We accordingly, at noon this day, drew the boats up a large creek coming in from the south, and formed an encampment on the main land.

April 25. We remained at the creek until this morning, when, to the great joy of us all, Thornton was sufficiently recovered to go on. The weather was fine, and we proceeded gaily through a most lovely portion of the country, without encountering a single Indian, or meeting with any adventure out of the usual course until the last of the month, when we reached the country of the Mandans, or rather of the Mandans, the Minnetarees, and the Ahnahaways; for these three tribes all live in the near vicinity of each other, occupying five villages. Not a great many years ago the Mandans were settled in nine villages, about eighty miles below, the ruins of which we passed without knowing what they were — seven on the west and two on the east of the river; but they were thinned off by the small-pox and their old enemies the Sioux, until reduced to a mere handful, when they ascended to their present position. [Mr. R. gives here a tolerably full account of the Minnetarees and Ahnahaways or Wassatoons; but we omit it, as differing in no

important particular from the ordinary statements respecting these nations.] The Mandans received us with perfect friendliness, and we remained in their neighborhood three days, during which we overhauled and repaired the piroque, and otherwise refitted. We also obtained a good supply of a hard corn, of a mixed color, which the savages had preserved through the winter in holes, near the front of their lodges. While with the Mandans we were visited by a Minnetaree chief, called Waukerassah, who behaved with much civility, and was of service to us in many respects. The son of this chief we engaged to accompany us as interpreter as far as the great fork. We made the father several presents, with which he was greatly pleased. * On the first of May we bade adieu to the Mandans, and went on our way.

* The chief Waukerassah is mentioned by Captains Lewis and Clarke, whom he also visited.

May 1. The weather was mild, and the surrounding country began to assume a lovely appearance with the opening vegetation, which was now much advanced. The cotton-wood leaves were quite as large as a crown, and many flowers were full blown. The low grounds began to spread out here more than usual, and were well supplied with timber. The cotton-wood and common willow, as well as red willow, abounded; with rose-bushes in great plenty. Beyond the low grounds on the river, the country extended in one immense plain without wood of any kind. The soil was remarkably rich. The game was more abundant than we had ever yet seen it. We kept a hunter ahead of us on each bank, and to-day they brought in an elk, a goat, five beavers, and a great number of plovers. The beavers were very tame and easily taken. This animal is quite a *bonne bouche* as an article of food; especially the tail, which is of a somewhat glutinous nature, like the fins of the halibut. A beaver tail will suffice for a plentiful dinner for three men. We made twenty miles before night.

May 2. We had a fine wind this morning, and used our sails until noon, when it became rather too much for us, and we stopped for the day. Our hunters went out and shortly returned with an immense elk, whom Neptune had pulled down after a long chase, the animal having been only slightly wounded by a buck shot. He measured six feet in height. An antelope was

also caught about dusk. As soon as the creature saw our men, it flew off with the greatest velocity, but after a few minutes stopped, and returned on its steps, apparently through curiosity — then bounded away again. This conduct was repeated frequently, each time the game coming nearer and nearer, until at length it ventured within rifle distance, when a shot from the Prophet brought it down. It was lean and with young. These animals, although of incredible swiftness of foot, are still bad swimmers, and thus frequently fall a victim to the wolves, in their attempts to cross a stream. Today made twelve miles.

