# OREGON.

# REPORT

OF

# LIEUT. NEIL M. HOWISON, UNITED STATES NAVY,

TO THE COMMANDER OF THE PACIFIC SQUADRON;

BEING

*The result of an examination in the year* 1846 *of the coast, harbors, rivers, soil, productions, climate, and population of the Territory of Oregon.*

FEBRUARY 29, 1848.

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U. S. FRIGATE SAVANNAH,
*San Francisco, California, February* 1, 1847.

SIR: Want of opportunity has prevented me from communicating with the commander-in-chief of the squadron since the month of June last.

I shall therefore do myself the honor on this occasion to report in detail my proceedings since that date, premising that the much regretted shipwreck of the vessel I commanded, with the loss of her log-book and all my papers, obliges me to draw upon memory for what is now respectfully submitted.

In obedience to orders from Commodore Sloat, then commanding the Pacific squadron, I took the United States schooner "Shark" last April to the Sandwich islands, where she was thorougly repaired and newly coppered. With my best exertions, this was not completed until the 23d of June, on the afternoon of which day I sailed for the Columbia river. Nothing more than usual occurred on this voyage. Made the land of Oregon on the 15th of July, about thirty miles north of the river, and in expectation of northwesterly winds; but we had calms and light westerly winds for the succeeding three days, which obliged me frequently to anchor on the coast, and await a change of tide, the direction of the flood being directly on shore, and the soundings shoal; in some places only ten fathoms seven or eight miles from the land.

About 10 o'clock a. m., of July 18, I anchored in ten fathoms, Cape Disappointment bearing NE. by N., distant five miles. Several guns were fired and signals made for a pilot; but seeing no one moving about the shore, on either side of the river, I took the master with me in the whale-boat,

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and pulled in the channel, between the breakers, sounding in no less than four fathoms, and passing sufficiently far in to recognise the landmarks on the north shore, described in Wilkes's sailing directions.

Here it is proper to mention, that while at the Sandwich islands I met with Captain Mott, master of the Hudson's Bay Company's barque Vancouver, and Captain Crosby, master of the American barque Toulon, both of whom had lately been in the Columbia river. I was informed by those persons that the sands about the mouth of the Columbia had undergone great changes within a short time past, and that a spit had formed out to the eastward from the spot upon which the Peacock was wrecked in 1841, which made it impossible to enter the river by the old marks, or those laid down on Wilkes's chart. The receipt of this information was most opportune and fortunate for me, as I had no other guide than a copy of a copy, upon tracing paper, of Wilkes's chart, which was even now, before its publication, out of date.

This new formation of Peacock spit, extending into the old channel, greatly obstructed this already embarrassing navigation, and those most experienced undertook to cross the bar with apprehension and dread. When, therefore, a seaman of my crew, who had been wrecked in the "Peacock," reminded me that this was the anniversary of her loss, I cannot deny that I felt sensibly the weight of my responsibilities.

Having, however, traced the channel in my whale-boat through the tumult of various tide rips, and the way seeming clear, I returned on board the schooner, and at 2 p. m. got under way and stood in ENE. With the wind at west, weather clear, and tide young flood, we glided rapidly and safely into Baker's bay; and to those who were unacquainted with the dangers which closely and imperceptibly beset our passage in, nothing appeared more simple and free from danger. Upon rounding Cape Disappointment, a boat came alongside with three American gentlemen in her, who introduced themselves as Mr. Lovejoy, the mayor of Oregon city, Mr. Spalding, a missionary, and Mr. Gray, a resident of Clatsop Plains. From these I learned that no regular pilots were to be had for the river, but that there was a black man on shore who had been living many years at the cape, was a sailor, and said, if sent for he would come off and pilot us up to Astoria. He was accordingly brought on board, and spoke confidently of his knowledge of the channel; said he had followed the sea twenty years, and had been living here for the last six; that "I need have no fear of him," &c. He ordered the helm put up, head sheets aft, and yards braced, with an air that deceived me into the belief that he was fully competent to conduct the vessel, and he was put in charge of her. In twenty minutes he ran us hard ashore on Chinook shoal, where we remained several hours thumping severely. We got off about 10 p. m., without having suffered any material damage, and anchored in the channel, where I was determined to hold on until I could make myself acquainted with the channel, or procure the services of a person to be relied on. At daylight I was pleased to find Mr. Lattee, formerly mate of a ship belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company, and now in charge of the port at Astoria, on board.

Upon the vessel's grounding, the gentlemen visitors, feeling themselves somewhat responsible for the employment of this pretended pilot, immediately put off to Astoria, a distance of ten miles, to procure the services of Lattee, who promptly complied with the request, and they all came back to the schooner about daylight, having been all night exposed in an open boat.

At 2 p. m. of the 19th, I anchored off Astoria, where I remained until the 22d, in order to visit Catsop Plains and the neighboring country.

We were abundantly furnished by the American settlers here with fresh beef and vegetables.

As I have said before, my only guide up the river was Wilkes's chart, which extended about twenty-five miles, and included part of Puget's island. In this a fine straight channel is delineated from the neighborhood of Tongue point up to Termination island. But upon consulting Lattee and an Indian named George, who acts as pilot in the upper part of the river, they both denied the existence of this channel, and assured me that no other than the shallow and tortuous passage which Captain Wilkes had himself always used, and which was invariably used by all others, had been found out, although George said he had often in his canoe, and at favorable times, attempted to trace it as described by Captain Wilkes and his officers. I nevertheless adhered to the opinion that such a channel existed, but thought it best at present to follow the beaten track, and accordingly buoyed out the common channel, (which is necessarily done by every vessel attempting to pass through it,) and used that in proceeding up the river. I employed Indian George to accompany me, and derived great advantage from his knowledge of the water above Tongue Point channel. He knows nothing about handling a vessel, but, with a fair wind, will conduct her very safely, pointing out ahead where the channel runs.

At this season of the year westerly winds blow every day, and there is no difficulty in ascending the river.

I reached Fort Vancouver, 100 miles from its mouth, on the night of July 24th, where I found H. B. M. sloop-of-war "Modeste," Captain Baillie, who immediately sent on board his compliments and the offer of his services. There were also moored to the river bank two barques and a ship in the employment of the Hudson's Bay Company. The next morning Mr. Douglass, chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, called on me with polite offers of supplies, &c.

On the 26th, I dropped down to the mouth of the Wilhammette, six miles below Vancouver, and made an effort to get the schooner over the bar at the mouth of the river, with the view of ascending it as far as navigable for sea-going vessels; but having grounded on the bar, and the water having still five or six feet to fall, I was obliged to desist from the attempt; and sending off in a boat the first lieutenant and some other officers to visit Oregon city, and the neighboring American settlers, I returned with the schooner to Vancouver.

At this time we had not heard of the settlement of the boundary question, and intense excitement prevailed among all classes of residents on this important subject. I enjoined it by letter on the officers under my command to refrain from engaging in arguments touching the ownership of the soil, as it was our duty rather to allay than increase excitement on a question which no power hereabouts could settle.

The officers were also directed to seek all the information respecting the country which their respective opportunities might afford. Besides the sloop of-war Modeste, anchored in the river, the British government kept the frigate Fisguard in Puget's sound, and the strongly armed steamer Cormorant in the sound and about Vancouver's island. These unusual demonstrations produced anything but a tranquilizing effect upon

the American portion of the population, and the presence of the British flag was a constant source of irritation.

The English officers used every gentlemanly caution to reconcile our countrymen to their presence, but no really good feelings existed. Indeed, there could never be congeniality between persons so entirely dissimilar as an American frontier man and a British naval officer. But the officers never, to my knowledge, had to complain of rude treatment. The English residents calculated with great certainty upon the river being adopted as the future dividing line, and looked with jealousy upon the American advance into the northern portion of the territory, which had some influence in restraining emigration.

Finding it impossible to get the schooner into the Wilhammette river, I left her at Vancouver, and made a visit to Oregon city, where I was received by the provisional governor, George Abernethy, esq., and honored with a salute fired from a hole drilled in the village blacksmith's anvil. From the city the governor accompanied me for a week's ride through the Williammette valley, and a more lovely country nature has never provided for her virtuous sons and daughters than I here travelled over. This excursion ended, the governor took a seat in my boat, and accompanied me to Vancouver. He was received on board the schooner with a salute, and remained with me for two days. I had previously despatched the first lieutenant, Mr. W. S. Schenck, up the Columbia river as high as the Dalles, to find out what settlements had been made along its banks, and more particularly to endeavor to gain some information of the large emigration which was expected in from our western frontier this autumn, and from which we should get dates from home as late as June. In person I visited the Twality plains, and returned again by the city and river.

The high price of mechanics' labor here, and facility with which any one can earn a living, had tempted ten of the Shark's crew to desert; and although a liberal reward was offered for their apprehension, only two had been brought back. The few American merchant vessels which had visited the Columbia, suffered the greatest inconvenience from the loss of their men in this way, and it is now customary for them to procure a reinforcement of Kanakas in passing the Sandwich islands, to meet this exigency.

When Captain Wilkes left the river in 1841, he placed the Peacock's launch, at that time a new and splendid boat, in charge of Dr. McLaughlin, agent of the Hudson's Bay Company, to be used in assisting vessels about the bar, should they need it. After this boat had remained a year in the water without being of any use, she was hauled up on shore, and was now completely out of order from the effect of decay and shrinkage. Many applications had been made for her by American emigrants, but Dr. McLaughlin did not feel authorized to deliver her to any other than a United States officer. She was fast going to pieces, and I thought it good policy to sell her for the benefit of the government, particularly as the man who purchased did so with the intention of repairing her, to be used as a pilot boat: she brought $150. It would have required as much more to repair her, and I was only anxious she should sell for enough to make the purchaser take care of her and keep her employed.

Being under orders to come out of the river by the 1st day of September, my explorations were necessarily very limited, making the best use of our time. Many interesting portions of the country were still unvisited,

which I greatly regret; for although Captain Wilkes in 1841, and other travellers since, have given very comprehensive descriptions of the country, so rapid are the developments made of its productions and resources by the large annual emigration of inhabitants, that a statistical account two years old may be considered out of date. Preparations were, of course, made to comply fully with orders.

The American barque Toulon, bound to the Sandwich islands, and now attempting to go down the river, had required the services of the old Indian, who acted as pilot, which left me entirely dependent on the lead, and a boat ahead, to feel my way through a devious channel of nearly 100 miles in extent. I had not, nor could I procure, a map giving even an outline of the general direction of the stream. Thus unprovided, I left Fort Vancouver at daylight of August 23d. Three or four miles below the fort, I found the barque Toulon badly aground on a sand bar. I anchored abreast of her and sent men and boats to her assistance, but the current was strong, and it became necessary to unlade part of her cargo; so, nearly three days were consumed in relieving her. This, and the subsequent tediousness of the voyage down against constant head winds, made it the 8th of September when I anchored in Baker's bay. The 9th was devoted to observations on the bar and preparations for crossing it. On the 10th, in the afternoon, the attempt was made and resulted in the shipwreck of the schooner, as is circumstantially related in my communication dated September 21st.

