

Diary

- 23 . . . Having arrived last night within three miles to Fort Kerney, we made this distance in about an hour's time. The resemblance of this place to the civilized world awakened in us a great feeling of happiness thinking that although far, far off from home, out in a great desert, still enjoyment was offered to the onward moving emigrant. The fort consists of five frame houses, two for the use of the commanding officers, the rest for the soldiers, all built in good style well answering their respective purposes. Besides these build-
- 24 ings is a church for the service of the Lord which is frequented by soldiers, civilized Indians and passing emigrants. About three miles above the fort, we lost, by ^{the} carelessness of one of the men, our pony. By the hardest kind of running, we recovered it again. Nothing of weight happened the next day. Having proceeded about twenty miles further up the river we stopped for the night.

- Twenty-sixth. We are now about three hundred and fifty miles off St. Joseph, encamped along the bank of the Platte here of about one and one-half miles width and very shallow. The river is sown with small islands all of very modern formation. They are generally overgrown with cottonwoods, and some of the oak kind, frequented more or less by wild geese, crows and numerous birds of smaller kind. Just as I am writing these lines my attention is attracted by the sublimity of the scenery around us. The whole Western border of the horizon is grandly beautified by the setting sun which, although out of sight, still leaves traces of its grand and sublime beauty behind, painting the horizon with the most various colours. It is getting darker and the far off peaks of a mountain chain which appears to follow a parallel course with the edges of the horizon gradually disappear. Quiet and peace is spread all over nature's garden. Many a turbulent mind is silenced by this beautiful phenomenon, and
- 25 while yet gazing at it, is sunk in the arms of the God of Sleep, Morpheus.

May the twenty-ninth, morning at five o'clock. We have traveled since my last notes were put down forty miles through a very barren mountainous country, grass being very scarce and water of inferior character, having in it dissolved some alkali substances. The second day or May twenty-eighth, inserting first that the day before we passed several creeks, meeting a most splendid spring at the last, we struck the bluffs near about the forks of the river. The bluffs which I visited this day are mainly composed of sand, likely deposited there by the wind in latter times. The whole bottom along the Platte is mostly sand which in dry season on account of the violent winds which prevail here, nothing being here to break its force, is a great inconvenience to travelers. The Platte river bottom below and above Fort Kerney up to where the road meets with the bluffs, is very little above the level of its waters, varying from five to fifteen feet above that, however, till when you strike the above mentioned point, its altitude is about twenty-five feet.

We met on the latter part of our journey numerous graves of emigrants who had finished their course in nature's garden to adopt new form and shape suiting a different object in nature. The deceased died mostly of cholera and smallpox, more or less originating from an un-

- 26 healthy diet, bad water and exposure. Good care and observance of physiological laws, however, as I previously mentioned, can considerably alleviate the diseases, if not keep them off altogether, from which cause then, I principally account for the good state of our health.

[Note: Mr. Lobenstine left Wheeling, Va., on steamer Messenger for Pittsburgh, April 20. Preferred to go to Oregon, but from inability to make up a certain complement of immigrants he had to give up the project and go to California. Went via St. Joseph, Missouri.]

We are now about crossing the river (the South fork of it) the forks of which we struck a day before this. The river runs in a Southwest direction and is about half a mile wide and very shallow, with quicksand in the bottom. The fording was of no difficulty to us, the river as first mentioned being very low, and having arrived on its opposite side we pursued our journey in a West - Northwesterly direction toward the Cedar Bluffs. After having the day before stopped about five o'clock at the right of the road, where we met with fairly good grass and water, we traveled the next day, Sunday, the thirtieth, till we reached the point where the road strikes the Bluffs, which latter point is about twenty or twenty-five miles from where we crossed the river. Stopped about ten o'clock and encamped to rest ourselves and our cattle for the remainder of the day, which by the hard road and great heat of the past week was very much required to invigorate us for the future. I read several chapters of Byron, but my mind being nearly down to zero on account of the excessive heat, I could not concentrate my spirits enough to follow his violent imagination.