May 3. This morning we made great headway, and by night had accomplished full thirty miles. The game continued to be abundant. Buffaloes, in vast numbers, lay dead along the shore, and we saw many wolves devouring the carcasses. They fled always at our approach. We were much at a loss to account for the death of the buffaloes, but some weeks afterwards the mystery was cleared up. Arriving at a pass of the river where the bluffs were steep and the water deep at their base, we observed a large herd of the huge beasts swimming across, and stopped to watch their motions. They came in a sidelong manner down the current, and had apparently entered the water from a gorge, about half a mile above, where the bank sloped into the stream. Upon reaching the land on the west side of the river they found it impossible to ascend the cliffs, and the water was beyond their depth. After struggling for some time, and endeavoring in vain to get a foothold in the steep and slippery clay, they turned and swam to the eastern shore, where the same kind of inaccessible precipices presented themselves, and where the ineffectual struggle to ascend was repeated. They now turned a second time, a third, a fourth, and a fifth — always making the shore at very nearly the same places. Instead of suffering themselves to go down with the current in search of a more favorable landing, (which might have been found a quarter of a mile below), they seemed bent upon maintaining their position, and, for this purpose, swam with their breasts at an acute angle to the stream and used violent exertions to prevent being borne down. At the fifth time of crossing, the poor beasts were so entirely exhausted that it was evident they could do no more. They now struggled fearfully to scramble up the bank, and one or two of them had

nearly succeeded, when, to our great distress (for we could not witness their noble efforts without commiseration) the whole mass of loose earth above caved in, and buried several of them in its fall, without leaving the cliff in better condition for ascent. Upon this the rest of the herd commenced a lamentable kind of lowing or moaning — a sound conveying more of a dismal sorrow and despair than any thing which it is possible to imagine — I shall never get it out of my head. Some of the beasts made another attempt to swim the river, struggled a few minutes, and sank — the waves above them being dyed with the red blood that gushed from their nostrils in the death agony. But the greater part, after the moaning described, seemed to yield supinely to their fate, rolled over on their backs, and disappeared. The whole herd were drowned — not a buffalo escaped. Their carcasses were thrown up in half an hour afterwards upon the flat grounds a short distance below, where, but for their ignorant obstinacy, they might so easily have landed in safety.

May 4. The weather was delightful, and, with a fair warm wind from the south, we made twenty-five miles before night. To-day Thornton was sufficiently recovered to assist in the duties of the boat. In the afternoon he went out with me into the prairie on the west, where we saw a great number of early spring flowers of a kind never seen in the settlements. Many of them were of a rare beauty and delicious perfume. We saw also game in great variety, but shot none, as we were sure the hunters would bring in more than was wanted for use, and I was averse to the wanton destruction of life. On our way home we came upon two Indians of the Assiniboin nation, who accompanied us to the boats. They had evinced nothing like distrust on the way, but, on the contrary, had been frank and bold in demeanor; we were therefore much surprised to see them, upon coming within a stone's throw of the piroque, turn, both of them, suddenly round, and make off into the prairie at full speed. Upon getting a good distance from us, they stopped and ascended a knoll which commanded a view of the river. Here they lay on their bellies, and, resting their chins on their hands, seemed to regard us with the deepest astonishment. By the aid of a spy-glass I could minutely observe their countenances, which bore evidence of both amazement and terror.

They continued watching us for a long time. At length, as if struck with a sudden thought, they arose hurriedly and commenced a rapid flight in the direction from which we had seen them issue at first.

May 5. As we were getting under way very early this morning, a large party of Assiniboins suddenly rushed upon the boats, and succeeded in taking possession of the piroque before we could make any effectual resistance. No one was in it at the time except Jules, who escaped by throwing himself into the river, and swimming to the large boat, which we had pushed out into the stream. These Indians had been brought upon us by the two who had visited us the day before, and the party must have approached us in the most stealthy manner imaginable, as we had our sentries regularly posted, and even Neptune failed to give any token of their vicinity.

