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A TRIP ACROSS THE PLAINS IN 1832

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The 22nd of April, 1852.

The day of my departure for the "Golden Land" found me on board a Saint Louis Steamer. 'Twas early in the morning when we pushed out into the stream and I for the last time for years walked out upon deck to take a "last fond lingering look" at the home of my boy-hood, the scene of my earnest struggle (in later life) to accomplish the dream of my life. More than all this, I was leaving all that was near and dear to me in this world, my wife, my children, my mother, brothers and friends, and all, perhaps, on a wild and fanciful speculation.

It was not without some little regret that I parted from the shores of the "Queen City" and left my future fortunes to fate. And this thought troubled me some, if a man cannot live and do well in this new and beautiful country, where can he expect to do it? Was I not, after all, "going upon a fool's errand"? These and kindred thoughts came rushing through my mind, but with as stout a heart as I could master I threw them off and resolved upon doing the best that in my lay towards accomplishing the fulfillment of my long dream.

Smoothly and pleasantly did our good boat glide down the beautiful Ohio, passing fine farms and happy homes, little children at play on its green banks, looking happy and contented. I had often been up and down this river but this trip every thing looked more interesting than usual. It was my last trip for years. It might be my last. I was about taking a long journey; some accident might happen, some sickness might overtake me. Four years, my expected absence, was a long time. Many changes would occur in the affairs of life during that period. What would four years bring forth to me? What changes and of what importance would they be? These were questions for which I had no answer.

Yet hope, that "bright particular star" of my existence shown brightly on my pathway, and beckoning me on, promised to lead the way to the new El Dorado where man could realize the fabled stories with which his ears and heart had been enchanted. However, I was not now, nor ever had been, so sanguine as to believe all the stories I had ever heard or read of the "Land of Gold".

Nothing of importance occurred on this, our first day's travel. We stopped at Louisville a few minutes and just at sun-set passed on over the falls. We were now fairly on our journey. I sought my bed to sleep and perhaps to dream of my lonely family at home.

2  
April 23d.

The ringing of the bell awoke me from a sound and refreshing sleep. All was well with me. But after breakfast while walking upon deck, my attention was called to a suit of clothes without an owner. This was strange. No one could solve the mystery. Hat, boots, pantaloons, coat and pipe lay there. It told of something wrong, perhaps the end of some unfortunate. However, we let it pass as a singular occurrence, as it really was. Nothing draws the attention of steam boat passengers a great while at a time, and this incident, singular as it was, was soon forgotten.

We passed our time in reading or looking abroad over the beautiful country dotted here and there with fine farm houses and beautiful villages. Those who have traveled the Ohio River can agree with me in saying that it can hardly be beat in beautiful and pleasant scenery. Other streams may present a wilder and more picturesque a scene, but for beauty and pleasantness combined, give me the beautiful Ohio.

April 24.

Past Casio and into the Mississippi River, there is something grand in beholding the "Father of Waters". A thousand rivers are here gathered upon one bosom, from the north and the south, from east and the west, all are tributary to this mighty river. We have just traveled five hundred miles upon its waters, one thousand we have still to travel. And still another thousand do we travel by the side of one of its tributaries, the will of God permitting. We shall drink of its waters while traversing the sandy and desert plains of the "Great West", and while setting beneath the shadow of the Great Rocky Mountains, we will drink of it. The Mississippi immediately above the mouth of the Ohio presents (not very pleasing to the eye of the traveler) a wilderness of woods, of land and of water, on an extensive scale. However, a near approach to Saint Louis brings us to high lands and a hilly country. We are now upon a rapid and dangerous part of the River; one portion to distinguish it from the balance of the river is called the "Grave Yard".

April 25.

Our wagons being on the hurricandeck caught fire from the cinders as they fell from the chimneys. However, not much damage was done. We stopped at quarantine and submitted to the inspection of the health officer. He reported "all right" and gave us a "free pass" to the city of St. Louis where we arrived a little after sundown.