Cast on shore as we were, with nothing besides the clothes we stood in, and those thoroughly saturated, no time was to be lost in seeking new supplies. I left the crew, indifferently sheltered, at Astoria, and, with the purser in company, pushed up the river to Vancouver, whither news of our disaster had preceded us, and elicited the sympathy and prompt attentions of the factors of the Hudson's Bay Company and of Captain Baillie and the officers of her Britannic Majesty's ship "Modeste." These gentlemen had unitedly loaded a launch with such articles of clothing and necessary provisions as we were most likely to need, and added a gratuitous offering of a bag of coffee and 80 pounds of tobacco. I met this boat 25 miles below the fort, and could not but feel extremely grateful for this very friendly and considerate relief. Copies of the letters accompanying these supplies are appended to this report, (marked A and B,) as well as an extract from one from Governor Abernethy, and another of the same friendly tenor from Captain Couch, an American trader at Oregon city, agent of Mr. Cushing, of Newburyport, Massachusetts, (the last marked C and D;) to all of which I made appropriate replies.

At Vancouver my wants of every kind were immediately supplied by the Hudson's Bay Company; and although cash was at Oregon city and with the American merchants worth twelve per cent. more than bills, yet the company furnished all my requisitions, whether for cash or clothing, taking bills on Messrs. Baring & Brothers at par. Upon returning to Astoria, I set about putting up log-houses for our accommodation, as there was no vessel in the river, and it was extremely uncertain when an opportunity would occur for us to leave. We got two comfortable buildings, of 30 by 24 feet, a story and a half high, well floored and boarded, with kitchen and bake oven, soon ready for occupation and use, and had half completed a frame house for the officers' special accommodation, when the schooner "Cadboro" arrived, which opened a prospect of leaving the

river, and induced us to desist from finishing the officers' house. The cost of plank for these buildings was something over two hundred dollars.

Officers and men had been constantly kept exploring the beach from Point Adams to the southward, to pick up any articles worth saving which should drift ashore from the wreck, but they seldom found a spar or plank from her which the Indians had not already visited and robbed of its copper and iron fastenings.

Receiving information through the Indians that part of the hull, with guns upon it, had come ashore below Killimuk's Head, about 20 or 30 miles south of Point Adams, I sent Midshipman Simes, an enterprising youth, to visit the spot. He did so, and reported that the deck between the mainmast and fore hatch, with an equal length of the starboard broadside planking above the wales, had been stranded, and that three of the carronades adhered to this portion of the wreck. He succeeded in getting one above high-water mark; but the other two were inaccessible, on account of the surf; and as it would have been utterly impracticable to transport any weighty object over the mountain road which it was necessary to traverse, I of course made no exertions to recover them, but informed the governor of their position, that during the smooth seas of next summer he might send a boat round and embark them.

Within a month all the upper works, decks, sides, and spars came ashore from the wreck, but separated a distance of 75 miles from each other, and were of no value, from the long wash and chafing which they had undergone. To the heel of the bowsprit we found two kedge anchors attached, one with an arm broken off; and it is a little singular that the only articles recovered which could be at all useful hereafter, were of metal and weight.

On the 11th of October we were cheered with the sight of a sail in the offing, and next day the Hudson's Bay Company's schooner Cadboro, from Vancouver's island, anchored at Astoria. The first lieutenant, master, and assistant surgeon were ordered to examine her, and report in writing her capacity or fitness to transport us to California; and although she was but 57 feet in length, they were of opinion we could pack in her closely and make the voyage. I lost no time, therefore, in going up the river and chartering her from the company; and although the price demanded (£500 sterling) was, in my judgment, an extravagant one, my anxiety to rejoin the squadron, having heard overland of hostilities with Mexico, was such as to overrule all other considerations, and I engaged the schooner.

On the 28th of October the winter set in, with a strong gale at southeast, and heavy rain. The Cadboro was prepared to receive us on board by the 1st of November; but unremitting gales from the southward, with rain, prevented us from embarking until the 16th. In the meantime the American barque Toulon arrived from the Sandwich islands, and brought us news of the Oregon treaty, Mexican war, and occupation of California. This intelligence rendered us doubly anxious to escape from our idle imprisonment in the river, and we seized upon the first day of sunshine to embark. This was on the 16th of November.

The ground upon which the houses described above had been built (the extremity of Point George) was within the pre-emption claim of Colonel John Maclure, who lived at Astoria; and, upon vacating them, they were put under his care, and subject to his use, as will be seen by letter annexed, (marked E.) The right ownership of the soil being decided by the

treaty, I no longer felt any reserve in hoisting our flag on shore; and it had been some time waving over our quarters on the very spot which was first settled by the white man on the banks of the Columbia. When we broke up and embarked, I transmitted this emblem of nationality to Governor Abernethy. The letter accompanying it, and the governor's reply, are annexed, (marked F and G.)

The Cadboro anchored in Baker's bay November 17th, where we remained, pent up by adverse winds and a turbulent sea on the bar, until the 18th of January. Her master, an old seaman, had been navigating this river and coast for the last 18 years, and his vessel drew but eight feet water; yet, in this long interval of sixty-two days he could find no opportunity of getting to sea safely. This is in itself a commentary upon the dangerous character of the navigation of the mouth of the Columbia

We suffered very much from our crowded stowage in this small craft. The weather was wet and cold; and the vessel not affording the comfort of stove or fireplace, and without space for exercise, I was very apprehensive that we should have something more serious than chillblains and frost-bitten fingers to complain of; but it was not so. Both officers and men enjoyed the most robust health and ravenous appetites. Many of the smaller items of the ration being deficient, the value was made up by beef, salmon, and potatoes, and of these each man consumed and digested his four pounds and a half a day. The Hudson's Bay Company allow its servants while making a voyage eight pounds of meat a day, and I am told the allowance is none too much. Our long detention in the river obliged me upon two occasions to send on new requisitions upon the company's store at Vancouver for supplies, which were promptly answered.

The Toulon having gone up the Williammette, discharged her cargo and taken in another, came down the river and anchored near us on the 8th of January. Ten days afterwards we both succeeded in getting to sea, and arrived in company at San Francisco on the 27th of January. The barque was laden with provisions, principally flour, which latter cost her $6 per barrel. Before she came to an anchor a United States officer had boarded her and purchased nearly all she had at $15 per barrel.

We found at San Francisco the U. S. frigate Savannah, and sloop-of-war Warren, to which vessels my officers and crew were immediately transferred and assumed their appropriate duties.

It will be seen by the foregoing sketch that although my visit to Oregon was most unexpectedly prolonged to six months, it had notwithstanding offered very limited opportunities of extending personal researches throughout the country. The officers, in compliance with my orders, have individually furnished me with a written report of all the information that each had acquired deemed worth communicating, and I take this occasion to express my obligations to them for the aid thus rendered me—a service alike useful to me and performed in a manner highly creditable to themselves. From these and the result of my own inquiries and observations, I am enabled to put you in possession of the following information, which, though it may be deemed in many points trite and unimportant, I will not apologize for, as my instructions required a full and minute report, which "for its very fullness would be the more acceptable." (*Extract from Mr. Bancroft's letter of August* 5, 1845.)

During the summer months, from April until October, the winds on the coast prevail almost uninterruptedly from the west, inclining northerly

in the afternoon, and the other part of the year they are generally from SE., S., and SW.; the navigator will therefore know what course to adopt in approaching the mouth of the river. He cannot fix the cape, even when many hundred miles distant, better than on an ENE. bearing. He will be almost sure of a fair wind, as it seldom blows from northeast any distance off shore. Cape Disappointment is in latitude 46° 19′ N., longitude 124° W. It is between six and seven hundred feet high, and can be seen in clear weather 30 miles. It juts prominently out into the sea, is a bold headland, and, if the weather be such as to allow an approach within 15 miles of it, cannot possibly be mistaken by persons at all experienced in adjusting a line of coast with the chart south of the Columbia. Soundings are very deep close in shore, while to the north of the river you will have from 15 to 20 fathoms in some places ten miles from shore, and in high westerly gales the sea often breaks five miles from the beach. A ship should never go nearer the coast than ten miles or twelve, unless with a view of going right in, or of reconnoitring the bar, particularly in winter, when the southeasterly gales spring suddenly up, and as suddenly shift to SW. and WSW., which with a flood tide requires a good sailing vessel and a press of canvass to keep a safe offing. I lay at anchor in Baker's bay, some three hundred yards inside the cape, from November 17, 1846, until January 18, 1847; and although we were unfortunately destitute of barometer and thermometers, we had a good opportunity of observing during these two winter months the wind and weather. The heavens were almost always overcast; the wind would spring up moderately at E., haul within four hours to SE., increasing in force and attended with rain. It would continue at this point some 20 hours, and shift suddenly in a hail storm to SW., whence, hauling westwardly and blowing heavy, accompanied with hail and sleet, it would give us a continuance of bad weather for three or four days, and force the enormous Pacific swell to break upon shore with terrific violence, tossing its spray over the tops of the rocks more than two hundred feet high. A day of moderate weather, with the wind at NE., might succeed this; but before the sea on the bar would have sufficiently gone down to render it passable, a renewal of the southeaster would begin and go on around the compass as before.

Throughout Oregon the NE. wind, or between N. and E., is clear and dry, and in winter very cold; it is the only wind at that season which will serve to take a ship safely out to sea; and as it generally succeeds the westerly gales, which leave a heavy sea on, the impatient navigator is oftentimes obliged to remain at his anchor until this fair wind has blown itself out. The northeaster may, as I have said before, be considered a land breeze, not reaching over ten or twelve miles to sea. In the upper part of the Territory, and above the mouth of the Cowlitz, on the Columbia, clear easterly winds are prevalent, and it is during their continuance the greatest degree of cold is felt: the river is often frozen over in the neighborhood of Fort Vancouver. Even in Baker's bay, the schooner we were on board of was in January belted around with ice at the water's edge, fully eighteen inches thick: this was, however, considered by the old residents an unusual and extraordinary spell of cold weather.

Captain Wilkes's survey, in 1841, of the mouth of the Columbia, however accurately it may have been done, is, I am sorry to say, at present only calculated to mislead the navigator: this I affirm without any intention to reproach himself or his assistants with incapacity or neglect;

five years' time has doubtless put an entirely new face upon the portrait of the sands hereabouts; nor has the change been altogether sudden, for I ascertained from those who had passed and sounded among the sands at short intervals since the date of the survey, that these changes have been gradually and steadily progressing. This chart delineates two fine open channels, broad and with regular outlines; but at this moment the mouth of the southern channel is nearly closed up, not having at low water more than two fathoms in it, while the old or northern one is obstructed by a spit from the wreck of the Peacock to the eastward; so that on the line of six fathoms laid down on the chart, only six feet can now be found. Many other changes equally important have taken place within the bar, which is needless to allude to here. The constant alterations which this bar, in common with most others, is undergoing, go to prove the necessity of frequent surveys and the establishment of resident pilots, who can be constantly exploring the channel, and keep pace with the shifting of sands, and the consequent change in the direction of the tides.

The following sailing directions will at this time carry a vessel safely into Baker's bay; but how far they may be suitable a year hence is altogether doubtful. There has been no heavy freshet in the Columbia for the last two summers, and the elongated and narrow spits which now jut out from the sands bordering on the channel are considered the result of the predominant sea wash, which will be removed by the first sweeping freshet that rushes out of the river. The past winter, 1846–'47, having been unusually severe, and a heavy deposite of snow and ice resting on the mountains and in the interior valleys, persons anticipate a great inundation in June, or as soon as the sun's rays attain power to convert this winter covering into fluid. This will unquestionably produce a new movement in the sands at the mouth of the river, and may perhaps render nugatory these directions for entering the river.