We were preparing to fire upon the enemy when Misquash (the new interpreter — son of Waukerassah) gave us to understand that the Assiniboins were friends and were now making signals of amity. Although we could not help thinking that the highway robbery of our boat was but an indifferent way of evincing friendship, still we were willing to see what these people had to say, and desired Misquash to ask them why they had behaved as they did. They replied with many protestations of regard; and we at length found that they really had no intention of molesting us any farther than to satisfy an ardent curiosity which consumed them, and which they now entreated us to appease. It appeared that the two Indians of the day before, whose singular conduct had so surprised us, had been struck with sudden amazement at the sooty appearance of our negro, Toby. They had never before seen or heard of a blackamoor, and it must therefore be confessed that their astonishment was not altogether causeless. Toby, moreover, was as ugly an old gentleman as ever spoke — having all the peculiar features of his race; the swollen lips, large white protruding eyes, flat nose, long ears, double head, pot-belly, and bow legs. Upon relating their adventure to their companions, the two savages could obtain no credit for the wonderful story, and were about losing caste for ever, as liars and double-dealers, when they proposed to conduct the whole band to the boats by way of vindicating their veracity. The sudden attack seemed to have been

the mere result of impatience on the part of the still incredulous Assiniboins; for they never afterwards evinced the slightest hostility, and yielded up the piroque as soon as we made them understand that we would let them have a good look at old Toby. The latter personage took the matter as a very good joke, and went ashore at once, in naturalibus, that the inquisitive savages might observe the whole extent of the question. Their astonishment and satisfaction were profound and complete. At first they doubted the evidence of their own eyes, spitting upon their fingers and rubbing the skin of the negro to be sure that it was not painted. The wool on the head elicited repeated shouts of applause, and the bandy legs were the subject of unqualified admiration. A jig dance on the part of our ugly friend brought matters to a climax. Wonder was now at its height. Approbation could go no farther. Had Toby but possessed a single spark of ambition he might then have made his fortune for ever by ascending the throne of the Assiniboins, and reigning as King Toby the First.

This incident detained us until late in the day. After interchanging some civilities and presents with the savages, we accepted the aid of six of the band in rowing us about five miles on our route — a very acceptable assistance, and one for which we did not fail to thank Toby. We made, to-day, only twelve miles, and encamped at night on a beautiful island which we long remembered for the delicious fish and fowl which its vicinity afforded us. We staid at this pleasant spot two days, during which we feasted and made merry, with very little care for the morrow, and with very little regard to the numerous beaver which disported around us. We might have taken at this island one or two hundred skins without difficulty. As it was, we collected about twenty. The island is at the mouth of a tolerably large river coming in from the south, and at a point where the Missouri strikes off in a due westerly direction. The latitude is about 48.

May 8. We proceeded with fair winds and fine weather, and after making twenty or twenty-five miles, reached a large river coming in from the north. Where it debouches, however, it is very narrow — not more than a dozen yards wide, and appears to be quite choked up with mud. Upon ascending it a short distance, a fine bold stream is seen, seventy or eighty yards wide,

and very deep, passing through a beautiful valley, abounding in game. Our new guide told us the name of this river, but I have no memorandum of it. ⁸ Robert Greely shot here some geese which build their nests upon trees.

May 9. In many places a little distant from the river banks, to-day, we observed the ground encrusted with a white substance which proved to be a strong salt. We made only fifteen miles, owing to several petty hindrances, and encamped at night on the main land, among some clumps of cotton-wood and rabbit-berry bushes.

May 10. To-day the weather was cold, and the wind strong, but fair. We made great headway. The hills in this vicinity are rough and jagged, showing irregular broken masses of rock, some of which tower to a great height, and appear to have been subject to the action of water. We picked up several pieces of petrified wood and bone; and coal was scattered about in every direction. The river gets very crooked.

May 11. Detained the greater part of the day by squalls and rain. Towards evening it cleared up beautifully with a fair wind, of which we took advantage, making ten miles before encamping. Several fat beavers were caught, and a wolf was shot upon the bank. He seemed to have strayed from a large herd which were prowling about us.

