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Article Title: "1,000 Miles From Home on the Wild Prairie": Charles B Darwin's 1849 Nebraska Diary

Full Citation: Richard E Jensen, ed., "1,000 Miles From Home on the Wild Prairie": Charles B Darwin's 1849 Nebraska Diary," *Nebraska History* 85 (2004): 58-114

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH2004Darwin.pdf>

Date: 8/14/2012

Article Summary: Darwin's diary recounts his 1849 trip from Tennessee to the gold mines of California, emphasizing his encounters with Indians, traders, and fur trappers. The section reproduced in this article extends from his arrival in western Iowa to his departure from Fort Laramie.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Charles Ben Darwin, Elvira Gaston Platt ("Spuxpate"), Lester W Platt, Edmund McKinney, Big Elk, Ira D Blanchard, James Case, George Belcher Gaston, David Hardin, Maria Cummings Gaston, Samuel Allis, Peter Sarpy, Alexander Papin, Albert Fontenelle, James Cleghorn, Charles Frederick Ruff, Ebenezer Pomeroy, Thaddeus Pomeroy, Marcellus Mathers, Bull's Tail, Robert Chilton, Benjamin Bonneville, John Dougherty, William A Hammond, Antoine Robidoux, Antoine Leroux, William Lambert, Thomas Woinaski

Place Names: Kanesville, Iowa; Bellevue, Nebraska; Grand Island, Nebraska; Fort Kearney (Fort Childs), Nebraska; Scottsbluff, Nebraska; Fort John (Fort Laramie), Wyoming

Indian Tribes/Bands Mentioned in the Diary: Panee (Pawnee), Omaha, Pottawatomies, Kaw (Kansa), Wyandots, Delawares, Otos (Otoes), Sioux, Loup or Skidi

Keywords: Charles Ben Darwin, Elvira Gaston Platt, Ira D Blanchard, cholera, James Cleghorn, Charles Frederick Ruff, William Lambert, George Belcher Gaston, Antoine Robidoux, Samuel Allis

Photographs / Images: traveler bound for the West (*Illustrated News*, February 5, 1848); inset page of Charles Darwin's diary with instructions for its disposition should he die; Charles Darwin; an Indian (William Henry Tappan, 1848); settlers breaking sod (*Harper's Weekly*, May 9, 1868); Fort Kearney and log cabins (James F Wilkins, 1849); Indian lodge (Karl Bodmer); Indian woman (Karl Bodmer); Indian women (William Henry Tappan, 1848); stampeding horse (*Harper's Weekly*, July 10, 1858); campfire scene and buffalo bull charging a horseman (J Goldsborough Bruff, 1851); deserted Pawnee village (James F Wilkins, 1849); Indian warrior (Karl Bodmer); 2 images of wagon train stopped for the night (*Harper's Weekly*, December 23, 1871); Ballou's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion, 1856); mountaineer (*Harper's Weekly*, January 30, 1858); map showing the principal landmarks mentioned by Darwin in his diary of travel in Nebraska; antelope (William Henry Tappan, 1848); buffalo herd surrounded by wolves; riders climbing up out of a ravine (*Harper's Weekly*, August 26, 1871); rider shooting a buffalo (*Harper's Weekly*, October 13, 1866); storm raging over a wagon train encampment (J Goldsborough Bruff, 1851); wagon train attempting to ford a river; burial site ravaged by wild animals (Karl Bodmer); burial platforms (William Minor Quesenberry, 1851); Castle Rock; Chimney Rock (James F Wilkins, 1849); Fort Laramie (*Harper's Weekly*, July 10, 1858); hunter with slain stag

"1,000 MILES FROM HOME



ON THE WILD PRAIRIE”

Charles B. Darwin’s 1849 Nebraska Diary

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY RICHARD E. JENSEN

In 1849 Charles Ben Darwin, a twenty-six-year-old attorney living with his wife and young son in Paris, Tennessee, fell victim to an acute case of gold fever. In the early spring of that year he left his family and set out for the California mines. Darwin kept a journal during his trek across the continent, and his vivid and detailed account was rarely matched by other trail diarists.

Historian Merrill J. Mattes, who examined nearly seven hundred accounts of Overland Trail travel, gave the Darwin diary five stars, his highest rating, pointing out that the diary “contains much valuable information found nowhere else—particularly about Indians, fur trappers and traders.”¹

Mattes writes that Darwin had “the soul of a poet and soars in rapturous descriptions worthy of Byron or Shelley.” Darwin’s poetic soul is revealed in a number of ways. For example, buffalo hunting must have been the nineteenth-century equivalent skydiving, and it seems every diarist who participated wrote about it. Nearly all dwelt on the physical aspects of the hunt, but Darwin’s “soul of a poet” prevailed. He tried to express the excitement and emotions a hunt elicited and he succeeds admirably.

On several occasions Darwin was captivated by an event or scene and wrote several pages of what Mattes described as “sheer pseudoromantic verbosity.” One example begins with a lucid description of the Platte River valley, but Darwin slowly succumbs to this baroque style:

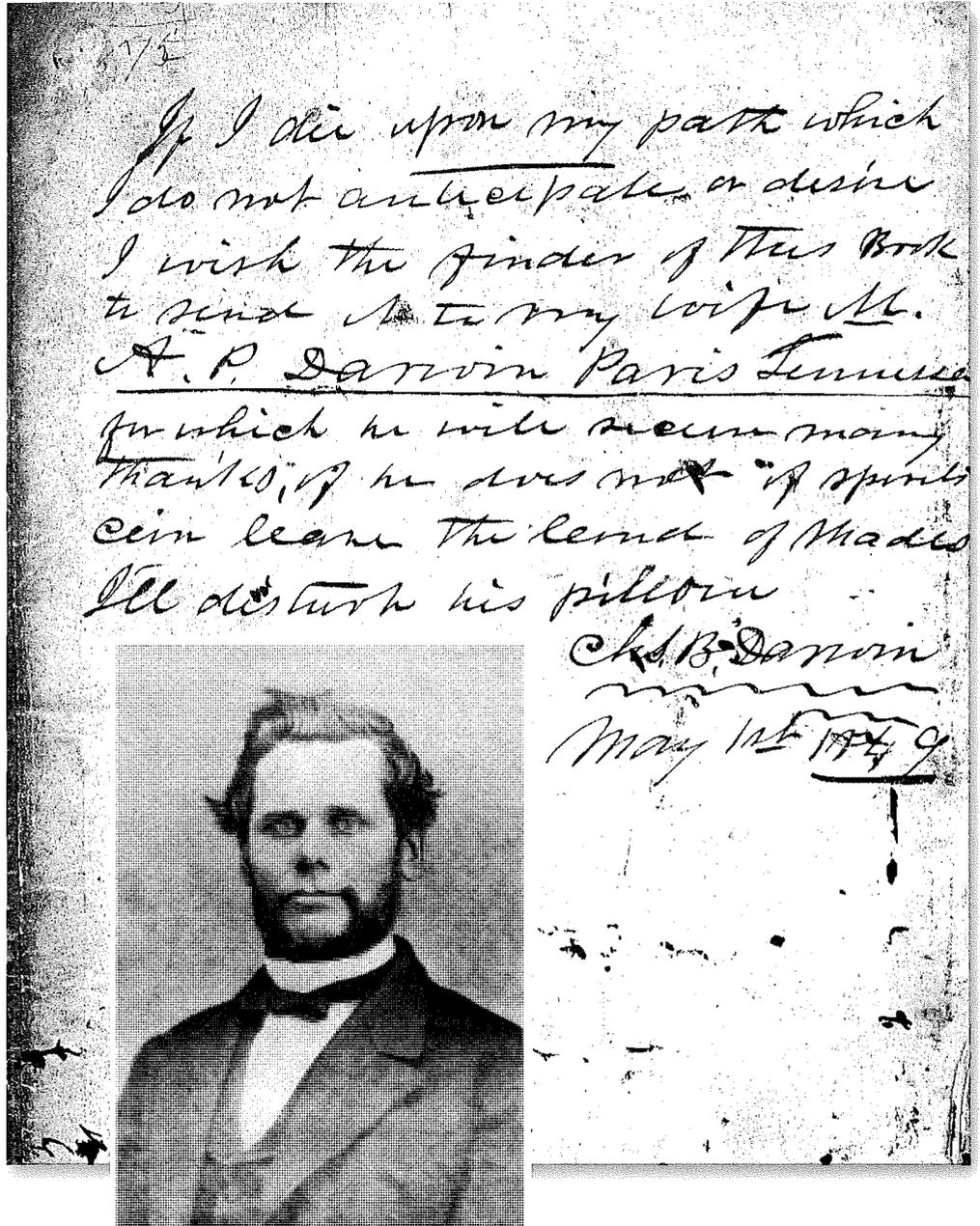
*Heavens most silvery fleeces
like hoary mantles envelope
their beautiful shoulders & their
feet are sandled with streams of
transparency tinged with azure
which evening with her spectral
fingers draws around the head
of earth.*

The description continues in this vein for several pages before Darwin returns to reality. The diary contains seven lengthy entries of this kind, totaling nearly three thousand words. Because these entries have no particular historical significance and often are scarcely intelligible even when read in context, they have been omitted here. The reader will, nevertheless, find many examples of Darwin’s “pseudoromantic verbosity” that are mercifully brief.

Elsewhere, however, revealing insights into Darwin’s personality lie hidden in those sections of turgid prose. It is in those moments that his bouts of loneliness are evident in such lines as “My curses on the mania for gold.” His

Charles B. Darwin began his 1849 diary with instructions for its disposition should he die and a threat to anyone who failed to comply, (see page 63 for a transcription of this passage).
Reproduced from a photocopy.
Huntington Library,
San Marino, California

Insert: Darwin (shown here in an undated photograph) spent some two months traveling from the Missouri River westward to Fort Laramie. His diary vividly records images and events of his travels through "the wild prairie."
Huntington Library,
San Marino, California



love for his wife, Mary, and son, Charles, and a deep respect for Elvira Platt of Civil Bend, Iowa, who, with her husband, had been in Indian mission posts since 1843, are also clearly evident.

It is also clear Darwin was more interested in Native Americans than in his Euro-American companions. While he spent paragraphs on the Indians he met on the trail, the white Argonauts were usually dismissed with a phrase. His early remarks about Indians reflect some blatant racism, but as he

became acquainted with some of them his attitude changed, and Darwin began to write with compassion and even with admiration. This change of heart may have been influenced by his missionary friends at Civil Bend, Iowa.

The negative aspects of life on the trail are at least mentioned by most diarists. They describe loneliness, fear, and a litany of foul conditions, but Darwin is one of the very few to examine trail life in some detail. In so doing he exposes the emotions behind the conditions. These unique sections are usually

buried in "pseudoromantic verbosity" that will tax any reader's tenacity. Although Darwin's style is troublesome, his asides about his feelings are worth plowing through. Interestingly, there is a clear correlation between these sections and a progressive deterioration in his handwriting. One cannot help wondering if Darwin did not occasionally indulge in an overdose of the medicine he was taking to prevent cholera, which included concoctions of calomel, pepper, brandy, and opium.

A few entries in the diary probably would have raised an eyebrow in 1849. In one he describes being caught in a torrential downpour and finding shelter under a piece of dressed hide with some Sioux women. Later he wrote "Truly have I been beneath the sheets with several squaws." On another occasion he mentioned two attractive "blooming" sisters he met, but admitted "a good many women look blooming after a man has been away from his for 2 months."

