

FUR HUNTING IN  
OREGON.

HARPER'S MONTHLY - FEB. 1856.

A FEW years hence, Oregon will be peopled. Wharves will have supplanted beaver-traps on the rivers, and steam-engines will drive busy wheels in the valleys where the Snakes and the Blackfeet have so long been used to muster their war parties. In anticipation of the passing away of the good old times of hunters, and trappers, and Indian wars, several industrious gentlemen are giving the world the benefit of their experience in that wild region. One of these, Mr. Alexander Ross, who was a servant of the old Pacific Fur Company, and subsequently transferred his services to the ill-fated Northwest, and afterward to the Hudson's Bay Company, spent forty years in the wilderness, like the Israelites, and having at last reached the land of promise at Red River, is beguiling his old age in the Northwest. He had been one of the first explorers—after Lewis and Clarke—of the Columbia River and Oregon; when the Pacific Fur Company went to pieces, at the breaking out of the war with England, he transferred his services to the Northwest Company, from which at that time great results were expected. He was at Astoria when the formal transfer took place, and started to resume the command of his post in the interior, at a place called She-Whaps, in company with the returning adventurers of Astor's association.

They traveled together as far as Onkanagan, where they were stopped for want of horses. In a valley, some two hundred miles distant, the Indians assemble every spring to settle questions of peace and war between the tribes. There horses can always be bought in any quantities, at about half the price of a trained dog, or some ten dollars apiece in money. Ross was dispatched to purchase the required supply.

The valley is beautiful and spacious. But Ross had no time to take note of its beauties. He had scarcely entered it, when he saw a camp, in true Mameluke style, covering more than six miles in every direction, and containing not less than 3000 men, exclusive of women and children, and perhaps 10,000 horses. The scene was indescribable. His ears were stunned by the whooping, yelling, drumming, singing, laughing, crying of human beings, the neighing of horses, the grunting of bears, the howling of dogs and wolves. It was like a great city gone mad. Every living thing—but the bears and wolves, which were tied up—was in a fever of motion. Ross rode boldly through the camp to the chiefs' tents; when he dismounted he was appalled by the stern greeting from an old chief—"These are the men who kill our relations, who cause us to mourn." At the hint, some of the Indians drove off the horses on which Ross and his men had ridden to the camp. This was unpromising enough; but Ross, putting a bold face on matters, commenced a trade in horses, and bought all that were offered. As fast as he bought them they were driven off by the Indians, amidst savage yells. Then the savages, emboldened by the forbearance of the white men, began to search their baggage, and finding nothing to steal, grew more insolent than ever, snatched the men's guns out of their hands, fired them off, and returned them with jeers. Worse than all, Ross and his party had had nothing to eat since their arrival but a few raw roots; and when they tried to cook a meal, the

Indians thrust spears into the kettle and bore off its contents; thirty or forty of them adding emphasis to the proceeding by firing their guns into the ashes. All this time Ross never allowed any sign of impatience to escape him, but waited his opportunity. At last an Indian, seeing one of the whites use his knife, snatched it from him. The owner claimed it angrily. The Indian threw off his robe, and grasping the knife, prepared for battle. This was evidently the crisis. Round the disputants gathered a crowd of Indians, eager to see the fight. Ross could no longer hold back. Cocking a pistol, he walked toward the thief with the intention of making him the first victim in the tragedy; but while in the act of drawing the weapon, the thought flashed across his mind that conciliation might possibly yet answer. He drew a knife instead of a pistol, and approaching the robber, said—"Here, my friend, is a chief's knife which I give you. The other is not a chief's knife—return it to the man."

This simple act turned the tide. The Indian took the proffered knife with childish pleasure, and in the flush of his gratitude made a speech in favor of the whites. Ross followed up his advantage, and in a few minutes the squaws were loading a table with dainties for his benefit. Still the stolen horses were not restored. Turning to one of the principal chiefs, Ross asked him what he should say to his white father when he asked for the horses they had bought of the Indians? He touched a sensitive chord; the horses were found, and delivered up; and thus, after a peril whose magnitude they did not fully realize till they had escaped it, Ross and his party returned to their friends.

In this instance, bravado would have been useless, as the Indians were over five hundred to one. Where the disparity of numbers was not so enormous, Mr. Ross found a bold policy to answer best. For many years the Indians on the Columbia endeavored to levy tribute on the hunters and their furs as they passed up or down the stream. They were confirmed in their purpose by the folly of several of the old Northwesters, who either allowed themselves to be frightened, or made a senseless and ineffective parade of force.