May 12. Landed to-day at noon, after making ten miles, upon a small steep island, for the purpose of overhauling some of our things. As we were about taking our departure, one of the Canadians, who led the van of the party and was several yards in advance, suddenly disappeared from our view with a loud scream. We all ran forward immediately, and laughed heartily upon finding that our man had only tumbled into an empty cache, from which we soon extricated him. Had he been alone, however, there is much room for question if he would have got out at all. We examined the hole carefully but found nothing in it beyond a few empty bottles; we did not even see any thing serving to show whether French, British, or Americans had concealed their goods here; and we felt some curiosity upon this point.

8. Probably White-earth River. — EDS. G. M.

May 13. Arrived at the junction of the Yellowstone with the Missouri, after making twenty-five miles during the day. Misquash here left us, and returned home.

Chapter 6

The character of the country through which we had passed for the last two or three days was cheerless in comparison with that to which we had been accustomed. In general it was more level; the timber being more abundant on the skirts of the stream, with little or none at all in the distance. Wherever bluffs appeared upon the margin we descried indications of coal, and we saw one extensive bed of a thick bituminous nature which very much discolored the water for some hundred yards below it. The current is more gentle than hitherto, the water clearer, and the rocky points and shoals fewer, although such as we had to pass were as difficult as ever. We had rain incessantly, which rendered the banks so slippery that the men who had the towing lines could scarcely walk. The air too was disagreeably chilly, and upon ascending some low hills near the river we observed no small quantity of snow lying in the clefts and ridges. In the extreme distance on our right we had perceived several Indian encampments which had the appearance of being temporary, and had been only lately abandoned. This region gives no indication of any permanent settlement, but appears to be a favorite hunting ground with the tribes in the vicinity — a fact rendered evident by the frequent traces of the hunt, which we came across in every direction. The Minnetarees of the Missouri, it is well known, extend their excursions in pursuit of game as high as the great fork, on the south side; while the Assiniboins go up still higher. Misquash informed us that between our present encampment and the Rocky Mountains we should meet with no lodges except those of the Minnetarees that reside on the lower or south side of the Saskatchewan.

The game had been exceedingly abundant, and in great variety — elk, buffalo, big-horn, mule-deer, bears, foxes, beaver, etc., etc., with wild fowl innumerable. Fish was also plentiful.

The width of the stream varied considerably from two hundred and fifty yards to passes where the current rushed between bluffs not more than a hundred feet apart. The face of these bluffs generally was composed of a light yellowish freestone, intermingled with burnt earth, pumice-stone, and mineral salts. At one point the aspect of the country underwent a remarkable change, the hills retiring on both sides to a great distance from the river, which was thickly interspersed with small and beautiful islands, covered with cotton-wood. The low grounds appeared to be very fertile; those on the north wide and low, and opening into three extensive valleys. Here seemed to be the extreme northern termination of the range of mountains through which the Missouri had been passing for so long a time, and which are called the Black Hills by the savages. The change from the mountainous region to the level was indicated by the atmosphere, which now became dry and pure; so much so indeed that we perceived its effects upon the seams of our boats, and our few mathematical instruments.

As we made immediate approach to the forks it came on to rain very hard, and the obstructions in the river were harassing in the extreme. The banks in some places were so slippery, and the clay so soft and stiff that the men were obliged to go barefooted, as they could not keep on their moccasins. The shores also were full of pools of stagnant water, through which we were obliged to wade, sometimes up to our armpits. Then again we had to scramble over enormous shoals of sharp-pointed flints, which appeared to be the wreck of cliffs that had fallen down en masse. Occasionally we came to a precipitous gorge or gully, which it would put us to the greatest labor to pass, and in attempting to push by one of these the rope of the large boat (being old and much worn) gave way and permitted her to be swung round by the current upon a ledge of rock in the middle of the stream, where the water was so deep that we could only work in getting her off by the aid of the piroque, and so were full six hours in effecting it.