Darwin's descriptions tend to be lengthy, detailed, and far more than a mere listing of events, and they raise questions of the purposes of his western journey. Contemporaries also wondered and, on one occasion, asked him why he kept a journal. It was a perfect opportunity for him to ponder his own motives but he wrote only, "I told them my purpose. . . & they looked somewhat surprised." Elsewhere he wrote about the loneliness he felt and that the diary was his "sole companion."

A few entries provoke other questions about Darwin. He mentioned tarrying at Fort Kearny because his "affairs at the fort were not in a leaveable condition." In another entry he wrote about going to California and concluded, "I am glad I am not going in truth." He did not bother to explain either statement, leaving a sizeable question mark in the minds of readers today.

Charles Ben Darwin was born about 1823 on a farm in the vicinity of Warren in eastern Ohio.² He attended nearby Oberlin College and earned a Master of Arts degree. A contemporary described him as "a student of the classics, and [he] delighted in reciting selections from Shakespeare's plays, as well as the orations of the Latin and Greek orators."³ In the mid-1840s he was employed as "a tutor in a planter's family in the French" in Louisiana. He moved to Paris, Tennessee, where he read law and was admitted to the bar in 1848. It was there he joined a large group of prospectors bound for California, and he arrived in Sacramento in September 1849.

Darwin soon gave up the search for gold and opened a law office in San Francisco. Apparently this venture was short-lived. He set out for home by a circuitous route through Mexico, finally settling in Burlington, Iowa. He taught in a private school there and, in 1852, was named principal of North Hill High School.

Darwin soon returned to his law practice and in the late 1850s began working with a commission to codify the laws of Iowa. The result was the Revision of 1860, informally referred

to as "Darwin's Code." Edward H. Stiles, a contemporary, concluded, "Upon the whole, I think his was the leading mind in that work," and "that he attained a commanding position at the bar, is beyond question." Darwin's election to the Iowa House of Representatives in 1866 seems to confirm this assessment.

Another associate, a Mr. Woods, wrote that Darwin "was inclined to be verbose" and "apt to branch off on some abstract theory." Darwin's diary provides considerable support for Wood's assessment. Sometime before 1868 (probably at the end of his term in office) Darwin left Iowa and moved to Washington Territory. Mr. Stiles admitted he had "never been able to figure out why in such a climax of success he left Iowa."⁴

One anecdote about Darwin shows an irritable side. A compendium of Iowa lawyers describes him as "one of the foremost lawyers of Iowa, very able, brilliant, but erratic and fond of contention." Most of the entry, however, describes an incident when Judge Springer fined him twenty-five dollars for contempt of court, "whereupon he [Darwin] retorted that the sum was totally inadequate to express the contempt he felt for the court." The judge raised the fine to seventy-five dollars.⁵

Darwin was living in Washington Territory by 1868. In January new boundaries were drawn to define the federal judges' jurisdictions, and Darwin received an appointment. His district included the area around Seattle and westward to the Pacific. It was a time of political turmoil, and Darwin was suddenly faced with powerful enemies who declared that he and fellow Judge C. C. Hewitt should be removed. The two men survived the attack only to be replaced by President Ulysses S. Grant shortly after he took office in 1869. Thirty years later historians reviewed the attempted removal of Darwin and Hewitt and came to some very revealing conclusions:

Although this was a political quarrel, there was another good reason for the removal of Darwin—the seduction of the wife of another official. Darwin was a scholarly judge, which Hewitt was not; but Hewitt was honest, which Darwin was not.⁶

Darwin then moved to San Francisco, where he continued to practice law. He died at Napa Asylum near San Francisco in April or May 1901.⁷

Notes on the Diary and Editorial Procedure

The journal begins with two pages of Pawnee words and their English translations. The next sheet, presumably the beginning of the diary, has been removed, apparently snipped out with scissors. The surviving section begins in midsentence after Darwin's arrival in western Iowa, continues during the trip to Sacramento, California, then into Mexico, and finally ends in Texas in 1850.⁸ The entire three-volume journal certainly deserves publication, but a quarterly magazine

devoted to the Plains is not the place for it. The section offered here ends with Darwin's departure from Fort Laramie.

Editors generally strive to minimize the inevitable changes that occur when a handwritten diary is transferred to a printed page. It almost seems that Darwin was intent on making this task as difficult as possible. He was an educated man, but ignored most of the rules of grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. To reproduce the diary as written would have retained the flavor of the original, but would have forced readers to proceed at a snail's pace, necessitating rereading and considerable concentration to decipher the meaning. It seemed unfair to pass this burden on to the reader, and changes have been made.

Minimal punctuation has been added. Darwin occasionally wrote modifying phrases for which it is impossible to determine the antecedent, and interpretation of these passages has been left to the reader's discretion. Darwin's capitalization was inconsistent. For example, he usually capitalized *Buffalo*, but not *deer*. Capital letters seem to appear at random, such as his midsentence mention of "Grass & seeds & corn" or "by Dark I had dismounted." Sentences might or might not begin with a capital. The upper- and lowercase forms of some letters, such as *s* and *a*, are indistinguishable. Darwin's capitalization has been retained, except for the addition of capitals at the beginning of sentences.

Spelling presented fewer problems. Darwin relied somewhat on phonetic renderings, which changed *though* into *tho* and *Pawnee* into the more accurate *Panee*. Darwin did not bother with double letters near the end of a word; thus *occasionally* becomes *occasionaly*, and *continually* is shortened to *continualy* (but *selecting* becomes *sellecting*). Since his spelling does not present a problem of interpretation it has been retained.

Darwin did not bother with paragraphs. They have been added here when a clear change of subject matter was evident. Occasionally Darwin wrote a series of sentences on unrelated subjects. These have been grouped as single "paragraphs."