April 26.

A wet and uncomfortable morning and all was hurry and

3

confusion. Horses, mules, drays, carts, merchandise, while men and negroes filled the entire space between the water and the front row of buildings. How or in what manner we were to get our goods from one boat to another was a mystery we could not solve until we had "jumped in" and worked from morn till night, through wet and mud. At six o'clock we had transferred our goods and chattles from the good steamer G. W. Sparhawk to the Clipper No. 2. bound for the Missouri river and St. Joe. We were fortunate in being among the first to engage our passage on this boat, as by so doing we secured comfortable rooms which we could not have done a few hours later. Here we began to see the rush for California. A string of adventurers came thronging aboard until every hold and corner of this spacious steamer was full to overflowing.

April 27.

Sunday morning. We remain in port today and now have time to look at the big city. St. Louis is certainly a great place and will continue to be without a doubt. Its importance may run far ahead of our own Queen City, yet I cannot bring myself to the conclusion that it will. I do not think it is so pleasant a place as Cincinnati, yet I may be prejudiced in favor of home, and perhaps cannot argue fairly. The street or the most of them near the river are very intricate and one gets confounded with the zig-zag ways. He is ever and anon to turn to find any particular place. There is not wanting fine and costly buildings that would be an ornament to any city, but I think they lack the situation to show to advantage.

April 28.

Still in port and the cry is "still they come". A steam boat like an omnibus is never full. Sundown and we are off and glad are we passengers for we are always in a hurry.

April 29.

Our boat was wallowing in the turbid and troubled waters of the Missouri long before day light and this morning as we walked out upon deck a new scene presented itself. I had never before traveled on this river. Every thing was new and strange to me. The low lands, and dark dismal forests had but little charms about them, and then the river. One could hardly imagine a more uncomfortable looking stream than this to navigate. Never had I seen so many snags or more terrible ones to look at. The low lands, wild woods, big snags, and a wide, rapid and muddy river are the principal features of the lower Missouri River. However, there are some redeeming features upon our path way. By and by we

hope to realize them.

April 30.

We have made tolerable headway since leaving St. Louis. There is a sameness of travel on this river I never experienced on any other. Right glad am I, when night comes on, to compose myself to sleep.

May 1st.

Nothing, out of our every day line excitement. Snags and sand bars are a continual trouble.

May 2nd.

We passed the wreck of the steamer Saluda. This boat exploded her boilers a few weeks ago, dealing death and destruction to one hundred human beings and involving boat and cargo in one grand ruin. The scene occurred at the City of Lexington and the marks of the terrible disaster are yet plainly visible in the ruined houses on shore and the broken wrecks of the ill-fated boat as she lays half concealed in the mud and water at the landing.

Many stories and incidents are related in connection with this disaster, but one or two of which I remember. As I said once before, the Missouri is quite a rapid river, the boat an old and worn out one and filled with freight which made slow traveling, the passengers like ourselves in a hurry, the Captain and crew reckless, ready at any time to blow a boat into the air for the sake of notoriety; all these things conspired against the old steamer which had been doing her best to ride the strong current of the river but without effect. She had made a number of useless efforts to gain a race with the strong current which so exasperated the Captain that he swore he would make the passage or land boat and cargo in Hell. How he succeeded! The remains of the terrible accident but too plainly show. It is said the Captain was thrown through a frame house and up onto the hill side. The safe belonging to the boat with a dog and chain attached were also found high up on the hill side.

The sight of the wrecked steamer caused much uneasiness among our passengers. We were upon an old and worn out concern, the officers were fool hardy and desperate men, caring for nothing but the gold they were now getting for taking us up the river. The loss of the old boat was of not much consequence. It would save the expense of running should she sink or blow up and then the Captain.

if he survived, would gain a reputation for rashness and go-a-headitiveness that would answer for so much capital stock to go into business again, a qualification (one would suppose, had he traveled and experienced in what manner steam boating was conducted on the Missouri River) together necessary in a steam boat captain.

