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OREGON PIONEER HISTORY.

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

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The Cayuse War Inaugurated by the News of Whitman's Massacre.

In their new homes among the solitudes of the Pacific, the American settlers enjoyed the great blessing of peace. The Hudson Bay company was a Foreign corporation, with opposing, and at times conflicting interests, but the great humanity and Christian sympathy of its chief factor, Dr. McLoughlin, secured for them supplies and assistance that could not have been otherwise procured, upon terms that were liberal, considering place and distance. The Hudson Bay company might have been, in a covert way, inimical to Americans, and have greatly retarded settlement. It dispels all thought of ill-feeling and intention on the part of "the great monopoly," as some early writers style this company, to remember that kindness and assistance rendered Americans strengthened and encouraged an element that would certainly in time supplant English power and dethrone the then all powerful fur company. There had grown up a semi-barbaric empire among the savage wastes and great mountain ranges that occupied the wide continent to the north to Puget sound on the west to Hudson's bay on the Atlantic—a stretch of over 4000 miles from ocean to ocean.

The great chief factor possessed many of the qualities of a conqueror, and even more of the characteristics of a great ruler, for he had not only undisputed control of many men who represented civilization, but his name was respected and even revered as that of a mighty chieftain among the savage tribes west of the Rocky mountains. He and the company he represented were supreme over this great territory. Had he wished to combine the savage tribes under his dominion to sweep away missions and settlers, to free the mountains of independent trappers and hunters, it could have been easily done and it would have been difficult to fix the responsibility upon the Hudson Bay company of its chief. That he did not do so is plainly enough shown by the history of early missions and immigrations. His warm sympathy with many Americans was shown by his kind acts, generous deeds and genuine hospitality. So when war came the infant government turned toward the Hudson Bay company for assistance without a suspicion that it was implicated in the massacre, though at this time John McLoughlin was not its chief factor and the London direction had reserved what was considered his too liberal policy toward Americans.

The news of the Waiilatpu massacre came to the settlements of Western Oregon like a thunderbolt from a peaceful sky. McBean sent a messenger—a French Canadian—to Vancouver with the terrible story, and very singularly, ordered him not to give the news to Mr. Hinman, who was stationed at The Dalles mission, though he heard of a war party being sent for its destruction. Mr. Hinman furnishes this messenger a canoe and accompanied him to Vancouver, only to learn of the atrocity of Waiilatpu and the danger threatening his own people, as they were wind bound at Cape Horn. This action by McBean was inexcusable. The letters opened at Vancouver told the story and Hinman returned to The Dalles, sending word to Gov. Abernathy to hasten a small force there without an instant's delay. Mr. Douglas also sent an official account of the massacre and the news went hastening by the winter roads through the scattered settlements. It was indeed a "time that tried men's

souls." There were few regular routes, not many laid out roads, and mails were casual happenings rather than an organized system. The only government was the provisional organization, which was everything to the people in this emergency, as it gave coherence to public action, and character to the claim for assistance in the purchase of supplies and munitions of war.

The provisional legislature was in session for it was December when the news of the massacre came, suddenly and so unexpectedly, upon the peaceful Willamette valley. Gov. Abernathy immediately sent a message to the legislative assembly, in which he briefly announced the fact and urged "immediate and prompt action." He suggested "the propriety of applying to the Hudson's Bay company and the merchants of this place (Oregon City) for a loan to carry out whatever plan you may fix upon." He had faith that all expenses would be promptly met by the national government. Assistance must be sent to survivors and all persons in the upper country, and an escort to convey them to civilization.

It was a momentous time when this message reached the house and was read, together with the letters of McBean and Gov. Douglas, that conveyed the information of the massacre. Mr. Nesmith offered a resolution that was adopted, whereby the governor was authorized and required to raise and equip a company of riflemen not to exceed fifty men, with officers, and dispatch them forthwith to The Dalles mission station and hold possession until reinforcements can arrive. This resolution led to a meeting, called the same evening, that was numerously attended. Stirring remarks were made by Nesmith, Lee, Barlow and others, and the enlisting immediately commenced. Oregon City was a small village at that time, and there was no opportunity or time to spare for gathering people from the country. Forty-two names were signed to the roll, and such prompt action was had that in fifteen hours from the time the roll was signed this company of pioneer riflemen was on their way to the seat of war.

The columns of the Spectator, the only journal of that day, read as follows: "At 12 o'clock on the afternoon of Tuesday the company assembled at the city hotel, where they were presented with an appropriate flag by Judge Nesmith, on behalf of the ladies of Oregon City. With an appropriate address, Capt. Lee, on the part of the company, made an exceedingly happy reply, upon receiving the beautiful token of the patriotism of the lovely donors. Two hours after this presentation the company started, amid the firing of cannon and the cheers of assembled citizens." It spoke well for Oregon City, that in less than twenty-four hours her citizens enlisted such a company of noble and brave men, and armed, equipped and dispatched them for the seat of war. It is well worth mention that, hurried as was their departure, the ladies of the town made for them a battle-flag as a reminder of home and duty.