Perhaps the most serious problem was Darwin's penmanship. Although large and bold, some sections could best be described as illegible scribble. Some words could not be deciphered and are indicated by _____, each underlined blank space representing one illegible word. Italicized words represent the editor's best guess. Other editorial insertions are enclosed in brackets.

The diary includes some underlined words, usually proper nouns or references to individuals. This may have been an attempt to draw attention to the first mention of an individual, but if so it was haphazard. Some names are underlined more than once, while others went unnoticed until the third or fourth mention. Verbs and adjectives are occasionally underlined, as are some phrases. There are also occasional vertical

lines in the margins. The lines undoubtedly had some meaning for Darwin, but they remain an unbroken code and have been omitted. Occasionally Darwin used what appears to be a foreign word or short phrase in an otherwise English sentence. Most of these remain a mystery.

The diary was kept in a cardboard-covered tablet. The unlined pages measure about seven by twelve inches. An 1840s printed map pasted to the first page shows southern Wyoming, northern Colorado, and eastern Utah. It shows John C. Fremont's explorations in 1843, 1844, and 1845. A handwritten note "Sub. cutoff" labels a wavy line west from South Pass.

The first twenty-two pages were written in pencil. Page twenty-three begins in ink. In the middle of page forty-one, with the entry for May 15, he returns to pencil. He takes up his pen on page seventy-eight for the May 28 entry, but returns to the pencil in the middle of page eighty-five. Ink is used from the middle of page ninety-five to the middle of ninety-eight, and then pencil to near the bottom of page one hundred. Ink is used for the remainder of the volume.

The diary is the property of the Huntington Library, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, California, 91108. Permission to publish the Plains portion was graciously granted by David S. Zeidberg, director of the library, in a letter to Richard E. Jensen dated June 28, 2001.

Notes

¹ Merrill J. Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), entry 419.

² Edward H. Stiles, *Recollections and Sketches of Notable Lawyers and Public Men of Early Iowa* (Des Moines: Homestead Publishing Co., 1916), 300.

³ Augustine M. Antrobus, *History of Des Moines County, Iowa, and Its People* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1915), 402.

⁴ Oberlin College, founded in 1833, was staffed largely by Congregationalists who espoused the doctrine that a person could be free from all sin and perfect in thought and deed. It is not known if Darwin accepted the doctrine, but it was roundly denounced by most Protestant clergy. Oberlin also received its share of criticism because it was coeducational. James E. Johnson, "Charles G. Finney and Oberlin Perfectionism, Part I." *Journal of Presbyterian History* 46 (1968): 42–57.

⁵ Anon., *The Bay of San Francisco: The Metropolis of the Pacific Coast and Its Suburban Cities: A History*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1892), 2: 440; Antrobus, *History of Des Moines County, Iowa*, 402; Stiles, *Recollections and Sketches of Notable Lawyers*, 299–300.

⁶ *The Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Iowa State Bar Association* (n.p.: 1901), 80.

⁷ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft: History of Washington, Idaho, and Montana*, 39 vols. (San Francisco: History Company Publishers, 1890) 31:278–79.

⁸ Stiles, *Recollections and Sketches of Notable Lawyers*, 299. Napa Asylum is today Napa State Hospital, an adjunct of the California Department of Health. State law prohibits release of any information about former patients except under stringent circumstances. Laurie Timmons, Napa State Hospital, to Richard E. Jensen, December 12, 2002.

⁹ Brooke M. Black, Huntington Library, to Richard E. Jensen, June 29, 2001.

The Diary

If I die upon my path which I do not anticipate or desire I wish the finder of this Book to send it to my wife M. A. P. Darwin Paris Tennessee for which he will secure many thanks, if he does not if spirits can leave the land of hades I'll disturb his pillow.

Chs. B. Darwin
May 1st 1849
[Inside front cover]

[page 5]

in the constant practice of taking Panee scalps & burning Panee villages insomuch that the most terrible name a Panee can hear is Sioux & those same fellows even sometimes threaten to destroy them where they are which they might very easily accomplish.¹ We found there about 20 Panees Otoes & Omahas mostly those that Elvira had taught in the Panee village.² We heard them read & pass an examination in Geography & observed their copy book all [of] which was tolerably creditable to them. None of them have ever experienced any religious change or manifested the least Idea of the God of the Christian. Many of their parents having just come in were there. Squaws with long black thick hair hanging from their face occasionally by an effort thrown aside to hide their eyes again in another moment the little peron completely naked & looking sublimely instinctive now squatting on its mothers lap & now peeping up from its perch on her shoulder through her robe of hair.³ Some of them manifested some feeling

"I have learned much of indian character & have formed a more favorable opinion of the Panees than on any other visit."

May 10, 1849

as seeing their children tho most look with keener eye upon the victuals for the poor starved creatures had been this winter reduced to the greatest conceivable distress so as to consume their horses & almost each other & this was well attested by their thin body spindle bony legs Especially on the part of the women poor creatures they lead a terrible life. White aggression on one side driving off the game Buffalo & Sioux & other hatchets on the other driving them from the range yet the Indian pride was very perceivable in the lofty strut but the sorry looking women bowed beneath packs of lodge robes & the papouse have enough of sorrow in any cheek & eye to deeper dye a ravens plume.