The wind should not be to the northward of west, nor to the eastward of south. The beginning of the summer sea breeze is generally at WSW., which is the most favorable quarter. Bring Cape Disappointment to bear NE. by N., catch an object in range on the high land behind it, (in order to correct the influence of the tide,) and stand for it on that bearing until the middle of Cockscomb hill is fully on with Point Adams—you will then be in 10 fathoms, a fathom more or less depending on the stage of the tide. Now steer ENE., or for Point Ellice, taking care to fix that also in range, and keep it on with some object in the distant high land in the rear—this course will gradually open Cockscomb hill with Point Adams, and will take you over the bar in four and a half fathoms water, deepening to five and six if you are exactly in the channel. If the tide be flood, and you shoal the water, you are probably too near the north breaker, and will find it necessary to observe strictly the Point Ellice range, which will inform you how you are affected by the tide. As you advance in, look along the northern shore for the first yellow bank or bluff which opens from behind the cape; and if it be ebb tide, haul up immediately NNE.; but if it be flood or slack water, NE. will do, and stand on that course until the next point opens, which is called Snag point; then steer direct for the cape and Snag point in range, which is N. by W. $\frac{1}{2}$ W. by compass. Passing a little to the eastward of this range, will open another seeming point, marked in summer by a growth of alder trees of unusually dark green hue, (in winter they are more brown than the adjacent forest,) which

has attained the name of Green point: beyond this range a vessel should not pass to the eastward, or the middle sands will abruptly bring her up. If it be flood tide you may pass within fifty yards of the cape; and even if it be full calm, the current will take you to an anchorage; but if it be ebb, keep a short quarter of a mile from the cape, as you are almost sure to be becalmed, and the tide runs out to the westward here at least five knots: if you lose the wind at this point, you must instantly let go an anchor, and, veering a good scope of cable, await a change of tide. The best anchorage is the cape bearing SSE., or on with Killimuk's Head, distant about five hundred yards, in five fathoms water If a stranger reach this point in safety, he had better remain here until either of the Indians, George or Ramsay, be sent for, or he can procure advice from some one familiar with the navigation hence to Astoria. From appearances on the chart, he would suppose this navigation very simple, but the strong and diverse currents make it extremely embarrassing and dangerous; and should a vessel ground anywhere within fifteen miles of the outer bar, and a strong wind arise, the swell is sufficiently great and the bottom hard enough to bilge her: none but a bouyant and fast pulling boat should be sent to sound about the bar, as the tide occasionally runs with an irresistible force; and, in spite of all efforts, would sweep an indifferent boat into the breakers.

Five fathoms can be carried at low water up to Astoria, which is the first anchorage combining comfort and security; three-quarters of a mile above that, is a narrow pass of only thirteen feet; but from Baker's bay, (pursuing the Chinook channel, which passes close to Point Ellice, and is more direct and convenient for vessels bound straight up,) four fathoms can be carried up to Tongue point, which is three miles above Astoria; and just within, or to the westward of, Tongue point is a spacious and safe anchorage. From Tongue point the navigation for ten miles is extremely intricate, and some parts of the tortuous channel not over ten feet deep at low water. The straight channel which Captain Wilkes discovered has become obstructed about its eastern entrance, and nothing can be made of it. A channel nearly parallel with it, but to the southward, was traced in my boats, and I devoted a day to its examination, and carried through three fathoms at low water; but my buoys being submerged by the tide, prevented me from testing its availability in the schooner. From Pillow rock the channel is at least three fathoms deep at the dryest season all the way to Fort Vancouver, except a bar of fifteen feet at the lower mouth of the Wilhammette, and another about a mile and a half below the fort. The Wilhammette enters the Columbia from the southward by two mouths, fourteen miles apart: the upper is the only one used, and is six miles below Vancouver. Throughout the months of August and September, it is impracticable for vessels drawing over ten feet. Both it and the Columbia, during the other months, will easily accommodate a vessel to back and fill drawing thirteen feet.

The Columbia is navigable to the Cascades, forty miles above Vancouver; the Wilhammette up to the mouth of the Clackamas river, twenty-one miles above its junction with the Columbia, and three below the falls, where the city of Oregon is located. These rivers reciprocally contribute their waters to one another at different seasons of the year. When the winter sets in, generally with the month of October, and rains are almost incessant, the Wilhammette river receives all the waters which

drain from the valley of its own name, which immediately raise it above the level of the Columbia, into which it flows with a strong current, causing a rise in the latter, and sometimes a gentle reflux of the waters up stream: this continues until March, when the rains cease and the Wilhammette settles to its level. 'Tis then, however, the warm rays of the sun begin to penetrate the more northern and frozen resources of the Columbia; the mountain snow and ice are soon converted into streams, which simultaneously contribute, along a course of seven or eight hundred miles, to swell this majestic river, until, by the month of June, it attains its greatest force and volume; it is then actually a tributary to the Wilhammette, forcing its waters back to the falls and causing a perceptible current in that direction. This rise in the Columbia is, however, like freshets in the Mississippi, not perceptible on the bar at the mouth, except to extend the time and increase the force of the ebb tide: at Vancouver the average summer rise is 16 to 18 feet.

The most suitable sailing vessels for this navigation are brig or barque rig, and of light draught of water—not to exceed, when loaded, 13 feet. They should be well found in ground tackling, and furnished with at least two good sized hawsers and kedges of suitable weight. During the summer months the prevailing westerly winds make the voyage up the river both safe and quick, and a vessel may descend at that season with the assistance of the downward current without much detention; but in winter both wind and tide are generally from the eastward, and forty-five days is the usual time to get to Vancouver; and this can only be done by warping, a very laborious operation for merchant vessels. I have been thus prolix in speaking of these two rivers, as they are the arteries of life to this country; indeed, I have no information touching points distant from their banks which has not been already published to the world by means vastly more competent than any in my possession. Besides, the information desired of me was more particularly in relation to the civilized inhabitants of Oregon; and very few of these are found settled, as yet, any great distance from the rivers.

Of Puget's sound and its many harbors nothing more is known or can be at present added to Wilkes's observations in 1841.

English jealousy and unoccupied country in the south have interposed to prevent American emigration to the north side of the Columbia until the last autumn.

I fell in with many persons exploring the country between the Cowlitz river (which is navigable by boats thirty miles from the Columbia in the line of route to Puget's sound) and the seacoast, and that hitherto unknown region is represented as offering many attractions to the new settler. A few scattering families are to be found north of the Columbia and elsewhere. I saw personally but little of Oregon, but that comprised its most interesting parts, viz: all settled spots on the Columbia below the Cascades, the Wilhammette valley for sixty miles above Oregon city, and the Twality and Clatsop plains. These, with the exception of superannuated missionary establishments at the Dalles and Wallawalla, and the Hudson's Bay Company's farm on the Cowlitz, and their distant trading posts in different parts of the Territory, are the only portions of the country yet occupied. All these united, however, make but an item when compared to the vast whole of Oregon, of whose topography, mineralogy, soil, or natural productions, it would be affectation in me to offer

any account. My report, as far as it goes, shall be confined to subjects which my own observations or verbal inquiries from authentic sources could reach. And first in order and importance is of the people who form the body politic here, their laws, &c.

The persons of any consideration who have been longest settled in Oregon are the factors, clerks, and servants of the Hudson's Bay Company. Their first point of residence was at Astoria; but the country hereabouts was forest land, and difficult to clear, and it became necessary to increase their resources of provisions and other domestic productions as their establishments enlarged. About twenty-two years ago, leaving a single trader to conduct the fur trade at Astoria, they made a new settlement 96 miles up the river, and called it Vancouver. This eligible site is the first prairie land found upon the banks of the river sufficiently elevated to be secure from the summer inundations. The control of all the company's affairs west of the Rocky mountains was at that time, and continued until 1845, to be in the hands of Mr. John McLaughlin. As this gentleman figures largely in the first settlement of the country, and continues to occupy a most respectable and influential stand there, it may be proper to describe him. He is a native of Canada, but born of Irish parents; his name is seldom spelt aright by any one but himself; he is well educated, and, having studied medicine, acquired the title of doctor, which is now universally applied to him. Of fine form, great strength, and bold and fearless character, he was of all men best suited to lead and control those Canadian adventurers, who, influenced partly by hopes of profit, but still more by a spirit of romance, enlisted themselves in the service of the fur-trading companies, to traverse the unexplored country west and north of Hudson's bay. He came, I think, as early as 1820 to assume the direction of the Hudson's Bay Company's interest west of the Rocky mountains, and immediately organized the necessary trading posts among the Indians of Oregon and those on the more northerly coasts. He continued to maintain the superintendence of this increasing and most profitable trade, and by judicious selections of assistants, the exercise of a profound and humane policy towards the Indians, and unremitting steadiness and energy in the execution of his duties, placed the power and prosperity of his employers upon a safe and lasting foundation. So much of his early life was passed away in the canoe and the camp, that he seems to have been prevented from cultivating those social relations at home which have their finale in matrimonial felicity, and (as was customary among his brethren of that day similarly employed) he rather unceremoniously graced the solitude of his camp with the society of a gentle half-breed from the borders of lake Superior. This lady occasionally presented him a pledge of her affection and fidelity, of whom two sons and a daughter survive, and I believe before her death was regularly married to the doctor, whose example in this particular was followed by all the other officers of the Hudson's Bay Company who had acquired the responsibility of parents. The doctor's oldest son, Joseph, is a respectable land owner and farmer in the Wilhammette; his daughter, the widow of a deceased Scotchman; and the other son, David, who received his education at Woolwich, in England, is engaged in commercial business with an American named Pettygrove, of whom something will be said hereafter. The doctor's present wife is a half-breed, the widow of one McKay, a celebrated old trapper, who came out with As-

tor's people in 1810, and was killed on board the ship Tonquin the same year.

The doctor is now about seventy years of age; is still strong and active, of robust figure and rosy complexion, with clear gray eyes, surmounted by huge brows and a full head of hair, white as snow. He is a strict professor of the Catholic religion. He resides now altogether at Oregon city; is said to be on furlough from duty in the company's service, and devotes himself to the operation of a fine flour and saw-mill which he has built at the falls. He is active and indefatigable, and has by his advice and assistance done more than any other man towards the rapid development of the resources of this country; and although his influence among his own countrymen, some few of the most respectable American settlers, and throughout the half-breed and Indian population, is unbounded, he is not very popular with the bulk of the American population. Some complaints against him of an overbearing temper, and a disposition to aggrandizement increasing with his age, seem not to be entirely groundless. He is, nevertheless, to be considered a valuable man; has settled himself on the south side of the river, with full expectation of becoming a citizen of the United States, and I hope the government at home will duly appreciate him. With Dr. McLaughlin came many others engaged in the Hudson's Bay Company's service; and these, as before remarked, are now the longest settled residents of the land. Few of those who filled even so high a post as that of clerk have separated themselves from the company's service and still continue to reside in the Territory; but of the boatmen, trappers, farmers, and stewards, almost every one, upon the expiration of his five years' service, fixed himself upon a piece of land and became a cultivator.