27 Next morning we started early for the Bluffs. The passage of them was very hard on our teams, the weather being very hot and the road being all sand, our wagons cut in very deep and therefore required the hardest pulling to get along. We descended down the other side--a terrible steep road--having traveled about ten miles over the hills and after proceeding ten miles further we encamped nigh the river whirlpool. Here was a good camping ground, dry and pleasant.

28m Tuesday we started for Ashes Hollow, being about eighteen miles from our starting place. The road led like the previous days through very sandy regions, the parallel running bluffs offering from the sameness of appearance in stratifications and composition very little attraction to the passing travelers. Two miles this side Ashes Hollow, the road ascends a very steep hill, about sixty feet above the level of the sea, being undoubtedly the hardest hill to pass over we have met up to this on our journey. After having got up to its highest point, the road gradually descends into the hollow which builds with the former a square angle. This valley is about two hundred feet wide, bordered with rocks and fine gravel in its hollow and timbered with ash trees and some wild roses and grapes. A cool spring, unsurpassed in its water by any we have met yet in this territory, is to be found to the right of the creek about a mile from where you first strike it. There we met a kind of trading post where several articles for the remainder of the journey for a reasonable price can be got. We passed on about two miles further from where we left the latter and encamped for the night (June second).

Monday, June 7th. Last week I neglected, not being at leisure in mornings or evenings and too much downspirited at noon, to keep up my journal with the events as I met them, but I shall try to recall in my memory the main objects met with. For two days after we left Ashes Hollow the roads were bad, being very hard on our cattle as well as ourselves. We got along, however, as well as circumstances did permit and after passing several creeks, hove on Friday last towards noon, in sight of Courthouse Rocks, called so by emigrants from a supposed resemblance with the building of that name, but appearing to me, however, more like some ancient castle than the object it is compared with. The rock is about eight miles off the road, a very deceiving distance to the traveler who thinks it only two or three miles off.

29 Proceeding further, having the Courthouse to our left, and the Platte at our right, the pinnacle of another rock got within the reach of our eye. This is what is called a chimney rock from its great resemblance to some factory chimneys. Although nearly twenty miles away it could distinctly be seen. We traveled on to within about eight miles of it and encamped to the right of the road, nigh the river bank. The next morning we started early. Some of our company went on ahead to ascend the rock. I stayed with the wagon, being not very well on foot, and proceeded slowly on our journey. Chimney rock is about, from its base to its apex, four hundred feet high, consisting of a low and second platform. Upon the latter is the chimney or shaft of the rock nearly one hundred feet high. This rock is principally composed of marl and clay, intermixed with several strata of white cement. Joining the chimney rock, right above it,

I beheld a most beautiful sight, being a section of rock of singular construction resembling in its appearance very much some of the scenery along the Rhine. The whole consisted of five rocks, one approaching the form of another smaller chimney and giving with the rest a most grand view, just like an ancient fort of the feudal barons on an average steep ascending hill, with cupola on the top assuming the forms of ruins. Had I the talent of a Byron or the skilled hand of a Raphael I might give an adequate idea of the landscape, but as I am, even common language is wanting to give an appropriate description. I thought it, however, romantic, and truly felt more than my tongue may express. O what a pity it is to be deficient of Brain!

30 Towards evening we arrived at a trading post, about eight miles before the pass of Scotch Bluffs, and encamped here for the night.

[sic]
Sunday, set out with a cloudy sky and rain. It soon, however, cleared up and turned into a sunny day. We approached the Scotch Bluffs, which we saw the evening before golden in the light of the setting sun, and our whole attention was attracted by the grandeur of the former, still more beautified by the surrounding country. The appearance of these sand hills, although from far off like solid rock, has a very accurate resemblance to a fortification or stronghold of the feudal barons of the middle age, of which many a reminder is yet to be met with along the bank of the Rhine. The rock itself is separated nearly at its middle, having a pass here about fifty to sixty feet wide, ascending at both sides perpendicular to a height of three hundred to four hundred feet. The passage through here was only made possible in 1851 and is now preferred by nearly all the emigrants, cutting off a piece of eight miles from the old road. We passed through without any difficulty and after having passed without another blacksmith shop and trading post, which are very numerous, protection being secured to them by the military down at Fort Laramie, we encamped for the night.]