On one occasion, as Ross was conducting a party, heavily laden, to the trading-post, the Indians gathered in great numbers on the shores of the river, and one fellow, more like a baboon than a man, cried out, flourishing his gun—"How long are the whites to pass here, troubling our waters and scaring our fish, without paying us?"

Ross heard this Ciceronian exordium, and, turning sharply round upon the Indian, asked—"Who gave you that gun?"

"The whites," said he.

"And who gave you tobacco to smoke?"

"The whites."

"Are you fond of your gun and your tobacco?"

"Yes,"

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by spinning pleasant stories about his exploits and his marvelous adventures.

He is, like most of the hunters of that region, a Scotchman, and seems to possess most of the virtues of his race. A man of cool nerve, iron constitution, and sure eye; slow to wrath, but inflexible in his purpose; fonder of conciliation than menace, but brave as steel in the hour of danger; a devout Christian, with a keen eye to trade: he must have been a valuable servant to his employers, and the right sort of man to thrive in the Northwest. He had been one of the first explorers—after Lewis and Clarke—of the Columbia River and Oregon; when the Pacific Fur Company went to pieces, at the breaking out of the war with England, he transferred his services to the Northwest Company, from which at that time great results were expected. He was at Astoria when the formal transfer took place, and started to resume the command of his post in the interior, at a place called She-Whaps, in company with the returning adventurers of Astor's association.

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mit me to give precise dates and localities. It is pleasant to go to town, if you go *right*. Take possession of paid quarters, and verify the old proverb, that there is no welcome like that of an inn. Denizens of cities are hospitable in their way. They like to dine you and sup you; they are delighted at a call; they are pleased if you can spend a night. But never, if you wish to be welcome, drive to the door with trunks and boxes, and surprise your city friends with a deliberate invasion. Fortify yourself in a public house, and thence make agreeable sorties on your relations and friends in rotation.

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"Then you ought to be fond of the whites."

This last retort seems to have been considered jocular on the Columbia, for the whole tribe roared, greatly to the discomfiture of the "baboon," and for the moment the peril was averted. At the next portage, however, the Indians pressed the whites anew, and so closely that the embarkation was only accomplished under cover of a file of muskets, cocked and pointed, and a swivel, likewise pointed, with match burning beside it. A third time that day the Indians were baffled through the sagacity and nerve of one of the hunters. It seems that they had delegated the command to three of their most daring warriors, who pressed toward the whites at the head of the throng. One of the white leaders, Mackenzie, noticed this, and walking up to the three, he presented them with a stone to sharpen their arrows. Then priming his own gun and pistols in their sight, he eyed them sternly, stamped on the ground, and motioned them to sit down opposite him and compose themselves. They could not resist his eye, and obeyed. He sat in front of them until the whole of the goods were embarked, having the satisfaction of seeing the rest of the tribe wait patiently for the signal from the three chiefs whom he was magnetizing, and thus the Indian project of levying "Sound dues" on the goods passing over the Columbia was defeated.

These Indians of the Far West are for the most part incorrigible horse-thieves. If the sharpest look-out is not kept up at night by parties traveling through the wilderness, they may rest assured that some of their cattle will be missing before morning. Horses are the usual game of the robbers; but, in truth, nothing comes amiss to them. On one of Mr. Ross's hunting expeditions, a party of friendly Indians, with whom he was in company, stole twelve of his beaver traps. Fearful of worse if they were permitted to steal with impunity, he armed thirty-five of his men, rode over to their camp, seized ten of their horses by way of payment, and drove them to his quarters. He then gave orders that every man should prepare for battle, and keep his eye on his gun, yet appear careless, as if nothing was expected. He would give the signal for action by striking the foremost Indian with his pipe-stem.

The Indians soon approached the camp. Ross drew a line, as usual, and civilly notified them that they must not cross it. The crowd obeyed sulkily; but a few of them stepped forward and demanded the horses in a menacing tone. Ross replied by demanding the restoration of the traps. They protested they had not stolen them, and seeing the whites apparently unprepared, began to clamor and advance toward the horses. One fellow seized a horse by the halter, and tried to drag him off. Ross remonstrated for a while; but the Indian persisting, he knocked him down with the long ash stem of his pipe. At the signal, the whole party sprang to arms with a shout, and in an instant every gun was leveled at the Indians.