May 3.

Still onward amid snags and over sand bars. Our boat drew some six feet water and had a continual habit of getting "hard up". This made our progress up the river, at times, quite slow. We passed today the wreck of a steamer recently sunk. All our passengers being curious in such matters crowded over to one side of the boat to see the wreck. This caused the old boat to careen considerably. When the Captain swore if they did not trim the boat he would land them where the Captain of the sunken steamer landed his, in the water two feet above their heads, no one could find fault with that threat, but many thought the Captain might have admonished us in a more genteel manner.

May 4.

A hole burst in one of our boilers last night. Stopped until daylight to repair damages; all set, and we are again traveling at fearful speed considering the weakness of our boilers. Everybody is now fearful of a "blow up". Passed a boat today bound for the same port, and like us, full of Californians.

May 5.

The old boats boilers are too weak to "stand the press"; another hole and another stop to repair. Three hours hard work and all is right and we are off again. For the want of fun, someone threw a pet dog over board. The little fellow swam for dear life, but like a mariner without a compass, swam a great deal contrary to the right direction. The consequence was loss of life and limb, for the poor little brute sank beneath Missouri's turbid wave, and to "mend the matter", his mistress sank to the cabin floor and like Rachael of old, "refused to be comforted". How long she would have remained so, would be hard to tell, had not the word been passed round that the old boat was again on the point of "blowing up". The news acted like a charm on the affections of the disconsolate woman. She immediately arose and made all necessary preparation for a swim herself should occasion require it.

Seven o'clock, and the lights of St. Joe are seen in the distance. We are happy in being so near our journey's

end on the river. Nine o'clock and we are anchored to the main land and the steam going down may it never be raised again in this "old tub" should it be. The officers ought to be hung for wilful and premeditated murder. Any set of men who like those concerned in this boat ought to be sent to the penitentiary for making an attempt to carry passengers on such a craft. This boat, Clipper No. 2 was an old worn out concern and too unsafe for the Ohio River trade, but was put in the Missouri River to make money, snag or blow up as the case might be. At any rate, her owner could sustain no loss.

As I have said before, there are many redeeming features upon this river. Cities, towns and villages are being built upon its banks; there are also many fine farms and pleasant looking homes scattered here and there over the country. Missouri is a great state and growing into importance every day.

May 6.

We unloaded our goods this morning and encamped on the great plain that stretches southward from the city of Sant Joe. The neighborhood for miles around was full of California bound emigrants. The white tents and white covers to wagons look as though preparations had been made for a "grand army" as indeed there had been, for here were armies of men, of women and of children. The city of Joe is much the gainer by so large an emigration starting from this point. Thousands of dollars will be spent here by those who are about starting over the plains. Almost every man has something to buy and as the merchants have anticipated all their wants, everything necessary for so long a journey can be procured without much delay. We here bought one yoke of oxen, a span of mules and many other fixings and soon got ready for the plains.

I had lived in this world a good while and thought I had seen great crowds and so I had, of men, but not of wagons. The river was to cross and such a crowd of wagons rammed, jamed and locked together I never before saw, and I do not think the world ever saw the like before. It seemed as though the salvation of every man depended on his getting his wagon over first. We judged by the exertions he made to do so that such was the case. We were so far behind in our turn crossing that we cast about for other means than the regular boats to cross over in. By hook or by crook, or by an accidental streak of good luck, the boys managed to get hold of an old craft that looked as though it would answer our purpose; for ought I know, it was "the

