

# WASHINGTON IRVING

ASTORIA; OR,  
ANECDOTES OF AN  
ENTERPRISE BEYOND  
THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

**Washington Irving**  
**Astoria; Or, Anecdotes**  
**of an Enterprise Beyond**  
**the Rocky Mountains**

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# Washington Irving Astoria; Or, Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains

## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

IN THE COURSE of occasional visits to Canada many years since, I became intimately acquainted with some of the principal partners of the great Northwest Fur Company, who at that time lived in genial style at Montreal, and kept almost open house for the stranger. At their hospitable boards I occasionally met with partners, and clerks, and hardy fur traders from the interior posts; men who had passed years remote from civilized society, among distant and savage tribes, and who had wonders to recount of their wide and wild peregrinations, their hunting exploits, and their perilous adventures and hair-breadth escapes among the Indians. I was at an age when imagination lends its coloring to everything, and the stories of these Sinbads of the wilderness made the life of a trapper and fur trader perfect romance to me. I even meditated at one time a visit to the remote posts of the company in the boats which annually

ascended the lakes and rivers, being thereto invited by one of the partners; and I have ever since regretted that I was prevented by circumstances from carrying my intention into effect. From those early impressions, the grand enterprise of the great fur companies, and the hazardous errantry of their associates in the wild parts of our vast continent, have always been themes of charmed interest to me; and I have felt anxious to get at the details of their adventurous expeditions among the savage tribes that peopled the depths of the wilderness.

About two years ago, not long after my return from a tour upon the prairies of the far West, I had a conversation with my friend, Mr. John Jacob Astor, relative to that portion of our country, and to the adventurous traders to Santa Fe and the Columbia. This led him to advert to a great enterprise set on foot and conducted by him, between twenty and thirty years since, having for its object to carry the fur trade across the Rocky Mountains, and to sweep the shores of the Pacific.

Finding that I took an interest in the subject, he expressed a regret that the true nature and extent of his enterprise and its national character and importance had never been understood, and a wish that I would undertake to give an account of it. The suggestion struck upon the chord of early associations already vibrating in my mind. It occurred to me that a work of this kind might comprise a variety of those curious details, so interesting to me, illustrative of the fur trade; of its remote and adventurous enterprises, and of the various people, and tribes, and castes,

and characters, civilized and savage, affected by its operations. The journals, and letters, also, of the adventurers by sea and land employed by Mr. Astor in his comprehensive project, might throw light upon portions of our country quite out of the track of ordinary travel, and as yet but little known. I therefore felt disposed to undertake the task, provided documents of sufficient extent and minuteness could be furnished to me. All the papers relative to the enterprise were accordingly submitted to my inspection. Among them were journals and letters narrating expeditions by sea, and journeys to and fro across the Rocky Mountains by routes before untravelled, together with documents illustrative of savage and colonial life on the borders of the Pacific. With such material in hand, I undertook the work. The trouble of rummaging among business papers, and of collecting and collating facts from amidst tedious and commonplace details, was spared me by my nephew, Pierre M. Irving, who acted as my pioneer, and to whom I am greatly indebted for smoothing my path and lightening my labors.

As the journals, on which I chiefly depended, had been kept by men of business, intent upon the main object of the enterprise, and but little versed in science, or curious about matters not immediately bearing upon their interest, and as they were written often in moments of fatigue or hurry, amid the inconveniences of wild encampments, they were often meagre in their details, furnishing hints to provoke rather than narratives to satisfy inquiry. I have, therefore, availed myself occasionally

of collateral lights supplied by the published journals of other travellers who have visited the scenes described: such as Messrs. Lewis and Clarke, Bradbury, Breckenridge, Long, Franchere, and Ross Cox, and make a general acknowledgment of aid received from these quarters.

The work I here present to the public is necessarily of a rambling and somewhat disjointed nature, comprising various expeditions and adventures by land and sea. The facts, however, will prove to be linked and banded together by one grand scheme, devised and conducted by a master spirit; one set of characters, also, continues throughout, appearing occasionally, though sometimes at long intervals, and the whole enterprise winds up by a regular catastrophe; so that the work, without any labored attempt at artificial construction, actually possesses much of that unity so much sought after in works of fiction, and considered so important to the interest of every history.

WASHINGTON IRVING

# CHAPTER I

Objects of American Enterprise. – Gold Hunting and Fur Trading. – Their Effect on Colonization. – Early French Canadian Settlers. – Ottawa and Huron Hunters. – An Indian Trading Camp. Coureurs Des Bois, or Rangers of the Woods. – Their Roaming Life. – Their Revels and Excesses. – Licensed Traders. Missionaries. – Trading Posts. – Primitive French Canadian Merchant. – His Establishment and Dependents. – British Canadian Fur Merchant. – Origin of the Northwest Company. – Its Constitution. – Its Internal Trade. – A Candidate for the Company. – Privations in the Wilderness. – Northwest Clerks. Northwest Partners. – Northwest Nabobs. – Feudal Notions in the Forests. – The Lords of the Lakes. – Fort William. – Its Parliamentary Hall and Banqueting Room. – Wassailing in the Wilderness.

TWO leading objects of commercial gain have given birth to wide and daring enterprise in the early history of the Americas; the precious metals of the South, and the rich peltries of the North. While the fiery and magnificent Spaniard, inflamed with the mania for gold, has extended his discoveries and conquests over those brilliant countries scorched by the ardent sun of the tropics, the adroit and buoyant Frenchman, and the cool and calculating Briton, have pursued the less splendid, but no less lucrative, traffic in furs amidst the hyperborean regions of the

Canadas, until they have advanced even within the Arctic Circle.

These two pursuits have thus in a manner been the pioneers and precursors of civilization. Without pausing on the borders, they have penetrated at once, in defiance of difficulties and dangers, to the heart of savage countries: laying open the hidden secrets of the wilderness; leading the way to remote regions of beauty and fertility that might have remained unexplored for ages, and beckoning after them the slow and pausing steps of agriculture and civilization.

It was the fur trade, in fact, which gave early sustenance and vitality to the great Canadian provinces. Being destitute of the precious metals, at that time the leading objects of American enterprise, they were long neglected by the parent country. The French adventurers, however, who had settled on the banks of the St. Lawrence, soon found that in the rich peltries of the interior, they had sources of wealth that might almost rival the mines of Mexico and Peru. The Indians, as yet unacquainted with the artificial value given to some descriptions of furs, in civilized life, brought quantities of the most precious kinds and bartered them away for European trinkets and cheap commodities. Immense profits were thus made by the early traders, and the traffic was pursued with avidity.

As the valuable furs soon became scarce in the neighborhood of the settlements, the Indians of the vicinity were stimulated to take a wider range in their hunting expeditions; they were generally accompanied on these expeditions by some of the

traders or their dependents, who shared in the toils and perils of the chase, and at the same time made themselves acquainted with the best hunting and trapping grounds, and with the remote tribes, whom they encouraged to bring their peltries to the settlements. In this way the trade augmented, and was drawn from remote quarters to Montreal. Every now and then a large body of Ottawas, Hurons, and other tribes who hunted the countries bordering on the great lakes, would come down in a squadron of light canoes, laden with beaver skins, and other spoils of their year's hunting. The canoes would be unladen, taken on shore, and their contents disposed in order. A camp of birch bark would be pitched outside of the town, and a kind of primitive fair opened with that grave ceremonial so dear to the Indians. An audience would be demanded of the governor-general, who would hold the conference with becoming state, seated in an elbow-chair, with the Indians ranged in semicircles before him, seated on the ground, and silently smoking their pipes. Speeches would be made, presents exchanged, and the audience would break up in universal good humor.

Now would ensue a brisk traffic with the merchants, and all Montreal would be alive with naked Indians running from shop to shop, bargaining for arms, kettles, knives, axes, blankets, bright-colored cloths, and other articles of use or fancy; upon all which, says an old French writer, the merchants were sure to clear at least two hundred per cent. There was no money used in this traffic, and, after a time, all payment in spirituous liquors was

prohibited, in consequence of the frantic and frightful excesses and bloody brawls which they were apt to occasion.

Their wants and caprices being supplied, they would take leave of the governor, strike their tents, launch their canoes, and ply their way up the Ottawa to the lakes.

A new and anomalous class of men gradually grew out of this trade. These were called *coureurs des bois*, rangers of the woods; originally men who had accompanied the Indians in their hunting expeditions, and made themselves acquainted with remote tracts and tribes; and who now became, as it were, peddlers of the wilderness. These men would set out from Montreal with canoes well stocked with goods, with arms and ammunition, and would make their way up the mazy and wandering rivers that interlace the vast forests of the Canadas, coasting the most remote lakes, and creating new wants and habitudes among the natives. Sometimes they sojourned for months among them, assimilating to their tastes and habits with the happy facility of Frenchmen, adopting in some degree the Indian dress, and not unfrequently taking to themselves Indian wives.

Twelve, fifteen, eighteen months would often elapse without any tidings of them, when they would come sweeping their way down the Ottawa in full glee, their canoes laden down with packs of beaver skins. Now came their turn for revelry and extravagance. "You would be amazed," says an old writer already quoted, "if you saw how lewd these peddlers are when they return; how they feast and game, and how prodigal they are, not

only in their clothes, but upon their sweethearts. Such of them as are married have the wisdom to retire to their own houses; but the bachelors act just as an East Indiaman and pirates are wont to do; for they lavish, eat, drink, and play all away as long as the goods hold out; and when these are gone, they even sell their embroidery, their lace, and their clothes. This done, they are forced upon a new voyage for subsistence.”

Many of these *coureurs des bois* became so accustomed to the Indian mode of living, and the perfect freedom of the wilderness, that they lost relish for civilization, and identified themselves with the savages among whom they dwelt, or could only be distinguished from them by superior licentiousness. Their conduct and example gradually corrupted the natives, and impeded the works of the Catholic missionaries, who were at this time prosecuting their pious labors in the wilds of Canada.

To check these abuses, and to protect the fur trade from various irregularities practiced by these loose adventurers, an order was issued by the French government prohibiting all persons, on pain of death, from trading into the interior of the country without a license.

These licenses were granted in writing by the governor-general, and at first were given only to persons of respectability; to gentlemen of broken fortunes; to old officers of the army who had families to provide for; or to their widows. Each license permitted the fitting out of two large canoes with merchandise for the lakes, and no more than twenty-five licenses were to be

issued in one year. By degrees, however, private licenses were also granted, and the number rapidly increased. Those who did not choose to fit out the expeditions themselves, were permitted to sell them to the merchants; these employed the *coureurs des bois*, or rangers of the woods, to undertake the long voyages on shares, and thus the abuses of the old system were revived and continued.

The pious missionaries employed by the Roman Catholic Church to convert the Indians, did everything in their power to counteract the profligacy caused and propagated by these men in the heart of the wilderness. The Catholic chapel might often be seen planted beside the trading house, and its spire surmounted by a cross, towering from the midst of an Indian village, on the banks of a river or a lake. The missions had often a beneficial effect on the simple sons of the forest, but had little power over the renegades from civilization.

At length it was found necessary to establish fortified posts at the confluence of the rivers and the lakes for the protection of the trade, and the restraint of these profligates of the wilderness. The most important of these was at Michilimackinac, situated at the strait of the same name, which connects Lakes Huron and Michigan. It became the great interior mart and place of deposit, and some of the regular merchants who prosecuted the trade in person, under their licenses, formed establishments here. This, too, was a rendezvous for the rangers of the woods, as well those who came up with goods from Montreal as those who

returned with peltries from the interior. Here new expeditions were fitted out and took their departure for Lake Michigan and the Mississippi; Lake Superior and the Northwest; and here the peltries brought in return were embarked for Montreal.

The French merchant at his trading post, in these primitive days of Canada, was a kind of commercial patriarch. With the lax habits and easy familiarity of his race, he had a little world of self-indulgence and misrule around him. He had his clerks, canoe men, and retainers of all kinds, who lived with him on terms of perfect sociability, always calling him by his Christian name; he had his harem of Indian beauties, and his troop of halfbreed children; nor was there ever wanting a louting train of Indians, hanging about the establishment, eating and drinking at his expense in the intervals of their hunting expeditions.

The Canadian traders, for a long time, had troublesome competitors in the British merchants of New York, who inveigled the Indian hunters and the *coureurs des bois* to their posts, and traded with them on more favorable terms. A still more formidable opposition was organized in the Hudson's Bay Company, chartered by Charles II., in 1670, with the exclusive privilege of establishing trading houses on the shores of that bay and its tributary rivers; a privilege which they have maintained to the present day. Between this British company and the French merchants of Canada, feuds and contests arose about alleged infringements of territorial limits, and acts of violence and bloodshed occurred between their agents.

In 1762, the French lost possession of Canada, and the trade fell principally into the hands of British subjects. For a time, however, it shrunk within narrow limits. The old *coureurs des bois* were broken up and dispersed, or, where they could be met with, were slow to accustom themselves to the habits and manners of their British employers. They missed the freedom, indulgence, and familiarity of the old French trading houses, and did not relish the sober exactness, reserve, and method of the new-comers. The British traders, too, were ignorant of the country, and distrustful of the natives. They had reason to be so. The treacherous and bloody affairs of Detroit and Michilimackinac showed them the lurking hostility cherished by the savages, who had too long been taught by the French to regard them as enemies.

It was not until the year 1766, that the trade regained its old channels; but it was then pursued with much avidity and emulation by individual merchants, and soon transcended its former bounds. Expeditions were fitted out by various persons from Montreal and Michilimackinac, and rivalships and jealousies of course ensued. The trade was injured by their artifices to outbid and undermine each other; the Indians were debauched by the sale of spirituous liquors, which had been prohibited under the French rule. Scenes of drunkenness, brutality, and brawl were the consequence, in the Indian villages and around the trading houses; while bloody feuds took place between rival trading parties when they happened to encounter

each other in the lawless depths of the wilderness.

To put an end to these sordid and ruinous contentions, several of the principal merchants of Montreal entered into a partnership in the winter of 1783, which was augmented by amalgamation with a rival company in 1787. Thus was created the famous "Northwest Company," which for a time held a lordly sway over the wintry lakes and boundless forests of the Canadas, almost equal to that of the East India Company over the voluptuous climes and magnificent realms of the Orient.

The company consisted of twenty-three shareholders, or partners, but held in its employ about two thousand persons as clerks, guides, interpreters, and "voyageurs," or boatmen. These were distributed at various trading posts, established far and wide on the interior lakes and rivers, at immense distances from each other, and in the heart of trackless countries and savage tribes.

Several of the partners resided in Montreal and Quebec, to manage the main concerns of the company. These were called agents, and were personages of great weight and importance; the other partners took their stations at the interior posts, where they remained throughout the winter, to superintend the intercourse with the various tribes of Indians. They were thence called wintering partners.

The goods destined for this wide and wandering traffic were put up at the warehouses of the company in Montreal, and conveyed in batteaux, or boats and canoes, up the river Attawa, or Ottawa, which falls into the St. Lawrence near Montreal, and

by other rivers and portages, to Lake Nipising, Lake Huron, Lake Superior, and thence, by several chains of great and small lakes, to Lake Winnipeg, Lake Athabasca, and the Great Slave Lake. This singular and beautiful system of internal seas, which renders an immense region of wilderness so accessible to the frail bark of the Indian or the trader, was studded by the remote posts of the company, where they carried on their traffic with the surrounding tribes.

The company, as we have shown, was at first a spontaneous association of merchants; but, after it had been regularly organized, admission into it became extremely difficult. A candidate had to enter, as it were, "before the mast," to undergo a long probation, and to rise slowly by his merits and services. He began, at an early age, as a clerk, and served an apprenticeship of seven years, for which he received one hundred pounds sterling, was maintained at the expense of the company, and furnished with suitable clothing and equipments. His probation was generally passed at the interior trading posts; removed for years from civilized society, leading a life almost as wild and precarious as the savages around him; exposed to the severities of a northern winter, often suffering from a scarcity of food, and sometimes destitute for a long time of both bread and salt. When his apprenticeship had expired, he received a salary according to his deserts, varying from eighty to one hundred and sixty pounds sterling, and was now eligible to the great object of his ambition, a partnership in the company; though years might yet elapse

before he attained to that enviable station.

Most of the clerks were young men of good families, from the Highlands of Scotland, characterized by the perseverance, thrift, and fidelity of their country, and fitted by their native hardihood to encounter the rigorous climate of the North, and to endure the trials and privations of their lot; though it must not be concealed that the constitutions of many of them became impaired by the hardships of the wilderness, and their stomachs injured by occasional famishing, and especially by the want of bread and salt. Now and then, at an interval of years, they were permitted to come down on a visit to the establishment at Montreal, to recruit their health, and to have a taste of civilized life; and these were brilliant spots in their existence.

As to the principal partners, or agents, who resided in Montreal and Quebec, they formed a kind of commercial aristocracy, living in lordly and hospitable style. Their posts, and the pleasures, dangers, adventures, and mishaps which they had shared together in their wild wood life, had linked them heartily to each other, so that they formed a convivial fraternity. Few travellers that have visited Canada some thirty years since, in the days of the M'Tavishes, the M'Gillivrays, the M'Kenzies, the Frobishers, and the other magnates of the Northwest, when the company was in all its glory, but must remember the round of feasting and revelry kept up among these hyperborean nabobs.

Sometimes one or two partners, recently from the interior posts, would make their appearance in New York, in the course

of a tour of pleasure and curiosity. On these occasions there was a degree of magnificence of the purse about them, and a peculiar propensity to expenditure at the goldsmith's and jeweler's for rings, chains, brooches, necklaces, jeweled watches, and other rich trinkets, partly for their own wear, partly for presents to their female acquaintances; a gorgeous prodigality, such as was often to be noticed in former times in Southern planters and West India creoles, when flush with the profits of their plantations.

To behold the Northwest Company in all its state and grandeur, however, it was necessary to witness an annual gathering at the great interior place of conference established at Fort William, near what is called the Grand Portage, on Lake Superior. Here two or three of the leading partners from Montreal proceeded once a year to meet the partners from the various trading posts of the wilderness, to discuss the affairs of the company during the preceding year, and to arrange plans for the future.

On these occasions might be seen the change since the unceremonious times of the old French traders; now the aristocratic character of the Briton shone forth magnificently, or rather the feudal spirit of the Highlander. Every partner who had charge of an interior post, and a score of retainers at his Command, felt like the chieftain of a Highland clan, and was almost as important in the eyes of his dependents as of himself. To him a visit to the grand conference at Fort William was a most important event, and he repaired there as to a meeting of

parliament.

The partners from Montreal, however, were the lords of the ascendant; coming from the midst of luxurious and ostentatious life, they quite eclipsed their compeers from the woods, whose forms and faces had been battered and hardened by hard living and hard service, and whose garments and equipments were all the worse for wear. Indeed, the partners from below considered the whole dignity of the company as represented in their persons, and conducted themselves in suitable style. They ascended the rivers in great state, like sovereigns making a progress: or rather like Highland chieftains navigating their subject lakes. They were wrapped in rich furs, their huge canoes freighted with every convenience and luxury, and manned by Canadian voyageurs, as obedient as Highland clansmen. They carried up with them cooks and bakers, together with delicacies of every kind, and abundance of choice wines for the banquets which attended this great convocation. Happy were they, too, if they could meet with some distinguished stranger; above all, some titled member of the British nobility, to accompany them on this stately occasion, and grace their high solemnities.

Fort William, the scene of this important annual meeting, was a considerable village on the banks of Lake Superior. Here, in an immense wooden building, was the great council hall, as also the banqueting chamber, decorated with Indian arms and accoutrements, and the trophies of the fur trade. The house swarmed at this time with traders and voyageurs, some from

Montreal, bound to the interior posts; some from the interior posts, bound to Montreal. The councils were held in great state, for every member felt as if sitting in parliament, and every retainer and dependent looked up to the assemblage with awe, as to the House of Lords. There was a vast deal of solemn deliberation, and hard Scottish reasoning, with an occasional swell of pompous declamation.

These grave and weighty councils were alternated by huge feasts and revels, like some of the old feasts described in Highland castles. The tables in the great banqueting room groaned under the weight of game of all kinds; of venison from the woods, and fish from the lakes, with hunters' delicacies, such as buffalos' tongues, and beavers' tails, and various luxuries from Montreal, all served up by experienced cooks brought for the purpose. There was no stint of generous wine, for it was a hard-drinking period, a time of loyal toasts, and bacchanalian songs, and brimming bumpers.

While the chiefs thus revelled in hall, and made the rafters resound with bursts of loyalty and old Scottish songs, chanted in voices cracked and sharpened by the northern blast, their merriment was echoed and prolonged by a mongrel legion of retainers, Canadian voyageurs, half-breeds, Indian hunters, and vagabond hangers-on who feasted sumptuously without on the crumbs that fell from their table, and made the welkin ring with old French ditties, mingled with Indian yelps and yellings.

Such was the Northwest Company in its powerful and

prosperous days, when it held a kind of feudal sway over a vast domain of lake and forest. We are dwelling too long, perhaps, upon these individual pictures, endeared to us by the associations of early life, when, as yet a stripling youth, we have sat at the hospitable boards of the “mighty Northwesters,” the lords of the ascendant at Montreal, and gazed with wondering and inexperienced eye at the baronial wassailing, and listened with astonished ear to their tales of hardship and adventures. It is one object of our task, however, to present scenes of the rough life of the wilderness, and we are tempted to fix these few memorials of a transient state of things fast passing into oblivion; for the feudal state of Fort William is at an end, its council chamber is silent and deserted; its banquet hall no longer echoes to the burst of loyalty, or the “auld world” ditty; the lords of the lakes and forests have passed away; and the hospitable magnates of Montreal where are they?

## CHAPTER II

Rise of the Mackinaw Company. – Attempt of the American Government to Counteract Foreign Influence Over the Indian Tribes. – John Jacob Astor. – His Birth-Place. – His Arrival in the United States. – What First Turned His Attention to the Fur Trade. – His Character, Enterprises, and Success. – His Communications With the American Government. – Origin of the American Fur Company

THE success of the Northwest Company stimulated further enterprise in this opening and apparently boundless field of profit. The traffic of that company lay principally in the high northern latitudes, while there were immense regions to the south and west, known to abound with valuable peltries; but which, as yet, had been but little explored by the fur trader. A new association of British merchants was therefore formed, to prosecute the trade in this direction. The chief factory was established at the old emporium of Michilimackinac, from which place the association took its name, and was commonly called the Mackinaw Company.

