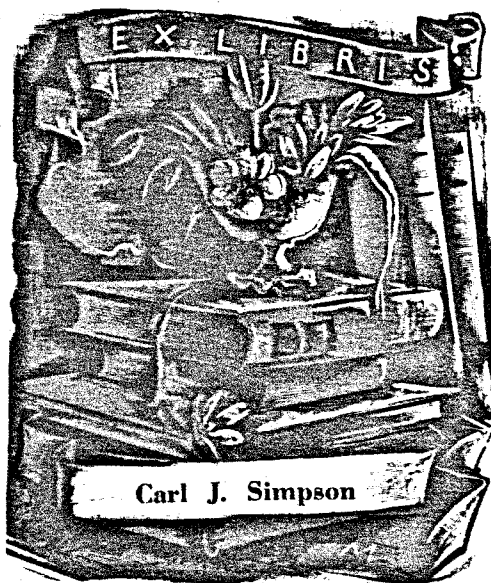




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*To Clara.
From
Uncle Carl*

Early Western Travels
1748-1846

Volume VII

Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River

1810-1813

By Alexander Ross

Edited with Notes, Introductions, Index, etc., by

Reuben Gold Thwaites

Editor of "The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents," "Wisconsin
Historical Collections," "Chronicles of Border Warfare,"
"Hennepin's New Discovery," etc.

(Separate publication from "Early Western Travels: 1748-1846,"
in which series this appeared as Volume VII)



Cleveland, Ohio
The Arthur H. Clark Company
1904

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PREFACE TO VOLUME VII

The present volume is occupied by the reprint, from the original London edition of 1849, of Alexander Ross's *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River* from 1810-13.

No less than three members of the Astorian expedition¹ published personal narratives, each of them a work of much merit. As a source for the study of this first attempt in behalf of the United States to colonize the Northwest Coast, the account of Ross supplements in many particulars that of Gabriel Franchère, the French Canadian clerk whose notable tale of adventure is published in volume vi of our series. Ross's narrative was not made public until twenty-nine years after the appearance of the first (French) edition of Franchère's book; but it was based upon journals written at the time, and has the value of a first-hand relation.

Ross was a Scotchman, who left his father's home (1804) to seek a fortune in the then "dissolute, extravagant, and butterfly" Province of Canada. He confesses that only stern Scotch pride kept him from returning to the parental roof, for which he secretly longed during several years after his departure. In the new land his fortunes did not flourish. Endowed with a good education, he at first eked out a scanty livelihood by teaching school; but after five years purchased some land in Upper

¹ Gabriel Franchère, *Voyage* (French original, published at Montreal in 1820; English translation published in New York, 1854); Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River* (London, 1831); and Alexander Ross, *Adventures* (London, 1849). We reprint the first and third of these.

Canada, and turned farmer. The reports of Astor's enterprise and of fortunes to be acquired in the fur-trade, tempted him to abandon the soil and embark in the promising project for a Columbia settlement, and he was a member of the contingent that sailed from New York in the "Tonquin," in 1810. Arrived at Columbia River, Ross was soon assigned to a post in the interior, where he whiled away the tedium of existence by studying Indian languages and characteristics, by copious journalizing, and much reflection. Nor was incident lacking to divert the isolated fur-trader, as the various brigades of the rival North West Company swept up and down the Columbia, and the fate of Astoria hung trembling in the balance. Most of the "Nor' Westers" were Scotchmen like himself, and Ross's sympathies appear to have been enlisted strongly in their behalf. As the books of reminiscence written during his retirement grew, they took on the form of apologies for McDougall and McKenzie, the Scotch partners of the American house, and virtually became tirades against the associates of Astor, and his business management as well.

Upon the consummation of the sale of Astoria (October, 1813), Ross was easily induced to enter the service of the new British owners, and he remained upon Columbian waters so long as the Nor' Westers operated in that district. With accustomed Scotch canniness he stipulated for an agreement in writing that he should be promoted at the end of seven years' service; but just before the expiration of that term the North West Company merged with its great rival, the Hudson's Bay (1821), and Ross's hopes were again dashed. However, the governor of the Hudson's Bay Company placed him in command of a

large brigade for hunting and exploring the country of the Snake Indians—the vast region of the Rocky Mountain divide, in the present states of Montana and Idaho. Here for two years (1823-25) he led his motley crews of Canadians, half-breeds, Iroquois, and Hawaiians, crossing and recrossing the path of Lewis and Clark, and exploring the fastnesses of the Snake and Salmon rivers.

But the wilderness had now lost its charm, and Ross returned to at least the borders of civilization, there to live in quiet and rear his half-breed children. In recognition of his services, the Hudson's Bay Company granted him a hundred acres of land in the Red River Valley, where he became one of the earliest and most prominent citizens of the present city of Winnipeg. His estate was known as "Colony Gardens," and upon the profits of his trade among the settlers and of his relations with the aborigines he grew wealthy and influential. Being chosen the first sheriff of Assiniboine (the present province of Winnipeg), he was later (1835) appointed a member of its first Government Council. Some account of his life as a settler, and a few of his letters, are published in the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba *Transactions* No. 63 (Winnipeg, 1903).

At last blessed with leisure, Ross now turned author, and published three works detailing the differing phases of his life. The first—*Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River*—relates his experiences as a fur-trader in American employ, and was issued from a London press in 1849; this book we here republish. The narrative of his life upon Western waters under the direction of British companies, appeared in 1855, as *The Fur Hunters of the Far West*. His final essay was a

history of *The Red River Settlement, its Rise, Progress, and Present State*, which appeared in 1856, the year of the author's death. All of these books are written in a simple, clear, unpretentious style, being mainly narrations of daily events.

Referring specifically to the *Adventures*, which we have chosen for reprinting, it is evident that the author's interest in topography was but slight. It is surprising to find a man who has had many years of intimate acquaintance with the interesting regions penetrated transiently by Lewis and Clark along narrow trails, contributing so slightly as does Ross to the world's knowledge of the country; whereas Lewis and Clark brought back from their hurried journey a wealth of detailed information. With ethnology, Ross exhibits greater concern. His alliance with an Okanagan woman, and his constant contact with the natives of the coast, gave him a command of tribal habits, traditions, and beliefs which makes his work a valuable source for the study of Western Indian life. The last four chapters present a good sociological treatment of the natives of the Shahaptian family—their religion, government, family life, and characteristics—in the primitive state, before contact with the whites had brought modification and degeneracy. Ross's account of the Indians of the coast, the Clatsop and Chinookan tribes, gives evidences of truth and accurate observation.