floating scow of Old Virginia". It looked old enough at any rate. Everything being in readiness, we attempted to freight the boat with mules, but no sooner did we get one on board and our attention drawn towards another than the first would jump overboard and swim ashore to the great delight of the crowd which thronged the river's bank. Finding that we gained but little in trying to freight the boat by the single additions, we contrived to drive them all in together which we did and put up the sailing to keep them there. A shout of victory followed the putting up of the bars; a triumph was gained over the stubborn mule and the order was given to "cast off", but before it could be executed, the little fiends in mule shape so crowded to one side of the boat that it dipped water. This scared the little devils themselves, and they all as if of one accord, "leaped overboard" again. Three times three cheers were given by the crowd on shore. So much fun could not pass unnoticed or without applause. However, by dint of perseverance the mules were gotten on board and properly secured, the lines cast off and the river crossed. The crowd on shore beat time to the tune of "Row de boat, man, row." Are you going to California in that old scow?" We had had such a time with our mules that it was but reasonable to expect a great one with the oxen. In this, however, we were mistaken, for the horned tribe seemed to have caught the stubbornness of the mule and if possible were more annoying and dangerous to handle than all the mules on the road to California. Suffice it is to say, however, we got them all on board and landed with our goods and cattle safely in the Indian territory and encamped to "fix up things". Here is a general camping ground and as it is on the verge of civilization anything forgotten can be procured by recrossing the river.

We for the first time built our camp in the woods. The croaking of frogs and distant howl of wolves was an intimation of what we had to expect from the wild beasts and reptiles of the wilderness beyond. There were many musicians and of various kinds, belonging to various companies, numbers of whom after supper was over, commenced practising those sweet tunes which were to enliven us while sitting around the camp fires on the far off plains. In addition to vocal and instrumental music performed by human will the frogs of the surrounding district as if animated by the festivities of the evening set up such a croaking as I think human ears had as yet never listened to. Those who were not present on the occasion can perhaps judge of the discordant sounds with which the old woods sang. Never shall I forget the horse bellow of the portly frog nor the sharp twang of the wee ones mingled as they were with soft strains of instrumental music.

If Bable was worse confounded than it was on that long to be remembered night, I do not wonder their leaving off the

Tower, for never before had I heard so many different sounds, and all at the same time.

This concert of sweet music lasted until near mid-night. At length all was hushed but the crackling of the log-fires as they were every now and then replenished by the watchful sentinels who kept watch and ward over the drowsy multitude who lay stretched upon the ground throughout the vast encampment.

Many and various were the feelings I experienced on this, the first night of my pilgrimage in the wilderness I was about to encounter. Tired nature at length gave way and sleep, sound sleep came to restore me from uneasy thoughts of home, of wife, of children and of friends.

May 7th.

Last night we kept our first regular watch-guard and as a beginning to our fun two of our oxen got very sick. The circumstance caused some little uneasiness, but by kind attention they were soon restored, and this morning appeared as well as ever. It took all of today to get things in readiness. No incident worthy of notice occurred to mar the busy scene our camp presented from morning till night. We had intended to have traveled in company with some acquaintances from Cincinnati, (Messrs. Rhodes and Porter), but they were the soonest ready and being in a hurry drove on.

May 8th.

Something more was wanting this morning to make our outfit complete. The Captain (Mr. Brown) recrossed the river to obtain it; while he was gone our unruly yoke of oxen took it into their heads to "clear out" and it was not until after a long and tedious time that we found them.

One o'clock and the captain has returned and dinner being over, we are now ready for a start. Horses, mules and oxen are being hitched up for the first time. We shall soon see what will be done. Two o'clock and the order for march is given and off we are for the "Promised Land" through mud knee deep. It is a glorious warm day and the traveling interesting, mud and water, and water and mud. Indeed it was a mixture of all the kinds of bad roads I had ever seen. It was now plainly visible that we were in for it, and it became us like good men and true to put our "shoulders to the wheel" which we did and most effectively too. Sometimes our whole strength of team was necessary to pull one wagon through a bad passage and then again each team was at its individual post tugging away for dear life. The speed was quite moderate for our only ambition was to gain six miles on our journey today.

which feat we accomplished handsomely and leaving the mud and frogs to have it all their own way. We encamped upon a bluff which borders this the "dead sea" of our day's journey.

Sunday May 9, 1852.