While the Northwesters continued to push their enterprises into the hyperborean regions from their stronghold at Fort William, and to hold almost sovereign sway over the tribes of the upper lakes and rivers, the Mackinaw Company sent forth

their light perogues and barks, by Green Bay, Fox River, and the Wisconsin, to that areas artery of the West, the Mississippi; and down that stream to all its tributary rivers. In this way they hoped soon to monopolize the trade with all the tribes on the southern and western waters, and of those vast tracts comprised in ancient Louisiana.

The government of the United States began to view with a wary eye the growing influence thus acquired by combinations of foreigners, over the aboriginal tribes inhabiting its territories, and endeavored to counteract it. For this purpose, as early as 1796, the government sent out agents to establish rival trading houses on the frontier, so as to supply the wants of the Indians, to link their interests and feelings with those of the people of the United States, and to divert this important branch of trade into national channels.

The expedition, however, was unsuccessful, as most commercial expedients are prone to be, where the dull patronage of government is counted upon to outvie the keen activity of private enterprise. What government failed to effect, however, with all its patronage and all its agents, was at length brought about by the enterprise and perseverance of a single merchant, one of its adopted citizens; and this brings us to speak of the individual whose enterprise is the especial subject of the following pages; a man whose name and character are worthy of being enrolled in the history of commerce, as illustrating its noblest aims and soundest maxims. A few brief anecdotes of his

early life, and of the circumstances which first determined him to the branch of commerce of which we are treating, cannot be but interesting.

John Jacob Astor, the individual in question, was born in the honest little German village of Waldorf, near Heidelberg, on the banks of the Rhine. He was brought up in the simplicity of rural life, but, while yet a mere stripling, left his home, and launched himself amid the busy scenes of London, having had, from his very boyhood, a singular presentiment that he would ultimately arrive at great fortune.

At the close of the American Revolution he was still in London, and scarce on the threshold of active life. An elder brother had been for some few years resident in the United States, and Mr. Astor determined to follow him, and to seek his fortunes in the rising country. Investing a small sum which he had amassed since leaving his native village, in merchandise suited to the American market, he embarked, in the month of November, 1783, in a ship bound to Baltimore, and arrived in Hampton Roads in the month of January. The winter was extremely severe, and the ship, with many others, was detained by the ice in and about Chesapeake Bay for nearly three months.

During this period, the passengers of the various ships used occasionally to go on shore, and mingle sociably together. In this way Mr. Astor became acquainted with a countryman of his, a furrier by trade. Having had a previous impression that this might be a lucrative trade in the New World, he made many

inquiries of his new acquaintance on the subject, who cheerfully gave him all the information in his power as to the quality and value of different furs, and the mode of carrying on the traffic. He subsequently accompanied him to New York, and, by his advice, Mr. Astor was induced to invest the proceeds of his merchandise in furs. With these he sailed from New York to London in 1784, disposed of them advantageously, made himself further acquainted with the course of the trade, and returned the same year to New York, with a view to settle in the United States.

He now devoted himself to the branch of commerce with which he had thus casually been made acquainted. He began his career, of course, on the narrowest scale; but he brought to the task a persevering industry, rigid economy, and strict integrity. To these were added an aspiring spirit that always looked upwards; a genius bold, fertile, and expansive; a sagacity quick to grasp and convert every circumstance to its advantage, and a singular and never wavering confidence of signal success.

As yet, trade in peltries was not organized in the United States, and could not be said to form a regular line of business. Furs and skins were casually collected by the country traders in their dealings with the Indians or the white hunters, but the main supply was derived from Canada. As Mr. Astor's means increased, he made annual visits to Montreal, where he purchased furs from the houses at that place engaged in the trade. These he shipped from Canada to London, no direct trade being allowed from that colony to any but the mother country.

In 1794 or '95, a treaty with Great Britain removed the restrictions imposed upon the trade with the colonies, and opened a direct commercial intercourse between Canada and the United States. Mr. Astor was in London at the time, and immediately made a contract with the agents of the Northwest Company for furs. He was now enabled to import them from Montreal into the United States for the home supply, and to be shipped thence to different parts of Europe, as well as to China, which has ever been the best market for the richest and finest kinds of peltry.

The treaty in question provided, likewise, that the military posts occupied by the British within the territorial limits of the United States, should be surrendered. Accordingly, Oswego, Niagara, Detroit, Michilimackinac, and other posts on the American side of the lakes, were given up. An opening was thus made for the American merchant to trade on the confines of Canada, and within the territories of the United States. After an interval of some years, about 1807, Mr. Astor embarked in this trade on his own account. His capital and resources had by this time greatly augmented, and he had risen from small beginnings to take his place among the first merchants and financiers of the country. His genius had ever been in advance of his circumstances, prompting him to new and wide fields of enterprise beyond the scope of ordinary merchants. With all his enterprise and resources however, he soon found the power and influence of the Michilimackinac (or Mackinaw) Company too

great for him, having engrossed most of the trade within the American borders.

A plan had to be devised to enable him to enter into successful competition. He was aware of the wish of the American government, already stated, that the fur trade within its boundaries should be in the hands of American citizens, and of the ineffectual measures it had taken to accomplish that object. He now offered, if aided and protected by government, to turn the whole of that trade into American channels. He was invited to unfold his plans to government, and they were warmly approved, though the executive could give no direct aid.

Thus countenanced, however, he obtained, in 1809, a charter from the legislature of the State of New York, incorporating a company under the name of "The American Fur Company," with a capital of one million of dollars, with the privilege of increasing it to two millions. The capital was furnished by himself he, in fact, constituted the company; for, though he had a board of directors, they were merely nominal; the whole business was conducted on his plans and with his resources, but he preferred to do so under the imposing and formidable aspect of a corporation, rather than in his individual name, and his policy was sagacious and effective.

As the Mackinaw Company still continued its rivalry, and as the fur trade would not advantageously admit of competition, he made a new arrangement in 1811, by which, in conjunction with certain partners of the Northwest Company, and other persons

engaged in the fur trade, he bought out the Mackinaw Company, and merged that and the American Fur Company into a new association, to be called the "Southwest Company." This he likewise did with the privity and approbation of the American government.

By this arrangement Mr. Astor became proprietor of one half of the Indian establishments and goods which the Mackinaw Company had within the territory of the Indian country in the United States, and it was understood that the whole was to be surrendered into his hands at the expiration of five years, on condition that the American Company would not trade within the British dominions.

Unluckily, the war which broke out in 1812 between Great Britain and the United States suspended the association; and, after the war, it was entirely dissolved; Congress having passed a law prohibiting the British fur traders from prosecuting their enterprises within the territories of the United States.

## CHAPTER III

Fur Trade in the Pacific – American Coasting Voyages – Russian Enterprises. – Discovery of the Columbia River. – Carver’s Project to Found a Settlement There. – Mackenzie’s Expedition. – Lewis and Clarke’s Journey Across the Rocky Mountains – Mr. Astor’s Grand Commercial Scheme. – His Correspondence on the Subject With Mr. Jefferson. – His Negotiations With the Northwest Company. – His Steps to Carry His Scheme Into Effect.

WHILE the various companies we have noticed were pushing their enterprises far and wide in the wilds of Canada, and along the course of the great western waters, other adventurers, intent on the same objects, were traversing the watery wastes of the Pacific and skirting the northwest coast of America. The last voyage of that renowned but unfortunate discoverer, Captain Cook, had made known the vast quantities of the sea-otter to be found along that coast, and the immense prices to be obtained for its fur in China. It was as if a new gold coast had been discovered. Individuals from various countries dashed into this lucrative traffic, so that in the year 1792, there were twenty-one vessels under different flags, plying along the coast and trading with the natives. The greater part of them were American, and owned by Boston merchants. They generally remained on the coast and about the adjacent seas, for two years, carrying on

as wandering and adventurous a commerce on the water as did the traders and trappers on land. Their trade extended along the whole coast from California to the high northern latitudes. They would run in near shore, anchor, and wait for the natives to come off in their canoes with peltries. The trade exhausted at one place, they would up anchor and off to another. In this way they would consume the summer, and when autumn came on, would run down to the Sandwich Islands and winter in some friendly and plentiful harbor. In the following year they would resume their summer trade, commencing at California and proceeding north: and, having in the course of the two seasons collected a sufficient cargo of peltries, would make the best of their way to China. Here they would sell their furs, take in teas, nankeens, and other merchandise, and return to Boston, after an absence of two or three years.

The people, however, who entered most extensively and effectively in the fur trade of the Pacific, were the Russians. Instead of making casual voyages, in transient ships, they established regular trading houses in the high latitudes, along the northwest coast of America, and upon the chain of the Aleutian Islands between Kamtschatka and the promontory of Alaska.

To promote and protect these enterprises, a company was incorporated by the Russian government with exclusive privileges, and a capital of two hundred and sixty thousand pounds sterling; and the sovereignty of that part of the American continent, along the coast of which the posts had been

established, was claimed by the Russian crown, on the plea that the land had been discovered and occupied by its subjects.

As China was the grand mart for the furs collected in these quarters, the Russians had the advantage over their competitors in the trade. The latter had to take their peltries to Canton, which, however, was a mere receiving mart, from whence they had to be distributed over the interior of the empire and sent to the northern parts, where there was the chief consumption. The Russians, on the contrary, carried their furs, by a shorter voyage, directly to the northern parts of the Chinese empire; thus being able to afford them in the market without the additional cost of internal transportation.

We come now to the immediate field of operation of the great enterprise we have undertaken to illustrate.

Among the American ships which traded along the northwest coast in 1792, was the Columbia, Captain Gray, of Boston. In the course of her voyage she discovered the mouth of a large river in lat. 46 19' north. Entering it with some difficulty, on account of sand-bars and breakers, she came to anchor in a spacious bay. A boat was well manned, and sent on shore to a village on the beach, but all the inhabitants fled excepting the aged and infirm. The kind manner in which these were treated, and the presents given them, gradually lured back the others, and a friendly intercourse took place. They had never seen a ship or a white man. When they had first descried the Columbia, they had supposed it a floating island; then some monster of the

deep; but when they saw the boat putting for shore with human beings on board, they considered them cannibals sent by the Great Spirit to ravage the country and devour the inhabitants. Captain Gray did not ascend the river farther than the bay in question, which continues to bear his name. After putting to sea, he fell in with the celebrated discoverer, Vancouver, and informed him of his discovery, furnished him with a chart which he had made of the river. Vancouver visited the river, and his lieutenant, Broughton, explored it by the aid of Captain Gray's chart; ascending it upwards of one hundred miles, until within view of a snowy mountain, to which he gave the name of Mt. Hood, which it still retains.

The existence of this river, however, was known long before the visits of Gray and Vancouver, but the information concerning it was vague and indefinite, being gathered from the reports of Indians. It was spoken of by travellers as the Oregon, and as the Great River of the West. A Spanish ship is said to have been wrecked at the mouth, several of the crew of which lived for some time among the natives. The Columbia, however, is believed to be the first ship that made a regular discovery and anchored within its waters, and it has since generally borne the name of that vessel. As early as 1763, shortly after the acquisition of the Canadas by Great Britain, Captain Jonathan Carver, who had been in the British provincial army, projected a journey across the continent between the forty-third and forty-sixth degrees of northern latitude to the shores of the

Pacific Ocean. His objects were to ascertain the breadth of the continent at its broadest part, and to determine on some place on the shores of the Pacific, where government might establish a post to facilitate the discovery of a northwest passage, or a communication between Hudson's Bay and the Pacific Ocean. This place he presumed would be somewhere about the Straits of Annian, at which point he supposed the Oregon disembogued itself. It was his opinion, also, that a settlement on this extremity of America would disclose new sources of trade, promote many useful discoveries, and open a more direct communication with China and the English settlements in the East Indies, than that by the Cape of Good Hope or the Straits of Magellan.<sup>1</sup> This enterprising and intrepid traveller was twice baffled in individual efforts to accomplish this great journey. In 1774, he was joined in the scheme by Richard Whitworth, a member of Parliament, and a man of wealth. Their enterprise was projected on a broad and bold plan. They were to take with them fifty or sixty men, artificers and mariners. With these they were to make their way up one of the branches of the Missouri, explore the mountains for the source of the Oregon, or River of the West, and sail down that river to its supposed exit, near the Straits of Annian. Here they were to erect a fort, and build the vessels necessary to carry their discoveries by sea into effect. Their plan had the sanction of the British government, and grants and other requisites were nearly completed, when the breaking out of the American Revolution

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<sup>1</sup> Carver's Travels, Introd. b. iii. Philad. 1796.

once more defeated the undertaking.<sup>2</sup>

The expedition of Sir Alexander Mackenzie in 1793, across the continent to the Pacific Ocean, which he reached in lat. 52 20' 48", again suggested the possibility of linking together the trade of both sides of the continent. In lat. 52 30' he had descended a river for some distance which flowed towards the south, and was called by the natives Tacoutche Tesse, and which he erroneously supposed to be the Columbia. It was afterwards ascertained that it emptied itself in lat. 49 degrees, whereas the mouth of the Columbia is about three degrees further south.

When Mackenzie some years subsequently published an account of his expeditions, he suggested the policy of opening an intercourse between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and forming regular establishments through the interior and at both extremes, as well as along the coasts and islands. By this means, he observed, the entire command of the fur trade of North America might be obtained from lat. 48 north to the pole, excepting that portion held by the Russians, for as to the American adventurers who had hitherto enjoyed the traffic along the northwest coast, they would instantly disappear, he added, before a well regulated trade.

A scheme of this kind, however, was too vast and hazardous for individual enterprise; it could only be undertaken by a company under the sanction and protection of a government; and as there might be a clashing of claims between the Hudson's Bay

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<sup>2</sup> Carver's Travels, p. 360.

and Northwest Company, the one holding by right of charter, the other by right of possession, he proposed that the two companies should coalesce in this great undertaking. The long-cherished jealousies of these two companies, however, were too deep and strong to allow them to listen to such counsel.

In the meantime the attention of the American government was attracted to the subject, and the memorable expedition under Messrs. Lewis and Clarke fitted out. These gentlemen, in 1804, accomplished the enterprise which had been projected by Carver and Whitworth in 1774. They ascended the Missouri, passed through the stupendous gates of the Rocky Mountains, hitherto unknown to white men; discovered and explored the upper waters of the Columbia, and followed that river down to its mouth, where their countryman, Gray, had anchored about twelve years previously. Here they passed the winter, and returned across the mountains in the following spring. The reports published by them of their expedition demonstrated the practicability of establishing a line of communication across the continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

It was then that the idea presented itself to the mind of Mr. Astor, of grasping with his individual hand this great enterprise, which for years had been dubiously yet desirously contemplated by powerful associations and maternal governments. For some time he revolved the idea in his mind, gradually extending and maturing his plans as his means of executing them augmented. The main feature of his scheme was to establish a line of trading

posts along the Missouri and the Columbia, to the mouth of the latter, where was to be founded the chief trading house or mart. Inferior posts would be established in the interior, and on all the tributary streams of the Columbia, to trade with the Indians; these posts would draw their supplies from the main establishment, and bring to it the peltries they collected. Coasting craft would be built and fitted out, also at the mouth of the Columbia, to trade, at favorable seasons, all along the northwest coast, and return, with the proceeds of their voyages, to this place of deposit. Thus all the Indian trade, both of the interior and the coast, would converge to this point, and thence derive its sustenance.

A ship was to be sent annually from New York to this main establishment with reinforcements and supplies, and with merchandise suited to the trade. It would take on board the furs collected during the preceding year, carry them to Canton, invest the proceeds in the rich merchandise of China, and return thus freighted to New York. As, in extending the American trade along the coast to the northward, it might be brought into the vicinity of the Russian Fur Company, and produce a hostile rivalry, it was part of the plan of Mr. Astor to conciliate the good-will of that company by the most amicable and beneficial arrangements. The Russian establishment was chiefly dependent for its supplies upon transient trading vessels from the United States. These vessels, however, were often of more harm than advantage. Being owned by private adventurers,

or casual voyagers, who cared only for present profit, and had no interest in the permanent prosperity of the trade, they were reckless in their dealings with the natives, and made no scruple of supplying them with fire-arms. In this way several fierce tribes in the vicinity of the Russian posts, or within the range of their trading excursions, were furnished with deadly means of warfare, and rendered troublesome and dangerous neighbors.

The Russian government had made representations to that of the United States of these malpractices on the part of its citizens, and urged to have this traffic in arms prohibited; but, as it did not infringe any municipal law, our government could not interfere. Yet, still it regarded, with solicitude, a traffic which, if persisted in, might give offence to Russia, at that time almost the only friendly power to us. In this dilemma the government had applied to Mr. Astor, as one conversant in this branch of trade, for information that might point out a way to remedy the evil. This circumstance had suggested to him the idea of supplying the Russian establishment regularly by means of the annual ship that should visit the settlement at the mouth of the Columbia (or Oregon); by this means the casual trading vessels would be excluded from those parts of the coast where their malpractices were so injurious to the Russians.

Such is a brief outline of the enterprise projected by Mr. Astor, but which continually expanded in his mind. Indeed it is due to him to say that he was not actuated by mere motives of individual profit. He was already wealthy beyond the ordinary

desires of man, but he now aspired to that honorable fame which is awarded to men of similar scope of mind, who by their great commercial enterprises have enriched nations, peopled wildernesses, and extended the bounds of empire. He considered his projected establishment at the mouth of the Columbia as the emporium to an immense commerce; as a colony that would form the germ of a wide civilization; that would, in fact, carry the American population across the Rocky Mountains and spread it along the shores of the Pacific, as it already animated the shores of the Atlantic. As Mr. Astor, by the magnitude of his commercial and financial relations, and the vigor and scope of his self-taught mind, had elevated himself into the consideration of government and the communion and correspondence with leading statesmen, he, at an early period, communicated his schemes to President Jefferson, soliciting the countenance of government. How highly they were esteemed by that eminent man, we may judge by the following passage, written by him some time afterwards.

<sup>3</sup>I remember well having invited your proposition on this subject,\*\*\* and encouraged it with the assurance of every facility and protection which the government could properly afford. I considered, as a great public acquisition, the commencement

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<sup>3</sup> On this point Mr. Jefferson's memory was in error. The proposition alluded to was the one, already mentioned, for the establishment of an American Fur Company in the Atlantic States. The great enterprise beyond the mountains, that was to sweep the shores of the Pacific, originated in the mind of Mr. Astor, and was proposed by him to the government.

of a settlement on that point of the western coast of America, and looked forward with gratification to the time when its descendants should have spread themselves through the whole length of that coast, covering it with free and independent Americans, unconnected with us but by the ties of blood and interest, and enjoying like us the rights of self-government.”

The cabinet joined with Mr. Jefferson in warm approbation of the plan, and held out assurance of every protection that could, consistently with general policy, be afforded. Mr. Astor now prepared to carry his scheme into prompt execution. He had some competition, however, to apprehend and guard against. The Northwest Company, acting feebly and partially upon the suggestions of its former agent, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, had pushed one or two advanced trading posts across the Rocky Mountains, into a tract of country visited by that enterprising traveller, and since named New Caledonia. This tract lay about two degrees north of the Columbia, and intervened between the territories of the United States and those of Russia. Its length was about five hundred and fifty miles, and its breadth, from the mountains to the Pacific, from three hundred to three hundred and fifty geographic miles.

Should the Northwest Company persist in extending their trade in that quarter, their competition might be of serious detriment to the plans of Mr. Astor. It is true they would contend with him to a vast disadvantage, from the checks and restrictions to which they were subjected. They were straitened on one side

by the rivalry of the Hudson's Bay Company; then they had no good post on the Pacific where they could receive supplies by sea for their establishments beyond the mountains; nor, if they had one, could they ship their furs thence to China, that great mart for peltries; the Chinese trade being comprised in the monopoly of the East India Company. Their posts beyond the mountains had to be supplied in yearly expeditions, like caravans, from Montreal, and the furs conveyed back in the same way, by long, precarious, and expensive routes, across the continent. Mr. Astor, on the contrary, would be able to supply his proposed establishment at the mouth of the Columbia by sea, and to ship the furs collected there directly to China, so as to undersell the Northwest Company in the great Chinese market.

Still, the competition of two rival companies west of the Rocky Mountains could not but prove detrimental to both, and fraught with those evils, both to the trade and to the Indians, that had attended similar rivalries in the Canadas. To prevent any contest of the kind, therefore, he made known his plan to the agents of the Northwest Company, and proposed to interest them, to the extent of one third, in the trade thus to be opened. Some correspondence and negotiation ensued. The company were aware of the advantages which would be possessed by Mr. Astor should he be able to carry his scheme into effect; but they anticipated a monopoly of the trade beyond the mountains by their establishments in New Caledonia, and were loth to share it with an individual who had already proved a formidable

competitor in the Atlantic trade. They hoped, too, by a timely move, to secure the mouth of the Columbia before Mr. Astor would be able to put his plans into operation; and, that key to the internal trade once in their possession, the whole country would be at their command. After some negotiation and delay, therefore, they declined the proposition that had been made to them, but subsequently despatched a party for the mouth of the Columbia, to establish a post there before any expedition sent out by Mr. Astor might arrive.

In the meantime Mr. Astor, finding his overtures rejected, proceeded fearlessly to execute his enterprise in face of the whole power of the Northwest Company. His main establishment once planted at the mouth of the Columbia, he looked with confidence to ultimate success. Being able to reinforce and supply it amply by sea, he would push his interior posts in every direction up the rivers and along the coast; supplying the natives at a lower rate, and thus gradually obliging the Northwest Company to give up the competition, relinquish New Caledonia, and retire to the other side of the mountains. He would then have possession of the trade, not merely of the Columbia and its tributaries, but of the regions farther north, quite to the Russian possessions. Such was a part of his brilliant and comprehensive plan.

He now proceeded, with all diligence, to procure proper agents and coadjutors, habituated to the Indian trade and to the life of the wilderness. Among the clerks of the Northwest Company were several of great capacity and experience, who had

served out their probationary terms, but who, either through lack of interest and influence, or a want of vacancies, had not been promoted. They were consequently much dissatisfied, and ready for any employment in which their talents and acquirements might be turned to better account.

