

time again it seemed that war could not be averted. That blood was not shed was probably due to the statesmanship of Webster, and that eloquent champion of peace, Rufus Choate. Although the Columbia River was discovered by Captain Gray in 1792, the treaty which settled upon the 49th parallel as the boundary line between British Columbia and the United States was not signed until July 17, 1846, nor were all the details closed until left to the arbitration of Emperor William of Germany, who gave the final decision October 21, 1871.

In 1830 the excitement over the occupation of Oregon was running high. Newspapers were teeming with articles descriptive of its vast resources, and the inducements it offered for settlement. Congress had been asked for the authority to establish there a territorial government, or an independent State governed by Americans. Others derided the effort to try to colonize and hold this remote region, and the question was asked, "Was Oregon worth winning?" Oregon, with its 251,000 square miles of territory, its hundreds of miles of sea-coast, its fertile valleys, wide ranges of pasture-lands, rich deposits of minerals, its magnificent rivers sweeping from mountains of perpetual snow with impetuous haste to pay their tribute to the great Pacific! The verdict of three-quarters of a million inhabitants to-day is that it was worth the struggle.

I have before me the private correspondence and diary of a man who in 1831 was far-sighted enough to see the value of acquiring a territory so vast and important, and that to acquire it, it was necessary to colonize it with Americans.

Though but twenty-nine years of age, with a courage, skill, and energy which challenge admiration and deserved success, he organized a movement for the colonization of Oregon, and between 1831 and 1836 led two expeditions across the American continent in the effort to found a State in the great Northwest.

With what enthusiasm he was filled to give up a prosperous business, a happy home commanding the comforts of life in the centre of American civilization, to part from a loving wife, family, and friends, and tempt fate in a perilous journey of thousands of miles through trackless forests, across seemingly boundless prairies, over rugged and unknown

mountains, at every turn exposed to dangers from hostile savages as brave as they were cunning and merciless! No one can read this old and musty diary, stained with frequent wettings from overturned bull-boats or drenching rains, in many places illegible by actual wearing out of the leaves by friction upon each other, without paying the tribute of profound respect and admiration for the man.

Of him Washington Irving wrote: "His enterprise was prosecuted with a spirit, intelligence, and perseverance that merited success. All the details that we have met with prove him to be no ordinary man. He appears to have the mind to conceive and the energy to execute extensive and striking plans. He had once more reared the American flag in the lost domains of Astoria; and had he been enabled to maintain the footing he had so gallantly effected, he might have regained for his country the opulent trade of the Columbia, of which our statesmen have negligently suffered us to be dispossessed."

This extract from his diary, written January 11, 1835, when "snowed in" in the mountains, at last convinced that after all he had done or could do Oregon must be given up, speaks with a pathos deeper than I can command:

"The crackling of the falling trees and the howling of the blast are more grand than comfortable. It makes two individuals feel their insignificance in the creation to be seated under a blanket with three and one-half feet of snow about them and more coming, and no telling when it will stop. The thoughts that have run through my brain while I have been here in the snow would fill a volume; my infancy, my youth, my manhood's troubled stream, its vagaries, its plans, mixed with the gall of bitterness, and its results, viz.: under a blanket, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of miles from a friend, the blast howling about, smothered in snow, poor, in debt, nearly naked, and considered a visionary."

Nathaniel Wyeth lived to see Oregon a Territory of the United States, and although he died before it was admitted as a State in 1859, his last years must have been happier in the knowledge that he had done much to make the occupation of this territory possible to his fellow-countrymen.

Barrows, in his *Oregon*, pays a tribute to his genius and skill in the selection

* *Bonneville.*

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