By far the greater part of these are Canadian voyagers, or those who worked out their term of service in pulling batteaux and canoes along the water-courses, which are almost continuous from York factory, on Hudson's bay, to the shores of the Pacific ocean. Eight or ten of these persons being annually discharged for twenty years, have become a large item in the population of Oregon. They settled contiguous to each other on the fine lands of the Wilhammette, about 30 miles above the falls, and form now a large majority in Champoeg county; their residence is called the French Settlement, and Canadian French is their language. Besides, there are a few prosperous cultivators adjacent to the Hudson's Bay Company's farm on the Cowlitz. They are all connected with Indian women, and would have united themselves with the tribes to which their women belong but for the advice of Dr. McLaughlin, whose influence induced them to assume the more civilized and respectable life of the farmer. They are a simple, uneducated people, but very industrious and orderly, and are justly esteemed among the best citizens of the Territory. They come under the general designation of half-breeds, and this class of population, including all ages and sexes, may be computed, numerically, at seven or eight hundred. They are well worthy the fostering care of the government, and have been assured that they will not be excepted by any general law of the United States in relation to Oregon land claims or preemption rights. If, unfortunately, their rights of property should not be protected by laws of the United States, they will soon be intruded on and forced from the lands. Falling back upon the Indian tribes with a sense of injury rankling in their bosoms, the consequence might in all time to come be most deplorable for the peace and safety of this country; where,

from the sparseness of the population, a band of forty or fifty blood-thirsty savages might surprise and destroy in rotation hundreds of inhabitants.

Simultaneously with the Canadians were discharged from the company's service other subjects of Great Britain, as farmers, mechanics, gardeners, dairymen, &c., chiefly from Scotland and the Orkney isles; besides some of the wild offspring from the Earl of Selkirk's emigrants to the Red River settlement, north of the lake of the Woods. A few American hunters, not numbering over 12 or 15, straggled into the country about the same time, and occasionally runaway seamen from our northwest traders. This heterogeneous population was, in some way or other, to a man, dependent on the Hudson's Bay Company. No important accessions to it occurred until the American missionaries, with their families, came into the country; nor do I believe, prior to 1836, a single *white woman* lived here. It was not until the year 1839 that any regular emigrating companies came out from the United States; and these were small until 1842, when an annual tide of thousands began to flow towards this western window of our republic.

From the best information I could procure, the whole population of Oregon, exclusive of thoroughbred Indians, whom I would be always understood to omit, may be set down now at nine thousand souls, of whom two thousand are not natives of the United States, or descendants of native Americans. Nearly all the inhabitants, except those connected with the Hudson's Bay Company, are settled in the Wilhammette valley; the extreme southern cottage being on Mary's river, about one hundred miles from the Columbia. Twenty or thirty families are at Astoria and the Clatsop plains; and by this time, there may be as many on the north side of the river, in the neighborhood of Nisqually and other ports on Puget's sound.

Between Astoria and Fort Vancouver, but one white man resides on the bank of the river for purposes of cultivation; and he is a retired officer of the Hudson's Bay Company, named Birnie, who has fixed himself 25 miles above Astoria. His house is the seat of hospitality, and his large family of quarter-breeds are highly respectable and well behaved. From Fort Vancouver to the Cascades, forty miles, but a single family has yet settled on either side of the river. Lieut. Schenck, who went up to the Dalles, had nothing to add to Captain Wilkes's account of this point of the country. He was hourly impressed with the strict accuracy of that officer's observations.

The people of Oregon had lived without law or politics, until the early part of 1845; and it is a strong evidence of their good sense and good disposition that it had not previously been found necessary to establish some restraints of law in a community of several thousand people. Among the emigrants of this year, however, were many intelligent reflecting minds, who plainly saw that this order of things could not continue in a rapidly increasing and bustling population; and that it had become indispensable to establish legal landmarks to secure property to those already in its possession, and point to new comers a mode of acquiring it. A convention was accordingly held, and a majority of votes taken in favor of establishing a provisional government, "until such time as the United States of America extend their jurisdiction over us." The organic law or constitution was of course first framed, and made abundantly democratic in its character for the taste of the most ultra disciple of that political school.

It makes the male descendants of a white man 21 years of age, no matter of what colored woman begotten, eligible for any office in the Territory; and grants every such person the privilege of selecting six hundred and forty acres of land, "in a square or oblong form, according to the natural situation of the premises." It provides for the election of a governor and other officers, civil and military, and makes it the duty of such elected to take the following oath:

"I do solemnly swear to support the organic laws of Oregon, as far as they are consistent with my duties as a citizen of the United States, or as a subject of Great Britain, and faithfully demean myself in office: so help me God."

One of the first enactments of the legislature elected under the organic law, was, "that in addition to gold and silver, treasury drafts, and good merchantable wheat at the market price, shall be a lawful tender."

The subject of forming this provisional government had been several months, indeed years, under discussion, and may be considered the first political question canvassed within the Territory. It was opposed by the influence of the Hudson's Bay Company and British subjects generally, although the chief factors of that company were ready to enter into a compact or domestic treaty for the regulation and adjustment of all points of dispute or difference which might spring up among the residents: indeed, they admitted that it was time to establish some rules, based upon public opinion, decidedly expressed, for the maintenance of good order and individual rights; but they felt apprehensive for themselves and their interests in placing extensive law-making power in the hands of a legislative body, composed of men on whose judgment they could not implicitly rely, and whose prejudices they had reason to believe were daily increasing against them. Their opposition was, however, unavailing.

The election for governor excited the same sort of party array; but, as there were several candidates for this office, some new considerations may be supposed to have mingled in the contest. George Abernethy, esq., a whole-souled American gentleman, was elected by a majority of the whole; nor did he receive any support from those under the company's influence. This gentleman came to Oregon as secular agent to the Methodist mission in 1838 or '39, and, at the dissolution of that body, engaged in mercantile and milling business. He is very extensively acquainted with the country and people of Oregon, and greatly respected for his amiable, consistent, and patriotic character. He is a native of New York, and married a lady of Nova Scotia, and will make a valuable correspondent to the United States government, should it be desirable to communicate with Oregon.

Among the components of the population are some few blacks, (perhaps thirty,) and about double that number of Kanakas or Sandwich islanders. These last act as cooks and house servants to those who can afford to employ them. Although the population has quadrupled itself within seven years past, and will doubtless continue to increase, it cannot be expected to do so at the past ratio.

California invites many off who are seeking new lands; and the emigrants of 1846 who reached Oregon were not computed at over seven hundred, while the two previous years had each increased the population two thousand or more.

The privations and sufferings of the first overland emigrants to this country are almost incredible, composed, as they were, of persons who, with families of women and children, had gathered together their all, and appropriated it to the purchase of means to accomplish this protracted journey.

They would arrive upon the waters of the Columbia after six months' hard labor and exposure to innumerable dangers, which none but the most determined spirits could have surmounted, in a state of absolute want. Their provisions expended and clothes worn out, the rigors of winter beginning to descend upon their naked heads, while no house had yet been built to afford them shelter; bartering away their wagons and horses for a few salmon, dried by the Indians, or bushels of grain in the hands of rapacious speculators, who placed themselves on the road to profit by their necessities, famine was staved off while they labored in the woods to make rafts, and thus float down stream to the Hudson's Bay Company's establishment at Vancouver. Here shelter and food were invariably afforded them, without which their sufferings must soon have terminated in death.

Such was the wretched plight in which I may say thousands found themselves upon reaching this new country; but, in the midst of present want and distress, the hardy pioneer saw around him all those elements of comfort and wealth which high hope had placed at the terminus of this most trying journey. At Vancouver he found repose and refreshment, the offerings of a disinterested benevolence. Aided by advice and still more substantial assistance, he prosecuted his journey up the Wilhammette, and on the banks of this river could make choice of his future home, from the midst of situations the most advantageous and lovely. Here stood the ash, the pine, and the poplar—the ready materials which an Illinois man, axe in hand, wants but a few hours to convert into a family domicil; the river teemed with fine salmon, and the soil was rich, promising fruitful returns for labor bestowed on it.

But throughout the winter these enterprising people were, with few exceptions, dependent on the Hudson's Bay Company for the bread and meat which they ate, and the clothes which they wore; stern necessity, and the clamors of suffering children, forced them to supplicate credit and assistance, which, to the honor of the company be it said, was never refused. Fearful, however, of demanding too much, many families told me that they lived during the winter on nothing more than boiled wheat and salted salmon; and that the head of the family had prepared the land for his first crop without shoes on his feet, or a hat on his head. These excessive hardships have been of course hourly ameliorating: the emigrant of 1843 has prepared a house and surplus food for his countrymen of the next year; and two roads being opened directly into the Wilhammette valley, rendering a resort to the Columbia unnecessary, has enabled the emigrants to bring in their wagons, horses and cattle, and find homes among their own countrymen.

The apprehensions of want are no longer entertained; the new arrivals improve in character and condition; a cash currency is likely soon to be the law of the land, and the houses are more and more fashioned to convenience, with an occasional attempt at nicety. The Hudson's Bay Company is no longer begged for charity, or besought for credit; but is slowly receiving back its generous loans and advances.

But I am sorry, in connexion with this subject, to report that the conduct of some of our countrymen towards the company has been highly reprehensible. The helping hand held out by the company to the early American emigrants not only relieved them from actual distress at a critical moment, but furnished them with means to make a beginning at cultivation, and unquestionably accelerated the growth and settlement of the country in a manner which could not have succeeded but for such timely assistance. The missionaries are not, however, to be forgotten; they did much for the early emigrants, but their means were more limited. I was told at Vancouver that the amount of debt due the company by Americans exceeded eighty thousand dollars; and that so little disposition was shown to pay off this debt, that it had been determined to refuse any further credits.

Some few persons, arriving here with titles and pretensions, had obtained credit for more than a thousand dollars; and these very men, since further credit had been refused, were foremost and most violent in denouncing the company as a monstrous monopoly, &c.

The bulk of this debt, however, is due in sums of from twenty to two hundred dollars, and seems to be the cause of no uneasiness to the officers of the company, who told me they were often surprised by the appearance (after an absence of years) of some debtor who came forward to liquidate the claim against him. Much of this large amount will probably be lost to the company; but there is some reason to presume that the larger credits were granted to individuals whose political influence was thus sought to be procured; and that the company, in this respect, should have made false calculations, and lost their money, is not so much to be regretted.

The honor of enrolling the names of doctors, colonels, generals, and judges upon the debtor side of the leger, they may also consider a partial indemnification for what they may eventually lose.

However unlimited, therefore, may be our gratitude for their kindness to the needy emigrants in earlier years, we cannot suppose it was *necessary* of late to have been so profuse in such grants; and I have no doubt their determination to withhold further credits will prove advantageous to both parties. The country is now so generally settled, and furnishes so much surplus, as to enable the people to supply the indispensable necessities of each other; among whom obligations of small debts will be mutual, and not onerous. Of the politics of the people of Oregon, it may be said they are thoroughly democratic; but, although I doubt not every American was a warm party man at home, a separation from the scene of contest has had the effect to cool down his feelings on the subject; and, as he no longer has the privilege of a vote in national elections, the subject engrosses but little attention. Some individuals were named to me who had, while discussing the propriety of forming a provisional government, been disposed to advocate an entire independence of the United States; but as matters have resulted, they have almost to a man changed their opinions, and are now displaying more than ordinary patriotism and devotion to the stars and stripes.

Of the British subjects, who form but a fraction of the whole population, I can say but little, as in my intercourse with them national affairs were but little spoken of. Nearly every one of them is or has been in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, and entertains a becoming rever

ence for his country; but I heard many of the most respectable express the opinion, that the resources of Oregon would be much more rapidly made available under the auspices of the United States government, than under that of Great Britain.