This band of riflemen consisted of the following-named persons and their descendants require no other patent of nobility than this record bestows:

Captain, H. A. G. Lee; lieutenants, J. Magone, J. E. Ross; commissary, C. H. Davenport; sergeants, J. S. Rinearson, C. W. Savage and Wm. Berry; corporals, Stephen Cummings and J. H. McMillen.

Privates:—L. B. Proctor, Geo. Moore, Lucius Marsh, Wm. Buckman, Joel McKee, T. Purvis, S. A. Jackson, H. Leavelly, Jacob Witchey, J. W. Morgan, C. Richardson, John Fleming, O. Tupper, A. C. Little, R. S. Tupper, I. Walgammotts, A. J. Thomas, John G. Gibson, Geo. Wesley, John Hiner, B. B. Rogers, H. W. Coe, Edw. Robson, G. H.

Bosworth, B. Brattin, Andrew Wise, Jacob Johnson, S. K. Barlow, D. Averson, J. C. Danford, Geo. Weston, John Bolton.

The news worked rapidly up the Willamette and down the Columbia; wherever it went men equipped themselves as best they could and started for the seat of war. Though not anticipated, it was an emergency not unexpected. The settler had constantly before his mind the possibilities that surrounded him. One of these was that the Indian tribes might any time combine to annihilate the American settlements. When war came it was not as if had been deemed possible, for it had been thought over, and talked over, around the pioneer firesides, and even the ways and means "committee of the whole" population had discussed the best way of meeting such a trial. They were men, too, not unused to danger and the vicissitudes of the frontier. The women and children, too, knew that war was a possibility and even probable and when the news came it found our "forbearers" not unprepared. At first the stories told were distorted or exaggerated, but soon the main facts became established and men commenced to move to the front. In many respects this was the critical period of Oregon history. Any weakness, or timidity, or hesitation then would have cost Americans the respect of all the Indians who surrounded them and might have encouraged a general Indian war. The emigrants of "the forties" were brave men and true. It required no "fiery cross" to summon them to the fray; no crusader's appeal was needed to rouse them to take the field. The first reports were uncertain and exaggerated, but the pioneer was not the man to invent rumors and circulate them. As a class they were truthful and reliable; the story of the massacre was soon abroad and as many of them had received favors at the hands of Whitman, of the Walla Walla mission, when coming into the country, and as the great majority respected and loved him for his good deeds to them and theirs, that fact added fuel to the flame and animated them for justice and vengeance, as well as for the safety and protection of their families and their property.

Men met seriously and discussed their common duty. There was no excitement or undue haste, nor undue slowness. After Nesmith addressed the riflemen, who left Oregon City upon sudden notice, he went up the valley to enlist a company in Polk county. It is not easy to gather particulars, because there was no daily press, and the Weekly Spectator was more of a looker-on than a chronicler. One would think that in that emergency the only newspaper in the county would have taken pride to record full particulars of passing events, but the pundits of journalism found it to their taste to bicker and quarrel over personal matters, instead of furnishing that age and this with truthful records of current doings, however important and exciting. Through the country the news spread "by word of mouth," and those who could do so gave of their substance, while others gave of their time and risked their lives. The young and active men took the field; they would receive a blanket from a neighbor, a gun from another; this man contributed a horse, that one a saddle and rigging, and perhaps all could furnish a quota of provisions. So the crusader was mounted, clothed, fed and armed, receiving what he lacked. Not standing on the order of his going, he went quickly. There was now active recruiting in all sections. Oregon City was the point where government centered and where troops gathered. The recruit, as soon as ready, had good-bye to the home spot and started by the shortest trails for Oregon City. If he came to some sequestered cabin, newly built on some home spot that was to be he

never doubted what his cheer would be. It might be boiled wheat and rough fare for the table, and a chance to spread his blankets on the puncheon floor for his bed, but he was roundly welcomed, had the best they had to give, and a blessing went with him as he went away. There was a hearty greeting at every pioneer's home for the man who went to fight their battle.

Besides the company raised and officered at Oregon City, another company was raised on French Prairie by Thomas McKay, among the Canadian French and half-breeds. Judge Grim, who settled near Aurora in the fall of 1847, describes this rendezvous and the enlisting of some fifty men, mostly half-breeds. There were assembled settlers from the district, and McKay was the moving spirit of the occasion. Mr. Grim had heard of him as an energetic and remarkable man, partly Indian himself, with some education and native wit enough to carry him through ordinary difficulties. He is described as riding like a centaur, the horse he bestrode seeming a part of himself. Some around him were on foot and some on horseback; people naturally grouped according to race and nationality. McKay would dash from one group to another, narrating the scenes of the massacre, the need of prompt action to secure the safety of the settlement, and urging those who could do so to "join the volunteers and go to the war." With eloquence, in polyglot style, he addressed the settlers—the Americans—in English. Turning to the French, he appealed to them, with fiery tones, in their mother tongue, while the next moment he would inspire the half-breeds with a torrent in their own vernacular, the hybrid Chinook. It was amazing to see and hear this hero of the wilds exhort, entreat and inspire—and not without effect, for his company of fifty men was raised on the ground that day.