Mr. Astor made his overtures to several of these persons, and three of them entered into his views. One of these, Mr. Alexander M'Kay, had accompanied Sir Alexander Mackenzie in both of his expeditions to the northwest coast of America in 1789 and 1793. The other two were Duncan M'Dougal and Donald M'Kenzie. To these were subsequently added Mr. Wilson Price Hunt, of New Jersey. As this gentleman was a native born citizen of the United States, a person of great probity and worth, he was selected by Mr. Astor to be his chief agent, and to represent him in the contemplated establishment.

On the 23d of June, 1810, articles of agreement were entered into between Mr. Astor and those four gentlemen, acting for themselves and for the several persons who had already agreed to become, or should thereafter become, associated under the firm of "The Pacific Fur Company."

According to these articles, Mr. Astor was to be at the head of the company, and to manage its affairs in New York. He was to furnish vessels, goods, provisions, arms, ammunition, and all other requisites for the enterprise at first cost and charges, provided that they did not, at any time, involve an advance of more than four hundred thousand dollars.

The stock of the company was to be divided into a hundred equal shares, with the profits accruing thereon. Fifty shares were to be at the disposition of Mr. Astor, and the other fifty to be divided among the partners and their associates.

Mr. Astor was to have the privilege of introducing other persons into the connection as partners, two of whom, at least, should be conversant with the Indian trade, and none of them entitled to more than three shares.

A general meeting of the company was to be held annually at Columbia River, for the investigation and regulation of its affairs; at which absent members might be represented, and might vote by proxy under certain specified conditions.

The association, if successful, was to continue for twenty years; but the parties had full power to abandon and dissolve it within the first five years, should it be found unprofitable. For this term Mr. Astor covenanted to bear all the loss that might be incurred; after which it was to be borne by all the partners, in proportion to their respective shares.

The parties of the second part were to execute faithfully such duties as might be assigned to them by a majority of the company on the northwest coast, and to repair to such place or places as the majority might direct.

An agent, appointed for the term of five years, was to reside at the principal establishment on the northwest coast, and Wilson Price Hunt was the one chosen for the first term. Should the interests of the concern at any time require his absence, a person

was to be appointed, in general meeting, to take his place.

Such were the leading conditions of this association; we shall now proceed to relate the various hardy and eventful expeditions, by sea and land, to which it gave rise.

## CHAPTER IV

Two Expeditions Set on Foot. – The Tonquin and Her Crew. – Captain Thorn, His Character. – The Partners and Clerks – Canadian Voyageurs, Their Habits, Employments, Dress, Character, Songs – Expedition of a Canadian Boat and Its Crew by Land and Water. – Arrival at New York. – Preparations for a Sea Voyage. – Northwest Braggarts. – Underhand Precautions – Letter of Instructions.

IN prosecuting his great scheme of commerce and colonization, two expeditions were devised by Mr. Astor, one by sea, the other by land. The former was to carry out the people, stores, ammunition, and merchandise, requisite for establishing a fortified trading post at the mouth of Columbia River. The latter, conducted by Mr. Hunt, was to proceed up the Missouri, and across the Rocky Mountains, to the same point; exploring a line of communication across the continent and noting the places where interior trading posts might be established. The expedition by sea is the one which comes first under consideration.

A fine ship was provided called the Tonquin, of two hundred and ninety tons burden, mounting ten guns, with a crew of twenty men. She carried an assortment of merchandise for trading with the natives of the seaboard and of the interior, together with the frame of a schooner, to be employed in the coasting trade. Seeds also were provided for the cultivation of the soil, and nothing

was neglected for the necessary supply of the establishment. The command of the ship was intrusted to Jonathan Thorn, of New York, a lieutenant in the United States navy, on leave of absence. He was a man of courage and firmness, who had distinguished himself in our Tripolitan war, and, from being accustomed to naval discipline, was considered by Mr. Astor as well fitted to take charge of an expedition of the kind. Four of the partners were to embark in the ship, namely, Messrs. M'Kay, M'Dougal, David Stuart, and his nephew, Robert Stuart. Mr. M'Dougal was empowered by Mr. Astor to act as his proxy in the absence of Mr. Hunt, to vote for him and in his name, on any question that might come before any meeting of the persons interested in the voyage.

Besides the partners, there were twelve clerks to go out in the ship, several of them natives of Canada, who had some experience in the Indian trade. They were bound to the service of the company for five years, at the rate of one hundred dollars a year, payable at the expiration of the term, and an annual equipment of clothing to the amount of forty dollars. In case of ill conduct they were liable to forfeit their wages and be dismissed; but, should they acquit themselves well, the confident expectation was held out to them of promotion, and partnership. Their interests were thus, to some extent, identified with those of the company.

Several artisans were likewise to sail in the ship, for the supply of the colony; but the most peculiar and characteristic part of this

motley embarkation consisted of thirteen Canadian “voyageurs,” who had enlisted for five years. As this class of functionaries will continually recur in the course of the following narrations, and as they form one of those distinct and strongly marked castes or orders of people, springing up in this vast continent out of geographical circumstances, or the varied pursuits, habitudes, and origins of its population, we shall sketch a few of their characteristics for the information of the reader.

The “voyageurs” form a kind of confraternity in the Canadas, like the arrieros, or carriers of Spain, and, like them, are employed in long internal expeditions of travel and traffic: with this difference, that the arrieros travel by land, the voyageurs by water; the former with mules and horses, the latter with batteaux and canoes. The voyageurs may be said to have sprung up out of the fur trade, having originally been employed by the early French merchants in their trading expeditions through the labyrinth of rivers and lakes of the boundless interior. They were coeval with the coureurs des bois, or rangers of the woods, already noticed, and, like them, in the intervals of their long, arduous, and laborious expeditions, were prone to pass their time in idleness and revelry about the trading posts or settlements; squandering their hard earnings in heedless conviviality, and rivaling their neighbors, the Indians, in indolent indulgence and an imprudent disregard of the morrow.

When Canada passed under British domination, and the old French trading houses were broken up, the voyageurs, like the

coureurs des bois, were for a time disheartened and disconsolate, and with difficulty could reconcile themselves to the service of the new-comers, so different in habits, manners, and language from their former employers. By degrees, however, they became accustomed to the change, and at length came to consider the British fur traders, and especially the members of the Northwest Company, as the legitimate lords of creation.

The dress of these people is generally half civilized, half savage. They wear a capot or surcoat, made of a blanket, a striped cotton shirt, cloth trousers, or leathern leggins, moccasins of deer-skin, and a belt of variegated worsted, from which are suspended the knife, tobacco-pouch, and other implements. Their language is of the same piebald character, being a French patois, embroidered with Indian and English words and phrases.

The lives of the voyageurs are passed in wild and extensive roving, in the service of individuals, but more especially of the fur traders. They are generally of French descent, and inherit much of the gayety and lightness of heart of their ancestors, being full of anecdote and song, and ever ready for the dance. They inherit, too, a fund of civility and complaisance; and, instead of that hardness and grossness which men in laborious life are apt to indulge towards each other, they are mutually obliging and accommodating; interchanging kind offices, yielding each other assistance and comfort in every emergency, and using the familiar appellations of "cousin" and "brother" when there is in fact no relationship. Their natural good-will is probably

heightened by a community of adventure and hardship in their precarious and wandering life.

No men are more submissive to their leaders and employers, more capable of enduring hardship, or more good-humored under privations. Never are they so happy as when on long and rough expeditions, toiling up rivers or coasting lakes; encamping at night on the borders, gossiping round their fires, and bivouacking in the open air. They are dextrous boatmen, vigorous and adroit with the oar and paddle, and will row from morning until night without a murmur. The steersman often sings an old traditionary French song, with some regular burden in which they all join, keeping time with their oars; if at any time they flag in spirits or relax in exertion, it is but necessary to strike up a song of the kind to put them all in fresh spirits and activity. The Canadian waters are vocal with these little French chansons, that have been echoed from mouth to mouth and transmitted from father to son, from the earliest days of the colony; and it has a pleasing effect, in a still golden summer evening, to see a batteau gliding across the bosom of a lake and dipping its oars to the cadence of these quaint old ditties, or sweeping along in full chorus on a bright sunny morning, down the transparent current of one of the Canada rivers.

But we are talking of things that are fast fading away! The march of mechanical invention is driving everything poetical before it. The steamboats, which are fast dispelling the wildness and romance of our lakes and rivers, and aiding to subdue the

world into commonplace, are proving as fatal to the race of the Canadian voyageurs as they have been to that of the boatmen of the Mississippi. Their glory is departed. They are no longer the lords of our internal seas, and the great navigators of the wilderness. Some of them may still occasionally be seen coasting the lower lakes with their frail barks, and pitching their camps and lighting their fires upon the shores; but their range is fast contracting to those remote waters and shallow and obstructed rivers unvisited by the steamboat. In the course of years they will gradually disappear; their songs will die away like the echoes they once awakened, and the Canadian voyageurs will become a forgotten race, or remembered, like their associates, the Indians, among the poetical images of past times, and as themes for local and romantic associations.

An instance of the buoyant temperament and the professional pride of these people was furnished in the gay and braggart style in which they arrived at New York to join the enterprise. They were determined to regale and astonish the people of the "States" with the sight of a Canadian boat and a Canadian crew. They accordingly fitted up a large but light bark canoe, such as is used in the fur trade; transported it in a wagon from the banks of the St. Lawrence to the shores of Lake Champlain; traversed the lake in it, from end to end; hoisted it again in a wagon and wheeled it off to Lansingburgh, and there launched it upon the waters of the Hudson. Down this river they plied their course merrily on a fine summer's day, making its banks resound for the first time with

their old French boat songs; passing by the villages with whoop and halloo, so as to make the honest Dutch farmers mistake them for a crew of savages. In this way they swept, in full song and with regular flourish of the paddle, round New York, in a still summer evening, to the wonder and admiration of its inhabitants, who had never before witnessed on their waters, a nautical apparition of the kind.

Such was the variegated band of adventurers about to embark in the Tonquin on this arduous and doubtful enterprise. While yet in port and on dry land, in the bustle of preparation and the excitement of novelty, all was sunshine and promise. The Canadians, especially, who, with their constitutional vivacity, have a considerable dash of the gascon, were buoyant and boastful, and great brag arts as to the future; while all those who had been in the service of the Northwest Company, and engaged in the Indian trade, plumed themselves upon their hardihood and their capacity to endure privations. If Mr. Astor ventured to hint at the difficulties they might have to encounter, they treated them with scorn. They were “northwesters;” men seasoned to hardships, who cared for neither wind nor weather. They could live hard, lie hard, sleep hard, eat dogs! – in a word they were ready to do and suffer anything for the good of the enterprise. With all this profession of zeal and devotion, Mr. Astor was not overconfident of the stability and firm faith of these mercurial beings. He had received information, also, that an armed brig from Halifax, probably at the instigation of the

Northwest Company, was hovering on the coast, watching for the Tonquin, with the purpose of impressing the Canadians on board of her, as British subjects, and thus interrupting the voyage. It was a time of doubt and anxiety, when the relations between the United States and Great Britain were daily assuming a more precarious aspect and verging towards that war which shortly ensued. As a precautionary measure, therefore, he required that the voyageurs, as they were about to enter into the service of an American association, and to reside within the limits of the United States, should take the oaths of naturalization as American citizens. To this they readily agreed, and shortly afterward assured him that they had actually done so. It was not until after they had sailed that he discovered that they had entirely deceived him in the matter.

The confidence of Mr. Astor was abused in another quarter. Two of the partners, both of them Scotchmen, and recently in the service of the Northwest Company, had misgivings as to an enterprise which might clash with the interests and establishments protected by the British flag. They privately waited upon the British minister, Mr. Jackson, then in New York, laid open to him the whole scheme of Mr. Astor, though intrusted to them in confidence, and dependent, in a great measure, upon secrecy at the outset for its success, and inquired whether they, as British subjects, could lawfully engage in it. The reply satisfied their scruples, while the information they imparted excited the surprise and admiration of Mr. Jackson, that a private individual

should have conceived and set on foot at his own risk and expense so great an enterprise.

This step on the part of those gentlemen was not known to Mr. Astor until some time afterwards, or it might have modified the trust and confidence reposed in them.

To guard against any interruption to the voyage by the armed brig, said to be off the harbor, Mr. Astor applied to Commodore Rodgers, at that time commanding at New York, to give the Tonquin safe convoy off the coast. The commodore having received from a high official source assurance of the deep interest which the government took in the enterprise, sent directions to Captain Hull, at that time cruising off the harbor, in the frigate Constitution, to afford the Tonquin the required protection when she should put to sea.

Before the day of embarkation, Mr. Astor addressed a letter of instruction to the four partners who were to sail in the ship. In this he enjoined them, in the most earnest manner, to cultivate harmony and unanimity, and recommended that all differences of opinions on points connected with the objects and interests of the voyage should be discussed by the whole, and decided by a majority of votes. He, moreover, gave them especial caution as to their conduct on arriving at their destined port; exhorting them to be careful to make a favorable impression upon the wild people among whom their lot and the fortunes of the enterprise would be cast. "If you find them kind," said he, "as I hope you will, be so to them. If otherwise, act with caution and forbearance, and

convince them that you come as friends.”

With the same anxious forethought he wrote a letter of instructions to Captain Thorn, in which he urged the strictest attention to the health of himself and his crew, and to the promotion of good-humor and harmony on board his ship. “To prevent any misunderstanding,” added he, “will require your particular good management.” His letter closed with an injunction of wariness in his intercourse with the natives, a subject on which Mr. Astor was justly sensible he could not be too earnest. “I must recommend you,” said he, “to be particularly careful on the coast, and not to rely too much on the friendly disposition of the natives. All accidents which have as yet happened there arose from too much confidence in the Indians.”

The reader will bear these instructions in mind, as events will prove their wisdom and importance, and the disasters which ensued in consequence of the neglect of them.

# CHAPTER V

Sailing of the Tonquin. – A Rigid Commander and a Reckless Crew. – Landsmen on Shipboard. – Fresh-Water Sailors at Sea. – Lubber Nests. – Ship Fare. – A Labrador Veteran – Literary Clerks. – Curious Travellers. – Robinson Crusoe’s Island. – Quarter-Deck Quarrels. – Falkland Islands. – A Wild-Goose Chase. – Port Egmont. – Epitaph Hunting. – Old Mortality – Penguin Shooting. – Sportsmen Left in the Lurch. – A Hard Pull. – Further Altercations. – Arrival at Owyhee.

ON the eighth of September, 1810, the Tonquin put to sea, where she was soon joined by the frigate Constitution. The wind was fresh and fair from the southwest, and the ship was soon out of sight of land and free from the apprehended danger of interruption. The frigate, therefore, gave her “God speed,” and left her to her course.

The harmony so earnestly enjoined by Mr. Astor on this heterogeneous crew, and which had been so confidently promised in the buoyant moments of preparation, was doomed to meet with a check at the very outset.

Captain Thorn was an honest, straightforward, but somewhat dry and dictatorial commander, who, having been nurtured in the system and discipline of a ship of war, and in a sacred opinion of the supremacy of the quarter-deck, was disposed to be absolute

lord and master on board of his ship. He appears, moreover, to have had no great opinion, from the first, of the persons embarked with him – He had stood by with surly contempt while they vaunted so bravely to Mr. Astor of all they could do and all they could undergo; how they could face all weathers, put up with all kinds of fare, and even eat dogs with a relish, when no better food was to be had. He had set them down as a set of landlubbers and braggadocios, and was disposed to treat them accordingly. Mr. Astor was, in his eyes, his only real employer, being the father of the enterprise, who furnished all funds and bore all losses. The others were mere agents and subordinates, who lived at his expense. He evidently had but a narrow idea of the scope and nature of the enterprise, limiting his views merely to his part of it; everything beyond the concerns of his ship was out of his sphere; and anything that interfered with the routine of his nautical duties put him in a passion.

The partners, on the other hand, had been brought up in the service of the Northwest Company, and in a profound idea of the importance, dignity, and authority of a partner. They already began to consider themselves on a par with the M'Tavishes, the M'Gillivrays, the Frobishers, and the other magnates of the Northwest, whom they had been accustomed to look up to as the great ones of the earth; and they were a little disposed, perhaps, to wear their suddenly-acquired honors with some air of pretension. Mr. Astor, too, had put them on their mettle with respect to the captain, describing him as a gunpowder fellow who would

command his ship in fine style, and, if there was any fighting to do, would “blow all out of the water.”

Thus prepared to regard each other with no very cordial eye, it is not to be wondered at that the parties soon came into collision. On the very first night Captain Thorn began his man-of-war discipline by ordering the lights in the cabin to be extinguished at eight o'clock.

The pride of the partners was immediately in arms. This was an invasion of their rights and dignities not to be borne. They were on board of their own ship, and entitled to consult their ease and enjoyment. M'Dougal was the champion of their cause. He was an active, irritable, fuming, vainglorious little man, and elevated in his own opinion, by being the proxy of Mr. Astor. A violent altercation ensued, in the course of which Thorn threatened to put the partners in irons should they prove refractory; upon which M'Dougal seized a pistol and swore to be the death of the captain should he ever offer such an indignity. It was some time before the irritated parties could be pacified by the more temperate bystanders.

Such was the captain's outset with the partners. Nor did the clerks stand much higher in his good graces; indeed, he seems to have regarded all the landsmen on board his ship as a kind of live lumber, continually in the way. The poor voyageurs, too, continually irritated his spleen by their “lubberly” and unseemly habits, so abhorrent to one accustomed to the cleanliness of a man-of-war. These poor fresh-water sailors, so vainglorious on

shore, and almost amphibious when on lakes and rivers, lost all heart and stomach the moment they were at sea. For days they suffered the doleful rigors and retchings of sea-sickness, lurking below in their berths in squalid state, or emerging now and then like spectres from the hatchways, in capotes and blankets, with dirty nightcaps, grizzly beard, lantern visage and unhappy eye, shivering about the deck, and ever and anon crawling to the sides of the vessel, and offering up their tributes to the windward, to infinite annoyance of the captain.

His letters to Mr. Astor, wherein he pours forth the bitterness of his soul, and his seamanlike impatience of what he considers the "lubberly" character and conduct of those around him, are before us, and are amusingly characteristic. The honest captain is full of vexation on his own account, and solicitude on account of Mr. Astor, whose property he considers at the mercy of a most heterogeneous and wasteful crew.

As to the clerks, he pronounced them mere pretenders, not one of whom had ever been among the Indians, nor farther to the northwest than Montreal, nor of higher rank than barkeeper of a tavern or marker of a billiard-table, excepting one, who had been a school-master, and whom he emphatically sets down for "as foolish a pedant as ever lived."

Then as to the artisans and laborers who had been brought from Canada and shipped at such expense, the three most respectable, according to the captain's account, were culprits, who had fled from Canada on account of their misdeeds; the

rest had figured in Montreal as draymen, barbers, waiters, and carriage drivers, and were the most helpless, worthless beings “that ever broke sea-biscuit.”

It may easily be imagined what a series of misunderstandings and cross-purposes would be likely to take place between such a crew and such a commander. The captain, in his zeal for the health and cleanliness of his ship, would make sweeping visitations to the “lubber nests” of the unlucky “voyageurs” and their companions in misery, ferret them out of their berths, make them air and wash themselves and their accoutrements, and oblige them to stir about briskly and take exercise.

Nor did his disgust and vexation cease when all hands had recovered from sea-sickness, and become accustomed to the ship, for now broke out an alarming keenness of appetite that threatened havoc to the provisions. What especially irritated the captain was the daintiness of some of his cabin passengers. They were loud in their complaints of the ship’s fare, though their table was served with fresh pork, hams, tongues, smoked beef, and puddings. “When thwarted in their cravings for delicacies,” said he, “they would exclaim it was d-d hard they could not live as they pleased upon their own property, being on board of their own ship, freighted with their own merchandise. And these,” added he, “are the fine fellows who made such boast that they could ‘eat dogs.’”

In his indignation at what he termed their effeminacy, he would swear that he would never take them to sea again “without

having Fly-market on the fore-castle, Covent-garden on the poop, and a cool spring from Canada in the maintop.”

As they proceeded on their voyage and got into the smooth seas and pleasant weather of the tropics, other annoyances occurred to vex the spirit of the captain. He had been crossed by the irritable mood of one of the partners; he was now excessively annoyed by the good-humor of another. This was the elder Stuart, who was an easy soul, and of a social disposition. He had seen life in Canada, and on the coast of Labrador; had been a fur trader in the former, and a fisherman on the latter; and, in the course of his experience, had made various expeditions with voyageurs. He was accustomed, therefore, to the familiarity which prevails between that class and their superiors, and the gossipings which take place among them when seated round a fire at their encampments. Stuart was never so happy as when he could seat himself on the deck with a number of these men round him, in camping style, smoke together, passing the pipe from mouth to mouth, after the manner of the Indians, sing old Canadian boat-songs, and tell stories about their hardships and adventures, in the course of which he rivaled Sinbad in his long tales of the sea, about his fishing exploits on the coast of Labrador.

This gossiping familiarity shocked the captain's notions of rank and subordination, and nothing was so abhorrent to him as the community of pipe between master and man, and their mingling in chorus in the outlandish boat-songs.

Then there was another whimsical source of annoyance to him. Some of the young clerks, who were making their first voyage, and to whom everything was new and strange, were, very rationally, in the habit of taking notes and keeping journals. This was a sore abomination to the honest captain, who held their literary pretensions in great contempt. "The collecting of materials for long histories of their voyages and travels," said he, in his letter to Mr. Astor, "appears to engross most of their attention." We can conceive what must have been the crusty impatience of the worthy navigator, when, on any trifling occurrence in the course of the voyage, quite commonplace in his eyes, he saw these young landsmen running to record it in their journals; and what indignant glances he must have cast to right and left, as he worried about the deck, giving out his orders for the management of the ship, surrounded by singing, smoking, gossiping, scribbling groups, all, as he thought, intent upon the amusement of the passing hour, instead of the great purposes and interests of the voyage.