The next most prominent British subject to Dr. McLaughlin is Mr. James Douglass, a Scotchman of fine talents and character. He has been on this side the mountains since 1825 or '26, and has gone through the probationary grades in the company's service, and now has the control, associated with Mr. Peter Skeen Ogden, of the whole business in Oregon and on the Northwest coast. He has a large family of quarter-breeds: a daughter of fifteen, with whose education and manners he has taken much pains, would compare, for beauty and accomplishments, with those of her age in any country. Mr. Ogden is senior to Mr. Douglass in the company's service; he has been, until recently, the active agent in exploring the country and establishing trading posts; and although he is not without those tender ties which it is the weakness of humanity to yearn after, they have not yet been legitimated by marriage. A handsome, ladylike daughter of his is married to a Scotchman, and these in turn have a family of children. Mr. Ogden is a jocose and pleasing companion; has at least one brother living in New York, but says he was born on the lines between New York and Canada. I mention the domestic relations of these gentlemen with reluctance; but it is necessary, to illustrate how completely their interests and affections are fixed upon things inseparable from Oregon. This remark will apply to every Englishman who has been five years in the country; and although when news of the boundary treaty arrived they undoubtedly were much mortified, they soon recovered their composure, and, I believe, were very well satisfied with their future prospects. Mr. Douglass, loyal to his king and country from principle, observed that "John Bull could well afford to be liberal to so promising a son as Jonathan, for the latter had given proofs of abilities to turn a good gift to the best account." I cannot but suppose that, before the expiration of the company's trading privileges here, the very respectable and intelligent body of men engaged in conducting its business will become blended with us in citizenship, and good members of our great democratic society. The number of British subjects throughout this Territory does not exceed six hundred, exclusive of French Canadians, and this number is not increasing. With three days' notice, double that number of Americans, well mounted and armed with rifles, could be assembled at a given point on the Wilhammette river. In the excited state of public feeling which existed among the Americans upon my arrival, the settled conviction on the mind of every one that all Oregon belonged to us, and that the English had long enough been gleaning its products, I soon discovered that, so far from arousing new zeal and patriotism, it was my duty to use any influence which my official character put me in possession of to allay its exuberance, and advise our countrymen to await patiently the progress of negotiations at home. The Hudson's Bay Company had information of consultations held on the south side of the river, in which the agrarian principle of division of property found some advocates, and perhaps they had some grounds to apprehend that their extensive storehouses of dry goods, hardware, and groceries might be invaded: in addition, therefore, to their own means of defence, they procured from the British government the constant attendance at Vancouver of a sloop-of-war. This vessel an-

chored there in October, 1845, and I left her there in January, 1847. She however, I understood, was under orders to leave the river, and her commander, who had once struck on the bar, and narrowly escaped with the loss of false keel and rudder, only awaited the good weather of spring to attempt to get out.

The company's agents expressed to me their fervent hopes that the United States would keep a vessel of war in the river, or promptly send out commissioners to define the bounds of right and property under the treaty. They have been excessively annoyed by some of our countrymen, who, with but little judgment and less delicacy, are in the habit of infringing upon their lands, and construing the law to bear them out in doing so. An individual, and a professor of religion, too, had been ejected by our course of law from a "claim" of the company's, and costs put upon him; but having nothing, the costs had to be paid by the plaintiffs; which was scarcely done when the same person resumed his intrusive position; and as he called himself now a "fresh man," the same formula of law must be gone through with to get clear of him, and so on *ad infinitum.* In a case where an American was confined one night in the fort for this sort of pertinacity, and refusing to give security that he would forbear in future such forcible entry upon the land, he instituted an action for damages for false imprisonment; but as no notice of suit had been served on the committing magistrate, and as I expostulated with the man on the subject, I believe he gave over the idea. These and many other similar acts arose from a belief that the Hudson's Bay Company would be soon turned out of the country by the terms of the anticipated treaty, and many were led to this offensive course by a desire to succeed to those advantages which could not be conveyed away by the retiring company. Since the details of the treaty have come to hand, it is to be presumed a better understanding of respective permanent rights will be entertained; but I feel bound to express the opinion, for the information of government, that however acceptable that treaty may be to the people generally, some of its items give great discontent and heart-burnings in Oregon. Howsoever little creditable this may be to the good sense and moderation of the complainants, it may be accounted for by reference to the fact, that in every community some of its members are unreasonable enough to act upon a one-sided view of the subject. In this particular case several causes unite to excite dissatisfaction: first, disappointment at not having a grasp at the enclosed fields and ready-made habitations which they had all along expected the treaty would oblige the Hudson's Bay Company to vacate; next, the hoped-for dissolution of this company would have relieved many persons from the presence of their creditors; and others saw that only in that event would Americans be able to engage successfully in commercial pursuits. But although too many were influenced by motives so unworthy, yet it must not be supposed I would include among them the substantial cultivator, or any one of the great bulk of honest emigrants who came here to live by his labor, and not by his artifice or speculating genius, which would render the labors of others subservient to his use.

These discontents might not be worth alluding to, did we not remember from what small beginnings political parties sometimes take their rise; and this may be the nucleus of a growth of independents, who may compromise our government in its stipulations for the security of English property in Oregon, to say nothing of the effect produced upon public

opinion by the habit of seeing always on the increase a party opposing the policy and measures of the United States. It should be nevertheless observed, that in Oregon the general tendency of persons and things is towards improvement; the ragged and penniless emigrant is, upon his arrival here, much less under the influence of human or moral laws than the same man is found to be a couple of years afterwards, when he has acquired a house over his head and fenced in an enclosure for his cattle. Becoming a property-holder, instantly inspires him with a reverence for the law, and he sees by supporting its inviolability he can alone make sure of retaining the means of independence and comfort which it has cost him two years' labor to obtain. The Hudson's Bay Company, from its having been so long established in the country; from the judicious selection it has made of sites for trading, agricultural, and manufacturing purposes; from the number of persons and large moneyed capital employed, and most of all from the far-sighted sagacity with which its business is conducted, in some way or other involves itself in every matter of consequence relating to this country; nor is it possible to avoid introducing it as bearing upon all points worth bringing to the notice of government. The terms of the treaty exemplify how ably its interests have been represented in London, and the immunities it enjoys by that instrument will, I apprehend, make it more the object of jealousy and dislike to our citizens here than it has hitherto been.

However long and tedious this report has already become, my inclination to terminate it must give way to a sense of duty, while I describe as briefly as possible all that I could see or learn about this company. Its original charter, granting exclusive trade for furs around Hudson's bay, was extended to other trade west of the Rocky mountains; and the privilege of raising from the soil whatever was necessary for their comfortable maintenance, in the prosecution of this trade, was likewise granted; but in reading its charter and the laws subsequently enacted in relation to its interests, it is very manifest that it was only considered an association of capitalists for *purposes of trade.*

The Puget's Sound Agricultural Company is merely a nominal affair, being only a new name with new privileges, under which the capital of persons belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company is turned into profit. It would be difficult to get exactly at the true relationship between it and the other, as the parties who manage them are the same, and they have endeavored to make them appear as separate interests. When, therefore, a new farm is taken possession of, stocked and put under cultivation, or a fine mill erected and put into profitable operation, these are acts and privileges of the agricultural society; but when the products of these establishments are ready for a market, the company, with trading privileges, takes them in hand. As before stated, persons wishing to hold land under the provisional government, having selected the same, were required to mark out its limits, and have it recorded by a person selected to keep a book of all such entries. Lands thus marked out were called "claims;" and in compliance with this requirement, the Hudson's Bay Company had entered all their landed property in the names of their officers and clerks; they have omitted no means or forms necessary to secure them in their possessions. Fort Vancouver is surrounded by 18 English "claims," viz: nine miles on the river and two back; and besides the dwelling-houses, storehouses, and shops in the fort, they have a flour mill a few miles up the river, and above that again a saw mill. The Vancouver

grounds are principally appropriated to grazing cattle, horses, sheep, and hogs. On the Cowlitz the company has a large wheat-growing farm, and I believe these are the only land claims they have below the mountains. They have, besides, a post on the Umpqua. Around their posts at Fort Hall, Boise, and on the northern branches of the river, they have hitherto enclosed no more ground than was necessary for garden purposes; but finding themselves confirmed by treaty in their hold upon property "legally acquired," God knows what may be the extent of their claims when a definite line comes to be drawn. The company have three barques, employed freighting hence to England and back, via the Sandwich islands, besides a schooner and small steamer in the trade of the northwest coast. They supply the Russian establishment at Sitka annually with 15,000 bushels of wheat, and sell them besides, I am told, some furs. The trade in this latter article has become of late years much less profitable than formerly; and *it is said* to have so far dwindled in amount as to be scarcely worth pursuing; but as no statistical reports of profits, or extent of trade, are ever published by the company, it is not possible to say with accuracy what they are doing. In April, 1846, a report reached Oahu that the company's barque Cowlitz had, after leaving the Sandwich islands for England, been run away with by the crew, and Mr. Pelly, the company's agent, immediately issued advertisements, making it known, and calling on commanders of ships of war to intercept her. He told me on that occasion that the barque's cargo of furs and specie (which was the usual annual remittance by the company) amounted to nearly two hundred thousand pounds sterling. The rumor about her turned out to have originated in a mistaken apprehension. Although it is well known that furs are not so abundant as formerly, they nevertheless still form an important article of trade, and this is entirely monopolized by the company. Nearly every dollar of specie which comes into the country—and there is more of it than might be supposed—finds its way sooner or later into the company's chests; keeping, as they do, a very large stock on hand of all those articles most necessary to the new settler. Indeed, so extensive and well selected are their supplies, that few country towns in the United States could furnish their neighbors so satisfactorily. An annual ship load arrives from London, which, with the old stock, makes an inventory of one hundred thousand pounds. Goods are invariably sold at an advance of one hundred per cent. on London prices; which, taking their good quality into consideration, is cheaper than they are offered by the two or three Americans who are engaged in mercantile business in the country.

The managers of this company, as I have before remarked, are sagacious, far-sighted men; they hold the keys of trade, and establish the value of property and of labor, both of which they are too wise to depreciate unduly. They are complained of as powerful monopolists; but so long as their power is made subservient to general interests, as well as their own, and stands in the way of rapacious speculators, it avails a good purpose, and is cheerfully recognised by the good citizen. They certainly may be said to establish a standard of prices; and many persons think if they were withdrawn, more competition would arise among merchants, and higher prices would be given for produce; but it should be remembered that their prices, those which they give and those which they take, are uniform, and not subject to those fluctuations which militate eventually against the producer.