Jealousy is shown to some extent by one of Oregon's most erudite historians, for he intimates that the half-breeds claimed too great a share of the glory of victory in the field. They were somewhat like the chivalrous sons of southern climes, who dash forward impetuously in the front of battle, while the northerners are slower on the charge, but fully as apt to hold all they gain. Many incidents are told of this gallant company, especially of Thomas and Charley McKay, were their leading spirits. W. H. Gray says the half-breeds would dash forward in full charge, but more often glad to fall back upon the American allies, who were always to be depended on. Mr. Shaw tells of the equestrianism of these veritable horsemen-of-the-plains, who rode as if they grew up on a cayuse's back. They were numerous on French Prairie and famous for their equestrian feats. Several at a time have been seen riding ill-broken animals, scarce wilder than themselves, with no saddle or bridle; perhaps a hair lariat was around the neck twisted round the jaw. Thus mounted they would perform exploits that even a trained rider of the hippodrome could wonder at. What Mr. Shaw noticed occurred in this campaign, on Butter creek, Eastern Oregon, when one of McKay's men ran down a coyote, and stooping from his saddle caught the creature by the tail and literally "thrashed the ground" with it. This was done in the presence of many, and such a feat is not often nor easily accomplished. The fact that this emergency called out such a number of those who had been British subjects, and were all Catholics, spoke well for the loyalty of the people of Oregon at that early time. It is pleasant to be able to record the fact and show that they did grand service in the field as will appear.

The pioneers of the forties accepted it as a serious duty to subdue the Cayuse nation and show them that the supremacy

of Americans must be unquestioned. The roads to Oregon City were used by those seeking marching orders, and very soon a small but efficient army was in the field. It was another duty of the time to procure supplies and arms and sustain a commissariat, as well as to provide quartermaster's stores. Going to war in an enemy's country, and in winter time, was no trivial affair, no holiday effort, no mere summer picnic. The massacre occurred in the last days of November, and the call to arms was issued early in December. It was the very dead of winter, and while some were opposed to moving at that season, the majority realized that no time was to be lost in inflicting a lesson on the Cayuses. To leave it for spring and summer would be to earn their contempt. In the summer they could scatter and live anywhere, while in winter they depended on supplies provided in the summer and fall and could neither leave them nor carry them with them. To campaign in the winter might be inconvenient, but if well conducted and actively prosecuted would be sure to bring them speedily to terms.

It was December when the American troops took the field, and midwinter when the young and active men of this region took up the line of march, by highways and byways, to Oregon City, to enlist for the war. Mr. John Minto tells me how he equipped for the war, though he afterwards joined Capt. Robinson to escort Jesse Applegate to California in search of help from any source that might be available there—State or national. He sold a yoke of cattle to secure a horse; Rev. J. H. Wilbur furnished him a "buffalo gun," as a large rifle then in use was commonly called. He remembers being present at a meeting of the older settlers, somewhat informal, held at the store of Mr. Thomas Cox, who occupied a small building among the grand oaks that stood once just north of where the Opera House is in Salem. There were present Mr. Cox, Daniel Delaney, Daniel Waldo, Jesse Looney, "Jimmy" Smith, W. H. Rector, T. D. Keizer, Townser Savage, the Methodist mission men and various others we cannot name. They met to talk over the situation and do something to provide the sinews of war. This meeting illustrates the situation, the feeling of the community, and the loyalty and self-sacrifice that pervaded it. Each man named what he could spare for the emergency. One could furnish a horse, another could equip it, a third had one or more guns. Blankets and bedding were needed for the winter campaign. It is probable, and indeed certain, that in every neighborhood of this region—so rich in men and women to make a State, but so poor in worldly goods—there were similar gatherings, spontaneous and earnest, to provide means to carry on the war. How different this from the way despots make conscriptions and levy taxes to gather men and munitions of war! The provisional governor and Legislature, organized and empowered by the few men who then settled Oregon, had only to recommend a course to be pursued to see it executed by the free will of a brave and self-sacrificing people.

The departments of the coming August Harpers are generously filled with banquet of nutritious diet. The Easy Chair provides the opening courses in lively paragraphs upon Reporter Scriptures, a Protestant Cathedral, International Copyright, O'Brien's Visit, and the Queens Jubilee. The Study serves the staple solid portions in Mr. Howell's views of Imaginative Literature and discussions of Tolstoi and other authors. The Monthly Record gives the compressed essence of the world's doings in four weeks. And the Drawer crowns the feast with a dessert of juicy anecdotes and spicy comicallies, introduced by Mr. Warner's essay on "Keeping a Diary," and illustrated by Frost and Du Mautier.