31 We arrived at Laramie on Tuesday evening, a day sooner than we calculated to get there. The Fort is situated on the Laramie River, which joins with the Platte about two miles below the Fort and about one hundred yards below the bridge for crossing of which we were charged two hundred dollars. The country around the fort is of a pleasing aspect. The bluffs which surround it slope off gradually down into the valley, through which the river of the same name winds in the most lovely curves, whose margins are timbered with a scattered growth of cottonwood and brush of various kinds. The Fort consists of several caserns for the subordinate soldiers, a better building for the captain, a powder and provision magazine, a hospital open to the broken-down travelers who wish to stop there, a good store where all articles a man wants in civilized countries or on the plains can be bought. The garrison disposed here is of a small number—from fifty to one hundred and fifty, which number although small, is sufficient to keep down any unruly spirit among the inhabitants of the soil. After getting a few requisite articles, we started from our encampment near the Fort for the black hills, along which the road runs on towards the Rocky Mountains.

32 The scenery, after passing the Fort and proceeding a few miles up the river, assumes quite a different aspect from that which we have passed before the Fort. The monotony of the prairie land disappears, and a varied highland scenery is offered to the traveler. The road leads generally over the bluffs at an average height of about seventy to one hundred feet above the bed of the Platte and in advancing approaches sometimes towards the South-western mountain chain with the Laramie Peak, whose summit is six thousand feet above the sea and covered with snow throughout the greater part of the year. This mountain can be seen at a distance of one hundred miles. We have first sight of it at the Scotch Bluff, distant about that far from it. Cones or little craters form the bulk of the mountain and give it a romantic appearance. The Platte river above the Fort Laramie takes a different appearance from its lower course. The low fertile land through which it runs for nearly seven hundred to eight hundred miles to its mouth, is

changed into a highland scene. Its course is rapid and cut through the solid granite rocks which must have taken many a century to open such passes and to such an extent as we met in this part of our journey. The beauty of the mountain chain is greatly increased by the scattered trees of cedar and pine and by the interruption of numerous streams which are bordered with a most beautiful growth of cottonwoods and other trees.

June twelfth. We left the river about noon and ascended for the whole afternoon up the highest bluffs on our advance. We got considerably molested by the wind which blew right in our faces and darkened them with sand.

33 Meeting a spring up near the highest point of ascent we stopped for the night. Next morning started for the descent. The Blackhill road comes in from where the road commences taking down to the bottom. We passed the LePonds River, at the foot of the bluffs, a very nice stream, beautifully treed with cottonwood. About four miles forwards on the road we passed another creek called by its red bank, Red Bank. The whole country around is a red stratified rock of the same kind--being iron ore.

June fourteenth. We drove about ten miles to-day, passed several new graves, and crossed three small creeks. Toward evening we encamped two miles up the Little Deer Creek to rest our cattle, as well as ourselves, and prepared for ascending the Rocky Mountains. I read several pages of geology treating of the different classes of rocks, their respective composition, position and the circumstances under which the process of protrusion and stratification took place.

The fifteenth. Some of our men killed various kinds of game on the bluffs with which we quite prepared us a feast adequate to all luxuries we ever had at home.

34 June the sixteenth. We took a new start this morning for the future of our journey. Leaving Little Deer Creek, we struck, after having met with the main road, the river, along the banks of which we passed all day and towards evening encamped within reach of it. We passed Big Deer Creek about noon; the country around, although the stream is of quiet romantic beauty, is very barren, offering but little pasture to the emigrants' teams.

June the seventeenth. This morning we started for the ferry, twenty-seven miles above Big Deer Creek. We arrived at the river about noon and got across again three or four o'clock in the afternoon, where we left the other side for the bluffs and encamped about four miles onwards on the road from the Platte. The ferry at this place is carried on with flat boats which are fastened to ropes spread across the river. The current carries them from one shore to the other. The following day we started very early in the morning, ascended Rattlesnake Hills, very rocky, and pursued our journey this day through an extremely barren section of country, the soil being mainly sand without any good water and grass. At Willow Springs twenty-six miles above the Platte ferry we arrived towards evening and put up for the night.