After supping we went on to the Bluff a mile further down & shouted at the chained gate of the Otoe mission house a very large two story log house enclosed by a high pointed palisade of logs set on end. Having gained entrance we introduce ourselves to Mr. McKinney the superintendent who made himself very interesting telling many Indian facts & giving me some Books.⁴ At Bed time several little Otoes Omahas & Panees girls came in and sang a hymn in Otoe & repeated after him the Lords prayer & returned next morning [May 2] we heard another Otoe hymn & breakfasted after which we ascended the steep bluff in the rear of the house & saw at the graves of the indians the skulls of horses that has been sent with them to the spirit land. Big Elk's grave or mound was among the number & was quite large. The habit of the indians enlarges his friends grave by placing a row of sods around it every year⁵

This mission too I so regard as waste of money for no Indian in my opinion has received any benefit. The course of instruction being just that given to white children I deem quite unfit for the rude mind of the indian. Of what use is it to him to know the names of the capitols of South America or of Europe & of what infinite use to know how to keep himself from starving by supplying the

loss of the expiring Buffalo by teeming corn fields but It seems to have been written in the book of destiny that they must pass away. The next few years will see more of their bones than have seen many years past for the white foot is *treading* heavy on their banded neck & they must expire poor devils. They expect a happier hunting ground in the far off west. Oh may they not be disappointed but may they on the contrary find there any quantity of Buffalo & Elk & Bear & Otter & Deer & get a good price for all their furs so that the drooping squaw may smile again & the intelligent papouse may not come into the world or rather prairie with a foreboding fear of its fate stamped upon its face.

On returning to the river we looked into a lodge. It was formed by setting long poles so as to embrace at top & wrapping around dressed skins leaving a hole at top which was 15 feet high for smoke to escape & a hole 3 feet square on one side at bottom for a door over which was hung a stiff skin suspended from a pole above & easily ssembled. Within was a fire around which sat an old hag for no other name expresses the qualities of an old squaw & several other squaws younger & better looking but none for to gaze on whom a seraph would leave of gazing on his god. On one side stood a board to which was tied in the manner of a crucifixion a little fellow perhaps a year old by several colored thongs in order to keep him straight.⁶ As we looked in the old hag screamed out in her hideous tongue tho her voice would have made angel _____ she hissed some emphatic word we could not understand but which we well knew by the accompanying gesture meant begone & nasotras vamos.

Some Panees followed us to the boat ferry desiring to cross perhaps to beg. Tho one Brave in a fine red blanket with all the hair pulled nicely out of his eyebrows & face wished to come & see spuxspate a name by which they know sister Elvira whom they very much love as must any one who has an opportunity

of knowing her amiable heart & very interesting disposition her sprightly nature graceful motions & empassionately by poetic voice & inflexion.⁷ But we would not let him come. We found our horses rather worse off for our having not been with them & my [horse] Lu never looked worse.

We directed our way to Kainesville a town of Mormons 10 miles further up & off toward the bluffs ended in among the bluffs. It numbers about 300 little log houses mud roofed & some cloth windowed. One tavern printing office where is printed the Frontier Guardian a very respectable looking sheet only 7 copies old however but promising well. Two or three stores where may be had quite cheep any thing desired. A log tabernacle & a groggery which last the paper finely lashes much to its credit. The people are mostly *Yankies* & oh how many pretty girls are there. If I were not a married man I would become a Mormon & have some of them for Spiritual wives tho they are very fit to murder Spirituality in those who gaze upon their cheeks transcendent hue their _____ forehead or their _____ nose as Byron says of his lymphatic _____.⁸ These Mormons are an Indifatigable people. I predict will one day make a noise in our world. It is so ordered here that they who speak out with a stout voice not fearing to break a blood vessel shall be heard & they who fear not having heard shall *rear* to themselves houses or temples & the Mormons whatever else they may be are this very people & whatever other tenets may be theirs they publish on every field. Thus "Know thy work & by the Eternal God be up & doing it & oh how the fences enclosing a thousand acres spring up all around. Grain usurping the place of grass & seeds & corn smiling [on] whose ground the Bison danced around his victim a year ago.

The Potawaitome for their energy I must honor them.⁹

In returning we came the Bluff road that is the road running paralell to the river but just on the high land & here I

saw the most beautiful of all countries. On the right down below rolled on the Mo. [Missouri River] on the left far as eye could reach stretched the prairie broken by no tree but gracefully undulating inclining in all directions but never precipitous *ravines* in descending to the table floor on the river, we saw few houses here only two in a days ride nearly & after experiencing something of a storm at night we arrived at ten pm at a house Maggert where we spread our Buffalo robes & settled for the rest of the night to be aroused at 4 am by the skirt tail of one of the femines of whom several slept in the same room drawing smartly over my face. After rubbing my eyes & *breakfasting* we started out & by ten we reached home again when I spread my Buf [buffalo robe] in the yard finished my nap & after dinner made a talk on temperance to an audience of 30 or 40 male & female in the new School house.¹⁰

Wrote to Mary the rest of the day intending to send it by sister Elvira down the river on the morrow but to after waiting on the banks of the river several hours waiting for the coming down of a Boat from above Dr Blanchard came up from the *fort* where the [steamboat] Mandan has just arrived & she has so many cases & deaths of cholera on her 16 reported.¹¹ So unfavorable the health below that the Dr concludes not to permit his wife to go & as Elvira was going for her company she stays too at home for which tho I do not have my letters sent. Thank God.