At one period we arrived at a high wall of black rock on the south, towering above the ordinary cliffs for about a quarter of a mile along the stream; after which there was an open plain, and about three miles beyond this again, another wall of a light color on the same side, fully two hundred feet high; then

another plain or valley, and then still another wall of the most singular appearance arises on the north, soaring in height probably two hundred and fifty feet, and being in thickness about twelve, with a very regular artificial character. These cliffs present indeed the most extraordinary aspect, rising perpendicularly from the water. The last mentioned are composed of very white soft sandstone, which readily receives the impression of the water. In the upper portion of them appears a sort of frieze or cornice formed by the intervention of several thin horizontal strata of a white freestone, hard, and unaffected by the rains. Above them is a dark rich soil, sloping gradually back from the water to the extent of a mile or thereabouts, when other hills spring up abruptly to the height of full five hundred feet more.

The face of these remarkable cliffs, as might be supposed, is chequered with a variety of lines formed by the trickling of the rains upon the soft material, so that a fertile fancy might easily imagine them to be gigantic monuments reared by human art, and carved over with hieroglyphical devices. Sometimes there are complete niches (like those we see for statues in common temples) formed by the dropping out bodily of large fragments of the sandstone; and there are several points where staircases and long corridors appear, as accidental fractures in the freestone cornice happen to let the rain trickle down uniformly upon the softer material below. We passed these singular bluffs in a bright moonlight and their effect upon my imagination I shall never forget. They had all the air of enchanted structures, (such as I have dreamed of,) and the twittering of myriads of martins, which have built their nests in the holes that every where perforate the mass, aided this conception not a little. Besides the main walls there are, at intervals, inferior ones, of from twenty to a hundred feet high, and from one to twelve or fifteen feet thick, perfectly regular in shape, and perpendicular. These are formed of a succession of large black-looking stones, apparently made up of loam, sand, and quartz, and absolutely symmetrical in figure, although of various sizes. They are usually square, but sometimes oblong (always parallelipedal) and are lying one above the other as exactly and with as perfect regularity as if placed there by some mortal mason; each upper stone covering and securing the point of

junction between two lower ones, just as bricks are laid in a wall. Sometimes these singular erections run in parallel lines, as many as four abreast; sometimes they leave the river and go back until lost amid the hills; sometimes they cross each other at right angles, seeming to enclose large artificial gardens, the vegetation within which is often of a character to preserve the illusion. Where the walls are thinnest, there the bricks are less in size, and the converse. We regarded the scenery presented to our view at this portion of the Missouri as altogether the most surprising, if not the most beautiful which we had yet seen. It left upon my own mind an impression of novelty — of singularity, which can never be effaced.

Shortly before reaching the fork we came to a pretty large island on the northern side, one mile and a quarter from which is a low ground on the south very thickly covered with fine timber. After this there were several small islands, at each of which we touched for a few minutes as we passed. Then we came to a very black-looking bluff on the north, and then to two other small islands, about which we observed nothing remarkable. Going a few miles farther we reached a tolerably large island situated near the point of a steep promontory; afterwards passing two others, smaller. All these islands are well timbered. It was at night on the 13th of May, that we were shown by Misquash the mouth of the large river, which in the settlements goes by the name of the Yellow Stone, but by the Indians is called the Ahmateaza.⁹ We made our camp on the south shore in a beautiful plain covered with cotton-wood.

May 14. This morning we were all awake and stirring at an early hour, as the point we had now reached was one of great importance, and it was requisite that, before proceeding any farther, we should make some survey by way of ascertaining which of the two large streams in view would afford us the best passage onward. It seemed to be the general wish of the party to push up one of these rivers as far as practicable, with a view of reaching the Rocky Mountains, when we might perhaps hit

9. There appears to be some discrepancy here which we have not thought it worth while to alter, as, after all, Mr. Rodman may not be in the wrong. The Amateaza (according to the Narrative of Lewis and Clarke) is the name given by the Minnetarees, not to the Yellow Stone, but to the Missouri itself.