They would sell the last bushel of salt or pound of nails in their storehouses as the first had been sold; not increasing the price as the article became less abundant in the market. They give sixty cents for an imperial bushel, or sixty-eight pounds of wheat; one dollar apiece for flour barrels; three dollars a thousand for shingles, and a corresponding price for other articles of country production. They see very plainly that in the prosperity of others consists their own; and, acting upon this judicious principle, they are content with sure and moderate gains. I have heard general charges of extortion alleged against them, but without proof to sustain them. They have providentially been the instrument of much good to Oregon, as the early emigrants can testify; and however objectionable it is on some grounds to have a large and powerful moneyed institution, controlled by foreigners, in the heart of this young America, its sudden withdrawal would be forcibly and disadvantageously felt throughout the land. In a few years, with a knowledge that the company is to withdraw, there will no doubt be a more enlarged system of trade entered upon by our own merchants, which will eventually supply the place of the company. At present they cannot well be spared, as will be more plainly seen by what I have to say of the commerce of Oregon. These remarks about the Hudson's Bay Company are made under the impression, prevalent in Oregon—where the treaty itself had not arrived when I left, but only a synopsis of it—that the charter of the company would expire in 1863, and of course its privileges with it. If the facts be otherwise, and its existence as a corporate body, under British charter, is perpetual, my speculations about its officers becoming American citizens are fallacious. Exclusive of the Hudson's Bay Company imports, the external commerce of Oregon is of very limited extent; it is a petty trade, not sufficiently systematized to be reducible to a statistical table, and I can give no better idea of its extent than to state, that during the whole year of 1846 a barque of three hundred tons came twice from the Sandwich islands, bringing each time about half a cargo of dry goods, groceries, hardware, &c., bought at Oahu. An American ship was also in the river this year, but came in ballast for a freight of lumber, &c., to the islands. Three mercantile houses divide the business of the Territory, small as it is, and I believe each has a favorable balance on its side. The prices imposed in selling to the consumer are enormously high, and these he must pay from the produce of his labor, or dispense with the most necessary articles of clothing, cooking utensils, groceries, and farming implements. An American axe costs $5; a cross-cut saw, $15; all articles manufactured of iron 25 cents per pound, &c., &c. The impediments to commerce here are, first, the want of a fixed currency; second, the remoteness of the foreign market and its uncertainty, and more particularly the hazardous nature of the navigation in and out of the river, and the tediousness of ascending and descending it. These last make the freight and premium on insurance very high, which adds to the cost of the imported article, and detracts proportionally from that which is offered in payment for it, and which, to realize anything, must be carried abroad. The misfortune is, that these impediments create and depend upon each other, and are likely to continue, and painfully retard the growth of this promising country. If the commerce were more extensive, it would afford payment to pilots, and construct light-houses, beacons, and buoys, which would greatly diminish the risk and expense of getting vessels into the river; and again, if more means of

transportation presented themselves, the surplus produce of the country would find a sale, and be conveyed to a foreign market—thus enabling the farmer, the miller, the sawyer, the shingle-maker, the gatherer of wool, and the packer of salted beef and pork, to share in the advantages of a more extended demand; in short, some thousands of people in this country are suffering at this moment in consequence of the inadequate means of commercial exchange between it and its neighbors of California and the Sandwich islands.

The granaries are surcharged with wheat; the saw-mills are surrounded with piles of lumber as high as themselves; the grazier sells his beef at three cents per pound to the merchant, who packs it in salt and deposites it in a warehouse, awaiting the tardy arrival of some vessel to take a portion of his stock at what price she pleases, and furnish in return a scanty supply of tea and sugar and indifferent clothing, also at her own rate. I feel it particularly my duty to call the attention of government to this subject. This feeble and distant portion, of itself, is vainly struggling to escape from burdens which, from the nature of things, must long continue to oppress it, unless parental assistance comes to its relief. The first measure necessary is to render the entrance and egress of vessels into the mouth of the Columbia as free from danger as possible; and the first step towards this is to employ two competent pilots, who should reside at Cape Disappointment, be furnished with two Baltimore-built pilot boats, (for mutual assistance in case of accident to either,) and be paid a regular salary, besides the fees, which should be very moderate, imposed upon each entering vessel. A light-house, and some beacons with and without lights, would aid very much in giving confidence and security to vessels approaching the river; but more important than all these would of course be the presence, under good management, of a strong and well-built steam tug. The effects of these facilities would be to render certain, at least during the summer months, the coming in and going out of vessels, subtract from the premium on insurance, and give confidence to the seamen, who now enter for a voyage to Oregon with dread, reluctance, and high wages. It is not for me to anticipate the boundless spring which the vivifying influence of an extended organized commerce would give to the growth and importance of this country: its portrait has been drawn by abler hands, in books and in the Senate, but I must take leave to suggest that good policy requires the parent government to retain the affections of this hopeful offspring by attentions and fostering care: it needs help at this moment; and if it be rendered, a lasting sense of dependence and gratitude will be the consequence; but if neglected in this its tender age, and allowed to fight its own way to independent maturity, the ties of consanguinity may be forgotten in the energy of its own unaided exertions.

Nisqually, the innermost harbor of Puget's sound, may at some future day become an important port for the exportation of produce from the north side of the river; but the inland transportation is at present impracticable for articles of more than a hundred pounds weight, on account of the mountains and water-courses. No wagon road has yet been opened from an interior point to Nisqually. Its importance will increase with the settlement of the country around it, possessing, as it does, natural advantages exceeding those of any other port in the Territory.

Besides Fort Vancouver, six sites have been selected for towns: of these Astoria takes precedence in age only. It is situated on the left bank of

the Columbia, thirteen miles from the sea: it contains ten houses, including a warehouse, Indian lodges, a cooper's and a blacksmith's shop; it has no open ground except gardens within less than a mile of it. It may be considered in a state of transition, exhibiting the wretched remains of a bygone settlement, and the uncouth germ of a new one. About 30 white people live here, and two lodges of Chinook Indians. The Hudson's Bay Company have still an agent here, but were about transferring him over to a warehouse they are putting up at Cape Disappointment. A pre-emption right to the principal part of this site is claimed by an American named Welch; the other portion, including Point George, is claimed in like manner by Colonel John Maclure. Leaving Astoria, we ascend the Columbia eighty miles, and there entering the Wilhammette, find, three miles within its mouth, the city of Linton, on its left or western shore. This site was selected by a copartnership of gentlemen as the most natural depot for the produce of the well settled Twality plains, and a road was opened over the ridge of hills intervening between the plains and the river. It contains only a few log-houses, which are overshadowed by huge fir trees that it has not yet been convenient to remove. Its few inhabitants are very poor, and severely persecuted by musquitos day and night. Not one of its proprietors resides on the spot, and its future increase is, to say the least of it, doubtful. Eight or nine miles above Linton, on the same side of the Wilhammette, we come to a more promising appearance of a town. It has been named Portland by the individual under whose auspices it has come into existence, and mainly to whose efforts its growth and increase are to be ascribed. This is Mr. F. W. Pettygrove, from Maine, who came out here some years back as agent for the mercantile house of the Messrs. Benson, of New York. Having done a good business for his employers, he next set about doing something for himself, and is now the principal commercial man in the country. He selected Portland as the site of a town accessible to shipping, built houses, and established himself there; invited others to settle around him, and appropriated his little capital to opening wagon roads (aided by neighboring farmers) into the Twality plains, and up the east side of the river to the falls where the city of Oregon stands. Twelve or fifteen new houses are already occupied, and others building; and, with a population of more than sixty souls, the heads of families generally industrious mechanics, its prospects of increase are favorable. A good wharf, at which vessels may lie and discharge or take in cargo most months in the year, is also among the improvements of Portland. Twelve miles above we come to the falls of the Wilhammette, and abreast of and just below these, on the east side of the river, stands Oregon city. This is considered the capital of the Territory, contains seventy-odd houses, and has a population of nearly five hundred souls. The situation of this place is very peculiar: the river here is about eighty yards wide, and at its lowest stage is twelve feet deep; in freshets it sometimes rises thirty feet above low-water mark. The rocky rampart, over which it falls almost perpendicularly, is perhaps forty feet high; and from about its upper level, a narrow strip of level ground three hundred yards wide, (between the bed of the river and a precipitous hilly ridge,) is the site of the town. This hilly range runs along down stream for nearly a mile, when it slopes off to the level of the river side plateau. The opposite side presents nearly the same features, so that the view in front and rear abruptly terminates in a rocky mountain side of five or six

hundred feet elevation. In a summer day the sun's rays reflected from these cliffs make the temperature high, and create an unpleasant sensation of confinement, which would be insupportable but for the refreshing influence of the waterfall: this, divided by rocky islets, breaks into flash and foam, imparting a delicious brightness to this otherwise sombre scenery. A Methodist and a Catholic church, two flour and saw mills, a tavern, a brick storehouse and several wooden ones, an iron foundry just beginning, and many snug dwelling-houses, are at this moment the chief constituents of the capital of Oregon. The site on the opposite side of the river, upon which some good buildings are beginning to appear, is called Muntnomah. Communication is kept up between these two places by two ferry boats. Dr. McLaughlin claims the square mile which includes Oregon city on one side, and an American named Moore claims an equal extent on the other side. The doctor has fixed a high price on his town lots, more than can conveniently be paid by those desirous of living in town, and persons were occasionally constructing upon his land in defiance of his remonstrances and threats of the law. Our government is already, I understand, in possession of the evidence upon which his claim rests, and I need therefore say nothing more on the subject.

A sixth spot dignified with the name of town is Salem, high up the Wilhammette, of which too little exists to be worthy an attempt at description. It would seem from this sorry catalogue that Oregon cannot yet boast of her cities. Even in these, however, her improvement has been great and rapid, and population comes into the capital faster than the gigantic fir trees, which have lately been its sole occupants, can be made to disappear.

The American missionaries were the first persons to attempt any establishment in Oregon, independent of the Hudson's Bay Company. They have doubtless done much good in past years, but are now disunited; and with the exception of Mr. Spalding, a worthy old Presbyterian gentleman who resides on the Kooskooskie river, I could hear of no attempts going on to educate or convert the aborigines of the country by Americans. Why their efforts came to be discontinued, (for there were at one time many missions in the field, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Babtist, and an independent self-supporting one,) would be a question which it would be difficult to have answered truly. The various recriminations which were uttered, as each member thought proper to secede from his benevolent associates in Christian duty, were not calculated to increase the public respect for their individual disinterestedness or purity. They seem early to have despaired of much success in impressing the minds of the Indians with a just sense of the importance of their lessons, and very sagaciously turned their attention to more fruitful pursuits. Some became farmers and graziers, others undertook the education of the rising generation of whites and half-breeds, and a few set up for traders; but these last imprudently encroached upon a very dear prerogative of the Hudson's Bay Company by bartering for beaver, and only by hastily quitting it escaped the overwhelming opposition of that all-powerful body. The French missionaries, to wit: a bishop, a number of priests, and seven nuns, are succeeding in their operations. They are amply furnished with money and other means for accomplishing their purposes. They educate a number of young Indians, principally girls, and all the offspring of the Canadians. In addition to a large wooden nunnery alrea-

dy some years in use, they are now building a brick church of corresponding dimensions, on beautiful prairie grounds a few miles from the Wilhammette river, and thirty-two above Oregon city. They are strict Catholics, and exercise unbounded influence over the people of the French settlements, who are improving in every way under their precepts. The mission derives its support from Europe, and I was told that the Queen of France, and her daughter, of Belgium, are liberal patronesses of the institution. It is at present in high estimation with all classes: it gives employment and high wages to a great number of mechanics and laborers, pays off punctually in cash, and is without doubt contributing largely to the prosperity of the neighborhood and country around it. A few Jesuits are located within six miles of the mission, and are ostensibly employed in the same praiseworthy occupation.

The Methodist institute, designed as an educational establishment for the future generations of Oregon, is still in the hands of gentlemen who were connected with the Methodist mission. It is finely situated on the Wilhammette, fifty miles above Oregon city. As a building its exterior was quite imposing from a distance, but I was pained, upon coming up with it, to find its interior apartments in an entirely unfinished state. Mr. Wilson, who is in charge of it, was so hospitable and polite to me that I refrained from asking questions which I was sure, from appearances, would only produce answers confirmatory of its languishing condition. Five little boys were now getting their rudiments of education here; when, from the number of dormitories, it was manifest that it had been the original design to receive more than ten times that number. I learned from Governor Abernethy, however, about the beginning of 1847, that the number of its pupils was fast increasing.

