

CALIFORNIA TRAVELS.

IN the Spring of 1850, during the general excitement of migration to the *Gold Region*, I was attacked with that mental disease,—“California Fever,”—which was then removing its thousands from the quiet domestic home of friends, to the friendless home of the West. I had before witnessed its ravages, and seen its effects; and, seemingly, it had no power over me. But the invisible hand of *gain* seemed to lay its iron grasp upon the tenure of my soul, and to whisper to me of the *immortal worth of gold*. The attack proved fatal; and every energy of my mind was aroused for testing the great enterprise. Home and friends were but shadows in the drama of excitement. The beams of the setting sun seemed almost to reflect the *golden rays* upon the canopy of heaven, and to paint on the white-capped clouds the glistening emblems of the crude ore. However, my mind was fixed, as if by the power of fate, and I began making preparations.

I joined a company, consisting of Messrs. Hays, Nearpass, and Drake; the former two of Kalamazoo, and the latter of Grand Prairie. We procured our equipage with despatch, consisting of a covered wagon, two span of French ponies, ourselves a full panoply of apparel, and all things necessary for the journey, such as blankets, implements for cooking, guns, dog, &c., &c.

We prepared to take our departure on the morning of March the 5th, should kind Providence permit. That day arrived, smiling in its full orb of beauty, cheering our minds by the echoing strains of animated nature; and, by its power of charm, dispelled that gloom from our countenances—the blushing of the sorrowing heart, that manifests itself, when the chord that binds heart to heart is about to be severed.

Our team was rigged at an early hour, but was unable to start

beautiful place, and is the centre of much trade. Here we purchased some cheese, apples, dried beef, &c., to carry with us.

MARCH 12.—Left this city, and proceeded on our journey to the village of Mapleville, which is pleasantly situated in the town and county of Dupage, thirty miles from Chicago; thirteen miles of which was plank road.

To-day we crossed one of the Illinois plains, which was like a vast ocean, without a tree, shrub, fence, and rarely a house.

Thence, on the following day, we proceeded about twenty miles, through Orriora, a considerably large village, into Kent County, and stopped in the town of Big Rock, at a private house, *in dirt up to our eyes*.

MARCH 14.—Advanced through Little Rock, a delightful village, over plains beyond the power of mortal sight to limit, to Paw Paw Grove, situated in the town of Lee.

Drove to-day twenty-five miles, and staid at Mr. Towns', a private house.

MARCH 15.—Drove this day, also, twenty-five miles, and put up about four P. M., at a Temperance House, a country seat. The weather for three days past had been good.

Nearpass and myself walked five miles, to the village of Dixon, situated on the east bank of Rock River. This river is about three hundred feet wide, with a mild current. Here we engaged a ferry to carry us over in the morning.

MARCH 16.—The teams arrived about nine o'clock. We crossed the river, and followed it down to the village of Sterling, in the county of White Sides, and town of Union Grove.

We travelled thirty miles and halted at a private house, fifteen miles from the Mississippi river, and remained over the Sabbath.

MARCH 18.—Thence we proceeded to Albany, situated on the bank of the Mississippi, where we arrived about two P. M. Not being able to cross the river on account of excessive wind, we put up at a Temperance House for the night. Albany is a small village, and many of its houses are marked by the defacing hand of time. It contained two taverns, about six stores, one or two churches, and dwelling houses accordingly.

MARCH 19.—Crossed the river on a horse ferry boat, into Iowa Territory. Two steamboats were coming up the river from St. Louis.

The river is here about three quarters of a mile wide, and presents an appearance surpassingly beautiful; especially when, as now, it is illumined by the beautiful Aurora.

Sixteen teams crossed it this morning, the most of which were bound for the land of gold.

Made this day about twenty miles, and laid up at a private house.

MARCH 20.—Drove fifteen miles, over sloughs almost impassable, into the town of Dewit.

Nearpass and myself, on foot, having left the boys, viz: Hays and Drake, and Neal and his companion, with the wagons, stopped at the log house of a frugal farmer, one mile and a half in advance of them.

Here were camped about seventy-five gold-seeking men, with one hundred horses and fifty yoke of cattle; who slept in every place which nature or art had sheltered from the moist dew drop.

We, however, slept in the house, on an ash floor, which was not so pliable as our bones; and as night spread over us her sable mantle, the din of voices ceased, and nought, save the mutterings of the solitary cricket, disturbed our travelling thoughts.

MARCH 21.—As the sun was returning to his daily task, three cheers were given by the eager throng, who were prepared to take their departure. The boys came up at an early hour, and we proceeded across a large prairie, eleven miles long, without a tree, shrub, house or fence, and drove fifteen miles, to the village of Tipton, which is small and pleasant, located in the County of Cedar.

Thence we drove eight miles, and put up at the house of Mr. Stouts.

Here we obtained permission to cook our own victuals. We purchased five dozen of eggs, which, even in one meal, fell a prey to our ravenous appetites.

MARCH 22.—Crossed Cedar river two miles hence, and arrived in Iowa City about two P. M.

This city is small, as to the number of its houses, but extends over considerable land.

Its buildings are very plain in their construction, of which the State House is the best.

Here we made an addition to our store of provisions, and procured two tin water cans, in which to carry a supply of water. On the following day about noon, we left the city and crossed Iowa river, and drove eight miles, to the farm house of Mr. Seahorn, with whom we remained during the Sabbath.

On Sunday we accompanied our host across a small stream, to a log house, in a retreat, to hear a Scotchman preach.

Thence, on Monday, we continued our journey, and reached Wassonville, fifteen miles distant, about three P. M. This is a small