It is possible the captain was in some degree right in his notions. Though some of the passengers had much to gain by the voyage, none of them had anything positively to lose. They were mostly young men, in the heyday of life; and having got into fine latitudes, upon smooth seas, with a well-stored ship under them, and a fair wind in the shoulder of the sail, they seemed to have got into a holiday world, and were disposed to enjoy it. That craving desire, natural to untravelled men of fresh and lively minds, to

see strange lands, and to visit scenes famous in history or fable, was expressed by some of the partners and clerks, with respect to some of the storied coasts and islands that lay within their route. The captain, however, who regarded every coast and island with a matter-of-fact eye, and had no more associations connected with them than those laid down in his sea-chart, considered all this curiosity as exceedingly idle and childish. "In the first part of the voyage," says he in his letter, "they were determined to have it said they had been in Africa, and therefore insisted on stopping at the Cape de Verdes. Next they said the ship should stop on the coast of Patagonia, for they must see the large and uncommon inhabitants of that place. Then they must go to the island where Robinson Crusoe had so long lived. And lastly, they were determined to see the handsome inhabitants of Easter Island."

To all these resolves, the captain opposed his peremptory veto, as "contrary to instructions." Then would break forth an unavailing explosion of wrath on the part of certain of the partners, in the course of which they did not even spare Mr. Astor for his act of supererogation in furnishing orders for the control of the ship while they were on board, instead of leaving them to be the judges where it would be best for her to touch, and how long to remain. The choleric M'Dougal took the lead in these railings, being, as has been observed, a little puffed up with the idea of being Mr. Astor's proxy.

The captain, however, became only so much the more crusty

and dogged in his adherence to his orders, and touchy and harsh in his dealings with the passengers, and frequent altercations ensued. He may in some measure have been influenced by his seamanlike impatience of the interference of landsmen, and his high notions of naval etiquette and quarter-deck authority; but he evidently had an honest, trusty concern for the interests of his employer. He pictured to himself the anxious projector of the enterprise, who had disbursed so munificently in its outfit, calculating on the zeal, fidelity, and singleness of purpose of his associates and agents; while they, on the other hand, having a good ship at their disposal and a deep pocket at home to bear them out, seemed ready to loiter on every coast, and amuse themselves in every port.

On the fourth of December they came in sight of the Falkland Islands. Having been for some time on an allowance of water, it was resolved to anchor here and obtain a supply. A boat was sent into a small bay to take soundings. Mr. M'Dougal and Mr. M'Kay took this occasion to go on shore, but with a request from the captain that they would not detain the ship. Once on shore, however, they were in no haste to obey his orders, but rambled about in search of curiosities. The anchorage proving unsafe, and water difficult to be procured, the captain stood out to sea, and made repeated signals for those on shore to rejoin the ship, but it was not until nine at night that they came on board.

The wind being adverse, the boat was again sent on shore on the following morning, and the same gentlemen again landed,

but promised to come off at a moment's warning; they again forgot their promise in their eager pursuit of wild geese and seawolves. After a time the wind hauled fair, and signals were made for the boat. Half an hour elapsed but no boat put off. The captain reconnoitered the shore with his glass, and, to his infinite vexation, saw the loiterers in the full enjoyment of their "wildgoose-chase." Nettled to the quick, he immediately made sail. When those on shore saw the ship actually under way, they embarked with all speed, but had a hard pull of eight miles before they got on board, and then experienced but a grim reception, notwithstanding that they came well laden with the spoils of the chase.

Two days afterwards, on the seventh of December, they anchored at Fort Egmont, in the same island, where they remained four days taking in water and making repairs. This was a joyous time for the landsmen. They pitched a tent on shore, had a boat at their command, and passed their time merrily in rambling about the island, and coasting along the shores, shooting sealions, seals, foxes, geese, ducks, and penguins. None were keener in pursuit of this kind of game than M'Dougal and David Stuart; the latter was reminded of aquatic sports on the coast of Labrador, and his hunting exploits in the Northwest.

In the meantime the captain addressed himself steadily to the business of his ship, scorning the holiday spirit and useless pursuits of his emancipated messmates, and warning them, from time to time, not to wander away nor be out of hail. They

promised, as usual, that the ship should never experience a moment's detention on their account, but, as usual, forgot their promise.

On the morning of the 11th, the repairs being all finished, and the water casks replenished, the signal was given to embark, and the ship began to weigh anchor. At this time several of the passengers were dispersed about the island, amusing themselves in various ways. Some of the young men had found two inscriptions, in English, over a place where two unfortunate mariners had been buried in this desert island. As the inscriptions were worn out by the time and weather, they were playing the part of "Old Mortality," and piously renewing them. The signal from the ship summoned them from their labors; they saw the sails unfurled, and that she was getting under way. The two sporting partners, however, Mr. M'Dougal and David Stuart, had strolled away to the south of the island in pursuit of penguins. It would never do to put off without them, as there was but one boat to convey the whole.

While this delay took place on shore, the captain was storming on board. This was the third time his orders had been treated with contempt, and the ship wantonly detained, and it should be the last; so he spread all sail and put to sea, swearing he would leave the laggards to shift for themselves. It was in vain that those on board made remonstrances and entreaties, and represented the horrors of abandoning men upon a sterile and uninhabited island; the sturdy captain was inflexible.

In the meantime the penguin hunters had joined the engravers of tombstones, but not before the ship was already out at sea. They all, to the number of eight, threw themselves into their boat, which was about twenty feet in length, and rowed with might and main. For three hours and a half did they tug anxiously and severely at the oar, swashed occasionally by the surging waves of the open sea, while the ship inexorably kept on her course, and seemed determined to leave them behind.

On board the ship was the nephew of David Stuart, a young man of spirit and resolution. Seeing, as he thought, the captain obstinately bent upon abandoning his uncle and the others, he seized a pistol, and in a paroxysm of wrath swore he would blow out the captain's brains, unless he put about or shortened sail.

Fortunately for all parties, the wind just then came ahead, and the boat was enabled to reach the ship; otherwise, disastrous circumstances might have ensued. We can hardly believe that the captain really intended to carry his threat into full effect, and rather think he meant to let the laggards off for a long pull and a hearty fright. He declared, however, in his letter to Mr. Astor, that he was serious in his threats, and there is no knowing how far such an iron man may push his notions of authority.

"Had the wind," writes he, "(unfortunately) not hauled ahead soon after leaving the harbor's mouth, I should positively have left them; and, indeed, I cannot but think it an unfortunate circumstance for you that it so happened, for the first loss in this instance would, in my opinion, have proved the best, as they seem

to have no idea of the value of property, nor any apparent regard for your interest, although interwoven with their own.”

This, it must be confessed, was acting with a high hand, and carrying a regard to the owner's property to a dangerous length. Various petty feuds occurred also between him and the partners in respect to the goods on board ship, some articles of which they wished to distribute for clothing among the men, or for other purposes which they deemed essential. The captain, however, kept a mastiff watch upon the cargo, and growled and snapped if they but offered to touch box or bale. “It was contrary to orders; it would forfeit his insurance; it was out of all rule.” It was in vain they insisted upon their right to do so, as part owners, and as acting for the good of the enterprise; the captain only stuck to his point the more stanchly. They consoled themselves, therefore, by declaring, that as soon as they made land, they would assert their rights, and do with ship and cargo as they pleased.

Beside these feuds between the captain and the partners, there were feuds between the partners themselves, occasioned, in some measure, by jealousy of rank. M'Dougal and M'Kay began to draw plans for the fort, and other buildings of the intended establishment. They agreed very well as to the outline and dimensions, which were on a sufficiently grand scale; but when they came to arrange the details, fierce disputes arose, and they would quarrel by the hour about the distribution of the doors and windows. Many were the hard words and hard names bandied between them on these occasions, according to

the captain's account. Each accused the other of endeavoring to assume unwarrantable power, and take the lead; upon which Mr. M'Dougal would vauntingly lay down Mr. Astor's letter, constituting him his representative and proxy, a document not to be disputed.

These wordy contests, though violent, were brief; "and within fifteen minutes," says the captain, "they would be caressing each other like children."

While all this petty anarchy was agitating the little world within the Tonquin, the good ship prosperously pursued her course, doubled Cape Horn on the 25th of December, careered across the bosom of the Pacific, until, on the 11th of February, the snowy peaks of Owyhee were seen brightening above the horizon.

## CHAPTER VI

Owyhee. – Sandwich Islanders – Their Nautical Talents. – Tamaahmaah. – His Navy. – His Negotiations. – Views of Mr. Astor With Respect to the Sandwich Islands – Karakakooa. – Royal Monopoly of Pork. – Description of the Islanders – Gayeties on Shore. – Chronicler of the Island. – Place Where Captain Cook was Killed. – John Young, a Nautical Governor. – His Story. – Waititi – A Royal Residence. – A Royal Visit – Grand Ceremonials. – Close Dealing – A Royal Pork Merchant – Grievances of a Matter-of-Fact Man.

OWYHEE, or Hawaii, as it is written by more exact orthographers, is the largest of the cluster, ten in number, of the Sandwich Islands. It is about ninety-seven miles in length, and seventy-eight in breadth, rising gradually into three pyramidal summits or cones; the highest, Mouna Roa, being eighteen thousand feet above the level of the sea, so as to domineer over the whole archipelago, and to be a landmark over a wide extent of ocean. It remains a lasting monument of the enterprising and unfortunate Captain Cook, who was murdered by the natives of this island.

The Sandwich Islanders, when first discovered, evinced a character superior to most of the savages of the Pacific isles. They were frank and open in their deportment, friendly and

liberal in their dealings, with an apt ingenuity apparent in all their rude inventions.

The tragical fate of the discoverer, which, for a time, brought them under the charge of ferocity, was, in fact, the result of sudden exasperation, caused by the seizure of their chief.

At the time of the visit of the Tonquin, the islanders had profited, in many respects, by occasional intercourse with white men; and had shown a quickness to observe and cultivate those arts important to their mode of living. Originally they had no means of navigating the seas by which they were surrounded, superior to light pirogues, which were little competent to contend with the storms of the broad ocean. As the islanders are not in sight of each other, there could, therefore, be but casual intercourse between them. The traffic with white men had put them in possession of vessels of superior description; they had made themselves acquainted with their management, and had even made rude advances in the art of ship-building.

These improvements had been promoted, in a great measure, by the energy and sagacity of one man, the famous Tamaahmaah. He had originally been a petty eri, or chief; but, being of an intrepid and aspiring nature, he had risen in rank, and, availing himself of the superior advantages now afforded in navigation, had brought the whole archipelago in subjection to his arms. At the time of the arrival of the Tonquin he had about forty schooners, of from twenty to thirty tons burden, and one old American ship. With these he held undisputed sway over his

insular domains, and carried on intercourse with the chiefs or governors whom he had placed in command of the several islands.

The situation of this group of islands, far in the bosom of the vast Pacific, and their abundant fertility, render them important stopping-places on the highway to China, or to the northwest coast of America. Here the vessels engaged in the fur trade touched to make repairs and procure provisions; and here they often sheltered themselves during the winters that occurred in their long coasting expeditions.

The British navigators were, from the first, aware of the value of these islands to the purposes of commerce; and Tamaahmaah, not long after he had attained the sovereign sway, was persuaded by Vancouver, the celebrated discoverer, to acknowledge, on behalf of himself, and subjects, allegiance to the king of Great Britain. The reader cannot but call to mind the visit which the royal family and court of the Sandwich Islands was, in late years, induced to make to the court of St. James; and the serio-comic ceremonials and mock parade which attended that singular travesty of monarchal style.

It was a part of the wide and comprehensive plan of Mr. Astor to establish a friendly intercourse between these islands and his intended colony, which might, for a time, have occasion to draw supplies thence; and he even had a vague idea of, some time or other, getting possession of one of their islands as a rendezvous for his ships, and a link in the chain of his commercial

establishments.

On the evening of the 12th of February, the Tonquin anchored in the bay of Karakakooa, in the island of Owyhee. The surrounding shores were wild and broken, with overhanging cliffs and precipices of black volcanic rock. Beyond these, however, the country was fertile and well cultivated, with inclosures of yams, plantains, sweet potatoes, sugar-canes, and other productions of warm climates and teeming soils; and the numerous habitations of the natives were pleasantly sheltered beneath clumps of cocoanut and bread-fruit trees, which afforded both food and shade. This mingled variety of garden and grove swept gradually up the sides of the mountains, until succeeded by dense forests, which in turn gave place to naked and craggy rocks, until the summits rose into the regions of perpetual snow.

The royal residence of Tamaahmaah was at this time at another island named Woahoo. The island of Owyhee was under the command of one of his eris, or chiefs, who resided at the village of Tocaigh, situated on a different part of the coast from the bay of Karakakooa.

On the morning after her arrival, the ship was surrounded by canoes and pirogues, filled with the islanders of both sexes, bringing off supplies of fruits and vegetables, bananas, plantains, watermelons, yams, cabbages and taro. The captain was desirous, however, of purchasing a number of hogs, but there were none to be had – The trade in pork was a royal monopoly, and no

subject of the great Tamaahmaah dared to meddle with it. Such provisions as they could furnish, however, were brought by the natives in abundance, and a lively intercourse was kept up during the day, in which the women mingled in the kindest manner.

The islanders are a comely race, of a copper complexion. The men are tall and well made, with forms indicating strength and activity; the women with regular and occasionally handsome features, and a lascivious expression, characteristic of their temperament. Their style of dress was nearly the same as in the days of Captain Cook. The men wore the maro, a band one foot in width and several feet in length, swathed round the loins, and formed of tappa, or cloth of bark; the kihei, or mantle, about six feet square, tied in a knot over one shoulder, passed under the opposite arm, so as to leave it bare, and falling in graceful folds before and behind, to the knee, so as to bear some resemblance to a Roman toga.

The female dress consisted of the pau, a garment formed of a piece of tappa, several yards in length and one in width, wrapped round the waist, and reaching like a petticoat, to the knees. Over this kihei, or mantle, larger than that of the men, sometimes worn over both shoulders, like a shawl, sometimes over one only. These mantles were seldom worn by either sex during the heat of the day, when the exposure of their persons was at first very revolting to a civilized eye.

Towards evening several of the partners and clerks went on shore, where they were well received and hospitably entertained.

A dance was performed for their amusement, in which nineteen young women and one man figured very gracefully, singing in concert, and moving to the cadence of their song.

All this, however, was nothing to the purpose in the eyes of Captain Thorn, who, being disappointed in his hope of obtaining a supply of pork, or finding good water, was anxious to be off. This it was not so easy to effect. The passengers, once on shore, were disposed, as usual, to profit by the occasion. The partners had many inquiries to make relative to the island, with a view to business; while the young clerks were delighted with the charms and graces of the dancing damsels.

To add to their gratifications, an old man offered to conduct them to the spot where Captain Cook was massacred. The proposition was eagerly accepted, and all hands set out on a pilgrimage to the place. The veteran islander performed his promise faithfully, and pointed out the very spot where the unfortunate discoverer fell. The rocks and cocoa-trees around bore record of the fact, in the marks of the balls fired from the boats upon the savages. The pilgrims gathered round the old man, and drew from him all the particulars he had to relate respecting this memorable event; while the honest captain stood by and bit his nails with impatience. To add to his vexation, they employed themselves in knocking off pieces of the rocks, and cutting off the bark of the trees marked by the balls, which they conveyed back to the ship as precious relics.

Right glad, therefore, was he to get them and their treasures

fairly on board, when he made sail from this unprofitable place, and steered for the Bay of Tocaigh, the residence of the chief or governor of the island, where he hoped to be more successful in obtaining supplies. On coming to anchor the captain went on shore, accompanied by Mr. M'Dougal and Mr. M'Kay, and paid a visit to the governor. This dignitary proved to be an old sailor, by the name of John Young; who, after being tossed about the seas like another Sinbad, had, by one of the whimsical freaks of fortune, been elevated to the government of a savage island. He received his visitors with more hearty familiarity than personages in his high station are apt to indulge, but soon gave them to understand that provisions were scanty at Tocaigh, and that there was no good water, no rain having fallen in the neighborhood in three years.

The captain was immediately for breaking up the conference and departing, but the partners were not so willing to part with the nautical governor, who seemed disposed to be extremely communicative, and from whom they might be able to procure some useful information. A long conversation accordingly ensued, in the course of which they made many inquiries about the affairs of the islands, their natural productions, and the possibility of turning them to advantage in the way of trade; nor did they fail to inquire into the individual history of John Young, and how he came to be governor. This he gave with great condescension, running through the whole course of his fortunes "even from his boyish days."

He was a native of Liverpool, in England, and had followed the sea from boyhood, until, by dint of good conduct, he had risen so far in his profession as to be boatswain of an American ship called the Eleanor, commanded by Captain Metcalf. In this vessel he had sailed in 1789, on one of those casual expeditions to the northwest coast, in quest of furs. In the course of the voyage, the captain left a small schooner, named the Fair American, at Nootka, with a crew of five men, commanded by his son, a youth of eighteen. She was to follow on in the track of the Eleanor.

In February, 1790, Captain Metcalf touched at the island of Mowee, one of the Sandwich group. While anchored here, a boat which was astern of the Eleanor was stolen, and a seaman who was in it was killed. The natives, generally, disclaimed the outrage, and brought the shattered remains of the boat and the dead body of the seaman to the ship. Supposing that they had thus appeased the anger of the captain, they thronged, as usual, in great numbers about the vessel, to trade. Captain Metcalf, however, determined on a bloody revenge. The Eleanor mounted ten guns. All these he ordered to be loaded with musket-balls, nails, and pieces of old iron, and then fired them, and the small arms of the ship, among the natives. The havoc was dreadful; more than a hundred, according to Young's account, were slain.

After this signal act of vengeance, Captain Metcalf sailed from Mowee, and made for the island of Owyhee, where he was well received by Tamaahmaah. The fortunes of this warlike chief were at that time on the rise. He had originally been of inferior

rank, ruling over only one or two districts of Owyhee, but had gradually made himself sovereign of his native island.

The Eleanor remained some few days at anchor here, and an apparently friendly intercourse was kept up with the inhabitants. On the 17th March, John Young obtained permission to pass the night on shore. On the following morning a signal-gun summoned him to return on board.

He went to the shore to embark, but found all the canoes hauled up on the beach and rigorously tabooed, or interdicted. He would have launched one himself, but was informed by Tamaahmaah that if he presumed to do so he would be put to death.

Young was obliged to submit, and remained all day in great perplexity to account for this mysterious taboo, and fearful that some hostility was intended. In the evening he learned the cause of it, and his uneasiness was increased. It appeared that the vindictive act of Captain Metcalf had recoiled upon his own head. The schooner Fair American, commanded by his son, following in his track, had fallen into the hands of the natives to the southward of Tocaigh Bay, and young Metcalf and four of the crew had been massacred.

On receiving intelligence of this event, Tamaahmaah had immediately tabooed all the canoes, and interdicted all intercourse with the ship, lest the captain should learn the fate of the schooner, and take his revenge upon the island. For the same reason he prevented Young from rejoining his countrymen.

The Eleanor continued to fire signals from time to time for two days, and then sailed; concluding, no doubt, that the boatswain had deserted.

John Young was in despair when he saw the ship make sail; and found himself abandoned among savages; – and savages, too, sanguinary in their character, and inflamed by acts of hostility. He was agreeably disappointed, however, in experiencing nothing but kind treatment from Tamaahmaah and his people. It is true, he was narrowly watched whenever a vessel came in sight, lest he should escape and relate what had passed; but at other times he was treated with entire confidence and great distinction. He became a prime favorite, cabinet counsellor, and active coadjutor of Tamaahmaah, attending him in all his excursions, whether of business or pleasure, and aiding in his warlike and ambitious enterprises. By degrees he rose to the rank of a chief, espoused one of the beauties of the island, and became habituated and reconciled to his new way of life; thinking it better, perhaps, to rule among savages than serve among white men; to be a feathered chief than a tarpaulin boatswain. His favor with Tamahmaah, never declined; and when that sagacious, intrepid, and aspiring chieftain had made himself sovereign over the whole group of islands, and removed his residence to Woahoo, he left his faithful adherent John Young in command of Owyhee.

Such is an outline of the history of Governor Young, as furnished by himself; and we regret that we are not able to give

any account of the state maintained by this seafaring worthy, and the manner in which he discharged his high functions; though it is evident he had more of the hearty familiarity of the fore-castle than the dignity of the gubernatorial office.

These long conferences were bitter trials to the patience of the captain, who had no respect either for the governor or his island, and was anxious to push on in quest of provisions and water. As soon as he could get his inquisitive partners once more on board, he weighed anchor, and made sail for the island of Woahoo, the royal residence of Tamaahmaah.

This is the most beautiful island of the Sandwich group. It is forty-six miles in length and twenty-three in breadth. A ridge of volcanic mountains extends through the centre, rising into lofty peaks, and skirted by undulating hills and rich plains, where the cabins of the natives peep out from beneath groves of cocoanut and other luxuriant trees.

On the 21st of February the Tonquin cast anchor in the beautiful bay before the village of Waititi, (pronounced Whyteetee.) the abode of Tamaahmaah. This village contained about two hundred habitations, composed of poles set in the ground, tied together at the ends, and thatched with grass, and was situated in an open grove of cocoanuts. The royal palace of Tamaahmaah was a large house of two stories; the lower of stone, the upper of wood. Round this his body-guard kept watch, composed of twenty-four men in long blue cassocks, turned up with yellow, and each armed with a musket.

While at anchor at this place, much ceremonious visiting and long conferences took place between the potentate of the islands and the partners of the company. Tamaahmaah came on board of the ship in royal style, in his double pirogue. He was between fifty and sixty years of age, above the middle size, large and well made, though somewhat corpulent. He was dressed in an old suit of regimentals, with a sword by his side, and seemed somewhat embarrassed by his magnificent attire. Three of his wives accompanied him. They were almost as tall, and quite as corpulent as himself; but by no means to be compared with him in grandeur of habiliments, wearing no other garb than the pan. With him, also, came his great favorite and confidential counsellor, Kraimaker; who, from holding a post equivalent to that of prime minister, had been familiarly named Billy Pitt by the British visitors to the islands.