While picking up wood for camp last night, some of the boys discovered a canteen and immediately approached it. "Tap the can", says one. "Good" says another, "its cheap." "Let's all take a horn", cries a third suiting the action to the word. The first speaker was about raising the precious beverage to his lips when a small clear voice whose tones rose just above the hum of busy multitude was heard to exclaim, "Gentlemen, don't make too free on short acquaintance". The reader may help the boys out of this scrape. I shall not. No business to get into it. A lone canteen after the incident above noted took place was looked upon with rather a suspicious eye.

Here were good spring water and plenty of wood, but little or no grass. Immediately beyond us was the open prairie and the grass there on the hillsides looked very inviting. Near our camp is a solitary grave with but a lonely letter upon the grave board to make the name. Here was food for reflection at the start. Could it be possible that the occupant of that grave was an emigrant like ourselves and had got no further upon his road? Yes, it was possible and quite probable, too. The sleeper slept well nor did he heed the hurry and anxiety of the thousands who were pressing onwards "toward that bourn from which no traveler ever returns". We travel today in hopes of finding good grass for our cattle. The road lay up hill, but as we were a "rising people" did not mind it much. The country was quite rolling and hilly, but as our teams were strong and ourselves anxious, we got along finely. We stopped at 12 o'clock and let our teams to grass which was quite abundant along our days travel. There are many wagons on the road today and everybody appears to be in a hurry. Hitched up at one o'clock and we pursued our journey over a beautiful prairie country. Timber only on the water courses and that only in narrow strips. Camped at 6 in the evening. Wood and water to carry some distance but good grass in abundance. The Captain had returned to Saint Joe this morning, but as we were turning out this evening he rode into camp, and we are all together again.

May 10th.

An early start this morning. A good but hilly road. At 2 o'clock we were in sight of the Mission, an institution for the instruction and civilization of the Indians. They cultivate quite an extensive farm and have good houses and lands. Saw

In this neighborhood the first dead ox on the road and passed two or three graves, the occupants of which it is said died of cholera. About two o'clock we met a young man returning with his team and two little children. He told us he had buried his wife and one child "just beyond". The woman, I believe, had died of small pox. We felt for the poor fellow as he turned his head toward the wilderness where lay his loved ones, over whose graves the wild beasts would make night hideous with their dreadful noises as they struggled one with another to see who should take precedence at the feast of human flesh. The poor fellow passed sadly homewards while we went joyously on. "Such is life". It commenced raining this afternoon and continued until after we encamped which was by the side of a small creek, wood, water and grass in abundance.

May 11th.

We had some neighbors last which we had intended to have visited but for the rain which fell in torrents. This was the beginning. We should know more about it at the end of our journey; to stand watch at night was hard enough but to stand it in rain and mud was still worse. We were as yet young in the business, but done our duty nobly and watched the weary hours away. Toward midnight our attention was drawn by the sound of weeping in our neighbor's tent. What could be the matter? Whilst deliberating whether we should go and see, a man approached our camp fire and told us he had just lost by death his only child and had now come to solicit aid in burying it. We promised that in the morning his wants should be attended to. This was a terrible night of rain and darkness. The wild howl of the hungry wolf and the moaning of that father and mother left the impression of the incidents of that night strongly impressed on my mind.

We this morning helped our neighbor bury his dead child. A bread box had been emptied and its size just suited that of the dead child. Rough but sympathizing hands laid the little girl in her rough coffin. The same hands carried her to a little grave by the road side and there by the light of the clear morning sun laid her down to rest. 'Twas a sorrowful picture to see that mother turn from the little grave and pursue a journey to distant lands leaving the darling of her heart buried in depth of the wilderness.