But it is chiefly as a narration of the fortunes of the Astorian expedition, that we value Ross's book. Unlike Franchère, he exhibits no reserve, and unhesitatingly expresses his opinion of the conduct of Captain Jonathan Thorn and Astor's partners, during the now famous voyage. His accounts of the adventures of the "Ton-

quin" and its passengers are consequently the more vivid and personal of the two. The dramatic situation evidently appealed strongly to our author's temperament; the incidents at the Falkland and Hawaiian islands, the irascibility and unreasonableness of Thorn's conduct, the useless sacrifice of life to the strictness of naval discipline, are related with no assuaging touch. Neither does the writer spare the reader an account of the hardships and trials of the adventurers, the poor and scanty food, the toil in felling trees and erecting buildings, the feuds and ill feeling between the workers, and the caprices of the commanding partners. Later, in describing the transfer of Astoria and its property to British hands, our author unhesitatingly appears as an apologist for the transaction, and an advocate of the pro-British party. His criticism of Astor's management, while partly justifiable from Ross's standpoint, seems to possess an element of personal pique; and for the clerks who, like Franchère, chose to remain loyal to the American owners, Ross has but few words of commendation. For a just estimate of the transaction, the reader must balance probabilities between the conclusions of Irving, Franchère, and Ross, and likewise take into consideration the emergencies arising from the Anglo-American war.

Aside from its historical value, Ross's *Adventures* possesses abundant interest for all who are stirred by clearly-delineated accounts of life in the great silent places of earth. Our author has a graphic touch: dangers from Indian treachery, perils of the forests and the waterways, thrilling escapes of every sort, lose nothing under his pen; wilderness life is vividly portrayed—the sharp contrasts between civilization and savagery, the obstacles

which beset man's progress through the vast solitudes of the Northwest, the forbidding aspects as well as the beauties of primeval nature; all these are presented with force and not seldom with charm.

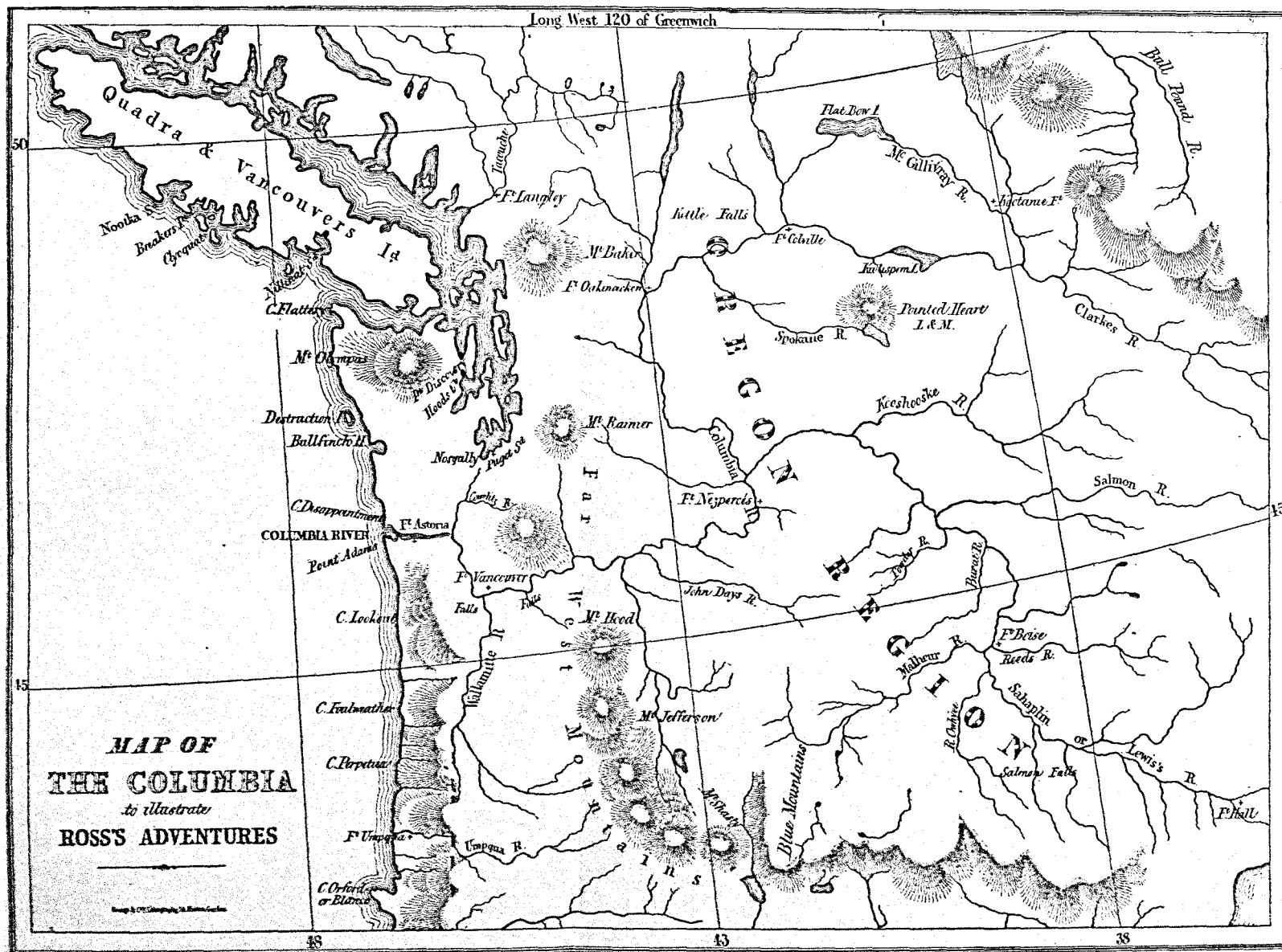
Assistance in annotating this volume has been received from Louise Phelps Kellogg, Ph. D., and Edith Kathryn Lyle, Ph. D.