These, stunned by the shock, lost their wits, threw off their clothes, and plunged in a body into the river; so that, in five minutes, there was nothing to be seen of the noisy host but a few heads bobbing up and down in the water.

The Snakes and other Indian tribes of Oregon differ in no essential characteristic from the branches of the great red family with which we are familiar. The same virtues and the same vices are conspicuous in all. Like all Indian traders, Mr. Ross had much reason to complain of their fickleness and ingratitude.

A young Indian, known by the name of Prince, had lost his sister, who had been carried off by a war party of the Snakes. Prince was inconsolable. He sat down outside the fort of the whites and began to sing the death-song. Mr. Ross, fearing that he was going to commit suicide, went to him, and tried to reason with him; but the Indian never raised his head, and continued to sing furiously. Ross turned away from him, and a moment or two afterward a loud report was heard. Prince had shot himself. The ball had entered his left breast and emerged near the backbone; he lay in a pool of his own blood. Mr. Ross humanely picked him up and carried him into the fort. He had seen instances of Indians recovering from wounds as severe; one fellow, whose skull had been broken, and from whose head Ross had himself picked out several pieces of bone, had to his knowledge ridden on a hunt within six weeks afterward. Notwithstanding the desperate character of Prince's wound, what remedies Ross had were applied hopefully, and sure enough, after six months' careful nursing, he was well again.

His first proceeding on his recovery was to demand a gun from Mr. Ross. The latter reminded him that he owned plenty of horses, and could buy a gun if he chose. The Indian hung his head sulkily, and cried,

"Since you are so stingy, keep your gun, and give me an ax!"

Ross, nettled by the imperative tone of the man, refused point blank. The next moment, as he turned round to speak with some one, Prince caught up a gun and made an attempt to shoot him in the back; the gun happily missed fire.

When he left the fort, as he was rather imprudently allowed to do, he met a Canadian belonging to the place, and asked to look at his gun. The Canadian handed it to him, when he instantly shot the horse which he rode, and scampered off with the gun, abusing the whites, and Mr. Ross in particular.

It must be hoped that Prince is not a fair average of his tribe. Quite certain it is, however, that the Iroquois, who are employed in great numbers by the factors of the fur companies, are treacherous and unreliable. Mr. Ross mentions frequently, that at the first obstacle on his hunting expeditions, they invariably wanted to desert, and more than once might have attempted to do mischief had it not been

for his sharp watch on them. Mr. Mackenzie, the well known *bourgeois* of the Northwest Company, once narrowly escaped being murdered by some of them. They were on a hunting-party under his command, and persisted, contrary to his orders, in trafficking on their own account with the Indians whom they met. To put a stop to these practices, a quarrel having arisen between a Nez Percé Indian and an Iroquois about a horse which the latter had purchased, Mr. Mackenzie drew a pistol and shot the horse dead. For this the Iroquois resolved to murder him. He soon won over the other men of his tribe, and while Mr. Mackenzie was asleep in his tent, a little before the break of day, they started on their murderous expedition. Fortunately for the white leader, one of his servants heard their footsteps and aroused his master just as the Iroquois and one of his companions rushed into the tent. Mackenzie tried to seize his pistols, but could not find them in the darkness; but, being a very powerful man, he grasped one of the tent-poles and knocked down the first and second of his assailants as fast as they appeared; this gave the servant time to rouse a few faithful Canadians, who very quickly put the other Iroquois to flight.

The best men in that country are the French-Canadians and the half-breeds. Some of the latter, as the old hunters gravely say, acquire loose notions and bad principles from associating with the independent whites and vagabonds—the white trash, as a Southerner would say—who are occasionally to be found in the Northwest country; but these are the exception, not the rule; and all the half-breeds are strong, brave, and indefatigable.

The worst men in the Northwest are the white stragglers who come there by accident, from vagabondage, or to escape the hands of justice. Mr. Ross, like all the other officers of the great fur corporations, regards the service of "the Company" as the only possible guarantee of respectability in the fur regions; this may be doubted by persons who do not live in the fear of Sir George Simpson; but at the same time, it is quite easy to understand how the forts, especially those on the sea-board, are occasionally infested by some of the vilest human vermin that breathe. The thief—the murderer—is secure from justice in the Northwest territory; let him have strength and industry, and he may lead a life of royal independence and plenty by the side of the silent rivers of the Far West, in the midst of Indians whose confidence he may easily win, and over whom he may soon exercise the influence belonging to his superior mind.