It was a beautiful morning and a beautiful country lay before us. There was naught to make us sad save the little grave we so often turned to look upon. The heavy rains had made bad traveling. One place in particular we had to unload and carry our goods over on our backs. This was a job not laid down in the bills yet imperative necessity compelled us to the task. Those we have been similarly situated

can well understand the trouble of unloading and repacking goods and provisions once snugly stowed away for an over land journey. We had plenty of help but still the trouble was more than was altogether to our wishes. However, there was some fun connected with the labor which helped to lighten the unsought-for-task. It was of the utmost importance to keep our flour and bread perfectly dry. To unload and pack the bags of flour across a deep and wide swamp was a job that required strength, agility and perseverance. Our best men were selected for this purpose, two and three to each bag of flour. One man would shoulder a bag, wade in and get "stuck". One of his companions would relieve him of his load and travel on, (the ends of the bag just above high water mark). It was not long till the third man would come to the rescue of the second, and so on to high ground. By great good fortune everything was got safely over and set to rights, passed on to good feed, wood and water. We had (since leaving Saint Joe) passed nine new made graves.

May 12th.

Met some wagons returning to the States. They had the small pox on board. Passed an encampment and a case of cholera. The travel today has been over a beautiful looking country, the land rolling and green with fresh grass. Birds hovered in flocks along our pathway making us glad with their music. Encamped this evening near a small but beautiful lake. The green grass was growing to the waters edge making it a very pleasant and comfortable place to pass the night.

Thursday May 13th.

Passed today the grave of an emigrant. He was just buried. His wife and children sat weeping round his last resting place. They had belonged to a large company bound for Oregon, but the deceased man being taken with the cholera the company drove on for fear that more cases might occur if the family remained longer with them. A more desolate looking group I never witnessed as I saw them on the open bleak prairie. The cold wind howling through the air and ever and anon it bore with it the mournful tones of that desolate woman.

The bleak and cold winds, the wagons, the oxen feeding near by, a woman sitting at the head of a new made grave with two little children on either side, a girl of some fourteen summers standing near by sobbing as though her heart would break with grief, a boy sitting upon the wagon tongue and a hired man setting up a board head stone for the dead man's grave and you have the picture as I saw it.

Camped at noon and while we were resting the woman and her family passed on. It was a mournful march. How often did that poor woman and those little girls look behind while bursts of grief would escape telling how dearly did they love that

husband and father whom they had left to pursue this long journey alone. It was a satisfaction to know that the family was well provided with money, teams and provisions.

This afternoon passed a grave. No mark to tell who was its silent tenant, a fresh grave amid the green grass. I suppose it was some passenger in a train. They were commonly disposed of in the quickest and cheapest manner possible and that too without the least feeling.

May 14, 1852.

Camped last night on the banks of the river Nemahaw and this morning was called upon to bury a man who had died in the night of cholera. There have been many cases of the above disease or something like it on this road. Let the sickness be what it may it has killed many. Yesterday we met two persons returning home out of a company of five who had left Saint Joe a day or two only before us. Of the other three, two had died and the other was left sick. I had seen these men when coming out on the boat and had partly bargained to take them over the plains, but when they got to Saint Joe concluded to join a larger company for safety. Yesterday we met two returning, two were dead and one left sick. They had all paid their passage money, one hundred and fifty dollars the man. The two who came back had some twenty dollars given them back to return home on.

There were many camps on the banks of this river. Many were sick and some dying and some dead. Many were discouraged. I think many returned home from this point. Indeed things look a little discouraging and those who are not determined may waver in their resolution to proceed.

The river Nemahaw is quite a small stream, but has very high and steep banks. At the fording place we all had a time of it in getting up from the waters edge. The way was so steep and slippery that it was nearly as much as teams could do to get up without being attached to a load.

This afternoon passed the graves of a man and a woman. The man was marked for 74 years. Poor old man his race had nearly run out before starting on this journey.

Saturday, May 15, 1852.

Started this morning in good time in hopes of gaining the big blue river but it commenced raining shortly which retarded our progress so much so that we lay up "short of the mark". Saw three graves today.

Camped before sundown one mile from wood, the same from water, but good grass in abundance.

Sunday, May 16.

