

## THE GATEWAY OF THE OREGON COUNTRY

The history of primitive people, their language, their religion, their customs and their achievements, fade away and are absorbed into the abyss of oblivion. If such people had experiences worth recording, there was no method of preserving the story for posterity: In after times, persistent search may produce an occasional bit of charred bone, or some rude weapon or broken utensil. But their chronicles have vanished as breath upon a shining mirror. There may be a shell heap, a trace of a rude dwelling, some ceremonial stone or sacrificial mound; or perhaps by good fortune there may be preserved a fantastic drawing upon a rock wall, or a grotesque figure scratched upon a stone, or modelled in clay. Such as these, and little else, constitute the historical residuum of generation after generation of early human activities.

On the other hand, it is a mark of advancement in the scale of civilization for a nation to have established enduring memorials of its revered and venerated leaders. Their names are preserved, their deeds are recounted, stirring events are depicted, that the records may stimulate the young to noble deeds, and inspire them to unselfish effort. So, liberty and human rights are protected and developed; so, are kept alive the spirit of adventure and enthusiasm for enterprise. Not less necessary are these to vital national life, than is the cultivation of the spirit of chivalry, love of justice and fair dealing, quick sympathy with pain and suffering, appreciation of beauty, and responsiveness to tender emotions of love and sacrifice.

These thoughts are suggested by the occasion and the place. The mighty Columbia River, ever going, and yet ever remaining, does not heed the succession of generations of men, or the march of the centuries of years. It has continued to flow along this rock channel for ages, "through caverns measureless to man." From remote times savage tribes have frequented these shores. They have had their encampments and their villages, especially populous during the fishing season when salmon can be taken with dip net and spear. Near this spot was a primitive emporium and trading place. Barter and exchange distributed the commodities of the mountain tribes among the Indians of the coast, while the simple articles of commerce from the lower Columbia found

a market, and reached to and beyond the Rocky Mountain Range. It is related that dried and preserved fish, of unsavory odor, but of delectable flavor to Indian taste, furnished the chief medium of exchange, good in both directions, better indeed than the white man's gold, for it could be consumed, and would afford a safeguard against hunger when game would be scarce in the dark and cold days of winter.

Along these banks even until the present day the remnants of the old tribes are protected in their ancient fishing rights by treaties made long ago. Decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States have affirmed that they may continue to take fish in their accustomed fishing places without interference by the newer possessors of the soil.

But the village remains of the early tribes tell but a meager tale. Human life appeared, and disappeared, and again and again renewed itself; it flowed away as yonder river hurries "changeless to the changeless sea," and left as little trace of the individuals as did the drops of the swelling current itself. During hundreds, nay during thousands of years, as we may believe, there were human beings here who struggled for existence; and they ate and slept, loved and fought, suffered grief and had their joys, much as do their more enlightened successors. But they left nothing to be recorded, nothing of history, for they were savages.

Then in the opening years of the nineteenth century came the white man,—the curious white man who saw everything and wrote it down with a quill pen and with ink made from a black ink powder and river water; the absurdly dressed white man, who had strange weapons and strange utensils and used a strange language. And so history began. For from that hour a record, many records, were kept and handed down for others to read, and to marvel at.

The portage at this place was mentioned by Lewis and Clark; it was described in detail by Washington Irving from the reports of the Astor men; and some of the young clerks of the Astor party displayed considerable literary ability in supplementing the narrative. The accounts of early pathfinders, missionaries, fur traders and settlers relate stories of their experiences, and the picturesque and somewhat troublesome native people.

Whenever a goal is seen in the distance, whenever a pathway opens to difficult and dangerous undertakings, there is a fascination that fixes the eyes of the enterprising of our race. There

are always daring spirits who burn to try the venture. Thus it is that great feats are undertaken and accomplished. It is in this way that new and distant regions are opened and made ready for the uses of organized society. This love of adventure, this eagerness to undertake what has its spice of novelty and danger, is a factor in the westward movement upon the North American continent in the last century; for, though many influences may be perceived, the first adventurous spirits, who began to trace the pathways, had ardent and courageous hearts.

It is fitting and proper that here, where early wayfarers and travellers before and after the coming of the white man, found it needful to break their journey and to portage their canoes, a memorial of native stone and enduring bronze shall be dedicated to the progressive men and women that have had a part in making history in this far Northwest. This place is, in a proper sense, a gateway to the Old Oregon country. Through this portal a new host entered, as the Israelites of old came over to the land of Canaan. An empire was reclaimed from savages, and was made ready for the uses of civilization.

