Prineville Review

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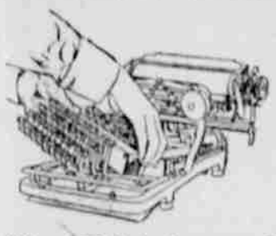

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Bend—preaching every first Sunday. Rev. Triplet pastor, residence Baptist parsonage Prineville Ore.

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Prayer meeting every Wednesday evening at 7:30 o'clock.

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J. L. McCULLOCH,

Abstracter of Titles

Prineville, Oregon.

LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF JOE MEEK

BY MRS. FRANCES FULLER VICTOR.

EARLY DAYS IN OREGON.

It is only necessary to add that Meek and Crow arrived safely at camp; and that the Shances came in after a day or two all right. Soon after the whole command under Bridger moved on to the Yellowstone, and went into winter camp in the great bend of that river, where buffalo were plenty, and cotton-wood was in abundance.

1835. Towards spring, however, the game had nearly all disappeared from the neighborhood of the camp; and the hunters were forced to follow the buffalo in their migration eastward. On one of these expeditions a party of six trappers, including Meek, and a man named Rose, made their camp on Clarke's fork of the Yellowstone. The first night in camp Rose had a dream with which he was very much impressed. He dreamed of shaking hands with a large white bear, which insisted on taking his right hand for that friendly ceremony. He had not given it very willingly, for he knew too much about bears in general to desire to be on very intimate terms with them.

Seeing that the dream troubled Rose, who was superstitiously inclined, Meek resorted to that "certain medicine for minds diseased" which was in use in the mountains, and added to the distress of Rose his interpretation, in the spirit of ridicule, telling him that he was an adept in the matter of dreams, and that unless he, Rose, was very mindful of himself that day, he would shake hands with Beelzebub before he slept again.

With this comforting assurance, Rose set out with the remainder of the party to hunt buffalo. They had proceeded about three miles from camp, Rose riding in advance, when they suddenly encountered a company of Blackfeet, nine in number, spies from a war party of one hundred and fifty, that was prowling and marauding through the country on the lookout for small parties from the camp of Bridger. The Blackfeet fired on the party as it came up, from their place of concealment, a ball striking Rose's right arm, and breaking it at the elbow. This caused his gun to fall, and an Indian sprang forward and raised it up quickly, aiming it at Meek. The ball passed through his cap without doing any harm. By this time the trappers were made aware of an ambuscade; but how numerous the enemy was they could not determine. However, as the rest, who were well mounted, turned to fly, Meek, who was riding an old mule that had to be beaten over the head to make it go, seeing that he was going to be left behind, called out lustily, "hold on, boys! There's not many of them. Let's stop and fight 'em;" at the same time pounding the mule over the head, but without effect. The Indians saw the predicament, and ran up to seize the mule by the bridle, but the moment the mule got wind of the savages, away he went, racing like a thoroughbred, jumping impediments, and running right over a ravine, which was fortunately filled with snow. This movement brought Meek out ahead.

The other men then began to call out to Meek to stop and fight. "Run for your lives, boys," roared Meek back at them, "there's ten thousand of them; they'll kill every one of you!"

The mule had got his head, and there was no more stopping him than there had been starting him. On he went in the direction of the Yellowstone, while the others made for Clarke's Fork. On arriving at the former river, Meek found that some of the pack horses had followed him, and others the rest of the party. This had divided the Indians, three or four of whom were on his trail. Springing off his mule, he threw his blankets down on the ice, and by moving them alternately soon crossed the mule over to the opposite side, just in time to avoid a bullet that came whistling after him. As the Indians could not follow, he pursued his way to camp in safety, arriving late that evening. The main party were already in and expecting him. Soon after, the buffalo hunters returned to the big camp, minus some pack horses, but with a good story to tell, at the expense of Meek, and which he enjoys telling of himself to this day.

CHAPTER XII.

1835. Owing to the high rate of pay which Meek was now able to command, he began to think of imitating the example of that distinguished order, the free trappers, to which he now belonged, and setting up a lodge to himself as a family man. The writer of this veracious history has never been able to obtain a full and particular account of our hero's earliest love adventures. This is a subject on which, in common with most mountain-men, he observes a becoming reticence. But of one thing we feel quite well assured; that from the time when the young Shoshonie beauty assisted in the rescue of himself and Sublette from the execution of the death sentence at the hands of her people, Meek had always cherished a rather more than friendly regard for the "Mountain Lamb."

But Sublette, with wealth and power, and the privileges of a Booshway, had hastened to secure her for himself; and Meek had to look and long from afar off, until, in the year of which we are writing, Milton Sublette was forced to leave the mountains and repair to an eastern city for surgical aid; having received a very troublesome wound in the leg, which was only cured at last by amputation.