The wind commenced blowing and rain began to fall at daylight. From our camp to the river it was six miles and the most tedious six miles I think I ever experienced in my life. The road lay through an open country and the wind went howling over our heads and beating the rain directly in our faces and with such force that we could hardly stem the current. Those who have traveled on the open prairie in bad weather can easily comprehend our situation. We made the journey by nine o'clock, encamped near a drift wood pile, set fire to the concern, warmed ourselves and cooked our breakfast.

Here was a "private" post office, trading post and ferry kept by a company of men who had established themselves to rob the emigrant of what little money he happened to have after leaving the States. Twenty-five cents for a glass of bad whiskey, one dollar for taking your letter to the States and three dollars for crossing each wagon. We gave neither, for we bought no whiskey, wrote no letters and drove our wagons through the "drink".

There are many new graves on the banks of this river, some fifteen or twenty perhaps. We overtook a large company today. They had lost some fifteen since leaving the states. Things begin to look a little hard. This has been a cold windy and disagreeable day, one not soon to be forgotten by those who like ourselves traveled in the neighborhood of the big Blue River.

May 17th.

A late start this morning caused by traveling yesterday (Sunday). Made twelve miles, crossed Cottonwood Creek and camped in the open country. Cold and windy yet. We had been advised to bring but little clothing as we should not need it on the plains. Our experience was quite the reverse. If we had not a sufficient supply, we should suffer.

May 18th.

The nights are still cold. Not a man slept warm. Started early to make a good day's work. Crossed little Sandy Creek today. A smith shop was standing on the west bank but deserted of its owner. I think he could not have fixed things comfortable. There was no roof or door, the charcoal cinders only gave any indication of a black smith having worked there at his trade. Whoever the poor fellow might have been or from what point of the compass he came or whither he had gone, none could

tell. Business, I presume, had gotten dull on the banks of Cottonwood Creek and he was trying his hand in some other locality. Located for the night near the old black-smith shop, a company in distress in our immediate vicinity, another case of cholera.

May 19, 1852.

An early start this morning in hopes of reaching the Little Blue River and camping on its banks to-night. We were disappointed in our expectation and had to lay up short of the mark. Saw two bears near the road today feeding on the dead carcass of an ox. Our hunters immediately gave chase but 'twas "no go". The vermits understood the "tricks of travelers" and made good their retreat distancing the boys half way in a mile heat. This was a disappointment and we had to dine as usual on dried beef and bacon meat was no where, or rather where we could not get at it. Our hunters saw much game today but came into camp more hungry than fortunate. A brace of birds was all they brought and they were given to a sick man.

May 20.

From an elevation near the road side we first discovered the little Blue River. 'Twas a beautiful sight that little river winding through groves of thick timber and small undergrowth whose branches dipping into the clear silvery flood below presented a scene of sweet repose altogether in accordance with our desires. Happy were we to repose under such a grateful shade and beside such a beautiful stream. Here were wood, water and grass in great profusion. After resting ourselves, eating supper, etc., we drove our stock over the river to feed. Already were the fording places thronged by the multitude of cattle being driven over. Ours among the rest were driver out into the wide spread prairie and I am happy to say fared well. Why it is, I do not know, but a large and wide spread prairie looks to me like desolation itself. Such a scene presented itself to me this evening. In looking toward the west, the whole face of the country looked to be a dead level without a tree or shrub to relieve the painful expanse before my vision and it was not until I had turned me round to catch a glimmering of the watch fires on the banks of the little river with the tall green trees above them that I became reconciled to stand guard for the night. Standing guard is quite an interesting feature in the duty of an emigrant's journey to California. He is sometimes placed on duty two or three miles from camp. Perhaps in the mountains amid the rocks and deep gulches alone by himself. When thus situated, he has the double duty to perform of keeping the cattle safe and himself, too, from the cunning of the Indians who may be lurking in the same vicinity with you. If the duty above alluded to does not keep him busy, he can roam about through the darkness of night and meditate and even

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speculate on the probabilities of his wife and family being able to support themselves while he is absent on just such a pilgrimage as he is now engaged in. I for one must own up to a good many such reflections and this night while on duty they came crowding thick and fast.

