

west of our frontier settlements. This is the route which you contemplate pursuing. In accomplishing this journey, you will make your way in the usual means of conveyance to Independence, one of the western villages on the Missouri river, where you will join the caravan of the traders going to the mountains, and make arrangements for passing the almost boundless wilderness which will then open before you. Furnished with horses to ride upon, and pack-horses carrying tents to shelter you, food to subsist upon, utensils for cooking, and the bedding and clothing which are indispensable to your comfort, you will commence a pilgrimage, which, for three or four months, and through a distance of from 2,000 to 2,500 miles, will subject you to an untried, and in some respects, an unpleasant mode of life. The shelter, and the quiet apartments of a comfortable house, either by night or day, you must temporarily forego; you must look for no well furnished table, no permanent resting place, and none of the security and retirement of home. Christian intercourse, beyond your own circle, you cannot expect; nor can you summon, whenever you wish, many of the resources of civilized life to minister to your comfort, or to relieve the dreary and wearisome monotony of your way. Still, even this deprivation and exposure, these daily changes, this continual progress may teach a useful lesson, by impressing more vividly on your mind an image of the toils and changes and barren wastes of this fleeting life, and leading you to bear all its burdens with more composure, in view of the quiet and satisfying home towards which you are rapidly hastening.

Your course will be somewhat north of west, and for the first week or two of your progress, the monotony of the scene will occasionally be broken by meeting with bands of Indians, or traders; and you may be cheered by a hasty interview with christian brethren at the three or four missionary stations near which you pass before leaving Council Bluffs, the last point of civilization near our frontiers. Nor will your journey be wholly without interest when you shall have passed the abodes and the works of man. You will then have the works of God to gaze upon, if not in their grandest and most valued, yet perhaps in their loveliest aspect. The interminable prairies, clothed in beautiful green, and adorned with flowers of every form and hue, the surface every where so gracefully undulating, and occasionally rising gradually into eminences which seem to mingle with the sky, and the strips of woodland skirting the water-courses or crowning the hills, present a landscape on which the eye is never weary of gazing. Before reaching the mountains, however, the trees on the streams become more scattered and nearly disappear, the prairie grass wears a faded appearance, and large tracts must sometimes be traversed which are sterile and bare. When you reach the mountains the whole scene changes, and nature assumes a most varied and magnificent aspect.

On the route commonly traveled by the trading caravans, which is along the northern branch of the Platte river, the main-ridge of the Rocky mountains, where the waters flowing into the Atlantic are separated from those flowing westward into the Pacific, is crossed between the 29th and 30th degree of longitude west from Washington, and about the 44th parallel of latitude. At this point, while passing through the grand defile, you are supposed to be about

10,000 feet above the ocean level, while you look up on either hand to snow-capped peaks rising 8,000 or 10,000 feet above you. Indeed some of the peaks near this pass are estimated by scientific men [Prof. Renwick of Columbia College] to be not less than 25,000 feet above the ocean level, and thus surpassing all other mountains on the globe, except the highest points of the Himmalayah chain in Central Asia. The highest land in North America is probably to be found in this vicinity, as the head waters of the Missouri, the Colorado, the Columbia, and Nelson's rivers, flowing in opposite directions and to different oceans, are found here. This defile in the mountains is somewhat more than half the distance from the Mississippi river to the Pacific. Thus far you will have passed over a level or gently undulating country, rising to your great elevation so gradually as scarcely to perceive that you were not on a horizontal plane. You will indeed have passed along the base of the Black Hills and some other spurs from the principal ridge, on your right; but on the western side of the great ridge the whole aspect changes, and you will find yourself encompassed by steep and lofty mountains, through the deep cuts of which you will wind your way. On either side of the Snake river, the southern tributary of the Columbia, upon whose waters you now come, you find two mountain chains stretching away to the west, from each of which innumerable spurs strike off towards the river. Many of these are covered with perpetual snows; and with their white tops and the barren precipices which compose their bases, and the unbroken solitude and desolation which reigns around them, present a scene of gloomy grandeur, to which there is probably no parallel on this continent. This mountainous region continues, embosoming, however, many extensive and fertile valleys, till you arrive within about 150 miles of the ocean, when you cross the last ridge, stretching from the Columbia river, nearly parallel with the coast, southerly towards California, and northerly towards Nootka Sound. The passage of this mountain tract usually occupies about two months, during which the eye and the mind are feasted with objects of novelty and grandeur which do not permit curiosity to sleep for a moment. You still find, however, the same destitution of trees, and to a great extent, instead of the refreshing verdure and flowers which closed the face of the earth over most of the distance from our frontiers to the Black Hills, you will find the surface composed of sand or broken stones, bearing no kind of vegetation except a bitter sedge of a dead and dreary appearance, with here and there small grass plats, and a few willows on the banks of the streams, occurring, as if by a special arrangement of providence, about often enough to be resting places at noon and night for the weary traveler and his beast.

The general barrenness which prevails in the mountains is doubtless owing principally to the destitution of moisture. Through the country, from the eastern base of the mountains till you arrive at the Pacific, the earth is seldom refreshed by a shower from July to October, and through most of the mountainous region no dew falls, and no cloud obscures the rays of the sun.

The country which you enter as you cross the Rocky mountains, and which is to be the scene of your labors, may be regarded as extending from east to west through twelve or sixteen de-