Dr B is a neighbor who has for 20 years [lived] among the Delawares & Kaws & Speaks with all his *family* very fluently their language is a good & enterprising man & fine citizen.¹² Mr. Case another neighbor was for some years a missionary assg [assigned] the Whyandots & is a very good old man grey headed but yet strong minded.¹³ Lambert is a name owned by several citizens all quite fine people & on this whom the neighborhood called by some lower down "Civil Bend" is very properly named civil & is truly an enter-

prising & moral society. This section having been lately determined to belong to Iowa & being not yet counted is proposed to be called Lester from Brother & the poffice [post office] kept at his house is called Gaston from Elvira so that our folks it seems exert some influence which they deserve to do for they are of the _____ stamp.¹⁴

Dr. Blanchard told me an anecdote of a Kaw chief quite interesting. A lofty looking Kaw chief followed in his lordly gait by two poor squaw wives each weighed down by a raw beef hide one Sabbath morning came in with a proud look & wished to sell his skins which the poor women peeping in at the *corner* of the *doors wore* over their neck & shoulders. He was told that Dr never

of a Panee chief. A portrait of Dan Webster hung in their room. He gazed for a long time through the window upon it & at last entered the house & stood admiringly before it seemingly lost in admiration while his abstracted eye wandering from feature to feature of the godlike face unveiled before him seems to lose itself in the larger intellectual orb that looked *opening* to take up a universe. At last with an emphatic "Lenah teetee shokora tu tu taric tcha i" this day have I seen a man he stalked away.¹⁶ Webster might feel more complemented by the involuntary homage of the Panee savage than by all the trumpet tongues of servile city groundlings or the *honored* eloquence of paricitic friends.

*Webster might feel more complemented
by the involuntary homage of the
Panee savage than by all the trumpet tongues
of servile city groundlings or the honored
eloquence of paricitic friends.*

traded on the Sabbath but said he looming up more proudly erect & exposing his chest I am the principal chief of the Kaw.¹⁵ Oh uncle I am very glad to see you & would like at some other time to trade with you. Looking surprised for an instant & stepping back a pace to command a better view & elevating himself to get a more princely height & attitude he smote proudly his swelled chest while he exclaimed in tones that might have commanded an Emperor but I am the very particular friend of the pres. of the U. S." Oh how the pres. might have felt honored had he then seen his very particular friend naked as he came into the big meadow save a *letter* strip of calico round his loins reaching to his knees & his two wives equally bare claiming to break the Sabbath on account of their very particular intimacy.

A good anecdote is related by Elvira

In going up to the bluffs we passed through the Potawatomie purchase which that tribe had abandoned only last year. Even yet the ruins of stray lodges were visible in strange contrast with their bark sides with the log cabin of the late settler. Occasionally a grave made by sitting the corpse on the ground & building logs up around him & covering the top with bark was presented to view & one I opened. The corpse had been there about two years. The legs were encased in a blanket. The spine yet erect in sitting posture looking to the west where at the foot of the grave had been driven down a stake painted red. The head had fallen down onto the lap & another in a former visit had brought it home & I now have just been to look at it. The forehead is very narrow & so receding as to leave nothing more than eyebrows. The mind that tabernacled in that skull had no visions

of a higher heaven than the dance around the writhing victim or the Buffalo feast & if a heaven is made for Indian hunts it will be a vast prairie grazed by herds of game no matter what its flora or its canopy of cloud sky or its _____ rainbow or the whispering of its rippling rivulets or the deep chested orchestra of its storm melody so long as meat & salt & scalps are hung on every *twig*. The poor inhabitant of this skull will seek no higher nobler paradise. It is fit that a nobler race should enjoy & appreciate this sublimely prolific country for surely no land in the world is more deserving of the choicest people than this Platte purchase. Prairie enough to offer farms already cleared to the husbandman & timber enough to satisfy every nec. [necessary] want with scenery from which may be gathered huge clusters of sublimity to grand & pyramidal piles of

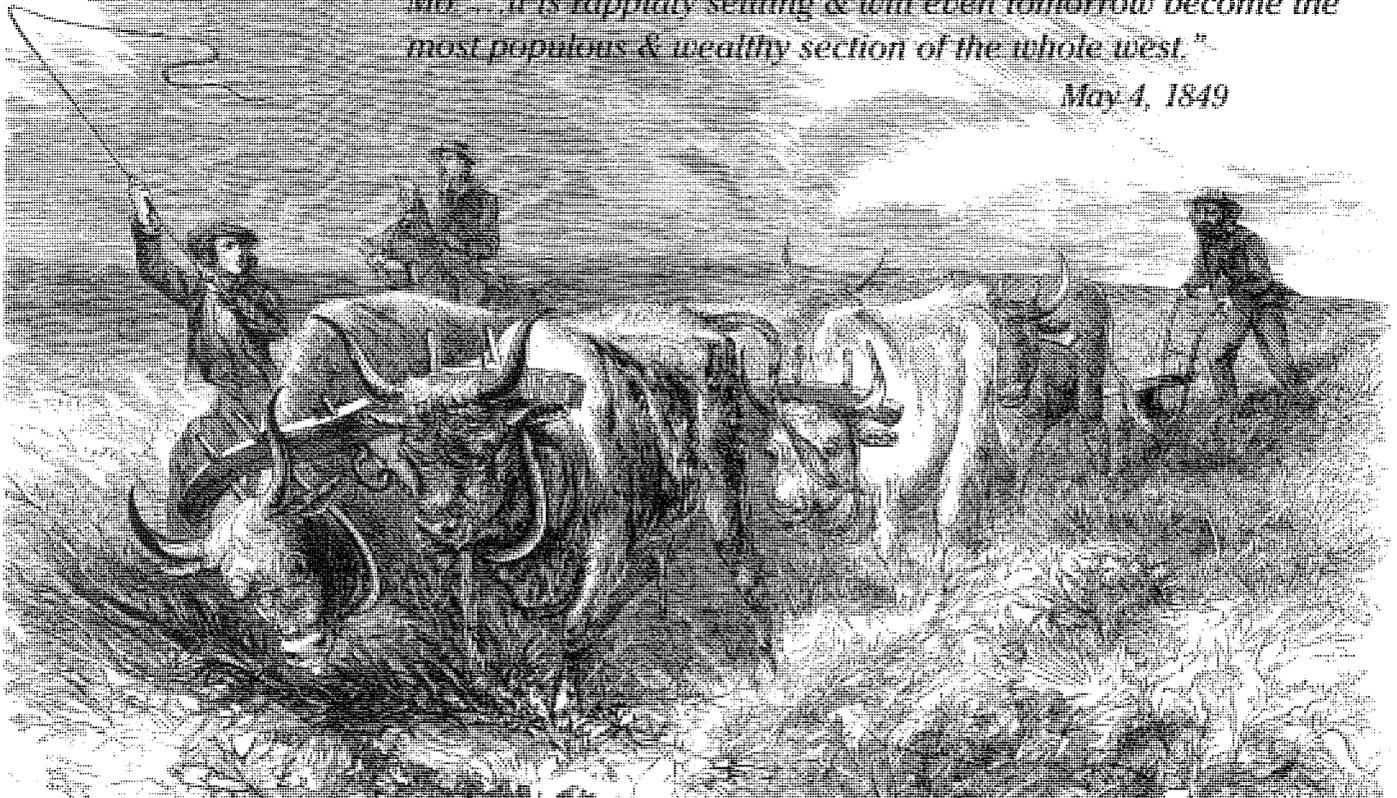
rainbow & auroral beauty. Crystalline streams as the little Platte the Nodaway & the Nishnebotteny handsomely fringed in emerald timber wind gracefully through _____ & invite with laughing eye & witching voice rapturous _____ the habitation of the pleasure seeking pilgrim while the less romantic but extensive prairie of ten feet soil promises to supply his every want to fatten his cattle & fill his barns for 180 miles along the Mo. it stretches its inviting arms occasionally holding out a gem like town with its busy traffic & industrious hum its noble court house & spired church its luxuriant tavern & gilded saloon & yet all this that one year ago was trodden by Indians only and that I now expected to find scarce better is rapidly settling & will even tomorrow become the most populous & wealthy section of the whole west. Its main want