One of these fellows Mr. Ross met at Fort George, on the Columbia. He was a Russian named Jacob, who was brought thither in irons for mutiny in a Boston vessel. He made such fair promises of amendment, that the commander at the fort ventured to give him his liberty, and set him to work at the forge. But he soon developed under his true colors. He

grew a favorite with the Indians, and one day induced eighteen of them to run away with him on a voyage of discovery. The Indians were overtaken by a party sent from the fort, and persuaded to return; but Jacob made his escape, and associated himself with a wild native tribe in the neighborhood. In order to win their confidence, he offered to rob the fort; and so daring and skillful a fellow was he, that he eluded the watch, scaled the twenty feet palisade, and carried off his booty. After this he was chosen a chief of the tribe, and word soon reached the fort that he was planning expeditions of a more extensive character.

It was absolutely necessary to free the country of so desperate a vagabond. With forty well-armed men, Mr. Ross set out, and marched straight to the encampment of the tribe which Jacob had honored with his company. A spy gave him information as to the locality of his tent, and when night had fairly set in, Mr. Ross, with two powerful men, followed the guide to the spot indicated. As they approached, the sound of their footsteps betrayed them, and two shots were fired at them in rapid succession from the tent. As they rushed in, Jacob was in the act of seizing a third gun. It was wrested from him; but he contrived to draw a knife, and inflicted a terrible wound on one of his captors. The three, however, were too many for him; he was knocked down, handcuffed, and carried off.

The Company's officers might have settled Jacob's business for him; but they preferred keeping him in irons till a ship arrived, and then sending him out of the country. When they put him in the boat to convey him on board the ship, he rose, took off his old Russian cap, and giving three loud cheers, cried, "Confusion to all my enemies!" A pleasant companion for a lonely place was Jacob!

It was while Ross was in the service of the Northwest Company that the council at Fort William resolved to transfer the central dépôt of their trade on the Columbia to the spot where Lewis and Clarke had made their great treaty with the Indians some thirteen years before. It was in the heart of the country of the fierce Nez Percés Indians, and was considered a post of no small danger. Ross was named to the command. The site is one of the most beautiful in the Western country, being on the bank of the Columbia at a point where it expands into a small lake, and in the centre of a fertile and picturesque region. At first, the adventurers met with the usual, and more than the usual difficulties. The Indians assembled and complained of the encroachments of the whites. What they offered to sell they valued at enormous prices, and for a few days the pioneers actually suffered from want of food. Then the red men offered to come to terms if the whites would give each of them a present. Ross yielded to none of their demands, but patiently negotiated, and waited, and argued, until he wore them out. The whites were too

formidable to be easily expelled by force; the Indians agreed at last to trade with them, and the building of the fort commenced. It is considered the strongest of the Company's forts on the west of the Rocky Mountains—the Gibraltar of the Columbia. Four pieces of ordnance, of from one to three pounds, ten swivels, sixty stand of muskets, twenty boarding-pikes, and a box of hand-grenades constitute its weapons of defense. It is strengthened by four strong wooden towers or bastions, and the gate is provided with a sort of rude portcullis.

In this castle Mr. Ross began to enjoy the life of a *bourgeois*. Most readers are doubtless aware that a *bourgeois* is the chief of a trading post or dépôt; it is the dignity to which all hunters aspire, as being, next to a partnership, the highest reward earth can offer them. Nor is the life of a *bourgeois* in any wise unworthy of the ambition it awakens. The *bourgeois*, like Robinson in his isle, is lord of all he surveys. The hunters and Indians are his slaves. His income provides him with every luxury and comfort which the forest affords, and enables him to procure many foreign luxuries which are far beyond the reach of men with the same stipend in civilized countries. Some excellent private libraries are to be found at the trading posts of the Hudson's Bay Company. Some of the best Port and Madeira in America is stored in their cellars. The *bourgeois* leads a life of delightful leisure. Once a year for a few weeks, at the time of the annual migration of the hunters, he is kept busily employed in fitting out parties, and forwarding couriers with dispatches. The remainder of the twelve months he can spend in study agreeably diversified by the chase. Nor is society wanting. Many of the hunters of the fur companies—like Mr. Ross—are well-educated men, who have taken to the woods from love of sport and adventure. They invariably marry the whitest girl they can find; and thus round each fort a small circle of society is formed, which is said to be pleasant and even refined. The balls which used to be given at Spokane House—the old central dépôt of the Northwest Company—are celebrated to this day. It is impossible to persuade an old Northwester that Paris itself contains prettier girls, more lovely dresses, more graceful dancing, better music, and pleasanter parties generally. If any cavil, let them go and see.