Whether it was the act of a gay Lothario, or whether the law of divorce is even more easy in the mountains than in Indiana, we have always judiciously refrained from inquiring; but this we do know, upon the word of Meek himself, no sooner was Milton's back turned, than his friend so insinuated himself into the good graces of his Isabel, as Sublette was wont to name the lovely Umentucken, that she consented to join her fortunes to those of the handsome young trapper without even the ceremony of serving a notice on her former lord. As their season of bliss only extended over one brief year, this chapter shall be entirely devoted to recording such facts as have been imparted to us concerning this free trapper's wife.

"She was the most beautiful Indian woman I ever saw," says Meek; "and when she was mounted on her dapple gray horse, which cost me three hundred dollars, she made a fine show. She wore a skirt of beautiful blue broadcloth, and a bodice and leggins of scarlet cloth, of the very finest make. Her hair was braided and fell over her shoulders, a scarlet silk handerchief, tied on hood fashion, covered her head; and the finest embroidered moccasins her feet. She rode like all the Indian women, astride, and carried on one side of the saddle the tomahawk for war, and on the other the pipe of peace.

"The name of her horse was "All Fours." His accoutrements were as fine as his rider's. The saddle, crupper, and bust girths cost one hundred and fifty dollars; the bridle fifty dollars; and the musk-a-moots fifty dollars more. All these articles were ornamented with fine cut glass beads, porcupine quills, and hawk's bells, that tinkled at every step. Her blankets were of scarlet and blue, and of the finest quality. Such was the outfit of the trapper's wife, Umentucken, Tukutey Undenwatsy, the Lamb of the Mountains."

Although Umentucken was beautiful, and had a name signifying gentleness, she was not without a will and a spirit of her own, when the occasion demanded it. While the camp was on the Yellowstone River, in the summer of 1835, a party of women left it to go in search of berries, which were often dried and stored for winter use by the Indian women. Umentucken accompanied this party, which was attacked by a band of Blackfeet, some of the squaws being taken prisoners. But Umentucken saved herself by flight, and by swiming the Yellowstone while a hundred guns were leveled on her, the bullets whistling about her ears.

At another time she distinguished herself in camp by a quarrel with one of the trappers, in which she came off with flying colors. The trapper was a big, bullying Irishman named O'Fallen, who had purchased two prisoners from the Snake Indians, to be kept in a state of slavery, after the manner of the savages. The prisoners were Utes, or Utahs, who soon contrived to escape O'Fallen, imagining that Umentucken had liberated them, threatened to whip her, and armed himself with a horse-whip for that purpose. On hearing of these threats Umentucken repaired to her lodge, and also armed herself, but with a pistol. When O'Fallen approached, the whole camp looking on to see the event, Umentucked slipped out at the back of the lodge and coming around confronted him before he could enter.

"Coward!" she cried. "You would whip the wife of Meek. He is not here to defend me; not here to kill you. But I shall do that for myself," and with that she presented the pistol to his head. O'Fallen taken by surprise, and having every reason to believe she would keep her word, and kill him on the spot, was obliged not only to apologize, but to beg to have his life spared. This Umentucken consented to do on conditien of his sufficiently humbling himself, which he did in a very shame-faced manner; and a shout then went up from the whole camp—"hurrah for the Mountain Lamb!" for nothing more delights a mountaineer than a show of pluck, especially in an unlooked for quarter.

The Indian wives of the trappers were often in great peril, as well as their lords. Whenever it was convenient they followed them on their long marches througs dangerous countries. But if the trapper was only going out for a few days, or if the march before him was more than usually dangerous, the wife remained with the main camp.

During this year of which we are writing, a considerable party had been out on Powder River hunting buffalo, taking their wives along with them. When on the return, just before reaching camp, Umentucken was missed from the cavalcade. She had fallen behind, and been taken prisoner by a party of twelve Crow Indians. As soon as she was missed, a volunteer party mounted their buffalo horses in such haste that they waited not for saddle or bridle, but snatched only a halter, and started back in pursuit. They had not run a very long distance when they discovered poor Umentucken in the midst of her jubilant captors, who were delighting their eyes with gazing at her fine feathers, and promising themselves very soon to pluck the gay bird, and appropriate her trinkets to their own use.

Their delight was premature. Swift on their heels came an avenging, as well as a saving spirit. Meek, at the head of his six comrades, no sooner espied the drooping form of the Lamb, than he urged his horse to the top of its speed. The horse was a spirited creature, that seeing something wrong in all these hasty maneuvers, took fright and adding terror to good will, ran with the speed of madness right in amongst the startled Crows, who doubtless regarded as a great "medicine" so fearless a warrior. It was now too late to be prudent, and Meek began the battle by yelling and firing, taking care to hit his Indian.

(To be continued.)

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