

into prompt execution. He had, however, some strong competition to apprehend and guard against. The powerful North-West Company had pushed one or two advanced trading posts beyond the Rocky Mountains, in a tract of country visited by Mackenzie in his overland journey, and lying between the mouth of the Columbia and the Russian territory. Had the North-West Company persisted in extending their trade in that quarter, their competition might have interfered seriously with Mr. Astor's plans, and have led to those evils which had proved so detrimental under similar circumstances in Canada.

Under these circumstances Mr. Astor divulged his plans to the North-West Company, and proposed to entrust them to the extent of one-third, in the trade thus to be opened. Some correspondence and negotiation ensued. The company were aware of the advantages which would be possessed by Mr. Astor, should he be able to carry his scheme into effect; but they had been led to anticipate a monopoly of the trade beyond the mountains; and were loth to share it with an individual who had already proved a formidable competitor in the Atlantic trade. They hoped, too, by a timely move, to secure a station at the mouth of the Columbia before Mr. Astor would be able to put his plans into operation; and that Key to the internal trade once in their possession, the whole surrounding country would be at their command. After some negotiation and delay; therefore, they declined the proposition that had been made to them; but they subsequently despatched a party to the mouth of the Columbia, to establish a post there before any expedition sent out by Mr. Astor could arrive. This was certainly a deviation from the honourable course of fair commerce.

Mr. Astor, finding his overtures rejected, proceeded fearlessly to execute his enterprise in the face of the whole power of the North-West Company. He looked with confidence to the ultimate success of his plan, as soon as his main establishment was once planted at the mouth of the Columbia. He proceeded with all diligence to procure proper agents and coadjutors, habituated to the Indian trade and to the life of the Wilderness. Among the clerks of the North-West Company were several of great capacity and experience, who had served out their probationary terms, but who had not been promoted; and of these three accepted the overtures of Mr. Astor.

All these arrangements occupied many years in bringing to a working form, so that it was not till June, 1810, that articles of agreement were signed by Mr. Astor, with those who were willing to form the nucleus of a company, to be called the "PACIFIC FUR COMPANY." According to the terms of the company, Mr. Astor was to be at the head, and to manage the affairs of the company at New York. He was to furnish vessels, goods, provisions, arms, ammunition, and all other requisites, at cost price, to an extent not exceeding four hundred thousand dollars. He was to receive half the entire profits of the company, and the other half was to be divided among the other partners. A general meeting of the company was to be held annually at the Columbia River, for the investigation and regulation of its affairs. The association, if successful, was to continue for twenty years; but otherwise might be dissolved in five years. Mr. Astor was to bear all losses for the first five years. The other partners were to exert their whole personal energies in the north-west regions of America, and gave this as a substitute for capital, in the joint-stock of the company.

This remarkable scheme was forthwith put in operation, under difficulties of a most trying and diverse character. Two expeditions were planned; one by sea, to carry out the people, stores, ammunition, and merchandize, requisite for establishing a fortified trading post at the mouth of the Columbia River; the other by land, to proceed up the Missouri and across the Rocky Mountains to the same point, exploring a line of communication across the Continent, and noting the places where interior trading posts might be established. We shall speak first of the sea expedition.

A fine vessel called the *Tonquin*, of 290 tons burden, was provided. Besides the captain and crew of twenty men, the *Tonquin* carried out four of the partners of the company, twelve clerks; (whose office was somewhat similar to that of a cadet or writer in the E. I. C's. service,) several artisans, and thirteen Canadian "voyageurs." The ship also carried an assortment of merchandize for trading with the natives, together with the frame of a schooner to be employed in the coasting trade. Seeds also were provided for

the cultivation of the soil; and nothing was neglected for the necessary supply of the establishment.

After many difficulties, in which Mr. Astor was in some respects disappointed as to the Voyageurs, and the North-Westers, the *Tonquin* set sail on the 10th September, 1810. No sooner had they left the land, than disagreements arose between Captain Thorn, the commander of the vessel, and the partners of the company; they considering that he was merely engaged to convey them to the Pacific, and he conceiving that he was lord and master in the ship. Hence bickerings and violent altercations occurred during the whole voyage. On the 4th December, they touched at the Falkland Isles, doubled Cape Horn on the 25th, and came to the Sandwich Islands on the 11th February, 1811, where they remained seventeen days. Setting sail again, they arrived at the mouth of the Columbia river, on the 22nd March.

After proceeding some distance up the river, and trading occasionally with the Indians on either shore, they founded their fort or parent establishment, to which they gave the name of ASTORIA, in compliment to the enterprising man, who had set the project on foot. The partners gave themselves certain tasks to perform; some to remain at the station and open communication with the natives; some to proceed far into the interior, to establish subordinate posts, and others to sail in the *Tonquin* along the north-west coast for the establishing of further enterprises. The ill-fated vessel sailed from Astoria on the 5th of June, with twenty-three persons on board, all of whom were murdered, and the ship destroyed, by a hostile party of natives encountered on the coast.

During the remainder of the year 1811, the little band at Astoria, discouraged by the loss of their friends in the *Tonquin*, and hearing nothing of the overland party, passed their time as well as they could, establishing posts in various parts and opening a trade with the natives. Thus they wintered; and the year 1812 came upon them before they had news of the land expedition.

This expedition had been placed by Mr. Astor under the direction of Mr. Hunt, a gentleman of integrity and talent, who proceeded to make the necessary arrangements for their journey. Mr. Hunt repaired to Montreal, in July, 1810, to procure the requisites for the expedition. He engaged Canadian voyagers, bought a large canoe fitted for the ascent of the American rivers, and provided the arms, provisions, and other necessaries. Mr. Hunt proved to be unequal to many of the tricks and manoeuvres to which he was subjected in his progress through Canada, being rather a gentlemanly man, than a rough traveller. He, however, succeeded in reaching by the end of the month, the trading post of Michilimackinac, at the confluence of the great lakes. Here he found it necessary—or rather he was persuaded by others—to augment his party to sixty, with whom he set off from the lakes on the 12th of August.

The course of the expedition was, from the Lakes to the Mississippi, from thence to St. Louis, where the Missouri joins it, and up the Missouri to the Rocky Mountains. The party arrived at St. Louis on the 3rd of September, and there they found that a number of fur-traders had joined themselves into a Company, under the name of the "MISSOURI FUR COMPANY." This circumstance does not seem to have been known at the time to Mr. Astor, and gave rise to most vexatious annoyances to Mr. Hunt. The company enticed away some of his men, threw difficulties in the way of his dealings at St. Louis, and gave him all sorts of false information as to the nature of the route from thence to the Rocky Mountains. The numerous delays were such as to prevent him from reaching the Rocky Mountains that year; but to avoid the expense of wintering at St. Louis, Mr. Hunt determined to push up the Missouri as far as possible to some point above the settlements, where game was plentiful, and where his whole party could be subsisted by hunting, until the breaking up of the ice in the spring should permit them to resume their voyage.

In October, 1810, they started on the Missouri, and by November 16th, arrived at a spot which they selected for their winter quarters. After a winter of very chequered events, the party broke up their encampments and proceeded up the Missouri. What they suffered in this journey by the upsetting of their canoes; the attacks of the natives, the opposition of the agents of the Missouri Company, and the varying features of the country through which they passed; Mr. Washington Irving has described with great vividness. It must suffice here to say, that after expending the summer in ascending the Missouri, the adventurers