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OREGON PIONEER HISTORY.

SKETCHES OF EARLY DAYS -- MEN AND TIMES IN THE FORTIES.

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NUMBER XIX.

The Journey of Judge Thornton from Oregon to Washington.

The recent interesting discussion of the authorship of the 36th section of the common school fund—Mrs. Victor's attack and Judge Thornton's reply—in The Oregonian, make it timely to give a chapter of early political history which involves that very interesting question. Therefore I will leap over the interval from early in the '40s to the fall of 1847, a time when various immigrations had peopled this valley, but to the weak condition of the unprotected settlements excited more apprehension and alarm. At that time communication with the Atlantic States was very infrequent and uncertain. The bark *Whiton* had arrived with missionaries in the summer and was preparing to return. No Legislature could act to appoint a representative or delegate to present the case to the national government, and it was thought important and necessary to send someone by this vessel to present the facts of life and settlement in Oregon to Congress and the President.

To recur to the condition of things here at that time it is necessary to present the case in good form. The Indians were many and in uncertain temper. The scattered settlements could have been easily attacked and annihilated if the Indians had formed the combination they afterwards made, and had shown the united and savage spirit that surrounded all the Oregon settlements with a cordon of savage tribes in 1855. Matters were so uncertain that leading men of the new Territory never met without exchange of fear and apprehensions. The settlers in their homes talked over the dangers that environed them. Whitman at that time apprehended the fate that was to befall him in a few weeks, and plainly expressed his fears. The only whites who felt no alarm were the Hudson's Bay Company men, and they walked the earth free of all sense of danger. It was a cause of trouble to many that this was so. They felt that it was possible for this company to let loose savage hordes on weak settlements if so inclined. That company was powerful and could quell an outbreak if it came, but the settler who was newly here timidly asked, though there was no reason to fear such a course, "What if the influence of this great corporation should be used against us, or even not used for us, in case of an Indian rising?"

All the infant settlements were in a state of apprehension, if not of alarm, and all persons of influence urged some action, calling on the government for aid and protection. In this emergency Governor Abernethy selected Judge Thornton of the supreme court of the provisional government, and at the direct instance of some of the most prominent men then in Oregon, who signed the request to that effect, appointed him as an official representative of Oregon interests at the national capital. At that time Judge Thornton had been two years in the country and had become thoroughly aware of its needs and its value to the nation. To him Oregon was an adopted mother, for whom he was willing and anxious to do service. He was then in the prime of life, and accepted the mission intrusted to his charge with all possible sense of its importance and anxiety to so discharge it as to secure the best possible results.

The bark *Whiton* was to sail for San Francisco; thence for the lower coast, and thence around Cape Horn for Boston. But something more negotiable than the authority of Oregon's provisional

governor was necessary for the performance of so long a journey and so important a mission. At that time money was non est in Oregon. Wheat and other products formed a basis of trade and commerce; legal tender was made up of commodities, the most popular of all being orders on stores, most especially on the Hudson Bay Company. But a minister extraordinary, such as Thornton was, could not travel far on such stock in trade. But there was a will and also there was a way. Rev. George Geary of the M. E. mission, assisted Judge Thornton to the extent of \$150, by draft on the mission board at the East. A remarkable character who then lived here and did business under the assumed name of Noyes Smith loaned the newly-appointed agent forty barrels of flour and gave him letters to friends East that was afterwards of service to him. The flour was shipped on the bark *Whiton* and found a fair market at San Francisco.

Judge Thornton thus had some means at command and went on board the bark expecting to be taken to Panama, thence to cross the isthmus and find a passage to New York from there by the same vessel. The vessel reached San Francisco, remained there some weeks, sailed for Lower California and stopped at San Jose, a small seaport on the coast of Lower California, inside the Gulf of California not far from Cape St. Lucas. Here the captain changed his mind, gave up the voyage home and concluded to remain and trade along the coast. At that time we were at war with Mexico. There was a small fort near San Jose that had been captured by the United States forces, and was held by a small party commanded by a lieutenant. The sloop of war *Portsmouth* lay off there, with her guns commanding the fort, to be used in an attempt at recapture. One day Lieutenant Bartlett of the *Portsmouth* came on board the *Whiton* and there learned the unhappy fix in which the Oregon representative was placed.

On board the bark were five or six men who had been out to Oregon, "prospecting" the country or on a tour of observation. They were intending to make the same trip that Thornton contemplated, but when the captain changed the plan of his voyage they changed theirs. Then procuring some conveyances across the Gulf of Mexico to Mazatlan, intending to go across to Vera Cruz and thence home. This journey involved more expenses than Thornton could afford, and it may be supposed that he was well nigh desperate in mind in view of his stranded condition. He could neither go on nor turn back; it was impossible to see his way out, and desperation is the only word that reaches his forlorn condition. It seems as if a special providence here interposed for Oregon and for its sadly disappointed emissary.