Of the Indian population of Oregon nothing *new* can be said. The "Nez Percés" are described as receiving advantageously the suggestions of Mr. Spalding with regard to the cultivation of their fields and rearing their cattle and horses. No difficulties or wars among the tribes, of any consequence have recently occurred. A fracas between the Cowlitzes and Chinooks took place while I was in the river, in which a young Chinook was killed, but the parties are mutually too feeble to make their quarrels a matter of any general interest. It was only among these two remnants of tribes, besides the Clatsops and the Callapooiales, that we had an opportunity of making any observations, and what I say on this subject will be understood as relating exclusively to them. The old and melancholy record of their decline must be continued. Destitution and disease are making rapid havoc among them; and as if the proximity of the white man were not sufficiently baneful in its insidious destruction of these unhappy people, our countrymen killed two by sudden violence and wounded another in an uncalled-for and wanton manner during the few months of my sojourn in the country. The only penalty to which the perpetrators of these different acts were subjected was the payment of a blanket or a beef to their surviving kindred. Public opinion, however, sets very strongly against such intrusions upon the degraded red man, and perhaps a year hence it may be strong enough to hang an offender of this kind. It is clearly the duty of our government to look promptly into the necessitous condition of these poor Indians. Their number is now very small: of the four tribes I have named, there are probably altogether not over five hundred, old and young, and these are scattered in lodges along the river, subject

to the intrusion of the squatter. If their situation could but be known to the humane citizens of the United States, it would bring before the government endless petitions in their behalf. As a matter of policy, likewise, it is indispensable that measures should be taken to get a better acquaintance with these as well as the mountain tribes; they are perfectly familiar with the difference between Americans and English, calling us "Boston mans," and the English "King George's mans;" and it would be highly judicious to make them sensible of their new and exclusive relations with the United States. A gratuitous annual distribution of a few thousand flannel frocks and *good* blankets (for an Indian would rather go naked than wear a bad one) to those living near our settlements would be not only an act which humanity demands, but one from which many good consequences would ensue. In speaking of the Indians, I would respectfully suggest that this moment is, of all others, the most favorable for extinguishing their titles to the land. Miserable as they are, they display some spirit and jealousy on this subject. Although a patch of potatoes may be the extent of their cultivation, they will point out a circuit of many miles as the boundary of their possessions. The tribes of which I have spoken have no chiefs, and on that account it would be difficult to treat formally with them; but a well selected agent, with but small means at his disposal, would easily reconcile them to live peaceably and quietly in limits which he should specify.

The salmon fishery naturally succeeds the preceding subject. Strange to say, up to this day none but Indians have ever taken a salmon from the waters of the Columbia; it seems to have been conceded to them as an inherent right, which no white man has yet encroached upon. They are wonderfully superstitious respecting this fish; of such vital importance is his annual visitation to this river and its tributaries, that it is prayed for, and votive offerings made in gratitude when he makes his first appearance. In Frazier's river, and still further north, the Indians carry their ceremonies and superstitious observances at this event far beyond the practices in the Columbia: here the shoals of salmon, coming from the north, enter the river in May, but they are permitted to pass on several days before nets are laid out for their capture. No reward of money, or clothes, will induce an Indian to sell salmon the first three weeks after his arrival; and throughout the whole season, upon catching a fish they immediately take out his heart and conceal it until they have an opportunity to burn it, their great fear being that this sacred portion of the fish may be eaten by dogs, which they shudder to think would prevent them from coming again to the river. When it is remembered that the many thousand Indians living upon this river, throughout its course of more than twelve hundred miles, are almost entirely dependent upon salmon for their subsistence, it would lessen our surprise that these simple-minded people should devise some propitiatory means of retaining this inappreciable blessing. The annual inroad of these multitudinous shoals into the Columbia may, in its effects upon the happiness and lives of the inhabitants, be compared to the effect produced upon the Egyptians by the rising of the Nile; a subject upon which they are described as reflecting not with lively solicitude and interest, but with feelings of religious solemnity and awe.

The salmon are much finer, taken when they first enter the river; and from the last of May the business of catching and drying is industriously pursued by the Indians. These sell to the whites, who salt and pack for

winter use, or exportation. As the season advances the fish become meagre and sickly, and only those not strong enough to force a passage against the torrent at the Cascades, and other falls, remain in the lower waters of the river. In September they are found at the very sources of the Columbia, still pressing up stream, with tails and bellies bruised and bloody by the long struggle they have had against the current and a rocky bottom. They die then in great numbers, and, floating down stream, the Indians intercept them in their canoes, and relish them none the less for having died a week or fortnight previous. The young fry pass out to sea in October; they are then nearly as large as herrings. Different families of salmon are in the habit of resorting to different rivers. The largest and best come into the Columbia, weighing on an average twenty pounds each ; some exceed forty pounds. Seven or eight hundred barrels are annually exported: they retail at Oahu for ten dollars a barrel, but I do not believe they are so highly appreciated anywhere as in Oregon, where they may be considered their staple article of food. Sturgeon and trout are also abundant in the Columbia.

I was surprised to find so great a scarcity of game in this country. I lugged a heavy gun more than a hundred and fifty miles through the Wilhammette valley, and in all that ride saw but three deer. Wolves are numerous, and prey upon other animals, so that the plains are entirely in their possession. The little venison I saw in Oregon was poor and insipid: a fat buck is a great rarity. Elk are still numerous, but very wild, living in the depths of the forests, or near those openings which the white man has not yet approached. An Indian hunter often brought elk meat to us at Astoria, which he had killed in the unexplored forests between Clatsop plains and Young's river. Black bears are very common, and destructive to the farmers' pigs; the grizzly bear is more rarely seen, but one of the Shark's officers procured a very promising young grizzly, and sent him a present to a lady friend at Oahu, whence it is probable he will be conveyed to the United States.

Nearly all the birds and fowls of the United States are found here, with several varieties of the grouse and partridge which we have not. The turkey is not indigeneous to Oregon, but has been introduced and successfully reared there. Wild fowl, from the swan to the blue-wing, are very abundant during the winter. The wild geese move over the country in clouds, and do great injury to the wheat fields upon which they determine to alight. The field lark, the robin, the wren, and the sparrow, alternately flit before the traveller and identify the country with scenes at home.

Although most descriptions of timber grow in this country, and grow to a great size, its quality and usefulness are in nowise comparable to that produced in the United States. The best here is found farthest north from Nisqually, towards the northern boundary. In those parts I visited, there was not a stick of timber suitable for ship-building; the spruce makes tough spars, but is very heavy, and after seasoning is apt to rive and open too much. Neither hickory, walnut, nor locust has yet been found here; they would doubtless, if introduced and proper soil selected for them, thrive prosperously. The hazel bush makes a substitute for hickory hoop-poles, and answers well. Perhaps a critical exploration would find timber of durable fibre in the less genial atmosphere of the mountain ridges; the cause of its bad quality in the low lands is the rapidity of its growth, which

in all countries produces the same disqualifying effects. The ash, which is very abundant, compares with that grown elsewhere better than any other timber. Much remains unknown respecting this essential portion of this country's wealth; nor would I have it inferred, that because I saw no good specimens of timber, there are none to be found.

Oregon, from its extent and varied topography, must, of course, possess some diversity of climate. As a general remark, it is equable and salubrious; and although ten degrees of latitude farther north than Virginia, it assimilates to the climate of that State, particularly in winter, qualified by less liability to sudden violent changes. The same season, however, in Oregon is characterized by more constant rains and cloudy weather. Our log-book records rain, hail, or snow, every day between October 29th, 1846, and January 17th, 1847, except eleven, and a continuation of such weather was anticipated until the month of March. But during this time there were but few days of severe cold. Grass grew verdantly in every spot that was at all sheltered, and yielded sustenance to the cattle, which requires neither shelter nor feeding (except what it procures itself) throughout the year. From March till October the weather is delightful; occasional showers obscure the sun and refresh the earth; but what is very remarkable, the summer clouds in Lower Oregon are seldom attended by thunder and lightning. During the winter, at the mouth of the river, we experienced this phenomenon, and witnessed its effects occasionally upon conspicuous trees in the forest, but in the interior it is not common at any season—a consoling circumstance to our countrywomen, who had been previously subject to its terrifying effects, on the banks of the Illinois and Mississippi.

The products of the soil depend mainly upon the climate, and the excellence of the latter is indicative of the abundance of the former. Hence we find from the seacoast to the Cascade range of mountains, an average breadth of 110 miles, a most vigorous natural vegetable growth; the forest trees are of gigantic stature, while the intervals between them are filled with a rank, impenetrable bushy undergrowth. Where the growth is rapid, maturity and then decay quickly succeed, and the soil is enriched from its own fruits. This region, like that of the United States before it was colonized, "has been gathering fertility from the repose of centuries, and lavishes its strength in magnificent but useless vegetation." It is not, however, a woody solitude throughout. Within the limits alluded to lies the whole Wilhammette valley; continuous ranges of prairie lands, free from the encumbrance of trees or other heavy obstacles to the plough, stretch along, ready for the hand of the cultivator; in their virgin state these are overgrown with fern, the height of which, say from three to ten feet, indicates the strength of the soil. No felling of trees or grubbing is necessary here. A two-horse plough prostrates the rankest fern, and a fine crop of wheat the very next year succeeds it. The fields, however, continue to improve under cultivation, and are much more prolific the fourth and fifth years than before. Wheat is the staple commodity; the average yield is twenty bushels to the acre; and this from very slovenly culture. Those who take much pains, reap forty or fifty. Although population is dispersed over these clear lands, and a large portion of them is held by "claims," there is, notwithstanding, a mere fraction cultivated. A fair estimate of all the wheat raised in 1846 does not exceed 160,000 bushels, which, by the average, would grow upon 8,000 acres of land—not

a hand's breadth compared to the whole body claimed and held in idleness. The quality of the wheat produced here is, I believe, unequalled throughout the world; it certainly excels in weight, size of grain, and whiteness of its flour, that of our Atlantic States, Chili, or the Black sea, and is far before any I have seen in California. Oats grow with correspondent luxuriance; but the nights of this salubrious valley are too cool for Indian corn or rye. These last grow to perfection further interior, where the summers are warmer than they are westward of the Cascade mountains. The few experiments made with hemp and tobacco have proven the competency of the soil and climate to their production. In short, I can think of nothing vegetable in its nature, common within the temperate zone, that Oregon will not produce. Fruits have been, so far, very sparingly introduced: there are a few orchards of apples, peaches, and pears among the Canadians; but growing upon seedlings, the fruit is inferior. A great variety of berries are indigenous and abundant; among them the strawberry, cranberry, whortleberry, and a big blue berry of delicious flavor. The traveller stopping at the humblest cottage on a summer day will be regaled with a white loaf and fresh butter, a dish of luscious berries, and plenty of rich milk; to procure all of which the cottager has not been outside his own enclosure. The fields for cultivation comprise, as before remarked, but a small portion of the country; outside the fences is a common range for the cattle. These have increased very rapidly, and in nothing does the new emigrant feel so sensibly relieved from labor as in having to make no winter provision for his stock. Large droves of American cows and oxen have annually accompanied the emigrating parties from the United States, and the Hudson's Bay Company have imported many from California; but of this indispensable appendage to an agricultural district, the far greater number in the Wilhammette valley have sprung from a supply driven in from California, through the instrumentality of Purser Slacum, United States navy, who visited Oregon eight or nine years ago as an agent of the government. Chartering a small vessel in the Columbia, he carried down to St. Francisco a number of passengers, gratis, whom he aided in procuring cattle, and purchased a number for himself besides, which were driven into the rich pastures of Oregon; their descendants are to the inhabitants a fertile source of present comfort and future wealth. It is but justice to the memory of Mr. Slacum to add, that from this circumstance, and others like it, evincing an interest in the welfare of the people, and a desire to aid their efforts in settling the country, no other official agent of the United States who has visited Oregon is held in equally high estimation or grateful remembrance by the early settlers here.

