

EXCURSION TO THE OREGON.

After having completed the fort, and raised the American flag upon it, the party on the 6th of August recommenced their journey westward, leaving some men in charge of the building. The company consisted now but of thirty men, several Indian women, and one hundred and sixteen horses. Having left most of the fresh buffalo meat brought in by the hunting party in the fort for the subsistence of the small garrison, they had to be contented with the old dry meat they had carried for many weeks in their hampers, varied with the flesh of a grizzly bear, or any such animal which good fortune might send across their path. Nor was this the worst, for on the very day after leaving the fort, having travelled from sunrise over an arid plain covered with jagged masses of lava and twisted wormwood bushes, and where not a drop of water was to be seen, they began to suffer dreadfully from thirst. Every man kept a bullet or smooth stone in his mouth, mumbling it to provoke the saliva. At last one of the men, a mulatto, "cast himself resolutely from his horse to the ground, and declared that he would lie there till he died; 'there was no water in this horrid country, and he might as well die here as go farther.' Some of us tried to infuse a little courage into him, but it proved of no avail, and each was too much occupied with his own particular grief to use his tongue much in persuasion; so we left him to his fate.

Soon after nightfall, some signs of water were seen in a small valley to our left, and upon ascending it, the foremost of the party found a delightful little cold spring; but they soon exhausted it, and then commenced, with axes and knives, to dig it out and enlarge it. By the time that Mr Nuttall and myself arrived, they had excavated a large space, which was filled to overflowing with muddy water. We did not wait for it to settle, however, but throwing ourselves flat upon the ground, drank until we were ready to burst. The tales which I had read of suffering travellers in the Arabian deserts then recurred with some force to my recollection, and I thought I could, though in a very small measure, appreciate their sufferings by deprivation, and their unmingled delight and satisfaction in the opportunity of assuaging them.

Poor Jim, the mulatto man, was found by one of the people who went back in search of him lying where he had first fallen, and, either in a real or pretended swoon, still obstinate about dying, and scarcely heeding the assurances of the other that water was within a mile of him. He was, however, at length dragged and carried into camp, and soused head foremost into the mud puddle, where he drank until his eyes seemed ready to burst from his head, and he was lifted out and laid dripping and flaccid upon the ground."

The ground over which the party was travelling, was becoming more and more rugged and rocky. They entered a defile between the mountains, about five hundred yards wide, covered