The sloop of war *Portsmouth* was commanded by Captain J. B. Montgomery, a very noble officer and gentleman, who became greatly interested in Lieutenant Bartlett's description of the Oregonian's difficulties. He sent him immediately back with an invitation for Mr. Thornton to visit him on board the *Portsmouth*, and a request that he would bring any papers he might have with him bearing on his mission to Washington. This he did, and Captain Montgomery expressed himself satisfied with the fact of his mission and its importance. He explained that the general instructions of the service required a naval commander, in case he found any United States minister, or diplomat, in such circumstances, to take him home, or to render any protection in his power. He said that under this rule he should not hesitate to offer Mr. Thornton passage to Boston, if he would accept it, which it may be supposed the stranded delegate did most thankfully. Captain Montgomery did nothing by halves. He took Mr. Thornton as he would some foreign minister who had received and

den dismissal. He gave the representative of Oregon all the honors he could bestow and maintained this courtesy and kindness all the months of the long voyage. The captain and his son had occupied a handsome suite of rooms that he vacated, having two hammocks swung in the dining cabin for his own and his son's use. No protest availed. There was a spare room in the officers' quarters—the ward room and its accompaniments—but the guest of the ship was not allowed to be on a par merely with his subordinates. They shared the cabin daytimes and the voyage was very pleasant so far as the captain and his chief officers could make it. They stopped at Valparaiso, where the captain and the Oregon representative dined with the American consul.

Speaking of Valparaiso reminds me of an incident that formed the only shadow on the long voyage, an incident that Captain Montgomery probably never had knowledge of. Some time before, a Lieutenant Schenck, of the navy, when in Oregon, tried to locate a section of land for himself, but the provisional government refused to recognize claims where there was no residence. This matter was known and talked of on the *Portsmouth*, and Oregon's supreme judge was asked why it was so. The danger of claiming lands for non-residents was explained and the necessity of residence dwelt on, but a certain lieutenant of marines could not be satisfied. He day after day, and continually, harped on this matter and would not be pacified. Not a day passed that the lieutenant of marines did not engage Thornton in conversation, as he took his evening walk on deck, and would manage to lug in this question until in time it became a discourtesy. Recognizing his position on board, Thornton always went patiently over his arguments. At last his patience was exhausted, and he said: "I am sorry, lieutenant, not to be able to satisfy you, but the fault seems to be I cannot furnish you with brains." This was overheard and repeated, and the ward room officers were provoked that one of them should have been so annoying, while some thought Thornton too rude. It is true he was toasty in speaking so. The laugh seemed on the young man, and he must have been annoyed by the criticisms and jokes. He was determined to challenge Thornton to mortal combat when they should reach land. The first land was Valparaiso, but the challenge was not sent. Thornton heard of the intention, and announced that he should unhesitatingly refuse the challenge and might word the refusal in undignified language. It had gone so far that the officer of marines had his second picked out, and that "friend in need" was a son of Paul Revere! But, aside from this incident, the voyage on the *Portsmouth* was a delightful episode. He felt that Oregon in his person was shown every honor a distinguished officer and gentleman could pay.

To be continued.

The commencement exercises of the Pacific University of Forest Grove, take place beginning May 30th, in the Congregational church at that place. On Sunday, Rev. G. A. Rockwood, of Oregon City, will deliver the Baccalaureate sermon. Hon. Raleigh Stott will deliver an address before the Gamma Sigma society on May 31st. Graduating exercises take place Tuesday and Wednesday. Commencement address by Rev. T. E. Clapp of Portland.

We hoped to be able to present to our readers the programme of exercises of the Grange picnic to be held near Jefferson at an early date, but at a late hour we are informed that it was sent away to Albany for publication. There is an old saying about "hiding your candle under a bushel measure." Our granger friends evidently don't want to see a large attendance, or was it spite work?

Correspondence.

A Trip Through Marion County. 14

AUNSVILLE, Or., May 22, 1886.

Editor Willamette Farmer:

If brief mention of observations taken during a run towards the northern part of the county are of interest, here they are at your service. Traveling per a one horse bicycle, I first brought up at Salem; thence to Crossan's mill, on Pudding river, three miles east of Brooks. Here is a steam sawmill of capacity of 8,000 feet, per diem, of a first class article of fir lumber. My next objective point was the residence of a young farmer, native to the manor born, two miles east of Woodburn. Passing what remained of the night with these hospitable friends, the citizens of Woodburn returned my salutation at eight o'clock next morning. This appears a thriving place, pervaded with a refreshing appearance of recently. Here the railroads cross, and the car shop of the O. R. are located; C. W. Ridgeway is the urbane rustler in the R. R. and express office, and the honor of being the residence of B. F. Cooley, Democratic nominee for Representative, appertains to Woodburn. Gervais was the next point visited. This was one of the promising towns on the O. & C. R. R., but this condition appears to have given place to a sort of a flavor of mild decay, as though it had already outlived the day of its usefulness, and was seriously contemplating suicide. The only appearance of freshness was the new paint which was being put on the R. R. station house. Yet the citizens are lively and sociable, in marked contrast to their surroundings. Returning to Crossan's mill, I took dinner with a genial mill-man, and directed the nose of my buckskin horse towards Mt. Angel. This station on the O. R. Co's. road is five miles northwest of Silverton, and appears to be quite a thriving little burg. J. H. Palmer & Co., deal in general merchandise, and there is a hotel, and a saloon. Near this place is a settlement of Catholics, known I believe as the "Benedictine brotherhood." I did not visit their place, but meeting with Mr. "Mac" Cooley, whom I had known in our young days, I returned with him about two miles towards Silverton, to his place where I remained over night. Mr. C. showed me over his place, which is a hundred acres of extra first-class land, fairly well improved, and yet he is like the average restless Oregonian, and will sell out for a moderate consideration, and remove elsewhere. To Silverton in the morning. This place has an air of business and thrift, and its citizens are good natured and social. The location of Silverton is not felicitous, being in a low valley where the boreal breezes of winter, and the fervid post-meridian sun of summer, has the advantage of the citizens. This town is remarkable for being the residence and business place of one Fitz Gerald, a harnessmaker, who is perhaps the only man in America who is so popular that he neither advertises, nor even hangs out a sign lest he should be overwhelmed with more business than he can manage. Accompanied by this popular harnessmaker I entered the 'den' of the Silverton Appeal man, with whom I spent an hour in pleasant and profitable converse. He is undoubtedly an O. K. man, whom the citizens of Silverton will do well to sustain. While in this place I called on a lady who has caged, one of the so-called "blossom nippers." The bird in question is the *Hesperiphonia vesperina*; evening grosbeak; and lives on seeds, insects, and fruits. He is badly slandered by the blossom nipper theorists.

Looking back on Silverton from the pleasant hills, on my way home, I remembered the saying that "God made the country, and man made the town,"

and was impressed with the idea that the hand of providence was not conspicuously apparent in the making of Silverton. Wherever I went the crops appear promising, with the exception of cherries and pears, which are not up to average. But this spring is quite remarkable for the absence of the usual number of injurious insects, and the presence of unusual numbers of insectivorous birds. Probably accounted for by the mild winter which saved the birds, and the cold late spring, which, together with the birds, has got away with the insects. The winter wheat is now jointing freely; the grouse and quail are sitting, and the farmers are already looking forward to the time when the towns shall pour forth their hordes of pilfering trespassers, to traverse their fields with dogs and gun, tramping down their grain and shooting their birds. What a nuisance this is. Has the farmer no rights that the marauding sportsman is bound to respect? Let a farmer go on the premises of these rod and gun gentry and commit like trespass, and see how long it will be until he is fined and jailed. But that is a different matter, said one of these fellows to me on occasion. Of course it is. One is the farmers rights which are being outraged, the other is the "city fellers," that's the difference. Some additional legislation is needed in this matter, and a little more back bone on the part of the farmer; and a taste of fine and jail administered to the free and easy poacher would correct this evil somewhat. That the game, fish, wild fruits, etc., on a farmers land do not belong to him, and that it is not stealing to take them without his knowledge or consent, is an outrageous humbug. They are as much his property as his farm, animals or grain crops, and should be so declared by law, and the punishment for taking them should be the same, both legally and morally. Let us ask the coming Legislature to relieve us from the unjust and expensive nuisance, and no longer require us to raise birds, fish, and fruits for others who have no right to them, yet take them without compensation. The law should also be worded so as to define the rights of farmers, to include the property in question, in the public roads, either across, or over against his land. I am already advised that all the rights the public have in, or to a public road, is the right of peaceable transit; yet most persons, especially this gunning class, think they may commit almost any trespass they please, with impunity, in the public highway; and the statutes should especially define this matter for the benefit of all parties concerned. The farmer should certainly be given every facility for protecting his own against those having no respect for the rights of others. MATTESON.

STOCK SALE.

WHITEAKER, Or., May 21, 1886.

Editor Willamette Farmer:

I beg leave to report sales of stock as follows: Jessie Edwards, of Newburg, Oregon, sold that fine bull calf "John," out of Rose by Johnson Bull. To J. F. Davis, of Harrisburg, Oregon, one Shropshire, two years, "Buck;" Woolley Eyes, No. 3, by Pride of Montford, No. 3. G. W. HUNT.

Have you Taken S. L. R.?

Then you can do good by communicating to others an unfailing cure for Dyspepsia, Constipation, Headache, Biliousness and Kidney affections. "Having suffered from debility, headache, dizziness and loss of appetite, from an inactive liver, Simmons Liver Regulator was recommended by a friend. Procuring a bottle, I was greatly benefited in a short time, and consider it an almost indispensable household remedy. —J. M. Detterer, William Penn P. O., Montgomery Co. Pa.

We want 100,000 pounds of wool. Wm. Brown & Co., dealers in Boots and Shoes and Leather. The highest price paid for hides, pelts and furs, 231 Commercial street, Salem, Oregon. If.