R. G. T.

MADISON, WIS., August, 1904.

**ALEXANDER ROSS'S ADVENTURES OF THE FIRST SETTLERS
ON THE OREGON OR COLUMBIA RIVER**

Reprint of the original edition (London, 1849)



A D V E N T U R E S
OF THE FIRST SETTLERS ON THE
OREGON OR COLUMBIA RIVER:

BEING

A NARRATIVE OF THE EXPEDITION FITTED OUT BY
JOHN JACOB ASTOR,

TO ESTABLISH THE

"PACIFIC FUR COMPANY;"

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF SOME
INDIAN TRIBES ON THE COAST OF THE PACIFIC.

BY ALEXANDER ROSS,
ONE OF THE ADVENTURERS.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.
—
1849.

PREFACE

HAVING been one of the first commercial adventurers to the Columbia River, and having spent fifteen years of my life travelling among the savage tribes west of the Rocky Mountains, I was induced, from time to time, to note down such incidents and opinions, illustrative of savage life and manners, as appeared to me either new or interesting.

To the characteristic details of Indian life, I have added that of personal adventure, the trials and misfortunes which the first adventurers had to undergo among the Indians in that quarter; connecting therewith an account of the trade and commerce of the country during the early days of that bold spirit which animated the first explorers of the Columbia.

These different subjects have been arranged and [iv] linked together in their natural order, so as to form one complete narrative, embodying the history of "the Pacific Fur Company."

It is not an arm-chair narrative, derived from hearsay tales, but the result of practical experience on the spot. From beginning to end, I had personally to act my part in the scenes described; they passed under my own eyes; and the account altogether may derive more value from being authentic than from any adventitious embellishment bestowed on it.

While on this part of our subject, it may be observed that there is an error which most travellers, especially those pioneers who first penetrate into dark and remote

regions, fall into: they generally run into the extreme, and spoil a simple story by colouring. Not content to leave nature in its simple garb, they must brighten or darken, magnify or diminish, everything they describe, until at last the real likeness of the thing is entirely effaced, and truth itself, by over-refinement, is thrown into the shade.

What belongs to oneself is generally viewed with a partial eye; and perhaps that partiality influences [v] my own opinion as to the interest of the subject before us. In reference to this subject, however, others have written on it as well as myself. Let our readers, therefore, judge for themselves.

In presenting the present work to the public, I have no very sanguine expectations. All I aim at is to lay before my readers a faithful and impartial statement of what took place, during my own times, in a quarter hitherto but little known.

Freedom from imperfection is not to be expected; yet, on the whole, I hope that this volume will prove to the calm inquirer, in all matters connected with the subject generally, a sure and satisfactory guide: allowance being made for any changes that may have taken place since this account was written—thirty years ago.

Red River Settlement, Rupert's Land.
Aug. 1, 1846.

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ADVENTURES OF THE FIRST SETTLERS ON THE COLUMBIA RIVER

CHAPTER I

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WHEN I first conceived the idea of writing the following narrative, my design was to begin with a brief outline of the discoveries already made on the coast of the Pacific, from Drake in 1579 to Vancouver in 1792;¹ or, rather, down to the present time; but, on second thoughts, I felt convinced that enough had been done already in that branch of [2] inquiry; or, at least, that the further prosecution of it might be better left to those who aspire to literary fame. Mine is an humbler ambition—not to figure as an author, but to record faithfully, as a trader, the events in which I bore a part; and, in so doing, to gratify a desire kindled by an acquaintance with strange scenes

¹ For a brief account of the discoveries of the Northwest Coast, see Thwaites, *Rocky Mountain Exploration* (New York, 1904), chap. i. For notes on Vancouver and Drake, see Franchère's *Narrative*, volume vi of our series, notes 2, 66. Further references to this *Narrative*, in the following notes, will be to that reprint.—ED.

and new fields of action, in a remote country which is still but little known.

The progress of discovery contributes not a little to the enlightenment of mankind; for mercantile interest stimulates curiosity and adventure, and combines with them to enlarge the circle of knowledge. To the spirit of enterprise developed in the service of commercial speculation, civilized nations owe not only wealth and territorial acquisitions, but also their acquaintance with the earth and its productions. The illustration of these remarks will be found in the following pages.

Mr. Astor of New York, a German by birth, but a citizen of the United States, raised himself, by his adventurous and enterprising spirit, from small beginnings to be one of the wealthiest and most eminent merchants in America. Soon after his arrival in the United States, about the year 1784, he commenced his commercial career in the traffic of furs: at first on a very narrow scale, but gradually expanding as his means increased. In this way he made visits to Canada, purchasing furs in that country, and shipping them from thence to the London market: [3] and it is supposed that at this period his buoyant and aspiring mind conceived the vast project of grasping in his own hands, at some future day, the whole fur trade of North America.²

The valuable furs and peltries scattered in former days over the extensive forests, lakes, and rivers of the Canadas, like the rich mines of Potosi and Mexico, invited many adventurers. The French, for some time after settling there, carried on an irregular but lucrative traffic in furs

² For brief sketch of John Jacob Astor, see Franchère's *Narrative*, volume vi. of our series, note 8.—ED.

and peltries, with very little opposition, until the year 1670, when the Hudson's Bay Company, established by royal charter, took possession of the territory now called "Rupert's Land," or Hudson's Bay. The Canada, or as it was more generally called, the North-West Company, was formed in 1787; and these soon became the two great rival companies of the north, as we shall have occasion to notice more fully hereafter. Next on the theatre of action appeared the Mackina Company, which swept the warm regions of the south, as the two others did those of the wintry north, until the American Fur Company, established by Mr. Astor in 1809, commenced operations; but he, finding the Mackina fur traders somewhat in his way, bought out that Company, and added its territorial resources in 1811 to those of the American Fur Company. This body corporate was entitled the South-West, in contradistinction to the North-West Company.³

Mr. Astor now saw himself at the head of all the [4] fur trade of the south, and his intention was to penetrate through the barriers of the Northern Company, so as eventually to come into possession of all the fur trade east of the Rocky Mountains. With this plan still before him, he now turned his views to the trade on the coast of the Pacific, or that new field lying west of the Rocky

³ For the history of the great fur-trade companies, see Turner, "Character and Influence of the Fur Trade in Wisconsin," Wisconsin Historical Society Proceedings, 1889; Chittenden, *History of American Fur Trade in Far West* (New York, 1902); J. Long's *Voyages*, volume ii of our series, preface. The Mackinac Company, composed of British subjects, was formed before the surrender of the Upper Lakes posts to the Americans (1796). It operated chiefly in the West and Southwest; and in 1807, Americans on Lake Ontario fired upon its brigade. See *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, xxv, pp. 250-257. This company was a source of dispute between Canada and the United States until Astor purchased its stock. At the time of sale, the North West Company's partners held a controlling interest.— Ed.