May 21.

Remained in camp all of today. Yesterday was beautiful and as warm as one could wish. Sometime in the night, however, it clouded up and this morning was raining hard. We busied ourselves in writing, fishing, hunting and doing camp duty. Our hunter returned to dinner after tramping far and near for game but without success. The game, too wild or our hunters too slow; there is plenty of game near the banks of this river and plenty of fish in its waters, but for want of skill or good luck we got neither. This has been a most disagreeable day. Our experience will this day give us an insight as to what we may expect should we have much such weather. Could our friends have seen us as we huddled round the camp fire "smoked out", "burnt out" and I should have liked to have said "rained out", but as it happens, man is neither sugar nor salt and it would take a good deal of rain to wash him entirely out.

May 22.

The captain and some others were out late last night which caused some little uneasiness, but came in and all was right again. Being in a country inhabited with Indians we keep a sharp look out for our stock; a great deal have been stolen lately.

Started early this morning. Our road up the river was quite good and we made twenty-five miles; camped and went fishing. Luck about as good as usual. Some folks have good luck catching fish. Why we do not, I cannot see.

Sunday May 23.

Traveled today against our inclination for we propose to lay by on the Sabbath, but grass and water being all important we are compelled to move according to circumstances. Two o'clock, just visited the grave of a murdered man. A notice at the grave read that he had been found with bullet holes in his body and the marks of a knife plainly visible. It is strange that man should commit murder at all, and stranger still to commit it in a lonely country where there is so much need of aid and comfort from one to another. At noon camped near a train of Rocky Mountain traders. They were on their way to the States loaded with furs. They were the first we had seen and they excited some little curiosity by their rusty looking

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morning and with some little regret; we have traversed its banks for seventy-five miles. The grass was good, water good and wood in abundance; besides the above conveniences it was an excellent place to fish. I had my hook into every band and crook in the river but could catch nothing. Others did, however, and I can but call it "a good place to fish". Our road leads from this river across the high lands to the Platt River. A desert looking country with but little good water, no wood and scarcely any grass. We were anxious to make the journey from one river to the other (without camping), and drove hard to accomplish it, but as bad luck would have it, got disappointed. Night came when we were several miles short. We had to camp without wood, water or grass. Our teams were worn down and must have rest. We were tired ourselves, but had plenty of provisions. How to cook it was the secret. The boys had or the most of them, had a walking stick. The sticks and an empty bread box built a fire. The boys also had a little water left in their canteens. The wood and the water helped to make the coffee, meat we did without, hard bread was good enough tonight. So Mr. Brown and myself were called up at twelve o'clock to stand the after watch. It rained some during the night and was quite cold and chilly. This was a dreary night; our poor oxen kept walking round in search of something to eat but not finding it.

May 25.

Hitched up quite early to make the Platt valley and to get some breakfast we must also have grass for our teams. The morning was drizzly, dark and gloomy. The country was desolate and as we would around and among the sand hills in the grey of the morning, I could not help contrasting my present situation with the past and "sunny days" surrounded with my little family amid the comforts of a quite and family home. Man cannot help his thoughts, he will reflect, but then he must not get disheartened. 12 o'clock, we are camped on the banks of the great Platt River and drawing fish from its muddy waters. The water in this river like that of the Missouri is thick with sand which gives it a yellow appearance forbidding to the look, nevertheless, good and sweet, and is considered more healthy than either the springs or wells found in the valley. There were hundreds of travelers camped on this river. Many busied themselves in fishing, hunting, jumping and playing cards, dancing, etc., etc. Some of us wrote letters for home intending to mail them at Fort Kearny. Thousands of letters are wrote in this neighborhood.

May 26.

Our path now lies upon the shores of the magnificent