upon the head waters of the large stream Aregan, described by all the Indians with whom we had conversed upon the subject, as running into the great Pacific Ocean. I was also anxious to attain this object, which opened to my fancy a world of exciting adventure, but I foresaw many difficulties which we must necessarily encounter if we made the attempt with our present limited information in respect to the region we should have to traverse, and the savages who occupied it; about which latter we only knew indeed that they were generally the most ferocious of the North American Indians. I was afraid, too, that we might get into the wrong stream, and involve ourselves in an endless labyrinth of troubles which would dishearten the men. These thoughts, however, did not give me any long uneasiness, and I set to work at once to explore the neighborhood; sending some of the party up the banks of each stream to estimate the comparative volume of water in each, while I myself, with Thornton and John Greely, proceeded to ascend the high grounds in the fork, whence an extensive prospect of the surrounding region might be attained. We saw here an immense and magnificent country spreading out on every side into a vast plain, waving with glorious verdure, and alive with countless herds of buffaloes and wolves, intermingled with occasional elk and antelope. To the south the prospect was interrupted by a range of high, snow-capped mountains, stretching from south east to north west, and terminating abruptly. Behind these again was a higher range, extending to the very horizon in the north west. The two rivers presented the most enchanting appearance as they wound away their long snake-like lengths in the distance, growing thinner and thinner until they looked like mere faint threads of silver as they vanished in the shadowy mists of the sky. We could glean nothing, from their direction so far, as regards their ultimate course, and so descended from our position much at a loss what to do.

The examination of the two currents gave us but little more satisfaction. The north stream was found to be the deeper, but the south was the wider, and the volume of water differed but little. The first had all the color of the Missouri, but the latter had the peculiar round gravelly bed which distinguishes a river that issues from a mountainous region. We were finally determined by the easier navigation of the north branch to

pursue this course, although from the rapidly increasing shallowness we found that in a few days, at farthest, we should have to dispense with the large boat. We spent three days at our encampment, during which we collected a great many fine skins, and deposited them with our whole stock on hand, in a well constructed cache on a small island in the river a mile below the junction.¹⁰ We also brought in a great quantity of game, and especially of deer, some haunches of which we pickled or corned for future use. We found great abundance of the prickly pear in this vicinity, as well as chokeberries in great plenty upon the low grounds and ravines. There were also many yellow and red currants (not ripe) with gooseberries. Wild roses were just beginning to open their buds in the most wonderful profusion. We left our encampment in fine spirits on the morning of

May 18. The day was pleasant, and we proceeded merrily, notwithstanding the consistent interruptions occasioned by the shoals and jutting points with which the stream abounds. The men, one and all, were enthusiastic in their determination to persevere, and the Rocky Mountains were the sole theme of conversation. In leaving our peltries behind us, we had considerably lightened the boats, and we found much less difficulty in getting them forward through the rapid currents than would otherwise have been the case. The river was crowded with islands, at nearly all of which we touched. At night we reached a deserted Indian encampment, near bluffs of a blackish clay.

10. Caches are holes very frequently dug by the trappers and fur traders, in which to deposit their furs or other goods during a temporary absence. A dry and retired situation is first selected. A circle about two feet in diameter is then described — the sod within this carefully removed and laid by. A hole is now sunk perpendicularly to the depth of a foot, and afterwards gradually widened until the excavation becomes eight or ten feet deep, and six or seven feet wide. As the earth is dug up, it is cautiously placed on a skin, so as to prevent any traces upon the grass, and, when all is completed, is thrown into the nearest river, or otherwise effectually concealed. This cache is lined throughout with dried sticks and hay, or with skins, and within it almost any species of backwoods property may be safely and soundly kept for years. When the goods are in, and well covered with buffalo hide, earth is thrown upon the whole, and stamped firmly down. Afterwards the sod is replaced, and a private mark made upon the neighboring trees, or elsewhere, indicating the precise location of the depôt. — EDS. G. M

Rattlesnakes disturbed us very much, and before morning we had a heavy rain.