is sites on the river for towns as from St. Joseph up river is no spot where the high land touches the river on this side for far away above the river being the dividing line between a high rocky bluff & the alluvial that was years ago the bed of the great Mo. This renders it nec. that the opposite territory should be soon appropriated by the States & it soon will be if our legislators can get to know the real wants of the people.¹⁷ But here now we are without any law no juries or *claim* of any kind extending its control over us. I have the disposition to respect each for the mutual benefit of all.

I lay yesterday some hours with my Buf. around me on this edge of the Mo. looking for a boat. I had with me my Spanish grammar but my thoughts following the course of the stream hovered about my Mary & boy. Oh powers celestial whose protection ever

“...extensive prairie of ten feet soil promises to supply his every want to fatten his cattle & fill his barns for 180 miles along the Mo. ... it is rapidly settling & will even tomorrow become the most populous & wealthy section of the whole west.”

May 4, 1849



Charles B. Darwin Diary, 1849

guards the virtuous fair while in Distant climes I wander let my Mary be [in] your care let her form so fair & faultless [be as] fair & faultless as your own.¹⁸

My Sister Elvira yesterday made me a present of a Book of Melodies for which I will often in the loneliness of the plains thank her from my soul. Oh she is a sweet woman all sphered round with delightful influences. May she ever be waited on by the graces & garmented by fleecy & feather footed clouds of radiant happiness. I must now to my Spanish book awhile. Dear, good bye Charles

Saturday May 5th 49

This day I have spent in studying Spanish & in reading the Era occasionally to Elvira. News from the fort tell of four interments today & five yesterday from cholera among the soldiers brought up from Fort Leavenworth & from Fort Childs. I have no doubt the cholera will follow us over the plains.¹⁹ Many a poor fellow far away from a dear wife & child or a good kind mother may breathe out his last agony with no one near when the eye is dimly glazing in death to whisper a last word of solace but the poor fellow turning to the eastern stars that beacons on his home afar Draws his blanket more closely around him and offers his emaciated bones to the wolves. Oh Gold what a God & what a demon thou art.²⁰

Sunday May 6th/49

I have just returned from the sabbath school. There were there about 35 from the pretty baby at the breast to the stout man of hoary hand & the domestic looking mother of *meridian* life. After singing a hymn a prayer was offered by Sister which tho I like her very much I did not deem appropriate not sufficiently plain & comprehensible for the little ones for whose benefit it was made. The exercises led to some remarks from which I learned that it was a custom among the Indians to procure mourners to officiate at the death of prominent persons by loud lamentations & that near friends have all [been] rendered poor by going

away & having stolen all their goods at the decease of a friend. If this custom were introduced into civilization would it not prolong the life of some married ones & render dear very dear friends _____ solicitous of the comfort of rich hoary hair [heir], nabob uncles, estated old maids & landed grandfathers. Death seems by striking the possessor to throw the property into the lawful possession of the first occupant. All freely expressed their opinions upon the subjects of the lesson & good feeling *prevailed* & no doubt much good will be done but oh what a contrast with a sunday ten years

*I love her more every day
& if I only leave lingering
in her bosom one memory
kind to me I will be content
for as a beautiful bird that
flings a rich song upon my
path & then vanishes forever
will I remember her.*