The sovereign was received with befitting ceremonial. The American flag was displayed, four guns were fired, and the partners appeared in scarlet coats, and conducted their illustrious guests to the cabin, where they were regaled with wine. In this interview the partners endeavored to impress the monarch with a sense of their importance, and of the importance of the association to which they belonged. They let him know that they were eris, or chiefs, of a great company about to be established on the northwest coast, and talked of the probability of opening a trade with his islands, and of sending ships there occasionally. All this was gratifying and interesting to him, for he

was aware of the advantages of trade, and desirous of promoting frequent intercourse with white men. He encouraged Europeans and Americans to settle in his islands and intermarry with his subjects. There were between twenty and thirty white men at that time resident in the island, but many of them were mere vagabonds, who remained there in hopes of leading a lazy and an easy life. For such Tamaahmaah had a great contempt; those only had his esteem and countenance who knew some trade or mechanic art, and were sober and industrious.

On the day subsequent to the monarch's visit, the partners landed and waited upon him in return. Knowing the effect of show and dress upon men in savage life, and wishing to make a favorable impression as the eris, or chiefs, of the great American Fur Company, some of them appeared in Highland plaids and kilts to the great admiration of the natives.

While visits of ceremony and grand diplomatic conferences were going on between the partners and the king, the captain, in his plain, matter-of-fact way, was pushing what he considered a far more important negotiation; the purchase of a supply of hogs. He found that the king had profited in more ways than one by his intercourse with white men. Above all other arts he had learned the art of driving a bargain. He was a magnanimous monarch, but a shrewd pork merchant; and perhaps thought he could not do better with his future allies, the American Fur Company, than to begin by close dealing. Several interviews were requisite, and much bargaining, before he could be brought to part with

a bristle of his bacon, and then he insisted upon being paid in hard Spanish dollars; giving as a reason that he wanted money to purchase a frigate from his brother George, as he affectionately termed the king of England.<sup>4</sup>

At length the royal bargain was concluded; the necessary supply of hogs obtained, besides several goats, two sheep, a quantity of poultry, and vegetables in abundance. The partners now urged to recruit their forces from the natives of this island. They declared they had never seen watermen equal to them, even among the voyageurs of the Northwest; and, indeed, they are remarkable for their skill in managing their light craft, and can swim and dive like waterfowl. The partners were inclined, therefore, to take thirty or forty with them to the Columbia,

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<sup>4</sup> It appears, from the accounts of subsequent voyagers, that Tamaahmaah afterwards succeeded in his wish of purchasing a large ship. In this he sent a cargo of sandalwood to Canton, having discovered that the foreign merchants trading with him made large profits on this wood, shipped by them from the islands to the Chinese markets. The ship was manned by natives, but the officers were Englishmen. She accomplished her voyage, and returned in safety to the islands, with the Hawaiian flag floating gloriously in the breeze. The king hastened on board, expecting to find his sandalwood converted into crapes and damasks, and other rich stuffs of China, but found, to his astonishment, by the legerdemain of traffic, his cargo had all disappeared, and, in place of it, remained a bill of charges amounting to three thousand dollars. It was some time before he could be made to comprehend certain of the most important items of the bill, such as pilotage, anchorage, and custom-house fees; but when he discovered that maritime states in other countries derived large revenues in this manner, to the great cost of the merchant, "Well," cried he, "then I will have harbor fees also." He established them accordingly. Pilotage a dollar a foot on the draft of each vessel. Anchorage from sixty to seventy dollars. In this way he greatly increased the royal revenue, and turned his China speculation to account.

to be employed in the service of the company. The captain, however, objected that there was not room in his vessel for the accommodation of such a number. Twelve, only, were therefore enlisted for the company, and as many more for the service of the ship. The former engaged to serve for the term of three years, during which they were to be fed and clothed; and at the expiration of the time were to receive one hundred dollars in merchandise.

And now, having embarked his live-stock, fruits, vegetables, and water, the captain made ready to set sail. How much the honest man had suffered in spirit by what he considered the freaks and vagaries of his passengers, and how little he had understood their humors and intentions, is amusingly shown in a letter written to Mr. Astor from Woahoo, which contains his comments on the scenes we have described.

“It would be difficult,” he writes, “to imagine the frantic gambols that are daily played off here; sometimes dressing in red coats, and otherwise very fantastically, and collecting a number of ignorant natives around them, telling them that they are the great eris of the Northwest, and making arrangements for sending three or four vessels yearly to them from the coast with spars, &c.; while those very natives cannot even furnish a hog to the ship. Then dressing in Highland plaids and kilts, and making similar arrangements, with presents of rum, wine, or anything that is at hand. Then taking a number of clerks and men on shore to the very spot on which Captain Cook was killed,

and each fetching off a piece of the rock or tree that was touched by the shot. Then sitting down with some white man or some native who can be a little understood, and collecting the history of those islands, of Tamaahmaah's wars, the curiosities of the islands, &c., preparatory to the histories of their voyages; and the collection is indeed ridiculously contemptible. To enumerate the thousand instances of ignorance, filth, &c., – or to particularize all the frantic gambols that are daily practiced, would require Volumes.”

Before embarking, the great eris of the American Fur Company took leave of their illustrious ally in due style, with many professions of lasting friendship and promises of future intercourse; while the matter-of-fact captain anathematized him in his heart for a grasping, trafficking savage; as shrewd and sordid in his dealings as a white man. As one of the vessels of the company will, in the course of events, have to appeal to the justice and magnanimity of this island potentate, we shall see how far the honest captain was right in his opinion.

# CHAPTER VII

Departure From the Sandwich Islands. – Misunderstandings – Miseries of a Suspicious Man. – Arrival at the Columbia – Dangerous Service. – Gloomy Apprehensions – Bars and Breakers. – Perils of the Ship. Disasters of a Boat's Crew. – Burial of a Sandwich Islander.

IT was on the 28th of February that the Tonquin set sail from the Sandwich Islands. For two days the wind was contrary, and the vessel was detained in their neighborhood; at length a favorable breeze sprang up, and in a little while the rich groves, green hills, and snowy peaks of those happy islands one after another sank from sight, or melted into the blue distance, and the Tonquin ploughed her course towards the sterner regions of the Pacific.

The misunderstandings between the captain and his passengers still continued; or rather, increased in gravity. By his altercations and his moody humors, he had cut himself off from all community of thought, or freedom of conversation with them. He disdained to ask questions as to their proceedings, and could only guess at the meaning of their movements, and in so doing indulged in conjectures and suspicions, which produced the most whimsical self-torment.

Thus, in one of his disputes with them, relative to the goods on board, some of the packages of which they wished to open,

to take out articles of clothing for the men or presents for the natives, he was so harsh and peremptory that they lost all patience, and hinted that they were the strongest party, and might reduce him to a very ridiculous dilemma, by taking from him the command.

A thought now flashed across the captain's mind that they really had a plan to depose him, and that, having picked up some information at Owyhee, possibly of war between the United States and England, they meant to alter the destination of the voyage; perhaps to seize upon ship and cargo for their own use.

Once having conceived this suspicion, everything went to foster it. They had distributed fire-arms among some of their men, a common precaution among the fur traders when mingling with the natives. This, however, looked like preparation. Then several of the partners and clerks and some of the men, being Scotsmen, were acquainted with the Gaelic, and held long conversations together in that language. These conversations were considered by the captain of a "mysterious and unwarranted nature," and related, no doubt, to some foul conspiracy that was brewing among them. He frankly avows such suspicions, in his letter to Mr. Astor, but intimates that he stood ready to resist any treasonous outbreak; and seems to think that the evidence of preparation on his part had an effect in overawing the conspirators.

The fact is, as we have since been informed by one of the parties, it was a mischievous pleasure with some of the partners

and clerks, who were young men, to play upon the suspicious temper and splenetic humors of the captain. To this we may ascribe many of their whimsical pranks and absurd propositions, and, above all, their mysterious colloquies in Gaelic.

In this sore and irritable mood did the captain pursue his course, keeping a wary eye on every movement, and bristling up whenever the detested sound of the Gaelic language grated upon his ear. Nothing occurred, however, materially to disturb the residue of the voyage excepting a violent storm; and on the twenty-second of March, the Tonquin arrived at the mouth of the Oregon, or Columbia River.

The aspect of the river and the adjacent coast was wild and dangerous. The mouth of the Columbia is upwards of four miles wide with a peninsula and promontory on one side, and a long low spit of land on the other; between which a sand bar and chain of breakers almost block the entrance. The interior of the country rises into successive ranges of mountains, which, at the time of the arrival of the Tonquin, were covered with snow.

A fresh wind from the northwest sent a rough tumbling sea upon the coast, which broke upon the bar in furious surges, and extended a sheet of foam almost across the mouth of the river. Under these circumstances the captain did not think it prudent to approach within three leagues, until the bar should be sounded and the channel ascertained. Mr. Fox, the chief mate, was ordered to this service in the whaleboat, accompanied by John Martin, an old seaman, who had formerly visited the river,

and by three Canadians. Fox requested to have regular sailors to man the boat, but the captain would not spare them from the service of the ship, and supposed the Canadians, being expert boatmen on lakes and rivers, were competent to the service, especially when directed and aided by Fox and Martin. Fox seems to have lost all firmness of spirit on the occasion, and to have regarded the service with a misgiving heart. He came to the partners for sympathy, knowing their differences with the captain, and the tears were in his eyes as he represented his case. "I am sent off," said he, "without seamen to man my boat, in boisterous weather, and on the most dangerous part of the northwest coast. My uncle was lost a few years ago on this same bar, and I am now going to lay my bones alongside of his." The partners sympathized in his apprehensions, and remonstrated with the captain. The latter, however, was not to be moved. He had been displeased with Mr. Fox in the earlier part of the voyage, considering him indolent and inactive; and probably thought his present repugnance arose from a want of true nautical spirit. The interference of the partners in the business of the ship, also, was not calculated to have a favorable effect on a stickler for authority like himself, especially in his actual state of feeling towards them.

At one o'clock, P.M., therefore, Fox and his comrades set off in the whaleboat, which is represented as small in size, and crazy in condition. All eyes were strained after the little bark as it pulled for shore, rising and sinking with the huge rolling waves, until

it entered, a mere speck, among the foaming breakers, and was soon lost to view. Evening set in, night succeeded and passed away, and morning returned, but without the return of the boat.

As the wind had moderated, the ship stood near to the land, so as to command a view of the river's mouth. Nothing was to be seen but a wild chaos of tumbling waves breaking upon the bar, and apparently forming a foaming barrier from shore to shore. Towards night the ship again stood out to gain sea-room, and a gloom was visible in every countenance. The captain himself shared in the general anxiety, and probably repented of his peremptory orders. Another weary and watchful night succeeded, during which the wind subsided, and the weather became serene.

On the following day, the ship having drifted near the land, anchored in fourteen fathoms water, to the northward of the long peninsula or promontory which forms the north side of the entrance, and is called Cape Disappointment. The pinnacle was then manned, and two of the partners, Mr. David Stuart and Mr. M'Kay, set off in the hope of learning something of the fate of the whaleboat. The surf, however, broke with such violence along the shore that they could find no landing place. Several of the natives appeared on the beach and made signs to them to row round the cape, but they thought it most prudent to return to the ship.

The wind now springing up, the Tonquin got under way, and stood in to seek the channel; but was again deterred by

the frightful aspect of the breakers, from venturing within a league. Here she hove to; and Mr. Mumford, the second mate, was despatched with four hands, in the pinnace, to sound across the channel until he should find four fathoms depth. The pinnace entered among the breakers, but was near being lost, and with difficulty got back to the ship. The captain insisted that Mr. Mumford had steered too much to the southward. He now turned to Mr. Aiken, an able mariner, destined to command the schooner intended for the coasting trade, and ordered him, together with John Coles, sail-maker, Stephen Weekes, armorer, and two Sandwich Islanders, to proceed ahead and take soundings, while the ship should follow under easy sail. In this way they proceeded until Aiken had ascertained the channel, when signal was given from the ship for him to return on board. He was then within pistol shot, but so furious was the current, and tumultuous the breakers, that the boat became unmanageable, and was hurried away, the crew crying out piteously for assistance. In a few moments she could not be seen from the ship's deck. Some of the passengers climbed to the mizzen top, and beheld her still struggling to reach the ship; but shortly after she broached broadside to the waves, and her case seemed desperate. The attention of those on board of the ship was now called to their own safety. They were in shallow water; the vessel struck repeatedly, the waves broke over her, and there was danger of her foundering. At length she got into seven fathoms water, and the wind lulling, and the night coming

on, cast anchor. With the darkness their anxieties increased. The wind whistled, the sea roared, the gloom was only broken by the ghastly glare of the foaming breakers, the minds of the seamen were full of dreary apprehensions, and some of them fancied they heard the cries of their lost comrades mingling with the uproar of the elements. For a time, too, the rapidly ebbing tide threatened to sweep them from their precarious anchorage. At length the reflux of the tide, and the springing up of the wind, enabled them to quit their dangerous situation and take shelter in a small bay within Cape Disappointment, where they rode in safety during the residue of a stormy night, and enjoyed a brief interval of refreshing sleep.

With the light of day returned their cares and anxieties. They looked out from the mast-head over a wild coast, and wilder sea, but could discover no trace of the two boats and their crews that were missing. Several of the natives came on board with peltries, but there was no disposition to trade. They were interrogated by signs after the lost boats, but could not understand the inquiries.

## **Parties now Went on shore and scoured the neighborhood. One of these**

was headed by the captain. They had not proceeded far when they beheld a person at a distance in civilized garb. As he drew near he proved to be Weekes, the armorer. There was a burst of joy, for it was hoped his comrades were near at hand. His story, however, was one of disaster. He and his companions had found it impossible to govern their boat, having no rudder, and being beset by rapid and whirling currents and boisterous surges. After long struggling they had let her go at the mercy of the waves, tossing about, sometimes with her bow, sometimes with her broadside to the surges, threatened each instant with destruction, yet repeatedly escaping, until a huge sea broke over and swamped her. Weekes was overwhelmed by the broiling waves, but emerging above the surface, looked round for his companions. Aiken and Coles were not to be seen; near him were the two Sandwich Islanders, stripping themselves of their clothing that they might swim more freely. He did the same, and the boat floating near to him he seized hold of it. The two islanders joined him, and, uniting their forces, they succeeded in turning the boat upon her keel; then bearing down her stern and rocking her, they forced out so much water that she was able to bear the weight of a man without sinking. One of the islanders now got in, and in a little while bailed out the water with his

hands. The other swam about and collected the oars, and they all three got once more on board.

By this time the tide had swept them beyond the breakers, and Weekes called on his companions to row for land. They were so chilled and benumbed by the cold, however, that they lost all heart, and absolutely refused. Weekes was equally chilled, but had superior sagacity and self-command. He counteracted the tendency to drowsiness and stupor which cold produces by keeping himself in constant exercise; and seeing that the vessel was advancing, and that everything depended upon himself, he set to work to scull the boat clear of the bar, and into quiet water.

Toward midnight one of the poor islanders expired; his companion threw himself on his corpse and could not be persuaded to leave him. The dismal night wore away amidst these horrors: as the day dawned, Weekes found himself near the land. He steered directly for it, and at length, with the aid of the surf, ran his boat high upon a sandy beach.

Finding that one of the Sandwich Islanders yet gave signs of life, he aided him to leave the boat, and set out with him towards the adjacent woods. The poor fellow, however, was too feeble to follow him, and Weekes was soon obliged to abandon him to his fate and provide for his own safety. Falling upon a beaten path, he pursued it, and after a few hours came to a part of the coast, where, to his surprise and joy, he beheld the ship at anchor and was met by the captain and his party.

After Weekes had related his adventures, three parties were

despatched to beat up the coast in search of the unfortunate islander. They returned at night without success, though they had used the utmost diligence. On the following day the search was resumed, and the poor fellow was at length discovered lying beneath a group of rocks, his legs swollen, his feet torn and bloody from walking through bushes and briars, and himself half-dead with cold, hunger, and fatigue. Weekes and this islander were the only survivors of the crew of the jolly-boat, and no trace was ever discovered of Fox and his party. Thus eight men were lost on the first approach to the coast; a commencement that cast a gloom over the spirits of the whole party, and was regarded by some of the superstitious as an omen that boded no good to the enterprise.

Towards night the Sandwich Islanders went on shore, to bury the body of their unfortunate countryman who had perished in the boat. On arriving at the place where it had been left, they dug a grave in the sand, in which they deposited the corpse, with a biscuit under one of the arms, some lard under the chin, and a small quantity of tobacco, as provisions for its journey in the land of spirits. Having covered the body with sand and flints, they kneeled along the grave in a double row, with their faces turned to the east, while one who officiated as a priest sprinkled them with water from a hat. In so doing he recited a kind of prayer or invocation, to which, at intervals, the others made responses. Such were the simple rites performed by these poor savages at the grave of their comrade on the shores of a strange land; and

when these were done, they rose and returned in silence to the ship, without once casting a look behind.

## CHAPTER VIII

Mouth of the Columbia. – The Native Tribes. – Their Fishing. – Their Canoes. – Bold Navigators – Equestrian Indians and Piscatory Indians, Difference in Their Physical Organization. – Search for a Trading Site. – Expedition of M'Dougal and David Stuart-Comcomly, the One-Eyed Chieftain. – Influence of Wealth in Savage Life. – Slavery Among the Natives. – An Aristocracy of Flatheads. – Hospitality Among the Chinooks – Comcomly's Daughter. – Her Conquest.

THE Columbia, or Oregon, for the distance of thirty or forty miles from its entrance into the sea, is, properly speaking, a mere estuary, indented by deep bays so as to vary from three to seven miles in width; and is rendered extremely intricate and dangerous by shoals reaching nearly from shore to shore, on which, at times, the winds and currents produce foaming and tumultuous breakers. The mouth of the river proper is but about half a mile wide, formed by the contracting shores of the estuary. The entrance from the sea, as we have already observed, is bounded on the south side by a flat sandy spit of land, stretching in to the ocean. This is commonly called Point Adams. The opposite, or northern side, is Cape Disappointment; a kind of peninsula, terminating in a steep knoll or promontory crowned with a forest of pine-trees, and connected with the mainland by a low and

narrow neck. Immediately within this cape is a wide, open bay, terminating at Chinook Point, so called from a neighboring tribe of Indians. This was called Baker's Bay, and here the Tonquin was anchored.

The natives inhabiting the lower part of the river, and with whom the company was likely to have the most frequent intercourse, were divided at this time into four tribes, the Chinooks, Clatsops, Wahkiacums, and Cathlamahs. They resembled each other in person, dress, language, and manner; and were probably from the same stock, but broken into tribes, or rather hordes, by those feuds and schisms frequent among Indians.

These people generally live by fishing. It is true they occasionally hunt the elk and deer, and ensnare the water-fowl of their ponds and rivers, but these are casual luxuries. Their chief subsistence is derived from the salmon and other fish which abound in the Columbia and its tributary streams, aided by roots and herbs, especially the wappatoo, which is found on the islands of the river.

As the Indians of the plains who depend upon the chase are bold and expert riders, and pride themselves upon their horses, so these piscatory tribes of the coast excel in the management of canoes, and are never more at home than when riding upon the waves. Their canoes vary in form and size. Some are upwards of fifty feet long, cut out of a single tree, either fir or white cedar, and capable of carrying thirty persons. They have thwart pieces

from side to side about three inches thick, and their gunwales flare outwards, so as to cast off the surges of the waves. The bow and stern are decorated with grotesque figures of men and animals, sometimes five feet in height.

In managing their canoes they kneel two and two along the bottom, sitting on their heels, and wielding paddles from four to five feet long, while one sits on the stern and steers with a paddle of the same kind. The women are equally expert with the men in managing the canoe, and generally take the helm.

It is surprising to see with what fearless unconcern these savages venture in their light barks upon the roughest and most tempestuous seas. They seem to ride upon the waves like sea-fowl. Should a surge throw the canoe upon its side and endanger its overturn, those to windward lean over the upper gunwale, thrust their paddles deep into the wave, apparently catch the water and force it under the canoe, and by this action not merely regain an equilibrium, but give their bark a vigorous impulse forward.

The effect of different modes of life upon the human frame and human character is strikingly instanced in the contrast between the hunting Indians of the prairies, and the piscatory Indians of the sea-coast. The former, continually on horseback scouring the plains, gaining their food by hardy exercise, and subsisting chiefly on flesh, are generally tall, sinewy, meagre, but well formed, and of bold and fierce deportment: the latter, lounging about the river banks, or squatting and curved up

in their canoes, are generally low in stature, ill-shaped, with crooked legs, thick ankles, and broad flat feet. They are inferior also in muscular power and activity, and in game qualities and appearance, to their hard-riding brethren of the prairies.

Having premised these few particulars concerning the neighboring Indians, we will return to the immediate concerns of the Tonquin and her crew.

Further search was made for Mr. Fox and his party, but with no better success, and they were at length given up as lost. In the meantime, the captain and some of the partners explored the river for some distance in a large boat, to select a suitable place for the trading post. Their old jealousies and differences continued; they never could coincide in their choice, and the captain objected altogether to any site so high up the river. They all returned, therefore, to Baker's Bay in no very good humor. The partners proposed to examine the opposite shore, but the captain was impatient of any further delay. His eagerness to "get on" had increased upon him. He thought all these excursions a sheer loss of time, and was resolved to land at once, build a shelter for the reception of that part of his cargo destined for the use of the settlement, and, having cleared his ship of it and of his irksome shipmates, to depart upon the prosecution of his coasting voyage, according to orders.

On the following day, therefore, without troubling himself to consult the partners, he landed in Baker's Bay, and proceeded to erect a shed for the reception of the rigging, equipments, and

stores of the schooner that was to be built for the use of the settlement.

This dogged determination on the part of the sturdy captain gave high offense to Mr. M'Dougal, who now considered himself at the head of the concern, as Mr. Astor's representative and proxy. He set off the same day, (April 5th) accompanied by David Stuart, for the southern shore, intending to be back by the seventh. Not having the captain to contend with, they soon pitched upon a spot which appeared to them favorable for the intended establishment. It was on a point of land called Point George, having a very good harbor, where vessels, not exceeding two hundred tons burden, might anchor within fifty yards of the shore.

After a day thus profitably spent, they recrossed the river, but landed on the northern shore several miles above the anchoring ground of the Tonquin, in the neighborhood of Chinooks, and visited the village of that tribe. Here they were received with great hospitality by the chief, who was named Comcomly, a shrewd old savage, with but one eye, who will occasionally figure in this narrative. Each village forms a petty sovereignty, governed by its own chief, who, however, possesses but little authority, unless he be a man of wealth and substance; that is to say, possessed of canoe, slaves, and wives. The greater the number of these, the greater is the chief. How many wives this one-eyed potentate maintained we are not told, but he certainly possessed great sway, not merely over his own tribe, but over the

neighborhood.