Mountains, and which forms the subject of our present narrative. In this quarter the Russians alone had regular trading ports, opposite to Kamtschatka, where they still carry on a considerable trade in furs and seal skins, sending them across the Pacific direct to China. Their capital is limited, and their hunting grounds almost entirely confined to the sea-coast and islands around their establishments. The American coasting vessels also frequent this quarter, collecting vast quantities of valuable furs, which they convey to the Chinese market. This casual traffic by coasters, yielded to their owners in former days, by means of the returning cargo, an average clear gain of a thousand per cent. every second year; but these vessels are not so numerous of late, nor are the profits thus made so great as formerly.

The comprehensive mind of Mr. Astor could not but see these things in their true light, and perceive that if such limited and desultory traffic produced such immense profits, what might not be expected from a well-regulated trade, supported by capital and prosecuted with system: at all events, the Russian trader would then be confined within [5] his own limits, and the coasting vessels must soon disappear altogether.

Towards the accomplishment of the great plan which he had in view, Mr. Astor now set about opening a new branch of the fur trade on the Pacific, under the appellation of the "Pacific Fur Company," the grand central dépôt of which was to be at the mouth of the Columbia River, the "Oregon of the Spaniards."⁴ By this means he contemplated carrying off the furs of all the countries

⁴ The word "Oregon" was not an appellation of the Spaniards, but appears to have first been employed in 1778 by the English traveller, Captain Jonathan Carver (concerning whom see J. Long's *Voyages*, volume ii of our series, note 5). On the meaning thereof, see Oregon Historical Society *Quarterly*, June, 1900; also H. H. Bancroft, *History of Oregon* (San Francisco, 1886), i, pp. 17-25.—ED.

west of the Rocky Mountains; at the same time forming a chain of trading posts across the Continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, along the waters of the great Missouri: connecting by this chain the operations of the South-West Company on the east, with that of the Pacific Fur Company on the west side of the dividing ridge.

This grand commercial scheme, appearing now plain and practicable, at least to men of sanguine disposition, gave much satisfaction to the American public, who, from the results contemplated, became deeply interested in its success; for all the rich cargoes of furs and peltries thus to be collected annually over the vast expanse were to be shipped in American vessels for the great China mart, there to be sold, and the proceeds invested in a return cargo of teas, silks, beads, and nankeens, and other articles of high demand in the United States; which would not only prevent to some extent the American specie from going out of the Union for such articles, but also turn the barren wilds of the north and far [6] west into a source of national wealth. Some, however, of the more sagacious and influential among the Americans themselves observed to Mr. Astor at the time, that his plan would be likely to give umbrage to the British, and arouse them to assert more speedily their claims of prior discovery to the Oregon quarter, and that such a step would operate against him. To these suggestions Mr. Astor simply observed, "that he had thought of that, but intended chiefly to employ in his undertaking British subjects, and that he should on that account give less offence; besides," added, he, "the claims of prior discovery and territorial right are claims to be settled by Government only, and not by an individual."

Mr. Astor's plans, hitherto known only to a few, now began to develop themselves more publicly. On the first intimation of the scheme, the North-Westerns took

the alarm; for having already, in the prosecution of their trade, penetrated to the west side of the Rocky Mountains, in the direction of New Caledonia and the north branch of the Columbia, where they expected to reap a rich harvest, they viewed Astor's expedition to that quarter with a jealous eye, according to the old adage that "two of a trade seldom agree;" but others again extolled the brilliant project, as the brightest gem in the American Union, and particularly many of the retired partners of the North-West Company, who, not being provided for in some late arrangements, had left that concern in disgust, and therefore were the most likely [7] to oppose with effect the ambitious views of their former coadjutors. These were just the men Mr. Astor had in his eye; men of influence and experience among savages, and who from their earlier days had been brought up in, and habituated to, the hardships of the Indian trade. To several of these persons Mr. Astor disclosed his plans and made proposals, whereupon Messrs. M'Kay, M'Kenzie, M'Dougall, and Stuart, entered into his views, and became partners in the new concern.⁵ The former of these gentlemen had accompanied Sir Alexander M'Kenzie in his voyages of discovery to the North Polar Sea in 1789, and to the Pacific in 1793, the narratives of which are before the public; and most of the others had equal experience, and were all of them in some way or other related to the great men at the head of the North-West Company.*

Articles of association and co-partnership were therefore entered into and concluded at New York, in the spring

⁵ For brief biography of these partners of the Pacific Fur Company, see Bradbury's *Travels*, volume v of our series, note 4; Franchère's *Narrative*, notes 9, 10.—Ed.

* Concerning Mackenzie's discoveries, see Franchère, note 4. McKay accompanied Mackenzie upon his second voyage to the Pacific, not upon his first expedition to the Arctic.—Ed.

of 1810, between those gentlemen and Mr. Astor, establishing the firm of the Pacific Fur Company, as already noticed; to which firm five other partners, namely, Messrs. Hunt, Crooks, Miller, M'Lellan, and Clarke, were soon afterwards added.⁷ The association was not a joint-stock concern; Mr. Astor alone furnished the capital, amounting to 200,000 dollars, divided into 100 shares of 2000 dollars each, with power to increase the capital to 500,000 dollars.