That there is a strange fascination in life in the wilderness, is proved not only by the nostalgia which every hunter feels after he has left the country, but by the wonderful tenacity with which the *voyageurs*, who enjoy so few of the comforts allotted to the *bourgeois*, cling to their wretched calling. Their stories remind one of Robin Hood and his merry men, without the windfalls from fat priors and the flagons of brimming wine. Mr. Ross met an old French Canadian who was over sixty, and took down his story in his own language.

"I have now," said he, "been forty-two years in this country. For twenty-four I was a light

canoe-man; I required but little sleep, but sometimes got less than I required. No portage was too long for me; my end of the canoe never touched the ground till I saw the end of it. Fifty songs a day were nothing to me. I have saved the lives of ten *bourgeois*, and was always a favorite, because, when others stopped to carry at a bad spot and lost time, I pushed on, over rapids, over cascades, over falls—all were the same to me. No water, no weather ever stopped the paddle or the canoe. I have had twelve wives in the country, and once owned fifty horses and six running dogs trimmed in the best style. I was then like a *bourgeois*, rich and happy. No *bourgeois* had better-dressed wives than mine. I wanted for nothing, and I spent all my earnings in the enjoyment of pleasure. Five hundred pounds twice told have passed through my hands, though now I have not a spare shirt, or a penny to buy one. Yet were I young again, I would glory in commencing the same career again. There is no life so happy as the *voyageur's* life; none so independent; no place where a man enjoys so much variety and freedom as in the Indian country. Hurrah! hurrah! *pour le pays sauvage!*"

Mr. Ross's happiness was not destined to last long. On the 19th June, 1816, Governor Semple, of the Hudson's Bay Company, heard that a party of Northwesters were advancing on the Earl of Selkirk's infant colony at Red River. With more courage than discretion he immediately armed twenty-two men, and marched out to meet them. The parties met, quarreled, shots were fired, and Governor Semple and his twenty-two men were all killed on the spot. The trials which followed; the "private war" which was carried on between the rival companies; the seizure of Fort William by the Earl of Selkirk; and the untimely death of twenty-three out of the forty-five victorious Northwesters, are now matters of history. The Northwest Company was manifestly in the wrong, and few tears were shed when it gave up the ghost a few years afterward. Mr. Ross was endorsed over with other property to the Hudson's Bay Company.

In their service he undertook one of the first great hunting and trapping expeditions that were ever made into the territory of the Snake Indians. His party consisted of fifty-five men, of whom two were Americans, seventeen Canadians, five half-breeds, and the rest Indians of various tribes. As hunting is the normal condition of these people, they took with them their wives and children—twenty-five of the former, and sixty-four of the latter in all. The baggage of the party consisted of seventy-five guns, a brass three-pounder, beaver traps, 392 horses, ammunition in abundance, and a few trading articles. They carried no provisions with them, but trusted to the luck of the hunters for their daily supply.

The main game of the party was, of course, the beaver. When they found a safe and secure spot, near a stream whose banks bore

traces of the animal, they encamped, and each hunter sallied forth at evening to set his six traps. At early dawn the traps were visited, the beaver taken out, and the traps reset. Then the hunters spent the day in idleness—smoking and spinning yarns in the camp, till the fall of night warned them to visit their traps again. By no means a despicable life in fine weather, and when the Indians kept aloof. The latter piece of good fortune seldom fell to their lot; the trappers went forth to the river with their traps in one hand and gun in the other. One day a band of Indians would loom up in the distance, and hover round menacingly till the whites resolved to make an end of them, and charging unexpectedly would scatter them like a flock of birds, and perhaps find on the spot they had vacated a bundle of wet scalps. At another time the wild men would succeed in carrying off a few of their horses, and defy pursuit. Sometimes the Indians would show fight.