Having mentioned slaves, we would observe that slavery exists among several of the tribes beyond the Rocky Mountains. The slaves are well treated while in good health, but occupied in all kinds of drudgery. Should they become useless, however, by sickness or old age, they are totally neglected, and left to perish; nor is any respect paid to their bodies after death.

A singular custom prevails, not merely among the Chinooks, but among most of the tribes about this part of the coast, which is the flattening of the forehead. The process by which this deformity is effected commences immediately after birth. The infant is laid in a wooden trough, by way of cradle. The end on which the head reposes is higher than the rest. A padding is placed on the forehead of the infant, with a piece of bark above it, and is pressed down by cords, which pass through holes on each side of the trough. As the tightening of the padding and the pressing of the head to the board is gradual, the process is said not to be attended with much pain. The appearance of the infant, however, while in this state of compression, is whimsically hideous, and “its little black eyes,” we are told, “being forced out by the tightness of the bandages, resemble those of a mouse choked in a trap.”

About a year's pressure is sufficient to produce the desired effect, at the end of which time the child emerges from its bandages a complete flathead, and continues so through life. It must be noted that this flattening of the head has something in it

of aristocratical significancy, like the crippling of the feet among the Chinese ladies of quality. At any rate, it is a sign of freedom. No slave is permitted to bestow this enviable deformity upon his child; all the slaves, therefore, are roundheads.

With this worthy tribe of Chinooks the two partners passed a part of the day very agreeably. M'Dougal, who was somewhat vain of his official rank, had given it to be understood that they were two chiefs of a great trading company, about to be established here, and the quick-sighted, though one-eyed chief, who was somewhat practiced in traffic with white men, immediately perceived the policy of cultivating the friendship of two such important visitors. He regaled them, therefore, to the best of his ability, with abundance of salmon and wappatoo. The next morning, April 7th, they prepared to return to the vessel, according to promise. They had eleven miles of open bay to traverse; the wind was fresh, the waves ran high. Comcomly remonstrated with them on the hazard to which they would be exposed. They were resolute, however, and launched their boat, while the wary chieftain followed at some short distance in his canoe. Scarce had they rowed a mile, when a wave broke over their boat and upset it. They were in imminent peril of drowning, especially Mr. M'Dougal, who could not swim. Comcomly, however, came bounding over the waves in his light canoe, and snatched them from a watery grave.

They were taken on shore and a fire made, at which they dried their clothes, after which Comcomly conducted them back to

his village. Here everything was done that could be devised for their entertainment during three days that they were detained by bad weather. Comcomly made his people perform antics before them; and his wives and daughters endeavored, by all the soothing and endearing arts of women, to find favor in their eyes. Some even painted their bodies with red clay, and anointed themselves with fish oil, to give additional lustre to their charms. Mr. M'Dougal seems to have had a heart susceptible to the influence of the gentler sex. Whether or no it was first touched on this occasion we do not learn; but it will be found, in the course of this work, that one of the daughters of the hospitable Comcomly eventually made a conquest of the great eri of the American Fur Company.

When the weather had moderated and the sea became tranquil, the one-eyed chief of the Chinooks manned his state canoe, and conducted his guests in safety to the ship, where they were welcomed with joy, for apprehensions had been felt for their safety. Comcomly and his people were then entertained on board of the Tonquin, and liberally rewarded for their hospitality and services. They returned home highly satisfied, promising to remain faithful friends and allies of the white men.

## CHAPTER IX

Point George – Founding of Astoria – Indian Visitors. – Their Reception. – The Captain Taboos the Ship. – Departure of the Tonquin. – Comments on the Conduct of Captain Thorn.

FROM the report made by the two exploring partners, it was determined that Point George should be the site of the trading house. These gentlemen, it is true, were not perfectly satisfied with the place, and were desirous of continuing their search; but Captain Thorn was impatient to land his cargo and continue his voyage, and protested against any more of what he termed “sporting excursions.”

Accordingly, on the 12th of April the launch was freighted with all things necessary for the purpose, and sixteen persons departed in her to commence the establishment, leaving the Tonquin to follow as soon as the harbor could be sounded.

Crossing the wide mouth of the river, the party landed, and encamped at the bottom of a small bay within Point George. The situation chosen for the fortified post was on an elevation facing to the north, with the wide estuary, its sand bars and tumultuous breakers spread out before it, and the promontory of Cape Disappointment, fifteen miles distant, closing the prospect to the left. The surrounding country was in all the freshness of

spring; the trees were in the young leaf, the weather was superb, and everything looked delightful to men just emancipated from a long confinement on shipboard. The Tonquin shortly afterwards made her way through the intricate channel, and came to anchor in the little bay, and was saluted from the encampment with three volleys of musketry and three cheers. She returned the salute with three cheers and three guns.

All hands now set to work cutting down trees, clearing away thickets, and marking out the place for the residence, storehouse, and powder magazine, which were to be built of logs and covered with bark. Others landed the timbers intended for the frame of the coasting vessel, and proceeded to put them together, while others prepared a garden spot, and sowed the seeds of various vegetables.

The next thought was to give a name to the embryo metropolis: the one that naturally presented itself was that of the projector and supporter of the whole enterprise. It was accordingly named **ASTORIA**.

The neighboring Indians now swarmed about the place. Some brought a few land-otter and sea-otter skins to barter, but in very scanty parcels; the greater number came prying about to gratify their curiosity, for they are said to be impertinently inquisitive; while not a few came with no other design than to pilfer; the laws of *meum and tuum* being but slightly respected among them. Some of them beset the ship in their canoes, among whom was the Chinook chief Comcomly, and his liege subjects. These

were well received by Mr. M'Dougal, who was delighted with an opportunity of entering upon his functions, and acquiring importance in the eyes of his future neighbors. The confusion thus produced on board, and the derangement of the cargo caused by this petty trade, stirred the spleen of the captain, who had a sovereign contempt for the one-eyed chieftain and all his crew. He complained loudly of having his ship lumbered by a host of "Indian ragamuffins," who had not a skin to dispose of, and at length put his positive interdict upon all trafficking on board. Upon this Mr. M'Dougal was fain to land, and establish his quarters at the encampment, where he could exercise his rights and enjoy his dignities without control.

The feud, however, between these rival powers still continued, but was chiefly carried on by letter. Day after day and week after week elapsed, yet the store-house requisite for the reception of the cargo was not completed, and the ship was detained in port; while the captain was teased by frequent requisitions for various articles for the use of the establishment, or the trade with the natives. An angry correspondence took place, in which he complained bitterly of the time wasted in "smoking and sporting parties," as he termed the reconnoitering expeditions, and in clearing and preparing meadow ground and turnip patches, instead of despatching his ship. At length all these jarring matters were adjusted, if not to the satisfaction, at least to the acquiescence of all parties. The part of the cargo destined for the use of Astoria was landed, and the ship left free to proceed on

her voyage.

As the Tonquin was to coast to the north, to trade for peltries at the different harbors, and to touch at Astoria on her return in the autumn, it was unanimously determined that Mr. M'Kay should go in her as supercargo, taking with him Mr. Lewis as ship's clerk. On the first of June the ship got under way, and dropped down to Baker's Bay, where she was detained for a few days by a head wind; but early in the morning of the fifth stood out to sea with a fine breeze and swelling canvas, and swept off gaily on her fatal voyage, from which she was never to return!

On reviewing the conduct of Captain Thorn, and examining his peevish and somewhat whimsical correspondence, the impression left upon our mind is, upon the whole, decidedly in his favor. While we smile at the simplicity of his heart and the narrowness of his views, which made him regard everything out of the direct path of his daily duty, and the rigid exigencies of the service, as trivial and impertinent, which inspired him with contempt for the swelling vanity of some of his coadjutors, and the literary exercises and curious researches of others, we cannot but applaud that strict and conscientious devotion to the interests of his employer, and to what he considered the true objects of the enterprise in which he was engaged. He certainly was to blame occasionally for the asperity of his manners, and the arbitrary nature of his measures, yet much that is exceptionable in this part of his conduct may be traced to rigid notions of duty acquired in that tyrannical school, a ship of war, and to the construction

given by his companions to the orders of Mr. Astor, so little in conformity with his own. His mind, too, appears to have become almost diseased by the suspicions he had formed as to the loyalty of his associates, and the nature of their ultimate designs; yet on this point there were circumstances to, in some measure, justify him. The relations between the United States and Great Britain were at that time in a critical state; in fact, the two countries were on the eve of a war. Several of the partners were British subjects, and might be ready to desert the flag under which they acted, should a war take place. Their application to the British minister at New York shows the dubious feeling with which they had embarked in the present enterprise. They had been in the employ of the Northwest Company, and might be disposed to rally again under that association, should events threaten the prosperity of this embryo establishment of Mr. Astor. Besides, we have the fact, averred to us by one of the partners, that some of them, who were young and heedless, took a mischievous and unwarrantable pleasure in playing upon the jealous temper of the captain, and affecting mysterious consultations and sinister movements.

These circumstances are cited in palliation of the doubts and surmises of Captain Thorn, which might otherwise appear strange and unreasonable. That most of the partners were perfectly upright and faithful in the discharge of the trust reposed in them we are fully satisfied; still the honest captain was not invariably wrong in his suspicions; and that he formed a pretty just opinion of the integrity of that aspiring personage, Mr.

M'Dougal, will be substantially proved in the sequel.

# CHAPTER X

Disquieting Rumors From the Interior. – Reconnoitring Party – Preparations for a Trading Post. – An Unexpected Arrival – A Spy in the Camp. – Expedition Into the Interior – Shores of the Columbia – Mount Coffin. – Indian Sepulchre. – The Land of Spirits – Columbian Valley – Vancouver's Point. – Falls and Rapids. – A Great Fishing Mart. – The Village of Wishram. – Difference Between Fishing Indians and Hunting Indians – Effects of Habits of Trade on the Indian Character. – Post Established at the Oakinagan.

WHILE the Astorians were busily occupied in completing their factory and fort, a report was brought to them by an Indian from the upper part of the river, that a party of thirty white men had appeared on the banks of the Columbia, and were actually building houses at the second rapids. This information caused much disquiet. We have already mentioned that the Northwest Company had established posts to the west of the Rocky Mountains, in a district called by them New Caledonia, which extended from lat. 52 to 55 deg north, being within the British territories. It was now apprehended that they were advancing within the American limits, and were endeavoring to seize upon the upper part of the river and forestall the American Fur Company in the surrounding trade; in which case bloody

feuds might be anticipated, such as had prevailed between the rival fur companies in former days.

A reconnoitring party was sent up the river to ascertain the truth of the report. They ascended to the foot of the first rapid, about two hundred miles, but could hear nothing of any white men being in the neighborhood.

Not long after their return, however, further accounts were received, by two wandering Indians, which established the fact that the Northwest Company had actually erected a trading house on the Spokane River, which falls into the north branch of the Columbia.

What rendered this intelligence the more disquieting was the inability of the Astorians, in their present reduced state as to numbers, and the exigencies of their new establishment, to furnish detachments to penetrate the country in different directions, and fix the posts necessary to secure the interior trade.

It was resolved, however, at any rate, to advance a countercheck to this post on the Spokan, and one of the partners, Mr. David Stuart, prepared to set out for the purpose with eight men and a small assortment of goods. He was to be guided by the two Indians, who knew the country and promised to take him to a place not far from the Spokan River, and in a neighborhood abounding with beaver. Here he was to establish himself and to remain for a time, provided he found the situation advantageous and the natives friendly.

On the 15th of July, when Mr. Stuart was nearly ready to

embark, a canoe made its appearance, standing for the harbor, and manned by nine white men. Much speculation took place who these strangers could be, for it was too soon to expect their own people, under Mr. Hunt, who were to cross the continent. As the canoe drew near, the British standard was distinguished: on coming to land, one of the crew stepped on shore, and announced himself as Mr. David Thompson, astronomer, and partner of the Northwest Company. According to his account, he had set out in the preceding year with a tolerably strong party, and a supply of Indian goods, to cross the Rocky Mountains. A part of his people, however, had deserted him on the eastern side, and returned with the goods to the nearest Northwest post. He had persisted in crossing the mountains with eight men, who remained true to him. They had traversed the higher regions, and ventured near the source of the Columbia, where, in the spring, they had constructed a cedar canoe, the same in which they had reached Astoria.

This, in fact, was the party despatched by the Northwest Company to anticipate Mr. Astor in his intention of effecting a settlement at the mouth of the Columbia River. It appears, from information subsequently derived from other sources, that Mr. Thompson had pushed on his course with great haste, calling at all the Indian villages in his march, presenting them with British flags, and even planting them at the forks of the rivers, proclaiming formally that he took possession of the country in the name of the king of Great Britain for the Northwest

Company. As his original plan was defeated by the desertion of his people, it is probable that he descended the river simply to reconnoitre, and ascertain whether an American settlement had been commenced.

Mr. Thompson was, no doubt, the first white man who descended the northern branch of the Columbia from so near its source. Lewis and Clarke struck the main body of the river at the forks, about four hundred miles from its mouth. They entered it from Lewis River, its southern branch, and thence descended.

Though Mr. Thompson could be considered as little better than a spy in the camp, he was received with great cordiality by Mr. M'Dougal, who had a lurking feeling of companionship and good-will for all of the Northwest Company. He invited him to head-quarters, where he and his people were hospitably entertained. Nay, further, being somewhat in extremity, he was furnished by Mr. M'Dougal with goods and provisions for his journey back across the mountains, much against the wishes Of Mr. David Stuart, who did not think the object of his visit entitled him to any favor.

On the 23rd of July, Mr. Stuart set out upon his expedition to the interior. His party consisted of four of the clerks, Messrs. Pillet, Ross, M'Lennon, and Montigny, two Canadian voyageurs, and two natives of the Sandwich Islands. They had three canoes well laden with provisions, and with goods and necessities for a trading establishment.

Mr. Thompson and his party set out in company with them, it

being his intention to proceed direct to Montreal. The partners at Astoria forwarded by him a short letter to Mr. Astor, informing him of their safe arrival at the mouth of the Columbia, and that they had not yet heard of Mr. Hunt. The little squadron of canoes set sail with a favorable breeze, and soon passed Tongue Point, a long, high, and rocky promontory, covered with trees, and stretching far into the river. Opposite to this, on the northern shore, is a deep bay, where the Columbia anchored at the time of the discovery, and which is still called Gray's Bay, from the name of her commander.

From hence, the general course of the river for about seventy miles was nearly southeast; varying in breadth according to its bays and indentations, and navigable for vessels of three hundred tons. The shores were in some places high and rocky, with low marshy islands at their feet, subject to inundation, and covered with willows, poplars, and other trees that love an alluvial soil. Sometimes the mountains receded, and gave place to beautiful plains and noble forests. While the river margin was richly fringed with trees of deciduous foliage, the rough uplands were crowned by majestic pines, and firs of gigantic size, some towering to the height of between two and three hundred feet, with proportionate circumference. Out of these the Indians wrought their great canoes and pirogues.

At one part of the river, they passed, on the northern side, an isolated rock, about one hundred and fifty feet high, rising from a low marshy soil, and totally disconnected with the adjacent

mountains. This was held in great reverence by the neighboring Indians, being one of their principal places of sepulture. The same provident care for the deceased that prevails among the hunting tribes of the prairies is observable among the piscatory tribes of the rivers and sea-coast. Among the former, the favorite horse of the hunter is buried with him in the same funereal mound, and his bow and arrows are laid by his side, that he may be perfectly equipped for the "happy hunting grounds" of the land of spirits. Among the latter, the Indian is wrapped in his mantle of skins, laid in his canoe, with his paddle, his fishing spear, and other implements beside him, and placed aloft on some rock or other eminence overlooking the river, or bay, or lake, that he has frequented. He is thus fitted out to launch away upon those placid streams and sunny lakes stocked with all kinds of fish and waterfowl, which are prepared in the next world for those who have acquitted themselves as good sons, good fathers, good husbands, and, above all, good fishermen, during their mortal sojourn.

The isolated rock in question presented a spectacle of the kind, numerous dead bodies being deposited in canoes on its summit; while on poles around were trophies, or, rather, funeral offerings of trinkets, garments, baskets of roots, and other articles for the use of the deceased. A reverential feeling protects these sacred spots from robbery or insult. The friends of the deceased, especially the women, repair here at sunrise and sunset for some time after his death, singing his funeral dirge, and

uttering loud wailings and lamentations.

From the number of dead bodies in canoes observed upon this rock by the first explorers of the river, it received the name of Mount Coffin, which it continues to bear.

Beyond this rock they passed the mouth of a river on the right bank of the Columbia, which appeared to take its rise in a distant mountain covered with snow. The Indian name of this river was the Cowleskee. Some miles further on they came to the great Columbian Valley, so called by Lewis and Clarke. It is sixty miles in width, and extends far to the southeast between parallel ridges of mountains, which bound it on the east and west. Through the centre of this valley flowed a large and beautiful stream, called the Wallamot, which came wandering for several miles, through a yet unexplored wilderness. The sheltered situation of this immense valley had an obvious effect upon the climate. It was a region of great beauty and luxuriance, with lakes and pools, and green meadows shaded by noble groves. Various tribes were said to reside in this valley, and along the banks of the Wallamot.

About eight miles above the mouth of the Wallamot the little squadron arrived at Vancouver's Point, so called in honor of that celebrated voyager by his lieutenant (Broughton) when he explored the river. This point is said to present one of the most beautiful scenes on the Columbia; a lovely meadow, with a silver sheet of limpid water in the center, enlivened by wild-fowl, a range of hills crowned by forests, while the prospect is closed by Mount Hood, a magnificent mountain rising into a lofty

peak, and covered with snow; the ultimate landmark of the first explorers of the river.

Point Vancouver is about one hundred miles from Astoria. Here the reflux of the tide ceases to be perceptible. To this place vessels of two and three hundred tons burden may ascend. The party under the command of Mr. Stuart had been three or four days in reaching it, though we have forbore to notice their daily progress and nightly encampments.

From Point Vancouver the river turned towards the northeast, and became more contracted and rapid, with occasional islands and frequent sand-banks. These islands are furnished with a number of ponds, and at certain seasons abound with swans, geese, brandts, cranes, gulls, plover, and other wild-fowl. The shores, too, are low and closely wooded, with such an undergrowth of vines and rushes as to be almost impassable.

About thirty miles above Point Vancouver the mountains again approach on both sides of the river, which is bordered by stupendous precipices, covered with the fir and the white cedar, and enlivened occasionally by beautiful cascades leaping from a great height, and sending up wreaths of vapor. One of these precipices, or cliffs, is curiously worn by time and weather so as to have the appearance of a ruined fortress, with towers and battlements, beetling high above the river, while two small cascades, one hundred and fifty feet in height, pitch down from the fissures of the rocks.

The turbulence and rapidity of the current continually

augmenting as they advanced, gave the voyagers intimation that they were approaching the great obstructions of the river, and at length they arrived at Strawberry Island, so called by Lewis and Clarke, which lies at the foot of the first rapid. As this part of the Columbia will be repeatedly mentioned in the course of this work, being the scene of some of its incidents, we shall give a general description of it in this place.

The falls or rapids of the Columbia are situated about one hundred and eighty miles above the mouth of the river. The first is a perpendicular cascade of twenty feet, after which there is a swift descent for a mile, between islands of hard black rock, to another pitch of eight feet divided by two rocks. About two and a half miles below this the river expands into a wide basin, seemingly dammed up by a perpendicular ridge of black rock. A current, however, sets diagonally to the left of this rocky barrier, where there is a chasm forty-five yards in width. Through this the whole body of the river roars along, swelling and whirling and boiling for some distance in the wildest confusion. Through this tremendous channel the intrepid explorers of the river, Lewis and Clarke, passed in their boats; the danger being, not from the rocks, but from the great surges and whirlpools.

At the distance of a mile and a half from the foot of this narrow channel is a rapid, formed by two rocky islands; and two miles beyond is a second great fall, over a ledge of rocks twenty feet high, extending nearly from shore to shore. The river is again compressed into a channel from fifty to a hundred feet wide,

worn through a rough bed of hard black rock, along which it boils and roars with great fury for the distance of three miles. This is called "The Long Narrows."

Here is the great fishing place of the Columbia. In the spring of the year, when the water is high, the salmon ascend the river in incredible numbers. As they pass through this narrow strait, the Indians, standing on the rocks, or on the end of wooden stages projecting from the banks, scoop them up with small nets distended on hoops and attached to long handles, and cast them on the shore.

They are then cured and packed in a peculiar manner. After having been opened and disemboweled, they are exposed to the sun on scaffolds erected on the river banks. When sufficiently dry, they are pounded fine between two stones, pressed into the smallest compass, and packed in baskets or bales of grass matting, about two feet long and one in diameter, lined with the cured skin of a salmon. The top is likewise covered with fish skins, secured by cords passing through holes in the edge of the basket. Packages are then made, each containing twelve of these bales, seven at bottom, five at top, pressed close to each other, with the corded side upward, wrapped in mats and corded. These are placed in dry situations, and again covered with matting. Each of these packages contains from ninety to a hundred pounds of dried fish, which in this state will keep sound for several years.<sup>5</sup>

We have given this process at some length, as furnished by

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<sup>5</sup> (Lewis and Clarke, vol. ii. p. 32.)

the first explorers, because it marks a practiced ingenuity in preparing articles of traffic for a market, seldom seen among our aboriginals. For like reason we would make especial mention of the village of Wishram, at the head of the Long Narrows, as being a solitary instance of an aboriginal trading mart, or emporium. Here the salmon caught in the neighboring rapids were "warehoused," to await customers. Hither the tribes from the mouth of the Columbia repaired with the fish of the sea-coast, the roots, berries, and especially the wappatoo, gathered in the lower parts of the river, together with goods and trinkets obtained from the ships which casually visit the coast. Hither also the tribes from the Rocky Mountains brought down horses, bear-grass, quamash, and other commodities of the interior. The merchant fishermen at the falls acted as middlemen or factors, and passed the objects of traffic, as it were, cross-handed; trading away part of the wares received from the mountain tribes to those of the rivers and plains, and vice versa: their packages of pounded salmon entered largely into the system of barter, and being carried off in opposite directions, found their way to the savage hunting camps far in the interior, and to the casual white traders who touched upon the coast.