May 19. We had not proceeded far before we found the character of the stream materially altered, and very much obstructed by sand bars, or rather ridges of small stones, so that it was with the greatest difficulty we could force a passage for the larger boat. Sending two men ahead to reconnoitre, they returned with an account of a wider and deeper channel above, and once again we felt encouraged to persevere. We pushed on for ten miles and encamped on a small island for the night. We observed a peculiar mountain in the distance to the south, of a conical form, isolated, and entirely covered with snow.

May 20. We now entered into a better channel, and pursued our course with little interruption for sixteen miles, through a clayey country of peculiar character, and nearly destitute of vegetation. At night we encamped on a very large island, covered with tall trees, many of which were new to us. We remained at this spot for five days to make some repairs in the piroque.

During our sojourn here an incident of note occurred. The banks of the Missouri in this neighborhood are precipitous, and formed of a peculiar blue clay, which becomes excessively slippery after rain. The cliffs, from the bed of the stream back to the distance of a hundred yards, or thereabouts, form a succession of steep terraces of this clay, intersected in numerous directions by deep and narrow ravines, so sharply worn by the action of water at some remote period of time as to have the appearance of artificial channels. The mouths of these ravines, where they debouche upon the river, have a very remarkable appearance, and look from the opposite bank, by moonlight, like gigantic columns standing erect upon the shore. To an observer from the uppermost terrace the whole descent towards the stream has an indescribably chaotic and dreary air. No vegetation of any kind is seen.

John Greely, the Prophet, the interpreter Jules, and myself started out after breakfast one morning to ascend to the topmost terrace on the south shore for the purpose of looking around us; in short to see what could be seen. With great labor, and by using scrupulous caution, we succeeded in reaching the level grounds at the summit opposite our encampment. The prairie here differs from the general character of that kind

of land in being thickly overgrown for many miles back with cotton-wood, rose-bushes, red willow, and broad-leaved willow; the soil being unsteady, and at times swampy, like that of the ordinary low grounds — it consists of a black-looking loam, one-third sand, and when a handful of it is thrown into water, it dissolves in the manner of sugar, with strong bubbles. In several spots we observed deep incrustations of common salt, some of which we collected and used.

Upon reaching these level grounds we all sat down to rest, and had scarcely done so when we were alarmed by a loud growl immediately in our rear, proceeding from the thick underwood. We started to our feet at once in great terror, for we had left our rifles at the island, that we might be unincumbered in the scramble up the cliffs, and the only arms we had were pistols and knives. We had scarcely time to say a word to each other before two enormous brown bears (the first we had yet encountered during the voyage) came rushing at us open-mouthed from a clump of rose-bushes. These animals are much dreaded by the Indians, and with reason, for they are indeed formidable creatures, possessing prodigious strength, with untameable ferocity, and the most wonderful tenacity of life. There is scarcely any way of killing them by a bullet, unless the shot be through the brains, and these are defended by two large muscles covering the side of the forehead, as well as by a projection of a thick frontal bone. They have been known to live for days with half a dozen balls through the lungs, and even with very severe injuries in the heart. So far we had never met with a brown bear, although often with its tracks in the mud or sand, and these we had seen nearly a foot in length, exclusive of the claws, and full eight inches in width.

What to do was now the question. To stand and fight, with such weapons as we possessed, was madness; and it was folly to think of escape by flight in the direction of the prairie; for not only were the bears running towards us from that quarter, but, at a very short distance back from the cliffs, the underwood of briar-bushes, dwarf willow, etc., was so thick that we could not have made our way through it at all, and if we kept our course along the river between the underwood and the top of the cliff, the animals would catch us in an instant; for as the ground was boggy we could make no progress upon it, while

the large flat foot of the bear would enable him to travel with ease. It seemed as if these reflections (which it takes some time to embody in words) flashed all of them through the minds of all of us in an instant — for every man sprang at once to the cliffs, without sufficiently thinking of the hazard that lay there.