A hunter named McDonald, trapping with a large party in the Snake country, was suddenly attacked by a band of Piegiens. The camp secured, McDonald started with his best men to give battle. The Indians did not flinch; one fellow held a scalp on the top of a pole, and waved it, yelling and screeching, and his comrades stood their ground till twenty of them fell. The survivors, losing courage, fled precipitately into a coppice of wood near the battle-field. But three of the whites had been killed, and their companions were determined to avenge their death according to Northwest rule. McDonald sent to the camp for buckshot, and when it arrived poured volley after volley into the coppice, the Indians lying concealed within. While this murderous work was going on, a Canadian challenged an Iroquois to enter the coppice and scalp a savage with him. The challenge was accepted, and the two set off together, holding each other by the hand, and each grasping a scalping-knife in the other. When they were within a few feet of a Piegan, the Iroquois cried to the Canadian, "I will scalp this fellow; do you find another!" But as he stretched out his hand to seize him, the Piegan shot him through the head, and so bespattered the Canadian with his brains that he was blinded, and ran hastily back to his comrades.

McDonald then resolved to set fire to the bush. It was decided that the oldest man should apply the firebrand, and a poor, wrinkled old fellow advanced with it, trembling in every limb, and expecting instant death. He performed his task in safety, and in a few minutes the whole coppice was in a blaze. As the poor half-roasted Piegiens emerged, the hunters took aim at them leisurely, and brought them down one by one; the Iroquois rushing in to finish the work with the knife. Out of seventy-five warriors only seven escaped the horrid massacre.

The beaver are not only valuable for their skin, but serve as food for the hunter. Care

must be taken, however, to examine the herb-  
age on which the animals feed, or mischief may follow an unwary repast. Mr. Ross's party were once poisoned by feasting heartily on beaver, and some of them had a very narrow escape. The Indians eat this kind of beaver, but they roast it; boiled, they say, it is pernicious.

Buffalo meat is a more popular dish than beaver. In the Snake country, when Mr. Ross visited it, buffaloes were plentiful, and his hunters had many a glorious feast, which was enjoyed all the more for the spice of danger which accompanied the chase. Inured as the Northwest hunters are to peril, there are few among the boldest who can stand and look coolly at a wounded buffalo, so terrible is the gaze of his hideous eye. If he is able to move, and the hunter's gun is empty, let him look for a tree, or bid adieu to earth. And even when the poor brute can not stir, but stands propped up on his legs, glaring wildly on the hunters, it is safe to put a final ball through his head before stepping up to him and pushing him over.

More ferocious still is the Northwestern wolf, an animal of wonderful strength and sagacity. As a general rule the bear and the buffalo will not attack man; but in spring the wolf flies at every living thing he sees. Horses are his usual prey, and then he pursues with almost human cunning. When a band of wolves discover a horse, they encamp at some little distance, all the troop squatting on their hams except two old fellows, who sally forth toward the horse. He is frightened at first by his visitors; but they gambol so pleasantly in the field, and look so innocent and friendly, that by degrees his terror subsides, and he continues to graze. Then the wolves slowly separate, one going to the front of the horse, the other to his rear, and both frisking about as amiably, and apparently as unconcerned as before. Slowly and cautiously they approach the doomed steed with equal steps; when they are within springing distance—they can cover over twenty feet at a bound—both dash at him together, one at his head, the other at his hamstrings. Horses are proverbially helpless under some circumstances; this is one of them. The most the poor creature does is to turn round and round, uttering cries of pain. In a few seconds the wolf who attacked him from behind—this being the main attack—has cut the sinews of his legs, and he falls helplessly to the ground. Then the whole pack come rushing down, howling, and each eager to tear a morsel from the living carcass. There is little left for the vultures.

The hunters sometimes catch wolves in steel traps; but the animals frequently run off with the traps, heavy as they are, or gnaw their legs off and leave them there. When the hunters surprise them before the amputation is performed, all thought of safety is forgotten in their rage. With teeth broken and bloody head—with their leg fractured, and clinging to the trap by the sinews only—they will fly at their enemy,

and even then, it is well for the hunter to make sure of his aim.

Some of the Indians catch wolves by a process which has never been illustrated save in the pages of comic periodicals. They suspend the bait on a strong fish-hook from the branch of a tree, at several feet from the ground. The wolf springs to seize it, is caught by the hook, and dangles in mid-air. In that position his strength can not help him, and he falls an easy prey to his destroyer.