We have already noticed certain contrarities of character between the Indian tribes, produced by their diet and mode of life; and nowhere are they more apparent than about the falls of the Columbia. The Indians of this great fishing mart are represented by the earliest explorers as sleeker and fatter, but less

hardy and active, than the tribes of the mountains and prairies, who live by hunting, or of the upper parts of the river, where fish is scanty, and the inhabitants must eke out their subsistence by digging roots or chasing the deer. Indeed, whenever an Indian of the upper country is too lazy to hunt, yet is fond of good living, he repairs to the falls, to live in abundance without labor.

“By such worthless dogs as these,” says an honest trader in his journal, which now lies before us, “by such worthless dogs as these are these noted fishing-places peopled, which, like our great cities, may with propriety be called the headquarters of vitiated principles.”

The habits of trade and the avidity of gain have their corrupting effects even in the wilderness, as may be instanced in the members of this aboriginal emporium; for the same journalist denounces them as “saucy, impudent rascals, who will steal when they can, and pillage whenever a weak party falls in their power.”

That he does not belie them will be evidenced hereafter, when we have occasion again to touch at Wishram and navigate the rapids. In the present instance the travellers effected the laborious ascent of this part of the river, with all its various portages, without molestation, and once more launched away in smooth water above the high falls.

The two parties continued together, without material impediment, for three or four hundred miles further up the Columbia; Mr. Thompson appearing to take great interest in the success of Mr. Stuart, and pointing out places favorable, as he

said, to the establishment of his contemplated trading post.

Mr. Stuart, who distrusted his sincerity, at length pretended to adopt his advice, and, taking leave of him, remained as if to establish himself, while the other proceeded on his course towards the mountains. No sooner, however, had he fairly departed than Mr. Stuart again pushed forward, under guidance of the two Indians, nor did he stop until he had arrived within about one hundred and forty miles of the Spokane River, which he considered near enough to keep the rival establishment in check. The place which he pitched upon for his trading post was a point of land about three miles in length and two in breadth, formed by the junction of the Oakinagan with the Columbia. The former is a river which has its source in a considerable lake about one hundred and fifty miles west of the point of junction. The two rivers, about the place of their confluence, are bordered by immense prairies covered with herbage, but destitute of trees. The point itself was ornamented with wild flowers of every hue, in which innumerable humming-birds were "banqueting nearly the livelong day."

The situation of this point appeared to be well adapted for a trading post. The climate was salubrious, the soil fertile, the rivers well stocked with fish, the natives peaceable and friendly. There were easy communications with the interior by the upper waters of the Columbia and the lateral stream of the Oakinagan, while the downward current of the Columbia furnished a highway to Astoria.

Availing himself, therefore, of the driftwood which had collected in quantities in the neighboring bends of the river, Mr. Stuart and his men set to work to erect a house, which in a little while was sufficiently completed for their residence; and thus was established the first interior post of the company. We will now return to notice the progress of affairs at the mouth of the Columbia.

# CHAPTER XI

Alarm at Astoria. – Rumor of Indian Hostilities. – Preparations for Defense. – Tragic Fate of the Tonquin.

THE sailing of the Tonquin, and the departure of Mr. David Stuart and his detachment, had produced a striking effect on affairs at Astoria. The natives who had swarmed about the place began immediately to drop off, until at length not an Indian was to be seen. This, at first, was attributed to the want of peltries with which to trade; but in a little while the mystery was explained in a more alarming manner. A conspiracy was said to be on foot among the neighboring tribes to make a combined attack upon the white men, now that they were so reduced in number. For this purpose there had been a gathering of warriors in a neighboring bay, under pretext of fishing for sturgeon; and fleets of canoes were expected to join them from the north and South. Even Comcomly, the one-eyed chief, notwithstanding his professed friendship for Mr. M'Dougal, was strongly suspected of being concerned in this general combination.

Alarmed at rumors of this impending danger, the Astorians suspended their regular labor, and set to work, with all haste, to throw up temporary works for refuge and defense. In the course of a few days they surrounded their dwelling-house and magazines with a picket fence ninety feet square, flanked by

two bastions, on which were mounted four four-pounders. Every day they exercised themselves in the use of their weapons, so as to qualify themselves for military duty, and at night ensconced themselves in their fortress and posted sentinels, to guard against surprise. In this way they hoped, even in case of attack, to be able to hold out until the arrival of the party to be conducted by Mr. Hunt across the Rocky Mountains, or until the return of the Tonquin. The latter dependence, however, was doomed soon to be destroyed. Early in August, a wandering band of savages from the Strait of Juan de Fuca made their appearance at the mouth of the Columbia, where they came to fish for sturgeon. They brought disastrous accounts of the Tonquin, which were at first treated as fables, but which were too sadly confirmed by a different tribe that arrived a few days subsequently. We shall relate the circumstances of this melancholy affair as correctly as the casual discrepancies in the statements that have reached us will permit.

We have already stated that the Tonquin set sail from the mouth of the river on the fifth of June. The whole number of persons on board amounted to twenty-three. In one of the outer bays they picked up, from a fishing canoe, an Indian named Lamazee, who had already made two voyages along the coast and knew something of the language of the various tribes. He agreed to accompany them as interpreter.

Steering to the north, Captain Thorn arrived in a few days at Vancouver's Island, and anchored in the harbor of Neweetee,

very much against the advice of his Indian interpreter, who warned him against the perfidious character of the natives of this part of the coast. Numbers of canoes soon came off, bringing sea-otter skins to sell. It was too late in the day to commence a traffic, but Mr. M'Kay, accompanied by a few of the men, went on shore to a large village to visit Wicananish, the chief of the surrounding territory, six of the natives remaining on board as hostages. He was received with great professions of friendship, entertained hospitably, and a couch of sea-otter skins prepared for him in the dwelling of the chieftain, where he was prevailed upon to pass the night.

In the morning, before Mr. M'Kay had returned to the ship, great numbers of the natives came off in their canoes to trade, headed by two sons of Wicananish. As they brought abundance of sea-otter skins, and there was every appearance of a brisk trade, Captain Thorn did not wait for the return of Mr. M'Kay, but spread his wares upon the deck, making a tempting display of blankets, cloths, knives, beads, and fish-hooks, expecting a prompt and profitable sale. The Indians, however, were not so eager and simple as he had supposed, having learned the art of bargaining and the value of merchandise from the casual traders along the coast. They were guided, too, by a shrewd old chief named Nookamis, who had grown gray in traffic with New England skippers, and prided himself upon his acuteness. His opinion seemed to regulate the market. When Captain Thorn made what he considered a liberal offer for an otter-skin, the wily

old Indian treated it with scorn, and asked more than double. His comrades all took their cue from him, and not an otter-skin was to be had at a reasonable rate.

The old fellow, however, overshot his mark, and mistook the character of the man he was treating with. Thorn was a plain, straightforward sailor, who never had two minds nor two prices in his dealings, was deficient in patience and pliancy, and totally wanting in the chicanery of traffic. He had a vast deal of stern but honest pride in his nature, and, moreover, held the whole savage race in sovereign contempt. Abandoning all further attempts, therefore, to bargain with his shuffling customers, he thrust his hands into his pockets, and paced up and down the deck in sullen silence. The cunning old Indian followed him to and fro, holding out a sea-otter skin to him at every turn, and pestering him to trade. Finding other means unavailing, he suddenly changed his tone, and began to jeer and banter him upon the mean prices he offered. This was too much for the patience of the captain, who was never remarkable for relishing a joke, especially when at his own expense. Turning suddenly upon his persecutor, he snatched the proffered otter-skin from his hands, rubbed it in his face, and dismissed him over the side of the ship with no very complimentary application to accelerate his exit. He then kicked the peltries to the right and left about the deck, and broke up the market in the most ignominious manner. Old Nookamis made for shore in a furious passion, in which he was joined by Shewish, one of the sons of Wicananish, who went off breathing

vengeance, and the ship was soon abandoned by the natives.

When Mr. M'Kay returned on board, the interpreter related what had passed, and begged him to prevail upon the captain to make sail, as from his knowledge of the temper and pride of the people of the place, he was sure they would resent the indignity offered to one of their chiefs. Mr. M'Kay, who himself possessed some experience of Indian character, went to the captain, who was still pacing the deck in moody humor, represented the danger to which his hasty act had exposed the vessel, and urged him to weigh anchor. The captain made light of his counsels, and pointed to his cannon and fire-arms as sufficient safeguard against naked savages. Further remonstrances only provoked taunting replies and sharp altercations. The day passed away without any signs of hostility, and at night the captain retired as usual to his cabin, taking no more than the usual precautions.

On the following morning, at daybreak, while the captain and Mr. M'Kay were yet asleep, a canoe came alongside in which were twenty Indians, commanded by young Shewish. They were unarmed, their aspect and demeanor friendly, and they held up otter-skins, and made signs indicative of a wish to trade. The caution enjoined by Mr. Astor, in respect to the admission of Indians on board of the ship, had been neglected for some time past, and the officer of the watch, perceiving those in the canoe to be without weapons, and having received no orders to the contrary, readily permitted them to mount the deck. Another canoe soon succeeded, the crew of which was likewise admitted.

In a little while other canoes came off, and Indians were soon clambering into the vessel on all sides.

The officer of the watch now felt alarmed, and called to Captain Thorn and Mr. M'Kay. By the time they came on deck, it was thronged with Indians. The interpreter noticed to Mr. M'Kay that many of the natives wore short mantles of skins, and intimated a suspicion that they were secretly armed. Mr. M'Kay urged the captain to clear the ship and get under way. He again made light of the advice; but the augmented swarm of canoes about the ship, and the numbers still putting off from shore, at length awakened his distrust, and he ordered some of the crew to weigh anchor, while some were sent aloft to make sail.

The Indians now offered to trade with the captain on his own terms, prompted, apparently, by the approaching departure of the ship. Accordingly, a hurried trade was commenced. The main articles sought by the savages in barter were knives; as fast as some were supplied they moved off, and others succeeded. By degrees they were thus distributed about the deck, and all with weapons.

The anchor was now nearly up, the sails were loose, and the captain, in a loud and peremptory tone, ordered the ship to be cleared. In an instant, a signal yell was given; it was echoed on every side, knives and war-clubs were brandished in every direction, and the savages rushed upon their marked victims.

The first that fell was Mr. Lewis, the ship's clerk. He was leaning, with folded arms, over a bale of blankets, engaged in

bargaining, when he received a deadly stab in the back, and fell down the companion-way.

Mr. M'Kay, who was seated on the taffrail, sprang on his feet, but was instantly knocked down with a war-club and flung backwards into the sea, where he was despatched by the women in the canoes.

In the meantime Captain Thorn made desperate fight against fearful odds. He was a powerful as well as a resolute man, but he had come upon deck without weapons. Shewish, the young chief singled him out as his peculiar prey, and rushed upon him at the first outbreak. The captain had barely time to draw a clasp-knife with one blow of which he laid the young savage dead at his feet. Several of the stoutest followers of Shewish now set upon him. He defended himself vigorously, dealing crippling blows to right and left, and strewing the quarter-deck with the slain and wounded. His object was to fight his way to the cabin, where there were fire-arms; but he was hemmed in with foes, covered with wounds, and faint with loss of blood. For an instant he leaned upon the tiller wheel, when a blow from behind, with a war-club, felled him to the deck, where he was despatched with knives and thrown overboard.

While this was transacting upon the quarter-deck, a chance-medley fight was going on throughout the ship. The crew fought desperately with knives, handspikes, and whatever weapon they could seize upon in the moment of surprise. They were soon, however, overpowered by numbers, and mercilessly butchered.

As to the seven who had been sent aloft to make sail, they contemplated with horror the carnage that was going on below. Being destitute of weapons, they let themselves down by the running rigging, in hopes of getting between decks. One fell in the attempt, and was instantly despatched; another received a death-blow in the back as he was descending; a third, Stephen Weekes, the armorer, was mortally wounded as he was getting down the hatchway.

The remaining four made good their retreat into the cabin, where they found Mr. Lewis, still alive, though mortally wounded. Barricading the cabin door, they broke holes through the companion-way, and, with the muskets and ammunition which were at hand, opened a brisk fire that soon cleared the deck.

Thus far the Indian interpreter, from whom these particulars are derived, had been an eye-witness to the deadly conflict. He had taken no part in it, and had been spared by the natives as being of their race. In the confusion of the moment he took refuge with the rest, in the canoes. The survivors of the crew now sallied forth, and discharged some of the deck-guns, which did great execution among the canoes, and drove all the savages to shore.

For the remainder of the day no one ventured to put off to the ship, deterred by the effects of the fire-arms. The night passed away without any further attempts on the part of the natives. When the day dawned, the Tonquin still lay at anchor in the bay,

her sails all loose and flapping in the wind, and no one apparently on board of her. After a time, some of the canoes ventured forth to reconnoitre, taking with them the interpreter.

They paddled about her, keeping cautiously at a distance, but growing more and more emboldened at seeing her quiet and lifeless. One man at length made his appearance on the deck, and was recognized by the interpreter as Mr. Lewis. He made friendly signs, and invited them on board. It was long before they ventured to comply. Those who mounted the deck met with no opposition; no one was to be seen on board; for Mr. Lewis, after inviting them, had disappeared. Other canoes now pressed forward to board the prize; the decks were soon crowded, and the sides covered with clambering savages, all intent on plunder. In the midst of their eagerness and exultation, the ship blew up with a tremendous explosion. Arms, legs, and mutilated bodies were blown into the air, and dreadful havoc was made in the surrounding canoes. The interpreter was in the main-chains at the time of the explosion, and was thrown unhurt into the water, where he succeeded in getting into one of the canoes. According to his statement, the bay presented an awful spectacle after the catastrophe. The ship had disappeared, but the bay was covered with fragments of the wreck, with shattered canoes, and Indians swimming for their lives, or struggling in the agonies of death; while those who had escaped the danger remained aghast and stupefied, or made with frantic panic for the shore. Upwards of a hundred savages were destroyed by the explosion, many more

were shockingly mutilated, and for days afterwards the limbs and bodies of the slain were thrown upon the beach.

The inhabitants of Neweetee were overwhelmed with consternation at this astounding calamity, which had burst upon them in the very moment of triumph. The warriors sat mute and mournful, while the women filled the air with loud lamentations. Their weeping and wailing, however, was suddenly changed into yells of fury at the sight of four unfortunate white men, brought captive into the village. They had been driven on shore in one of the ship's boats, and taken at some distance along the coast.

The interpreter was permitted to converse with them. They proved to be the four brave fellows who had made such desperate defense from the cabin. The interpreter gathered from them some of the particulars already related. They told him further, that after they had beaten off the enemy and cleared the ship, Lewis advised that they should slip the cable and endeavor to get to sea. They declined to take his advice, alleging that the wind set too strongly into the bay and would drive them on shore. They resolved, as soon as it was dark, to put off quietly in the ship's boat, which they would be able to do unperceived, and to coast along back to Astoria. They put their resolution into effect; but Lewis refused to accompany them, being disabled by his wound, hopeless of escape, and determined on a terrible revenge. On the voyage out, he had repeatedly expressed a presentiment that he should die by his own hands; thinking it highly probable that he should be engaged in some contest with the natives, and being

resolved, in case of extremity, to commit suicide rather than be made a prisoner. He now declared his intention to remain on board of the ship until daylight, to decoy as many of the savages on board as possible, then to set fire to the powder magazine, and terminate his life by a signal of vengeance. How well he succeeded has been shown. His companions bade him a melancholy adieu, and set off on their precarious expedition. They strove with might and main to get out of the bay, but found it impossible to weather a point of land, and were at length compelled to take shelter in a small cove, where they hoped to remain concealed until the wind should be more favorable. Exhausted by fatigue and watching, they fell into a sound sleep, and in that state were surprised by the savages. Better had it been for those unfortunate men had they remained with Lewis, and shared his heroic death: as it was, they perished in a more painful and protracted manner, being sacrificed by the natives to the manes of their friends with all the lingering tortures of savage cruelty. Some time after their death, the interpreter, who had remained a kind of prisoner at large, effected his escape, and brought the tragical tidings to Astoria.

Such is the melancholy story of the Tonquin, and such was the fate of her brave but headstrong commander, and her adventurous crew. It is a catastrophe that shows the importance, in all enterprises of moment, to keep in mind the general instructions of the sagacious heads which devise them. Mr. Astor was well aware of the perils to which ships were exposed on

this coast from quarrels with the natives, and from perfidious attempts of the latter to surprise and capture them in unguarded moments. He had repeatedly enjoined it upon Captain Thorn, in conversation, and at parting, in his letter of instructions, to be courteous and kind in his dealings with the savages, but by no means to confide in their apparent friendship, nor to admit more than a few on board of his ship at a time.

Had the deportment of Captain Thorn been properly regulated, the insult so wounding to savage pride would never have been given. Had he enforced the rule to admit but a few at a time, the savages would not have been able to get the mastery. He was too irritable, however, to practice the necessary self-command, and, having been nurtured in a proud contempt of danger, thought it beneath him to manifest any fear of a crew of unarmed savages.

With all his faults and foibles, we cannot but speak of him with esteem, and deplore his untimely fate; for we remember him well in early life, as a companion in pleasant scenes and joyous hours. When on shore, among his friends, he was a frank, manly, sound-hearted sailor. On board ship he evidently assumed the hardness of deportment and sternness of demeanor which many deem essential to naval service. Throughout the whole of the expedition, however, he showed himself loyal, single-minded, straightforward, and fearless; and if the fate of his vessel may be charged to his harshness and imprudence, we should recollect that he paid for his error with his life.

The loss of the Tonquin was a grievous blow to the infant establishment of Astoria, and one that threatened to bring after it a train of disasters. The intelligence of it did not reach Mr. Astor until many months afterwards. He felt it in all its force, and was aware that it must cripple, if not entirely defeat, the great scheme of his ambition. In his letters, written at the time, he speaks of it as “a calamity, the length of which he could not foresee.” He indulged, however, in no weak and vain lamentation, but sought to devise a prompt and efficient remedy. The very same evening he appeared at the theatre with his usual serenity of countenance. A friend, who knew the disastrous intelligence he had received, expressed his astonishment that he could have calmness of spirit sufficient for such a scene of light amusement. “What would you have me do?” was his characteristic reply; “would you have me stay at home and weep for what I cannot help?”

## CHAPTER XII

Gloom at Astoria – An Ingenious Stratagem. – The Small-Pox Chief. – Launching of the Dolly. – An Arrival. – A Canadian Trapper. – A Freeman of the Forest – An Iroquois Hunter. – Winter on the Columbia. – Festivities of New Year.

THE tidings of the loss of the Tonquin, and the massacre of her crew, struck dismay into the hearts of the Astorians. They found themselves a mere handful of men, on a savage coast, surrounded by hostile tribes, who would doubtless be incited and encouraged to deeds of violence by the late fearful catastrophe. In this juncture Mr. M'Dougal, we are told, had recourse to a stratagem by which to avail himself of the ignorance and credulity of the savages, and which certainly does credit to his ingenuity.

The natives of the coast, and, indeed, of all the regions west of the mountains, had an extreme dread of the small-pox; that terrific scourge having, a few years previously, appeared among them, and almost swept off entire tribes. Its origin and nature were wrapped in mystery, and they conceived it an evil inflicted upon them by the Great Spirit, or brought among them by the white men. The last idea was seized upon by Mr. M'Dougal. He assembled several of the chieftains whom he believed to be in the conspiracy. When they were all seated around, he

informed them that he had heard of the treachery of some of their northern brethren towards the Tonquin, and was determined on vengeance. "The white men among you," said he, "are few in number, it is true, but they are mighty in medicine. See here," continued he, drawing forth a small bottle and holding it before their eyes, "in this bottle I hold the small-pox, safely corked up; I have but to draw the cork, and let loose the pestilence, to sweep man, woman, and child from the face of the earth."

The chiefs were struck with horror and alarm. They implored him not to uncork the bottle, since they and all their people were firm friends of the white men, and would always remain so; but, should the small-pox be once let out, it would run like wildfire throughout the country, sweeping off the good as well as the bad; and surely he would not be so unjust as to punish his friends for crimes committed by his enemies.

Mr. M'Dougal pretended to be convinced by their reasoning, and assured them that, so long as the white people should be unmolested, and the conduct of their Indian neighbors friendly and hospitable, the phial of wrath should remain sealed up; but, on the least hostility, the fatal cork should be drawn.

From this time, it is added, he was much dreaded by the natives, as one who held their fate in his hands, and was called, by way of preeminence, "the Great Small-pox Chief."

All this while, the labors at the infant settlement went on with unremitting assiduity, and, by the 26th of September, a commodious mansion, spacious enough to accommodate all

hands, was completed. It was built of stone and clay, there being no calcareous stone in the neighborhood from which lime for mortar could be procured. The schooner was also finished, and launched, with the accustomed ceremony, on the second of October, and took her station below the fort. She was named the Dolly, and was the first American vessel launched on this coast.

On the 5th of October, in the evening, the little community at Astoria was enlivened by the unexpected arrival of a detachment from Mr. David Stuart's post on the Oakinagan. It consisted of two of the clerks and two of the privates. They brought favorable accounts of the new establishment, but reported that, as Mr. Stuart was apprehensive there might be a difficulty of subsisting his whole party throughout the winter, he had sent one half back to Astoria, retaining with him only Ross, Montigny, and two others. Such is the hardihood of the Indian trader. In the heart of a savage and unknown country, seven hundred miles from the main body of his fellow-adventurers, Stuart had dismissed half of his little number, and was prepared with the residue to brave all the perils of the wilderness, and the rigors of a long and dreary winter.

With the return party came a Canadian creole named Regis Brugiere and an Iroquois hunter, with his wife and two children. As these two personages belong to certain classes which have derived their peculiar characteristics from the fur trade, we deem some few particulars concerning them pertinent to the nature of this work.

Brugiere was of a class of beaver trappers and hunters technically called "Freemen," in the language of the traders. They are generally Canadians by birth, and of French descent, who have been employed for a term of years by some fur company, but, their term being expired, continue to hunt and trap on their own account, trading with the company like the Indians. Hence they derive their appellation of Freemen, to distinguish them from the trappers who are bound for a number of years, and receive wages, or hunt on shares.