The first descent was some thirty or forty feet, and not very precipitous; the clay here also partook in a slight degree of the loam of the upper soil; so that we scrambled down with no great difficulty to the first terrace, the bears plunging after us with headlong fury. Arrived here, we had not a moment for hesitation. There was nothing left for us now but to encounter the enraged beasts upon the narrow platform where we stood, or to go over the second precipice. This was nearly perpendicular, sixty or seventy feet deep, and composed entirely of the blue clay which was now saturated with late rains, and as slippery as glass itself. The Canadian, frightened out of his senses, leaped to the edge at once, slid with the greatest velocity down the cliff, and was hurled over the third descent by the impetus of his course. We then lost sight of him, and of course supposed him killed; for we could have no doubt that his terrific slide would be continued from precipice to precipice until it terminated with a plunge over the last into the river — a fall of more than a hundred and fifty feet.

Had Jules not gone in this way it is more than probable that we should all have decided, in our extremity, upon attempting the descent; but his fate caused us to waver, and in the meantime the monsters were upon us. This was the first time in all my life I had ever been brought to close quarters with a wild animal of any strength or ferocity, and I have no scruple to acknowledge that my nerves were completely unstrung. For some moments I felt as if about to swoon, but a loud scream from Greely, who had been seized by the foremost bear, had the effect of arousing me to exertion, and when once fairly aroused I experienced a kind of wild and savage pleasure from the conflict.

One of the beasts, upon reaching the narrow ledge where we stood, had made an immediate rush at Greely, and had borne him to the earth, where he stood over him, holding him with his huge teeth lodged in the breast of his overcoat — which, by

the greatest good fortune, he had worn, the wind being chilly. The other, rolling rather than scrambling down the cliff, was under so much headway when he reached our station that he could not stop himself until the one-half of his body hung over the precipice; he staggered in a sidelong manner, and his right legs went over while he held on in an awkward way with his two left. While thus situated he seized Wormley by the heel with his mouth, and for an instant I feared the worst, for in his efforts to free himself from the grasp the terrified struggler aided the bear to regain his footing. While I stood helpless, as above described, through terror, and watching the event without ability to render the slightest aid, the shoe and moccasin of W. were torn off in the grasp of the animal, who now tumbled headlong down to the next terrace, but stopped himself, by means of his huge claws, from sliding farther. It was now that Greely screamed for aid, and the Prophet and myself rushed to his assistance. We both fired our pistols at the bear's head; and my own ball, I am sure, must have gone through some portion of his skull, for I held the weapon close to his ear. He seemed more angry, however, than hurt; the only good effect of the discharge was in his quitting his hold of Greely (who had sustained no injury) and making at us. We had nothing but our knives to depend upon, and even the refuge of the terrace below was cut off from us by the presence of another bear there. We had our backs to the cliff, and were preparing for a deadly contest, not dreaming of help from Greely (whom we supposed mortally injured) when we heard a shot, and the huge beast fell at our feet, just when we felt his hot and horribly fetid breath in our faces. Our deliverer, who had fought many a bear in his life-time, had put his pistol deliberately to the eye of the monster, and the contents had entered the brain.

Looking now downwards, we discovered the fallen bruin making ineffectual efforts to scramble up to us — the soft clay yielded to his claws, and he fell repeatedly and heavily. We tried him with several shots, but did no harm, and resolved to leave him where he was for the crows. I do not see how he could ever have made his escape from the spot. We crawled along the ledge on which we stood for nearly half a mile before we found a practicable path to the prairie above us, and did not get to camp until late in the night. Jules was there all alive,

but cruelly bruised — so much so indeed that he had been unable to give any intelligible account of his accident or of our whereabouts. He had lodged in one of the ravines upon the third terrace, and had made his way down its bed to the river shore.