The association was formed for a period of twenty [8] years, but with this proviso, that it was to be dissolved if it proved either unprofitable or impracticable, after a trial of five years; during which trial, however, Mr. Astor, as stock-holder, was alone to bear all expenses and losses, the other partners giving only their time and labour. Of the above shares, Mr. Astor held fifty in his own hands; Mr. Hunt, as his representative and chief manager of the business, five; while the other partners, who were to carry on the trade with the Indians, were to have four each, in the event of the business succeeding. The remaining shares were reserved for the clerks, who joined the concern as adventurers, without any other remuneration than their chances of success at the end of the five years' trial. The only exceptions were Mr. Robert Stuart and myself, who were to have our promotion at the end of the third year. From the proportion of interest, or number of shares in the hands of the stockholder and his representative, it will appear evident that the other partners, however unanimous they might be, could never have gained a majority of votes in any case over those which might have been by proxy appointed to represent Astor.

At the head dépôt, or general rendezvous, was to be

⁷ Relative to Hunt, Crooks, McClellan, and Miller, see Bradbury's *Travels*, volume v of our series, notes 2, 3, 72; for Clarke, see Franchère, note 81.—Ed.

stationed Mr. Astor's representative. The person appointed to this important trust was Wilson Price Hunt, a gentleman from New Jersey, who alone, of the whole party, had never been engaged in the Indian trade; yet his active habits, perseverance, and enterprise, soon made good his want of experience, [9] and enabled him to discharge the duties of his station. In him was also vested the chief authority, or, in his absence, in M'Dougall. It was therefore to either or to both of these gentlemen that all Mr. Astor's measures were made known, and all his cargoes consigned.

At the time when these novel schemes were first agitated, I was in Upper Canada; and the first intimation I had of them was in a letter from Mr. M'Kay, the senior partner, requesting an interview with me at Montreal. To Montreal I accordingly went in the month of May; and there, for the first time, I saw the gilded prospectus of the new Company, and, accepting the proposals made to me by Mr. Astor, was the first to join the expedition;—and who at the time would not have joined it, for, although the North-Westerns tried to throw all the cold water of the St. Lawrence on the project, yet they could not extinguish the flame it had spread abroad. The flattering hopes and golden prospects held out to adventurers, so influenced the public mind, that the wonder-stricken believers flocked in from all quarters to share in the wonderful riches of the far west.

It need not be wondered at, if, under the influence of such extravagant expectations, many applicants appeared; but in accordance with Astor's plan, that the business should be carried on only by persons of well-tested merit and experience, for on their habits of perserverance and

enterprise alone rested all hopes [10] of ultimate success, his assistants were selected with more than ordinary care, every poor fellow that engaged being led to believe that his fortune was already made. Here Messrs. Franchère, Pillet, M' Gillis, Farnham, and M' Lennan, besides Mr. Stuart and myself, joined the adventurers;* besides five tradesmen or mechanics, and twenty-four canoe men, the best that could be found of their classes.

Operations were now deemed requisite for the accomplishment of the Company's views; therefore, while one party, headed by Mr. Hunt, was ordered to make its way across the Continent by land, another party, headed by Mr. M' Kay, was to proceed by sea in the *Tonquin*, a ship of 300 tons, and mounting twelve guns. The *Tonquin's* course was round Cape Horn, for the north-west coast. The Columbia River was to be the common destination of both parties. The land party at its outset consisted of only seventeen persons, but Mr. Hunt's object was to augment that number to about eighty as he passed along, by means of American trappers and hunters from the south. Here M' Kenzie strongly recommended Mr. Hunt to take all his men from Canada, as too much time might probably be lost in collecting them from the south; and besides, Canadians, as he thought, would answer much better; but Mr. Hunt adhered to his first plan.

The arrangement of these two expeditions, in which M' Kay, whose life had been spent in voyaging through the Indian countries, and who was nowise [11] qualified as a merchant, had resigned the inland voyage to a gentleman, bred to mercantile pursuits, but unacquainted with this

* For what is known of these clerks, see Franchère, notes 76, 84. For Robert Stuart, see Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, note 117.—ED.

new mode of travelling, exhibited such an egregious inversion of the ordinary rules of prudence, as gave rise to much comment.

Matters being so far settled, Mr. Hunt, who was now seconded by Mr. M'Kenzie, left La Chine, nine miles south of Montreal, with the land expedition, in the beginning of July; and, on the 20th of the same month, the ship party, consisting of three partners, five clerks, Mr. Stuart, and myself, five mechanics, and fourteen canoe men, left Montreal for New York, where we were to embark. Of this number, however, M'Kay and eight of the most expert voyageurs proceeded in a bark-canoe through the States: on all such occasions there is a kind of mutual understanding between both parties, that is, between the canoe men and the canoe, the former undertaking to carry the latter over the land part of the journey, while the latter is bound to carry the others safe over water. The appearance of this unusual kind of craft on the American waters, with the cheerful chantings of its crew, their feathered caps and sylvan appearance, as they approached the gay city of New York, attracted such a crowd of spectators of all classes around them, as left but little space to land; but what was the astonishment, when, in the twinkling of an eye, two of the crew were seen to shoulder their craft, capable of containing [12] two tons weight, and to convey it to a place of safety on terra firma. Mr. Astor, who happened to be present, was so delighted with the vivacity and dexterity of the two men, that he gave them an eagle to drink his health; then turning round, observed to some gentlemen who were standing by, that "six Americans could not do what these two brawny fellows had done," which observation gave rise to some further remarks, when

Mr. M'Kay, with an air of confidence, challenged the swiftest New York boat for a three mile race, offering to bet ten to one on his canoe men, but, after what had been witnessed, no one appeared disposed to risk his money. It is scarcely necessary in this place to observe, that the Canadian voyageurs are among the most expert and venturesome canoe men in the world.

[13] CHAPTER II *

The *Tonquin* sails—Quarrels on board—The captain's character—Accommodations—A sudden squall—Flying fish—The captain's harshness—Cape de Verd Islands—Alarm of fire—A suspicious sail—Crossing the line—Springing a leak—Short allowance of water—Immense wave—The Falkland Islands—Rocky passage—Wild fowl—Port Egmont Bay—The party on shore—Mr. Farnham's gray goose—Old graves renewed—Epitaphs—Party left behind—New dangers—Mr. Robert Stuart's determined conduct—Feuds on board—Cape Horn doubled—The weather—Pilot fish—Trade winds—Rogues' mess—Little pilot—Mouna Roa—A man overboard—The mate in irons.