Having passed their early youth in the wilderness, separated almost entirely from civilized man, and in frequent intercourse with the Indians, they relapse, with a facility common to human nature, into the habitudes of savage life. Though no longer bound by engagements to continue in the interior, they have become so accustomed to the freedom of the forest and the prairie, that they look back with repugnance upon the restraints of civilization. Most of them intermarry with the natives, and, like the latter, have often a plurality of wives. Wanderers of the wilderness, according to the vicissitudes of the seasons, the migrations of animals, and the plenty or scarcity of game, they lead a precarious and unsettled existence; exposed to sun and storm, and all kinds of hardships, until they resemble Indians in complexion as well as in tastes and habits. From time to time, they bring the peltries they have collected to the trading houses of the company in whose employ they have been brought up. Here they traffic them away for such articles of merchandise

or ammunition as they may stand in need of. At the time when Montreal was the great emporium of the fur trader, one of these freemen of the wilderness would suddenly return, after an absence of many years, among his old friends and comrades. He would be greeted as one risen from the dead; and with the greater welcome, as he returned flush of money. A short time, however, spent in revelry, would be sufficient to drain his purse and sate him with civilized life, and he would return with new relish to the unshackled freedom of the forest.

Numbers of men of this class were scattered throughout the northwest territories. Some of them retained a little of the thrift and forethought of the civilized man, and became wealthy among their improvident neighbors; their wealth being chiefly displayed in large bands of horses, which covered the prairies in the vicinity of their abodes. Most of them, however, were prone to assimilate to the red man in their heedlessness of the future.

Such was Regis Brugiere, a freeman and rover of the wilderness. Having been brought up in the service of the Northwest Company, he had followed in the train of one of its expeditions across the Rocky Mountains, and undertaken to trap for the trading post established on the Spokane River. In the course of his hunting excursions he had either accidentally, or designedly, found his way to the post of Mr. Stuart, and had been prevailed upon to ascend the Columbia, and "try his luck" at Astoria.

Ignace Shonowane, the Iroquois hunter, was a specimen of

a different class. He was one of those aboriginals of Canada who had partially conformed to the habits of civilization and the doctrines of Christianity, under the influence of the French colonists and the Catholic priests; who seem generally to have been more successful in conciliating, taming, and converting the savages, than their English and Protestant rivals. These half-civilized Indians retained some of the good, and many of the evil qualities of their original stock. They were first-rate hunters, and dexterous in the management of the canoe. They could undergo great privations, and were admirable for the service of the rivers, lakes, and forests, provided they could be kept sober, and in proper subordination; but once inflamed with liquor, to which they were madly addicted, all the dormant passions inherent in their nature were prone to break forth, and to hurry them into the most vindictive and bloody acts of violence.

Though they generally professed the Roman Catholic religion, yet it was mixed, occasionally, with some of their ancient superstitions; and they retained much of the Indian belief in charms and omens. Numbers of these men were employed by the Northwest Company as trappers, hunters, and canoe men, but on lower terms than were allowed to white men. Ignace Shonowane had, in this way, followed the enterprise of the company to the banks of the Spokane, being, probably, one of the first of his tribe that had traversed the Rocky Mountains.

Such were some of the motley populace of the wilderness, incident to the fur trade, who were gradually attracted to the new

settlement of Astoria.

The month of October now began to give indications of approaching winter. Hitherto, the colonists had been well pleased with the climate. The summer had been temperate, the mercury never rising above eighty degrees. Westerly winds had prevailed during the spring and the early part of the summer, and been succeeded by fresh breezes from the northwest. In the month of October the southerly winds set in, bringing with them frequent rain.

The Indians now began to quit the borders of the ocean, and to retire to their winter quarters in the sheltered bosom of the forests, or along the small rivers and brooks. The rainy season, which commences in October, continues, with little intermission, until April; and though the winters are generally mild, the mercury seldom sinking below the freezing point, yet the tempests of wind and rain are terrible. The sun is sometimes obscured for weeks, the brooks swell into roaring torrents, and the country is threatened with a deluge.

The departure of the Indians to their winter quarters gradually rendered provisions scanty, and obliged the colonists to send out foraging expeditions in the Dolly. Still the little handful of adventurers kept up their spirits in their lonely fort at Astoria, looking forward to the time when they should be animated and reinforced by the party under Mr. Hunt, that was to come to them across the Rocky Mountains.

The year gradually wore away. The rain, which had poured

down almost incessantly since the first of October, cleared up towards the evening of the 31st of December, and the morning of the first of January ushered in a day of sunshine.

The hereditary French holiday spirit of the French voyageurs is hardly to be depressed by any adversities; and they can manage to get up a fete in the most squalid situations, and under the most untoward circumstances. An extra allowance of rum, and a little flour to make cakes and puddings, constitute a “regale;” and they forget all their toils and troubles in the song and dance.

On the present occasion, the partners endeavored to celebrate the new year with some effect. At sunrise the drums beat to arms, the colors were hoisted, with three rounds of small arms and three discharges of cannon. The day was devoted to games of agility and strength, and other amusements; and grog was temperately distributed, together with bread, butter, and cheese. The best dinner their circumstances could afford was served up at midday. At sunset the colors were lowered, with another discharge of artillery. The night was spent in dancing; and, though there was a lack of female partners to excite their gallantry, the voyageurs kept up the ball with true French spirit, until three o'clock in the morning. So passed the new year festival of 1812 at the infant colony of Astoria.

## CHAPTER XIII

Expedition by Land. – Wilson P. Hunt. – His Character. – Donald M'Kenzie. – Recruiting Service Among the Voyageurs. – A Bark Canoe. – Chapel of St. Anne. – Votive Offerings. – Pious Carousals, – A Ragged Regiment. – Mackinaw. – Picture of a Trading Post. – Frolicking Voyageurs. – Swells and Swaggerers. – Indian Coxcombs. – A Man of the North. – Jockeyship of Voyageurs – Inefficacy of Gold. – Weight of a Feather – Mr. Ramsay Crooks – His Character. – His Risks Among the Indians. – His Warning Concerning Sioux and Blackfeet. – Embarkation of Recruits. – Parting Scenes Between Brothers, Cousins, Wives, Sweethearts, and Pot Companions.

WE have followed up the fortunes of the maritime part of this enterprise to the shores of the Pacific, and have conducted the affairs of the embryo establishment to the opening of the new year; let us now turn back to the adventurous band to whom was intrusted the land expedition, and who were to make their way to the mouth of the Columbia, up vast rivers, across trackless plains, and over the rugged barriers of the Rocky Mountains.

The conduct of this expedition, as has been already mentioned, was assigned to Mr. Wilson Price Hunt, of Trenton, New Jersey, one of the partners of the company, who was

ultimately to be at the head of the establishment at the mouth of the Columbia. He is represented as a man scrupulously upright and faithful his dealings, amicable in his disposition, and of most accommodating manners; and his whole conduct will be found in unison with such a character. He was not practically experienced in the Indian trade; that is to say, he had never made any expeditions of traffic into the heart of the wilderness, but he had been engaged in commerce at St. Louis, then a frontier settlement on the Mississippi, where the chief branch of his business had consisted in furnishing Indian traders with goods and equipments. In this way, he had acquired much knowledge of the trade at second hand, and of the various tribes, and the interior country over which it extended.

Another of the partners, Mr. Donald M'Kenzie, was associated with Mr. Hunt in the expedition, and excelled on those points in which the other was deficient; for he had been ten years in the interior, in the service of the Northwest Company, and valued himself on his knowledge of "woodcraft," and the strategy of Indian trade and Indian warfare. He had a frame seasoned to toils and hardships; a spirit not to be intimidated, and was reputed to be a "remarkable shot;" which of itself was sufficient to give him renown upon the frontier.

Mr. Hunt and his coadjutor repaired, about the latter part of July, 1810, to Montreal, the ancient emporium of the fur trade where everything requisite for the expedition could be procured. One of the first objects was to recruit a complement

of Canadian voyageurs from the disbanded herd usually to be found loitering about the place. A degree of jockeyship, however, is required for this service, for a Canadian voyageur is as full of latent tricks and vice as a horse; and when he makes the greatest external promise, is prone to prove the greatest "take in." Besides, the Northwest Company, who maintained a long established control at Montreal, and knew the qualities of every voyageur, secretly interdicted the prime hands from engaging in this new service; so that, although liberal terms were offered, few presented themselves but such as were not worth having.

From these Mr. Hunt engaged a number sufficient, as he supposed, for present purposes; and, having laid in a supply of ammunition, provisions, and Indian goods, embarked all on board one of those great canoes at that time universally used by the fur traders for navigating the intricate and often-obstructed rivers. The canoe was between thirty and forty feet long, and several feet in width; constructed of birch bark, sewed with fibres of the roots of the spruce tree, and daubed with resin of the pine, instead of tar. The cargo was made up in packages, weighing from ninety to one hundred pounds each, for the facility of loading and unloading, and of transportation at portages. The canoe itself, though capable of sustaining a freight of upwards of four tons, could readily be carried on men's shoulders. Canoes of this size are generally managed by eight or ten men, two of whom are picked veterans, who receive double wages, and are stationed, one at the bow and the other at the stern, to keep a look-out and

to steer. They are termed the foreman and the steersman. The rest, who ply the paddles, are called middle men. When there is a favorable breeze, the canoe is occasionally navigated with a sail.

The expedition took its regular departure, as usual, from St. Anne's, near the extremity of the island of Montreal, the great starting-place of the traders to the interior. Here stood the ancient chapel of St. Anne, the patroness of the Canadian voyageurs; where they made confession, and offered up their vows, previous to departing on any hazardous expedition. The shrine of the saint was decorated with relics and votive offerings hung up by these superstitious beings, either to propitiate her favor, or in gratitude for some signal deliverance in the wilderness. It was the custom, too, of these devout vagabonds, after leaving the chapel, to have a grand carouse, in honor of the saint and for the prosperity of the voyage. In this part of their devotions, the crew of Mr. Hunt proved themselves by no means deficient. Indeed, he soon discovered that his recruits, enlisted at Montreal, were fit to vie with the ragged regiment of Falstaff. Some were able-bodied, but inexpert; others were expert, but lazy; while a third class were expert and willing, but totally worn out, being broken-down veterans, incapable of toil.

With this inefficient crew he made his way up the Ottawa River, and by the ancient route of the fur traders, along a succession of small lakes and rivers, to Michilimackinac. Their progress was slow and tedious. Mr. Hunt was not accustomed to the management of "voyageurs," and he had a crew admirably

disposed to play the old soldier, and balk their work; and ever ready to come to a halt, land, make a fire, put on the great pot, and smoke, and gossip, and sing by the hour.

It was not until the 22d of July that they arrived at Mackinaw, situated on the island of the same name, at the confluence of – lakes Huron and Michigan. This famous old French trading post continued to be a rallying point for a multifarious and motley population. The inhabitants were amphibious in their habits, most of them being, or having been voyageurs or canoe men. It was the great place of arrival and departure of the southwest fur trade. Here the Mackinaw Company had established its principal post, from whence it communicated with the interior and with Montreal. Hence its various traders and trappers set out for their respective destinations about Lake Superior and its tributary waters, or for the Mississippi, the Arkansas, the Missouri, and the other regions of the west. Here, after the absence of a year, or more, they returned with their peltries, and settled their accounts; the furs rendered in by them being transmitted in canoes from hence to Montreal. Mackinaw was, therefore, for a great part of the year, very scantily peopled; but at certain seasons the traders arrived from all points, with their crews of voyageurs, and the place swarmed like a hive.

Mackinaw, at that time, was a mere village, stretching along a small bay, with a fine broad beach in front of its principal row of houses, and dominated by the old fort, which crowned an impending height. The beach was a kind of public promenade

where were displayed all the vagaries of a seaport on the arrival of a fleet from a long cruise. Here voyageurs frolicked away their wages, fiddling and dancing in the booths and cabins, buying all kinds of knick-knacks, dressing themselves out finely, and parading up and down, like arrant braggarts and coxcombs. Sometimes they met with rival coxcombs in the young Indians from the opposite shore, who would appear on the beach painted and decorated in fantastic style, and would saunter up and down, to be gazed at and admired, perfectly satisfied that they eclipsed their pale-faced competitors.

Now and then a chance party of "Northwesters" appeared at Mackinaw from the rendezvous at Fort William. These held themselves up as the chivalry of the fur trade. They were men of iron; proof against cold weather, hard fare, and perils of all kinds. Some would wear the Northwest button, and a formidable dirk, and assume something of a military air. They generally wore feathers in their hats, and affected the "brave." "Je suis un homme du nord!" – "I am a man of the north," – one of these swelling fellows would exclaim, sticking his arms akimbo and ruffling by the Southwesters, whom he regarded with great contempt, as men softened by mild climates and the luxurious fare of bread and bacon, and whom he stigmatized with the inglorious name of pork-eaters. The superiority assumed by these vainglorious swaggerers was, in general, tacitly admitted. Indeed, some of them had acquired great notoriety for deeds of hardihood and courage; for the fur trade had its heroes, whose names resounded

throughout the wilderness.

Such was Mackinaw at the time of which we are treating. It now, doubtless, presents a totally different aspect. The fur companies no longer assemble there; the navigation of the lake is carried on by steamboats and various shipping, and the race of traders, and trappers, and voyageurs, and Indian dandies, have vaped out their brief hour and disappeared. Such changes does the lapse of a handful of years make in this ever-changing country.

At this place Mr. Hunt remained for some time, to complete his assortment of Indian goods, and to increase his number of voyageurs, as well as to engage some of a more efficient character than those enlisted at Montreal.

And now commenced another game of Jockeyship. There were able and efficient men in abundance at Mackinaw, but for several days not one presented himself. If offers were made to any, they were listened to with a shake of the head. Should any one seem inclined to enlist, there were officious idlers and busybodies, of that class who are ever ready to dissuade others from any enterprise in which they themselves have no concern. These would pull him by the sleeve, take him on one side, and murmur in his ear, or would suggest difficulties outright.

It was objected that the expedition would have to navigate unknown rivers, and pass through howling wildernesses infested by savage tribes, who had already cut off the unfortunate voyageurs that had ventured among them; that it was to climb

the Rocky Mountains and descend into desolate and famished regions, where the traveller was often obliged to subsist on grasshoppers and crickets, or to kill his own horse for food.

At length one man was hardy enough to engage, and he was used like a "stool-pigeon," to decoy others; but several days elapsed before any more could be prevailed upon to join him. A few then came to terms. It was desirable to engage them for five years, but some refused to engage for more than three. Then they must have part of their pay in advance, which was readily granted. When they had pocketed the amount, and squandered it in regales or in outfits, they began to talk of pecuniary obligations at Mackinaw, which must be discharged before they would be free to depart; or engagements with other persons, which were only to be canceled by a "reasonable consideration." It was in vain to argue or remonstrate. The money advanced had already been sacked and spent, and must be lost and the recruits left behind, unless they could be freed from their debts and engagements. Accordingly, a fine was paid for one; a judgment for another; a tavern bill for a third, and almost all had to be bought off from some prior engagement, either real or pretended.

Mr. Hunt groaned in spirit at the incessant and unreasonable demands of these worthies upon his purse; yet with all this outlay of funds, the number recruited was but scanty, and many of the most desirable still held themselves aloof, and were not to be caught by a golden bait. With these he tried another temptation. Among the recruits who had enlisted he distributed

feathers and ostrich plumes. These they put in their hats, and thus figured about Mackinaw, assuming airs of vast importance, as “voyageurs” in a new company, that was to eclipse the Northwest. The effect was complete. A French Canadian is too vain and mercurial a being to withstand the finery and ostentation of the feather. Numbers immediately pressed into the service. One must have an ostrich plume; another, a white feather with a red end; a third, a bunch of cock’s tails. Thus all paraded about, in vainglorious style, more delighted with the feathers in their hats than with the money in their pockets; and considering themselves fully equal to the boastful “men of the north.”

While thus recruiting the number of rank and file, Mr. Hunt was joined by a person whom he had invited, by letter, to engage as a partner in the expedition. This was Mr. Ramsay Crooks, a young man, a native of Scotland, who had served under the Northwest Company, and been engaged in trading expeditions upon his individual account, among the tribes of the Missouri. Mr. Hunt knew him personally, and had conceived a high and merited opinion of his judgment, enterprise, and integrity; he was rejoiced, therefore, when the latter consented to accompany him. Mr. Crooks, however, drew from experience a picture of the dangers to which they would be subjected, and urged the importance of going with a considerable force. In ascending the upper Missouri they would have to pass through the country of the Sioux Indians, who had manifested repeated hostility to the white traders, and rendered their expeditions extremely

perilous; firing upon them from the river banks as they passed beneath in their boats, and attacking them in their encampments. Mr. Crooks himself, when voyaging in company with another trader of the name of M'Lellan, had been interrupted by these marauders, and had considered himself fortunate in escaping down the river without loss of life or property, but with a total abandonment of his trading voyage.

Should they be fortunate enough to pass through the country of the Sioux without molestation, they would have another tribe still more savage and warlike beyond, and deadly foes of white men.

These were the Blackfeet Indians, who ranged over a wide extent of country which they would have to traverse. Under all these circumstances, it was thought advisable to augment the party considerably. It already exceeded the number of thirty, to which it had originally been limited; but it was determined, on arriving at St. Louis, to increase it to the number of sixty.

These matters being arranged, they prepared to embark; but the embarkation of a crew of Canadian voyageurs, on a distant expedition, is not so easy a matter as might be imagined; especially of such a set of vainglorious fellows with money in both pockets, and cocks' tails in their hats. Like sailors, the Canadian voyageurs generally preface a long cruise with a carouse. They have their cronies, their brothers, their cousins, their wives, their sweethearts, all to be entertained at their expense. They feast, they fiddle, they drink, they sing, they

dance, they frolic and fight, until they are all as mad as so many drunken Indians. The publicans are all obedience to their commands, never hesitating to let them run up scores without limit, knowing that, when their own money is expended, the purses of their employers must answer for the bill, or the voyage must be delayed. Neither was it possible, at that time, to remedy the matter at Mackinaw. In that amphibious community there was always a propensity to wrest the laws in favor of riotous or mutinous boatmen. It was necessary, also, to keep the recruits in good humor, seeing the novelty and danger of the service into which they were entering, and the ease with which they might at anytime escape it by jumping into a canoe and going downstream.

Such were the scenes that beset Mr. Hunt, and gave him a foretaste of the difficulties of his command. The little cabarets and sutlers' shops along the bay resounded with the scraping of fiddles, with snatches of old French songs, with Indian whoops and yells, while every plumed and feathered vagabond had his troop of loving cousins and comrades at his heels. It was with the utmost difficulty they could be extricated from the clutches of the publicans and the embraces of their pot companions, who followed them to the water's edge with many a hug, a kiss on each cheek, and a maudlin benediction in Canadian French.

It was about the 12th of August that they left Mackinaw, and pursued the usual route by Green Bay, Fox and Wisconsin rivers, to Prairie du Chien, and thence down the Mississippi to St. Louis,

where they landed on the 3d of September.

## CHAPTER XIV

St. Louis. – Its Situation. – Motley Population. – French Creole Traders and Their Dependants. – Missouri Fur Company – Mr. Manuel Lisa. – Mississippi Boatmen. – Vagrant Indians. – Kentucky Hunters – Old French Mansion – Fiddling – Billiards – Mr. Joseph Miller – His Character – Recruits – Voyage Up the Missouri. – Difficulties of the River. – Merits of Canadian Voyageurs. – Arrival at the Nodowa. – Mr. Robert M'Lellan joins the Party – John Day, a Virginia Hunter. Description of Him. – Mr. Hunt Returns to St. Louis.

ST. LOUIS, which is situated on the right bank of the Mississippi River, a few miles below the mouth of the Missouri, was, at that time, a frontier settlement, and the last fitting-out place for the Indian trade of the Southwest. It possessed a motley population, composed of the creole descendants of the original French colonists; the keen traders from the Atlantic States; the backwoodsmen of Kentucky and Tennessee; the Indians and half-breeds of the prairies; together with a singular aquatic race that had grown up from the navigation of the rivers – the “boatmen of the Mississippi” – who possessed habits, manners, and almost a language, peculiarly their own, and strongly technical. They, at that time, were extremely numerous, and conducted the chief navigation and commerce of the Ohio

and the Mississippi, as the voyageurs did of the Canadian waters; but, like them, their consequence and characteristics are rapidly vanishing before the all-pervading intrusion of steamboats.

The old French houses engaged in the Indian trade had gathered round them a train of dependents, mongrel Indians, and mongrel Frenchmen, who had intermarried with Indians. These they employed in their various expeditions by land and water. Various individuals of other countries had, of late years, pushed the trade further into the interior, to the upper waters of the Missouri, and had swelled the number of these hangers-on. Several of these traders had, two or three years previously, formed themselves into a company, composed of twelve partners, with a capital of about forty thousand dollars, called the Missouri Fur Company; the object of which was, to establish posts along the upper part of that river, and monopolize the trade. The leading partner of this company was Mr. Manuel Lisa, a Spaniard by birth, and a man of bold and enterprising character, who had ascended the Missouri almost to its source, and made himself well acquainted and popular with several of its tribes. By his exertions, trading posts had been established, in 1808, in the Sioux country, and among the Aricara and Mandan tribes; and a principal one, under Mr. Henry, one of the partners, at the forks of the Missouri. This company had in its employ about two hundred and fifty men, partly American and partly creole voyageurs.

All these circumstances combined to produce a population at

St. Louis even still more motley than that at Mackinaw. Here were to be seen, about the river banks, the hectoring, extravagant bragging boatmen of the Mississippi, with the gay, grimacing, singing, good-humored Canadian voyageurs. Vagrant Indians, of various tribes, loitered about the streets. Now and then a stark Kentucky hunter, in leathern hunting-dress, with rifle on shoulder and knife in belt, strode along. Here and there were new brick houses and shops, just set up by bustling, driving, and eager men of traffic from the Atlantic States; while, on the other hand, the old French mansions, with open casements, still retained the easy, indolent air of the original colonists; and now and then the scraping of a fiddle, a strain of an ancient French song, or the sound of billiard balls, showed that the happy Gallic turn for gayety and amusement still lingered about the place.

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