Here, the fur traders, picturesque in costume and in language, paused in their swift journeys up and down the great waterways. For them, the Columbia was a highroad affording a route through the mountain ranges. In imagination we can picture the annual brigades of the Hudson's Bay Company, coming and going through this passage, making these cliffs ring with their gay songs and cheerful laughter. Simple-hearted, generous, hospitable men, they welcomed the missionaries and aided them in getting located; and then these preachers and teachers, hardly waiting to build shelters for themselves, learned in simple fashion

"To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave  
And spread the roof above them"

to make temples of religion and of education. Thus was prepared the way for the great migration of home makers, and so it came to pass that the pioneers, with the same genius that was shown by their ancestors for self government, adopted an Organic Act and created a voluntary government, to which was surrendered some of their individual rights in the interest of the common welfare. Legislative bodies, administrative officers, and judicial tribunals were established, and the reign of law and order was insured. Settlers brought their wives and their children to homes of culture and refinement; for, however crude the first make-

shifts of domestic life upon the new frontier, the softening influence of the church, the school, and the fireside, soon made the wilderness to yield to a new and better hope.

That was a long and painful journey that was followed by the pioneers. With wonderful determination and devotion they gave up their old homes and old friends, and turned their faces to the unknown. The tender partings, the tearing asunder of family ties, the giving up of close associations with friends and neighbors, the breaking up of ease and habit, the uprooting of business relations, and the abandonment of church and lodge and community,—all these things we can but dimly appreciate, while we wonder at the courage and the faith. Followed then the slow and wearisome trek, often through real danger in the Indian country, and always attended by hardships and fatigue. Day after day, during weary months, the creaking wagon moved toward the receding west, generally surrounded by a cloud of dust, often passing through almost impossible difficulties of mountain slope or river canyon. Sometimes starvation and disease were there, sometimes there was a stop to open a new grave by the wayside and leave in the wilderness the lifeless form of one beloved; and then would come the bitter pang of moving on, while realizing that never again could the hallowed spot be visited.

Spring advanced into summer, and the autumn moon loomed large in the chill September nights in the mountain passes. Frost and rain and dearth of food, and failing strength of animals, with stories of the accumulated misfortunes of other wayfarers, difficulties multiplied a hundred fold,—still, with dogged determination the progress continued, westward and ever westward.

The gateway of the Columbia was reached, and bronzed and weatherworn men clasped hands and congratulated each other on having come to the threshold of their hopes. And in due time by river, or by mountain trail, the devoted band arrived in the valley of the River of the West.

So, a country of great natural resources was reclaimed from the wilderness. By the enterprise, courage, and steadfastness of the pioneer the nation's horizon was extended. Is it strange that with such mettle, these people proved worthy to found a government of their own devising? And is it not a matter of logical sequence that a civilization composed of such material was sure to sustain the highest ideals, and to be actuated by noble aspirations?

They came to a country of wonderful natural resources, but it was not a lazy man's country. It was no place for blighting ease and luxurious idleness. The great forests yielded tillable acres grudgingly, and the products of soil and mine had to find markets in a country without roads. The pioneers were creators, and by thrift and foresight and indefatigable energy they made cities and developed commerce. But it was by unremitting toil, with the sacrifice of long hours at labor, supported by habits of self denial, that they were able to build the great commonwealths of the Northwest.

The period that knew the explorer, the fur trader, the pioneer missionary and the overland home maker has passed. Few of the older generation remain for us to show them honor, or to enable us to hear from their lips the accounts of the splendid wayfaring of their youth. To many of them was given prophetic vision of the glorious destiny of the republic of the west, and they foresaw the future greatness of the country they found upon the shores of the Pacific. But history has not failed to record their deeds of courage, and to write down the imperishable Aeneid of their achievements and their devotion. Unlike the millions of untutored and unskilled aborigines that held the gateway before the days of Lewis and Clark, the names of these are imperishable, for history keeps the annals of the newer race, and tells the inspiring story for others to emulate.

I have read that in ancient Rome the cippus was a monument, sometimes of rude native stone, not infrequently decorated with sculptured ornament, and provided with base and capital. Often it was used to perpetuate great names and great deeds, and to mark graves and sacred places, and then there was placed thereon the inscription: S. T. T. L. (*Sit tibi terra levis*), which may be freely translated, "May the earth lie lightly upon thy form."

And here by the wayside, where travellers still use the pass at the river side, though no longer coming in canoes that are to be carried around the swift waters at this point, let there be a cippus, with a tablet of enduring bronze, listing a few of the names of the intrepid men and women who brought civilization to the Pacific Coast. Long ago they were gathered to the ample bosom of Mother Earth, and it is in the spirit of the old Roman custom that we shall place an inscription for all the world to read. In the centuries to come, the youth who sees these names em-

blazoned here and asks what they did to make them worthy of this honor, may be referred, not to shell heaps and shards, nor to the relics of a primitive and savage race, but to the white man's brilliant and moving tale of the discovery, exploration and settlement of the Columbia River valley.

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