

states, caused much attention to be directed to Oregon. Two steadfast friends labored constantly in congress for the assertion of American rights on the Columbia, Senators Thomas H. Benton and Lewis F. Linn, of Missouri, both of whom have counties in the state they helped to create named in their honor. They never ceased to urge upon the government the necessity of taking some decisive step to perfect its title to this region, and to extend the jurisdiction of the law over this disputed country, for the protection of those American citizens already living here, and that greater number they well knew would seek this far western land in the next few years.

Moved by the impulses just recited, the first regular immigration began the long journey to Oregon in the spring of 1841. It consisted of one hundred and eleven persons, who, owing to the supposed impossibility of crossing the country with wagons, made no attempt to bring vehicles with them. In the fall of the same year twenty-three families from the Red river settlement of the Hudson's Bay Company came out and settled on Cowlitz prairie, some of them locating later in the Willamette valley. They were brought out by the great fur monopoly as an offset to the American settlers, but they were too few in numbers to stem the tide setting Americanward, and were overwhelmed by the American immigration of the next few years. In 1842 the first regular emigrant train started for Oregon, consisting of sixteen wagons and one hundred and nine people. What an undertaking was theirs! No wagon wheel had ever cut the virgin sod of the country over which they proposed to go, and the region through which they must pass was practically unknown, so far as a route for wagons was concerned. To be sure, trapping bands had traversed it in all directions for years, and old trappers were secured for guides by these hardy pioneers; but they had been on horseback, and had not been compelled to find good camping places, with grass and water, at such short intervals as was necessary for the sluggish emigrant train; nor had they found it necessary to pursue a route over which wagons could pass. With infinite difficulty they progressed as far as the old trapping rendezvous on Green river, where half the wagons were dismantled and used to make pack saddles. The other half were taken as far as Fort Hall, on Snake river, where they were abandoned, owing to the deep-rooted belief that wagons could not be taken through the Snake river canyon and Blue mountains.

Wherever the American citizen goes, he carries with him the great fundamental principle of a representative democratic government, and no better example of this great fact can be cited than the conduct of the early settlers of Oregon. Immediately upon

the arrival of enough of them to make any showing of numbers, they began to consider the question of self government. Not daunted by the fact that a great British corporation had complete ascendancy among the natives, and had employees far outnumbering their little band, and that this company was opposed to the exercise of authority from any other source than its own fountain head, especially in the interests of a foreign and rival government, they proceeded with the work of organization. Their efforts were futile for several years, but in the spring of 1843, by the help of the immigration of the previous two years, they were strong enough to form a provisional government, with a code of laws, which was the foundation of the government of the state of Oregon as we find it to-day. A few months later eight hundred immigrants poured into Oregon, and settled forever the question of American ascendancy, at least in the region south of the Columbia, and this great influx of Americans requires special consideration.

By the winter of 1842-3 the causes which had prompted the immigrations of 1841 and 1842, had become more potent and widespread than ever. Senator Linn was pressing his "Oregon bills" upon the attention of congress, one of which provided for the donation of public lands to all who might settle in Oregon, his idea being that a liberal emigration alone could be relied upon to win the Columbia for the United States, and that special inducements should be offered to those brave and hardy pioneers who must constitute the nation's line of battle on the frontier. Encouraged by this and led by the glowing stories of the fertile vale of the Willamette, this great emigrant train assembled in the spring of 1843 and started on the long and toilsome journey. This train is remarkable, not only because the first large train to reach Oregon, but because it took its wagons clear through, and demonstrated the disputed fact that the mountains, deserts and canyons were navigable for the "prairie schooner" of the emigrant. To Doctor Marcus Whitman, the martyred missionary previously alluded to, is due the credit of carrying these wagons to their destination. Some enthusiastic partisans ascribe to him, also, the formation of the emigrant train itself, in pursuance of a determination to save Oregon to the United States by proving the existence of a practicable route for wagons, but this, to say the least, is questionable. During the winter of 1842-3 he made a most hazardous and fatiguing journey to the east, and returned with this great train. As he did not reach St. Louis until February, and the train started in May, it is obviously impossible that in those days of neither railroad nor telegraph in that region, he could have accomplished the feat, especially as he spent all but a few days of the