On the 6th of September, 1810, all hands—twenty-two belonging to the ship, and thirty-three passengers—being on board, the *Tonquin* set sail, and a fresh breeze springing up, soon wafted her to a distance from the busy shores of New York. We had not proceeded far when we were joined by the American frigate *Constitution*, which was to escort us clear of the coast. On the 7th, in the afternoon, we passed Sandy Hook lighthouse, and the next day the *Constitution* returned, we dismissed our pilot, and were soon out of sight of land, steering a S.E. course. [14] So

* Compare the following description of the voyage of the "*Tonquin*" with that of *Franchère*; on the "*Constitution*," Captain Thorn, and the Hawaiian Islands, see *ibid.*, notes 18, 19, 21.—ED.

far all was bustle and confusion upon deck, and every place in the ship was in such topsy-turvy state, with what sailors call live and dead lumber, that scarcely any one knew how or where he was to be stowed; and it was in settling this knotty point that the crusty supremacy of the high-minded captain was first touched. Captain Jonathan Thorn had been brought up in the American navy, had signalized himself, and upon the present occasion he stood upon his own quarter-deck. Matters went on well enough till we came to the mechanics: these young men had been selected from the most respectable of their class, had been promised by their employers situations as clerks in the trade whenever vacancies should occur, and in consequence, serving in the twofold capacity of clerks and tradesmen, they were entitled, by their engagements, whilst on board ship to the same treatment as the other clerks; but behold when the captain came to assign them their place, it was not in either the second or the third cabin, no, nor in the steerage, but before the mast among the common sailors. In vain did they remonstrate, and equally vain was it for them to produce copies of their engagements; right or wrong, forward they must go; but that was not all; to the grievance of bad accommodations was added that of an insult to their feelings, by being compelled, as a further punishment for their obstinacy, to perform the duties of common seamen both by day and night. After this bit of a row with the captain, they applied for [15] redress to the partners on board, the very persons with whom they had executed their agreements. The partners interposed, and in their turn remonstrated with the captain, but without effect; he remained inexorable. Both parties then getting into a violent passion, Mr. M'Kay said, "That his people would defend them-

selves rather than suffer such treatment." On hearing this, the captain, suddenly turning round on his heel, defied Mr. M'Kay and his people, adding, "that he would blow out the brains of the first man who dared to disobey his orders on board his own ship." In the midst of this scene, Mr. David Stuart, a good old soul, stepped up, and by his gentle and timely interference put an end to the threatening altercation.

This was the first specimen we had of the captain's disposition, and it laid the foundation of a rankling hatred between the partners and himself, which ended only with the voyage, and not only that, but it soon spread like a contagion amongst all classes, so that party spirit ran high: the captain and his people viewing the passengers as the passengers did them, with no very cordial feelings. Whilst these feuds agitated the great folks at the head of affairs, we amused ourselves with conjectures as to the issue of the contest. A new leaf was to be turned over, the captain forbade the partners the starboard side of the quarter-deck; the clerks, the quarter-deck altogether; and as for the poor mechanics and Canadians, they were ruled ever after with a rod of iron. All this [16] time the *Tonquin* was speeding her way proudly over the wide bosom of the Atlantic, until the 18th, in the morning, when she was struck with a sudden squall, which backed all the sails and placed her in a critical position for about two minutes; her stern going down foremost was almost under water, when all at once she recovered and relieved our anxiety. The next day two sail were descried a head, all hands were mustered on deck, and each had his station assigned to him in case of coming to close quarters. For some days past the flying fish appeared in immense numbers, passing frequently through the ship's rigging, and now and then

falling on the deck. We measured one of them and found its length to be $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, circumference of the body 2 inches; the wings, situate near the gills, resemble in texture the wings of the bat, and measure, when stretched, 5 inches between the tips. In their flight they generally rise to 15 or 20 feet above the surface of the water, and fly about 150 yards at a time. As soon as their wings get dry they fall again into the water, and only fly to avoid their pursuers. They are the prey of the dolphin and other large fishes.

On the 6th of October we made one of the Cape de Verd Islands, on the coast of Africa. It proved to be Bonavista, in lat. 16° N. and long. $22^{\circ} 47'$ W. The land, covered with a blue haze, appeared broken, barren, and rocky. The weather was overcast, and we had heavy rain and thunder at the time. Near this place immense shoals of porpoises kept skipping [17] on the surface of the water going southwards. They were said to prognosticate the near approach of bad weather. We found the changes of the weather here very remarkable, from calm to rough, from foul to fair; clear, cloudy, wet, dry, hazy, and squally alternately, with the usual finale of mist and rain, and not unfrequently all these changes within the twenty-four hours.

After leaving the land, some of the gentlemen amused themselves one fine evening with shooting at a mark suspended from the ship's stern, under which a boat lay secured; soon afterwards, in the dusk of the evening, smoke was seen to issue from that quarter; the alarm of fire was given, and in an instant all the people assembled on deck in a state of wild confusion, some calling out to broach the water casks, others running to and fro in search

of water, some with mugs, others with decanters, while the *mâitre de cuisine* was robbed of his broth and dish water—no one, in the hurry and bustle of the moment, ever thought of dipping the buckets alongside. At length to the inexpressible joy of all, it was discovered that the smoke was occasioned only by the wadding of the guns setting fire to some old junk which was lying in the boat astern. This gentle warning, however, put an end to such sport in future. Some angry words took place between the captain and Mr. Fox, the first mate, on which the latter was suspended from duty, and ordered below: no other reason could be assigned for this act but [18] the friendly and sociable terms existing between the mate and the partners; for by this time such was the ill-feeling between the captain and the passengers generally, that scarcely a word passed between them. After three days' confinement Mr. Fox was reinstated.

Just as we entered the trade winds, a sail appeared about two leagues to leeward; she gained fast upon us, and dogged us all day, and the next morning was close under our stern. She appeared to be an armed brig, and pierced for twenty guns, and looked very suspicious; very few hands, however, were to be seen on her deck, which might have been a manœuvre to decoy us alongside. We were prepared for combat, at least as far as a good display of numbers on deck: for to our numbers, and not to either our skill or discipline, did we chiefly trust, and it is probable this show had the desired effect, for she soon bore away and we saw her no more.

