

like the surrounding country with pines; and as they proceeded, the timber grew so closely, added to a thick undergrowth of bushes, that it appeared almost impossible to proceed with their horses. The farther they advanced the more their difficulties seemed to increase; obstacles of various kinds impeded their progress—fallen trees, their branches tangled and matted together; large rocks and deep ravines; holes in the ground, into which their animals would be precipitated without the possibility of avoiding them; and a hundred other difficulties.

After travelling for six miles through this defile, two of the party, Captain Wyeth and the experienced hunter Richardson, set out to explore the foreground, and look for a pass through the mountains. They returned next morning with the mortifying intelligence that no pass could be found. They had climbed to the very summit of the highest peaks above the snow and the reach of vegetation, and the only prospect they had was a confused mass of huge angular rocks, over which a wild goat could scarcely make his way. The captain also had a narrow escape from being dashed to pieces during the excursion. He was walking on a ridge which sloped from the top at an angle of about forty degrees, and terminated at its lower part in a perpendicular precipice of a thousand or twelve hundred feet. He was moving along in the snow cautiously, near the lower edge, in order to attain a more level spot beyond, when his feet slipped and he fell. Before he could attempt to fix himself firmly, he slid down the declivity till within a few feet of the frightful precipice. At the instant of his fall, he had the presence of mind to plant the rifle which he held in one hand, and his knife which he drew from the scabbard with the other, into the snow, and as he almost tottered on the verge, he succeeded in checking himself, and holding his body perfectly still. He then gradually moved, first the rifle and then the knife, backward up the slanting hill behind him, and fixing them firmly, drew up his body parallel to them. In this way he moved slowly and surely until he had gained his former position, when, without further difficulty, he succeeded in reaching the more level land.

Disappointed in finding a pass through the mountains at this point, the party altered the bearing of their route, and at last they came upon the remains of a recent encampment of Indians. Following the trail of these Indians, they entered a valley similar to that which they had just explored, and terminating in a path over the mountains. Mr Townsend thus describes their toilsome march across these heights. "The commencement of the Alpine path was, however, far better than we had expected, and we entertained the hope that the passage could be made without difficulty or much toil; but the farther we progressed, the more laborious the travelling became. Sometimes we mounted steep banks of intermingled flinty rock and friable slate, where our horses could scarcely obtain a footing, frequently sliding down