The Hudson's Bay Company own large flocks of sheep, the breed of which they have taken every pains to improve, besides affording them a constant table supply of good mutton. This stock yields a profitable fleece of wool, which goes to England. Many farmers are also rearing this animal, which succeeds admirably. I saw a flock of twenty on the Recreall river, which had been brought the year before from Missouri. Its owner informed me that they travelled better, and proved on the journey more thrifty, than either horses or oxen, climbing mountains and swimming rivers with unabated sprightliness during a journey of two thousand miles. Of this small stock every one had come safely in.

It is scarcely worth while to add that all garden vegetables grow abundantly in Oregon—at least all which have been tried; fresh seed and in-

creased varieties are much wanting, and it is to be lamented that the emigrants seldom bring out anything of this kind. If each would provide himself with a few varieties, how soon would they be repaid for their trouble. The man who will put some walnuts and hickory nuts in his pocket, and bring them to Oregon, may in that way propagate the growth of timber, for which posterity will be grateful. But few exotic plants or flowers have yet arrived; but the natural flora of this country is said, by those acquainted with the subject, to be very rich and extensive. Speaking of flowers reminds me that the honey-bee has not yet been naturalized—a desideratum which every one seems to notice with surprise where the sweet-brier and honeysuckle, the clover and wild-grape blossom, "waste their sweets upon the desert air." An emigrant of 1846 left Missouri with two hives, and conveyed them safely over the mountains; but was overtaken by winter before reaching the settlements, and, to the regret of all, this praiseworthy and troublesome experiment did not succeed.

There has been nothing valuable in mineralogy yet discovered. Coal has been found in the northeastern portion of Vancouver's island, and the British war-steamer Cormorant visited the mine and procured some of it, which was found to be of fair quality. A systematic exploration of our own territory would doubtless bring to light much valuable information on this subject.

With respect to defences, the subject is too comprehensive to be more than hinted at here. Cape Disappointment may be rendered impregnable, and will command the river so long as the channel passes where it does; but I cannot suppose the government will commence works of defence anywhere, without a special reconnoissance by military engineers had first been made of the premises. It may be proper, however, to report that Cape Disappointment is now "claimed" by Mr. Peter Skeen Ogden, a chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company. He purchased the "claim" from an American named Wheeler, giving him a thousand dollars for it, and is now putting up a warehouse there. Point Adams, the southern point of the river's mouth, and nearly five miles from the cape, is low and sandy, and of course not so susceptible of defence as the other side; nor is there safe anchorage in its neighborhood during the winter season. The cape, Tongue point, both sides of the Wilhammette falls, a site at the Cascades, and one at the Dalles, are points on the rivers prominently presenting themselves for reservation by the government, should it design to reserve anything.

Nisqually, and perhaps other places on the sound and coast, are not less distinctly marked by nature as eligible sites for forts or future towns. I have omitted Astoria from this list, as the isthmus of Tongue point, within three miles of it, is every way better situated for a business settlement, being accessible to ships from sea of equal draughts of water, having more spacious anchorage ground, and subject to less tide. A snug cove on the eastern side affords secure landing for loaded boats, flats, and rafts coming down the river, without the exposed navigation around the promontory. Mr. Shortiss, an American, "claims" two miles along the river and half a mile back, including all this point, by virtue of the organic law of Oregon, and an hereditary title acquired through his Indian wife, who was born somewhere hereabouts. The policy of confirming all these land claims it is not my province to discuss; but it may be necessary to observe, that few of those who are now in possession of the land

could by any means be made to pay even a dollar and a quarter an acre for it. In the first place, they have not the necessary funds; and in the second, they feel that they have fairly earned a title to it, by assuming possession while it was uncertain to whom it belonged, and that this very act of taking possession at the expense of so much toil and risk gives an increased value to what remains unoccupied, which will indemnify the government for the whole. The President's suggestions to Congress on this subject will, it is hoped, be acted on, and a law framed to meet the exigency.

Many allowances should be made in favor of these people. They come generally from among the poorer classes of the western States, with the praiseworthy design of improving their fortunes. They brave dangers and accomplish Herculean labors on the journey across the mountains. For six months consecutively they have "the sky for a pea-jacket," and the wild buffalo for company; and during this time, are reminded of no law but expediency. That they should, so soon after their union into societies at their new homes, voluntarily place themselves under any restraints of law or penalties whatever, is an evidence of a good disposition, which time will be sure to improve and refine. If some facts I have related would lead to unfavorable opinions of them, it will be understood that the number is very limited—by no means affecting the people as a mass, who deserve to be characterized as honest, brave, and hardy, rapidly improving in those properties and qualities which mark them for future distinction among the civilized portion of the world.

With great respect, I am, sir, &c., &c.,

NEIL M. HOWISON,
*Lieut. Commanding, U. S. Navy.*

To the COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
*Of the U. S. Naval forces in the Pacific Ocean.*

## APPENDIX.

### A.

HER MAJESTY'S SLOOP MODESTE,
*Fort Vancouver, Columbia River, Sept.* 13, 1846.

SIR: It was with the greatest regret that I this morning received information of your vessel being on the sands at the mouth of the Columbia. From the hurried information I have received, I much fear my boat will be too late to render any assistance in saving the vessel; but in the possibility of your not having been able to save provisions, &c., I beg to offer for your acceptance a few of such articles as are not likely to be obtained at Clatsop.

I have the honor to be, sir, your most obedient servant,
THOS. BAILLIE, *Commander.*

Lieut HOWISON,
*Commanding U. S. Schooner Shark.*

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### B.

FORT VANCOUVER, *Sept.* 11, 1846.

DEAR SIR: We have just heard of the unfortunate accident which has befallen the Shark on the bar of this river, and we beg to offer our sincere condolence on the distressing event. We also beg to offer every assistance we can render in your present destitute state, and hope you will accept of the few things sent by this conveyance. Captain Baillie having despatched bread and tea by the Modeste's pinnace anticipated our intention of sending such things. Have the goodness to apply to Mr. Peers for any articles of food or clothing you may want, and they will be at your service if he has them in store. As the people of Clatsop can furnish abundance of beef and potatoes, we are not anxious about your suffering any privation of food. If otherwise, Mr. Peers will do his utmost to supply your wants.

With kind remembrance to the officers, we remain, dear sir, yours truly,
PETER SKEEN OGDEN,
JAMES DOUGLASS.

NEIL HOWISON, *&c., &c.*

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### B.

BAKER'S BAY, *Friday, November* 9.

SIR: I much regret the melancholy disaster which befel your vessel on Wednesday evening, and also my inability to render you any assistance at that time. The Indians tell me there are several lives lost, but I hope such is not true.

I am informed you wish to occupy part of the house at Astoria; it is at your service, as also anything else there in the shape of food or clothing; and I must, at the same time, apologise for offering you such poor accommodations. I sent off a despatch to Vancouver yesterday morning, to acquaint them of your distress, and expect an answer Sunday morning.

I remain, sir, yours, most respectfully,

HENRY PEERS,
*Port Agent of Hudson's Bay Company.*

To Captain HOWISON,
*&c., &c., &c.*

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C.

OREGON CITY, *September* 15, 1846.

DEAR SIR: Last night we heard the melancholy tidings that the schooner Shark was lost on the South spit. It was very painful intelligence, particularly as we are yet in doubt as to the safety of yourself, officers, and crew. The letter we received at this place states that the probability is, all were saved; which I sincerely hope may be the case; but until we hear of the safety of all, we will be in an unhappy state of suspense. My first feeling was to leave all here, and reach Clatsop as soon as possible; but I am situated in such a way, just at this time, that I cannot leave. Should you not make arrangements to get away in the Mariposa, we have your room in readiness for you, and will be very happy to have you make one of our family, as long as you may remain in the country, and any one of your officers that you may choose for the other room. I perceive the Modeste's launch was to leave with a supply of provisions for you for the present. If you wish anything that I have, let me know, and I will send it down immediately. I have plenty of flour, and I have no doubt but plenty of beef and pork can be obtained here for the crew. It will give me great pleasure to be of any service to you. Hoping to hear from you soon, and that yourself, officers, and crew are all safe on shore, and in good health,

I remain, dear sir, yours, very truly,

GEORGE ABERNETHY.

Captain NEIL HOWISON,
*&c., &c., &c.*

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D.

[Extract.]

SEPTEMBER 19, 1846.

* * * * * * Should a vessel arrive belonging to the firm, I think you will have no difficulty in chartering her to go to California. I shall be happy to render you all the assistance that lies in my power. Should you wish any assistance as it regards money, or anything that I can obtain for you in Oregon, please inform me, and I will at the

earliest date endeavor to procure it for you. Please accept my kindest regards to yourself and officers.

Yours truly,

JOHN H. COUCH.

Capt. NEIL HOWISON.

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E.

BAKER'S BAY, COLUMBIA RIVER,
*December* 1, 1846.

DEAR GOVERNOR: One of the few articles preserved from the shipwreck of the late United States schooner Shark was her stand of colors. To display this national emblem, and cheer our citizens in this distant territory by its presence, was a principal object of the Shark's visit to the Columbia; and it appears to me, therefore, highly proper that it should henceforth remain with you, as a memento of parental regard from the general government.

With the fullest confidence that it will be received and duly appreciated as such by our countrymen here, I do myself the honor of transmitting the flags (an ensign and union-jack) to your address; nor can I omit the occasion to express my gratification and pride that this relic of my late command should be emphatically the first *United States* flag to wave over the undisputed and purely American territory of Oregon.

With considerations of high respect, I remain your obedient servant,

NEIL M. HOWISON,
*Lieutenant Commanding United States Navy.*

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F.

OREGON CITY, *December* 21, 1846.

DEAR SIR: I received your esteemed favor of the 1st December, accompanied with the flags of the late U. S. schooner "Shark," (an ensign and union-jack) as a "memento of parental regard from the general government" to the citizens of this Territory.

Please accept my thanks and the thanks of this community for the (to us) very valuable present. We will fling it to the breeze on every suitable occasion, and rejoice under the emblem of our country's glory. Sincerely hoping that the "star-spangled banner" may ever wave over this portion of the United States, I remain, dear sir, yours truly,

GEO. ABERNETHY.

NEIL HOWISON,
*Lieutenant commanding, &c., &c.*

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G.

A very snug harbor has within a few years been sounded out and taken possession of by the Hudson's Bay Company on the southeastern part of

Vancouver's island. They have named it Victoria, and it is destined to become the most important British seaport contiguous to our territory. Eighteen feet water can be carried into its inmost recesses, which is a fine large basin. There is besides pretty good anchorage for frigates outside this basin. The company are making this their principal shipping port, depositing, by means of small craft during the summer, all their furs and other articles for the English market at this place, which is safe for their large ships to enter during the winter season. They no longer permit them to come into the Columbia between November and March.