On the 25th, in long. $26^{\circ} 24'$ W. we crossed the equinoctial line, and here the usual ceremony of ducking was performed on such of the sailors as had never before

entered the southern hemisphere. The heat was intense, the weather a dead calm, and the ocean smooth as a sheet of glass. The thermometer stood at 92° in the shade.

In lat. $3^{\circ} 17'$ S. and long. $26^{\circ} 40'$ W. we spoke a brig from Liverpool bound to Pernambuco. On nearing this old and ghastly-looking hulk, which apparently had but few hands on board, we thought [19] ourselves exceedingly strong compared to her, and I suppose from the bold front we presented, put her in as much bodily fear as the armed brig some days before did us.

On the 10th of November a violent gale came on, which lasted for fifty hours without intermission, and did us considerable damage, our jib and jib-boom being both carried off, and a leak of considerable extent sprung; but as it was easy of access, we soon got it stopped again. In the night of the 14th, an alarm of fire was again given; but after much confusion it ended without serious consequences. Of all calamities that of fire on board ship seems to be the most terrific, and every precaution was taken to prevent any accident of the kind, for at nine o'clock every night all the lights were, by the captain's orders, put out, and this rule was strictly observed during the voyage. In these latitudes we saw many turtle, and caught some of them sleeping on the water, one of which weighed forty-five pounds; we also frequently met with what the sailors call a Portuguese man-of-war, or sea-bladder, floating on the surface of the waters.

In lat. 35° S. and $42^{\circ} 17'$ W. we experienced another tempestuous gale, which lasted upwards of forty hours. During this violent storm the ship laboured hard, and sustained damage. Two new leaks were observed, and many of the sails blown to rags. Although the top and top-gallant masts had been lowered, six of the guns got

dismounted, and [20] kept for some time rolling like thunder on the deck, and the ship in a constant heavy sea. For seventeen hours she scudded before the wind, and went in that time two hundred and twenty miles; nothing alarming, however, took place until eight o'clock in the morning of the second day, when a very heavy sea broke over the stern, and filled us all with consternation. This wave, like a rolling mountain, passed over her deck ten feet high, and broke with a tremendous crash about the mainmast; yet, fortunately, no lives were lost, for on its near approach we all clung to the rigging, and by that means saved ourselves. On the weather moderating the carpenter was soon at work, and succeeded effectually in stopping the leaks. On the 20th our allowance of water, already short by one-half, was lessened to a pint and a half per man, and on the 2nd of December to a pint each man per day—then a gallon of brandy was offered for a pint of fresh water! but on the 5th, when the joyful sight of land was announced, a hogshead of water was offered in return for a pint of brandy. In the afternoon of this day, we made the N. W. point of one of the Falkland Islands, the rugged and solitary features of which presented a truly romantic appearance. Near this spot are three remarkable peaked rocks; or insular bluffs, of considerable height, and nearly equal distance from each other. We soon afterwards came close in with the shore, and beheld a rocky surface, with an aspect of hopeless sterility. [21] Here we came to an anchor; but the captain not liking the place changed his resolution of taking in water there.

During the few hours, however, which we spent on shore, while the ship lay at anchor, one of the sailors, named Johnston, strolled out of the way. The captain,

nevertheless, gave orders to weigh anchor, declaring that he would leave the fellow to his fate; but after much entreaty he consented to wait an hour, adding, that if the man did not return in that time he should never more set foot on board his ship. A party immediately volunteered to go in search of the lost tar. This party after beating about in vain for some time, at last thought of setting fire to the few tufts of grass which here and there alone decked the surface. This expedient succeeded, and the man was found, having fallen asleep near the water's edge. But the hour had unfortunately elapsed, and the loss of a few minutes more so enraged the captain, that he not only threatened the man's life, but maltreated all those who had been instrumental in finding him. We then set sail, and had much difficulty in effecting a passage through a narrow strait which lay before us, interrupted in many places by ledges of rocks, which were literally covered with seals, penguins, white and grey geese, ducks, shags, albatrosses, eagles, hawks, and vultures. After making our way through this intricate pass, we again came to anchor.

[22] On the 7th of December we anchored in Port Egmont Bay, for the purpose of taking in a supply of water. The bay or inlet of Port Egmont is about a mile long, and half a mile broad, and sheltered from almost every wind that blows. All hands now were set to work; two of the mates and two-thirds of the crew, together with the mechanics and Canadians, commenced replenishing the water-casks, whilst the other two mates with the remainder of the people were employed on board repairing the rigging, and putting everything in a fit condition for a new start. During these operations the partners and clerks, and frequently the captain also, went sporting on shore, where wild fowl of all kinds stunned our ears with

their noises, and darkened the air with their numbers, and were generally so very tame, or rather stupid, that we often killed them with sticks and stones, and the sailors in their boats often knocked down the ducks and penguins with their oars in passing the rocks. The only quadruped we saw on land was a wolverine of ordinary size, which one of our party shot.

Our tent was pitched on shore, not above four hundred yards from the ship; this was our sporting rendezvous. On the 10th all the water-casks were ready, and the captain on going on board that evening said to Mr. M'Dougall, that the ship would probably sail the next day. Soon after, however, Messrs. M'Kay and M'Dougall also went on board, where they passed the night; but coming ashore [23] the next morning, they told us that the ship would not sail till the 12th, and that all hands were ordered on board on that night.

In the mean time Mr. Farnham, one of the clerks, had caught a grey goose, which he tied to a stone between our hut and the landing-place, in order to have some sport with it. Soon afterwards the captain, happening to come on shore, and seeing the goose, he up with his gun to shoot at it. Thinking, however, that he had missed it, he instantly reloaded and fired again, and seeing the goose flutter he ran up to catch it, when he discovered his mistake, on which we all burst out a laughing. Nettled at this, he immediately turned round and went on board again. Meantime, Messrs. M'Dougall and Stuart started across the point after game; whilst Mr. M'Kay, myself, and some others, went up the bay a little to repair two old graves which we had discovered in a dilapidated state the day before. On one of these graves was the following rudely-cut inscription on a board:—"William Stevens,

aged twenty-two years, killed by a fall from a rock, on the 21st of September, 1794;" on the other, "Benjamin Peak died of the smallpox on the 5th of January, 1803, ship *Eleonora*, Captain Edmund Cole, Providence, Rhode Island."