Needless to say that the hunters fare sumptuously. Buffalo meat, venison, bears' hams, and every description of feathered game succeed each other at their repasts as fancy prompts, till the wearied appetite seeks a repose from good things, and invents monstrous regales of mouse soup, broiled snake, and insect pie. Grasshoppers and crickets are an especial delicacy. Apicius, in the Far West, toasts his grasshoppers till they crackle like grains of gun-powder dropped into a frying-pan; a handful of these are the greatest luxury you can offer him. The tough old *voyageur*, who has shot his own hack when hard pressed for a meal, will leave the savory platter of vension, bear's fat, wappatoes, and obellies, to chew a stringy piece of horse-flesh. And many an Indian will turn up his nose at the most appetizing product of the white man's caldron, in order to feast himself in private on the ribs of a dog.

It is painful to reflect that the monsters who are guilty of these horrors are more plentifully supplied with that prince of fish, the salmon, than any other people in the world. In the spring the salmon swim up the rivers on the Pacific slope, not in shoals, but in beds. They are speared, hooked, trapped, butchered by the thousand. Twenty thousand fish in a day is no extraordinary haul for a hunting-party. A cheap knife, such as sells for sixpence in our marine shores, is worth fifty salmon; a pin or a nail will purchase a dozen. Let us console ourselves with the reflection that Oregon will soon be peopled.

All is not pleasure, however, on these trapping expeditions. In the month of March Mr. Ross found his road blocked by a high mountain ridge. He resolved to cross it. The exploring party he sent forward on snow-shoes to examine the way, reported that the pass was twelve miles long, and the snow eight feet deep. The Iroquois attached to the expedition at once declared that it was impracticable for a party with horses and baggage, and insisted on returning. Ross was well aware of the difficulty; but he had determined to cross, so he calmly drew a pistol, placed it to the head of the Iroquois leader, and gave him his choice of proceeding with the party, or paying his debt to the Company. The Indians sulkily submitted. Then the question was how to beat a road. They resolved to try horses. Taking eighty of the strongest, they led them to the foot of the drift. A man on snow-shoes then seized the foremost horse by the bridle, and dragged it into the

snow, while another applied the whip behind. The animal plunged until it was exhausted; it was left standing with nothing but its head and ears above the surface. A second was then led forward in the same way, through the track of the first, and was thus enabled to make a few plunges further on; then a third, and so on to the eightieth. When the last horse was left in the snow, there was nothing to be seen but a long row of heads and ears peeping above the drift. Then the horses were dragged out one by one, and in this manner, after nine hours severe labor, 580 yards of road were made. The next day the operation was repeated, but no more than 370 yards were made. Ross persevered day after day, till most of the horses were knocked up, and only a third of the road was made.

The Iroquois now again burst into rebellion. Provisions were growing scarce in the camp, and a man might well be excused for wishing to return. But Ross was immovable: cross they must, and as the horse plan had failed, some other must be tried. He sent a party into the woods to cut mallets and shovels. Dividing the working parties into couples, and providing one man with a mallet to break the crust, while his companion followed with a shovel, he began once more the terrible job. The men wrought so hard that they were hardly able to mount their horses at night. But they persevered, and after nine days' labor the road was complete, and preparations were made for a start. The agony of mind which Mr. Ross suffered during the night before the departure can well be conceived. It was a perfect calm; but had the wind begun to blow, in three or four hours the whole work would have been rendered useless; the drift would have obliterated the road. A happy man was he when he arose on the tenth morning and found the air as still as on the night before. The caravan started from the "Valley of Troubles," as they christened their encampment, in high good-humor; and in a few hours they enjoyed the delight of looking down into the plain on the other side.

On the top of the ridge bubbles a small spring into a circular pool, from which a tiny stream creeps down the mountain side. Mr. Ross stood astride of it, smoking his pipe and looking contemplatively into the waters. It is the source of the great Missouri river.

Some will think that the mere pleasure of standing astride of that spring was ample recompense for the labors of the expedition, to say nothing of some 5000 beaver, and other peltries which the hunters had the satisfaction of carrying back to the dépôt.

#### SENTIMENT AND ACTION.

"A GREAT gift, a great gift you ask me for, Master Paul!" said the old man, sternly, turning away his head.

"But one that you will never have cause to repent bestowing on me," said Paul, eagerly. "Oh! Mr. Trevelyan, you do not know how