While we were thus eagerly employed, little did we suspect what was going on in another quarter; for, about two o'clock in the afternoon, one of our party called out, "The ship's off!"—when all of us, [24] running to the top of a little eminence, beheld, to our infinite surprise and dismay, the *Tonquin*, under full sail, steering out of the bay. We knew too well the callous and headstrong passions of the wayward captain to hesitate a moment in determining what to do; with hearts, therefore, beating between anxious hope and despair, some made for the boat, whilst others kept running and firing over hill and dale to warn Messrs. M'Dougal and Stuart, who had not yet returned. In half an hour we were all at the water's edge; the ship by this time was three miles out at sea. We were now nine persons on shore, and we had to stow, squat, and squeeze ourselves into a trumpery little boat, scarcely capable of holding half our number. In this dreadful dilemma, we launched on a rough and tempestuous sea, and, against wind and tide, followed the ship. The wind blowing still fresher and fresher, every succeeding wave threatened our immediate destruction. Our boat already half full of water, and ourselves, as may be supposed, drenched with the surges passing over her, we gave up all hope of succeeding in the unequal struggle, and a momentary pause ensued, when we deliberated whether we should proceed in the perilous attempt or return to land. The ship was now at least two leagues ahead of us, and just at this time the man who was bailing

out the water in the boat unfortunately let go and lost the pail, and one of our oars being broken in the struggle to recover it, our destiny seemed sealed beyond a doubt. A second deliberation [25] ended in the resolve to reach the ship or perish in the attempt. The weather now grew more violent; the wind increased; and, what was worst of all, the sun had just sunk under the horizon, and the fearful night began to spread its darkness over the turbulent deep. Every ray of hope now vanished: but so shortsighted is man, that the moment when he least expects it, relief often comes from an unseen hand; and such was our case; for in an instant our hopeless anxiety was turned into joy by the ship suddenly making down to our assistance: but here again we had a new danger to contend with; for, on coming alongside, we were several times like to be engulfed or dashed to pieces by the heavy seas and rolling of the ship. The night was dark; the weather stormy; and death in a thousand forms stared us in the face. At length, after many ineffectual attempts and much manœuvring, we succeeded in getting on board; having been in the boat upwards of six hours. That the captain's determination was to leave us all to our fate, there is not the least doubt; for he declared so afterwards, in a letter written to Mr. Astor from the Sandwich Islands, and he was only prevented from carrying his purposes into effect by the determined conduct of Mr. Robert Stuart, who, seizing a brace of pistols, peremptorily told the captain to order about ship and save the boat; or, he added, "You are a dead man this instant."

During the night the gale increased almost to a hurricane, so that two of our sails were torn to pieces, [26] and the side-rails broke by the labouring of the ship; so we had to lie-to under a storm-staysail for six hours. The

reader is here left to picture to himself how matters went on after the scene just described. All the former feuds and squabbles between the captain and passengers sink into insignificance compared to the recent one. Sullen and silent, both parties passed and repassed each other in their promenades on deck without uttering a word; but their looks bespoke the hatred that burnt within. The partners on the quarter-deck made it now a point to speak nothing but the Scotch dialect; while the Canadians on the forecastle spoke French—neither of which did the captain understand; and as both groups frequently passed hours together, cracking their jokes and chanting their outlandish songs, the commander seemed much annoyed on these occasions, pacing the deck in great agitation. Yet all this time the ship good was hastening on her way.

On the 15th we saw Staten Land, whose forked peaks and rugged surface exhibited much snow. Soon afterwards, Terra del Fuego came in sight; and on the 19th, at 9 o'clock in the morning, we had a full view of Cape Horn. But adverse winds meeting us here, we were unable to double it before Christmas morning, and were carried, in the mean time, as far south as lat. $58^{\circ} 16'$. While in these latitudes, notwithstanding the foggy state of the weather, we could read common print at all hours of the night on deck without the aid of artificial light. The sky was [27] generally overcast, and the weather raw and cold, with frequent showers of hail and snow, but we saw no ice. Here the snow birds and Cape pigeon frequently flew in great numbers about the ship. After doubling the Cape, a speckled red and white fish, about the size of a salmon, was observed before the ship's bow, as if leading the way. The sailors gave it the name of the pilot-fish.

With gladdened hearts, we now bent our course north-

ward on the wide Pacific. On the 19th of January, 1811, all hands passed the ordeal of inspection, or as the sailors more appropriately called it, the "general turn-out;" and as none could guess what this new manoeuvre portended, we all judged it to be a relic of man-of-war discipline, which the captain introduced merely to refresh his memory; but the proceeding must be described:—After breakfast, all hands were summoned on deck, and there ordered to remain, while the officers of the ship got up the trunks, chests, hammocks, dirty shirts, and old shoes belonging to each individual, on deck. They were then ordered to empty out the contents of the boxes, examine, and expose the whole to view, each man's paraphernalia separately. While this was going on, the bystanders were ordered to claim any article belonging to them in the possession of another. This declaration cleared up the matter, and set our judgment right as to the captain's motives; but to the credit of all, very little stolen property was found—being only three articles, namely, a pamphlet, a clasp-knife, [28] and a spoon, and even as to them the theft was not very well proved; but the three individuals implicated were nevertheless condemned, and placed on what is called the "rogue's mess" for a month.

On the 24th we again crossed the Equator, and entered the northern hemisphere, and here the pilot-fish that joined us at Cape Horn disappeared. During a run of upwards of 5,000 miles, our little piscatory pilot was never once known, by day or night, to intermit preceding the ship's bow. On the 10th of February, the cloud-capped summit of the towering Mouna Roa—a pyramidal mountain in Owhyhee, and the loftiest in the Sandwich Islands—was visible at the distance of 50 miles.

As we drew near to the land, going at the rate of eight