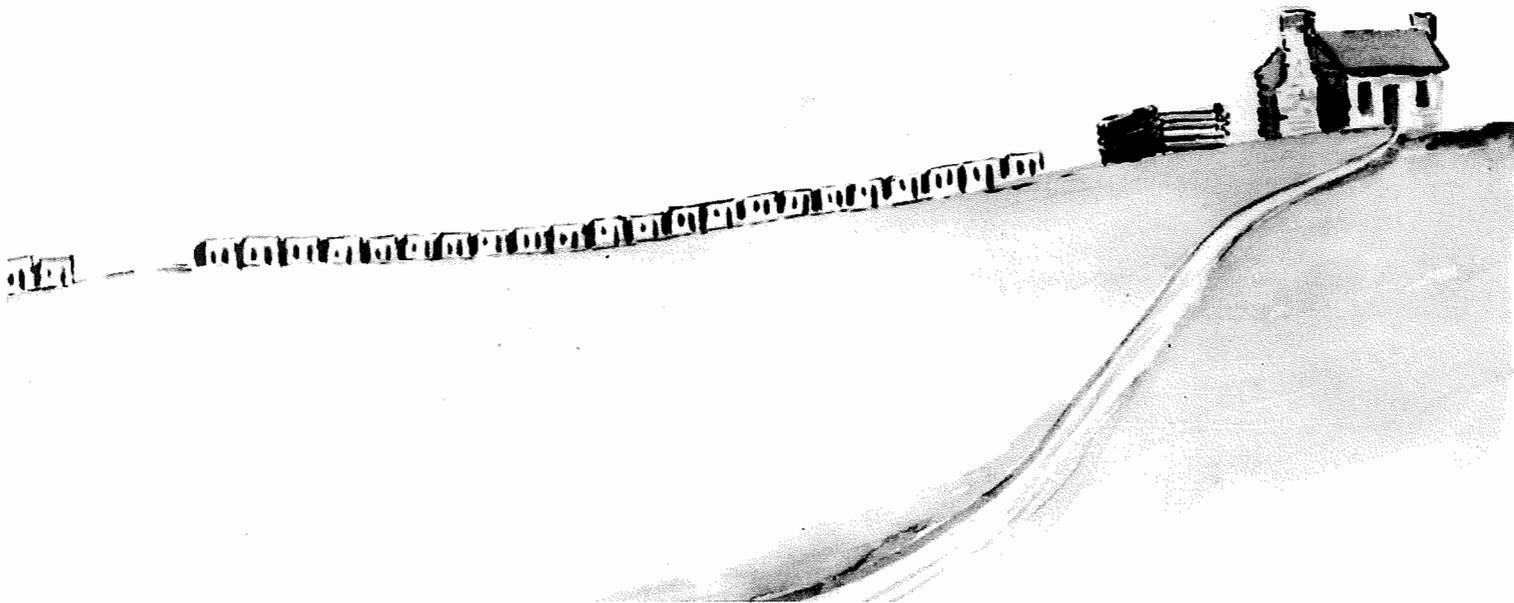
ago when perhaps a lodge of Indians yelled on the same spot. One cannot help think of this continually. I had proposed going to Bible class but having spread my Buffalo on the ground & taken the Renegade a novel of Elviras I became so absorbed in its inconsistent contents as to let the hours pass unnoticed. I went to supper & again spread my Robe & looked upon the stars. The moon wears a thin gauze over her face & only a few stars peer dimly thro. How much melancholy one can gather from an hours converse with the pale wanderer of the blue welkin vault. She looks so much as if abandoned by her beardless boy Endymion who used to toy with the rich *spaces* of her downy bosom.²¹ She had no other solace but to throw a veil over her fair forehead pearled round with stars & weep her way up to heaven & ~~then~~ down to her ocean grave careless of her path all paved with diamond constellations.

Good night my loves Charles

Monday May 7, 1849

Slight headache this morning from *many* influences last night. Have written ~~this~~ a letter home which will be sent with the long one I wrote on Thursday & the paper.²² May it get home soon. Elvira sits by me churning on her knee with a ladle which brings to my mind that some take on the plains cows & put the cream at morning into a jar in the wagon & find there Butter at night. A good idea very. A beautifully warm day this & all nature revives its green coat rapidly. Elvira has presented me a beautiful souvenir a Bible on a bunch of moss with the motto "Seek God" in Panee with her Panee name "Spuxspate" attached. I love her more every day & if I only leave lingering in her bosom one memory kind to me I will be content for as a beautiful bird that flings a rich song upon my path & then vanishes forever will I remember her. Yes as a bird of paradise all robed in radiant plumage with a throat pulsing with the rarest symphony that perches like a fairy dream upon your soul & cheats you for a moment with auroral gleams of heaven. She is a seraph woman. I like her next to my Diamond eyed Mary.

I have been down to the Fort [Kearny] over the river. It consists of a block house loopholed made of hewed logs two stories high & one set paralel to the Diagonal of the other so as to command all points. This at a little distance is surrounded by rows of small log cabins numbering perhaps 300 & were occupied by the volunteers during the winter before last.²³ The whole is on a high yet gentle acclivity & commands an extended and pleasing view of the Mo. below for a distance of five or six miles. The big prairie stretches in its rear & a thin strip of timber lies between it & the river. It is now in the keeping of "Hardin" & a large number of soldiers are there about starting for Fort Kearney (Childs).²⁴ The cholera is diminishing among them. Some in last night from the plains report wagons 70 miles out & grass good. Whippoorwills are working with all their souls till the woods resound



but I must to bed & up by times for the Bluffs. Good night Love Charles mountain Goodyear

Thursday May 10th 1849

Expecting to go with the Panees to their village on their return, on Tuesday in company with Elvira & George & Maria Gaston.²⁵ I started for the Bluffs. The day was fine & altho no marked incident lent novelty to our ride, yet the society & the scenery threw around it an interest that never before attended journey of mine. After ten hours of alternate trotting walking & racing sprinkled with a little footing we reined up before the Iowa Hotel kept by Mrs. Mary Gheen a jolly looking damsel of forty summers who spreads a quite hospitable table & to her guests is profuse of most generous smiles. Having then stabled our horses & flung a passing glance on the sights of the villa we directed our steps toward the ferry. The mud soup of the mountains here pours boiling through a very narrow pass but the light skiff under the sinewy arms of our Charon soon bore us to the craggy bank of the indian shore.²⁶

Oh in what strange contrast was the thrush-noted "sparkling & bright" from the throats of our ladies for whom we ground the discord, with the rushing torrent of Hell broth beneath us; the precipitous steps before us & the skin tents of the wild savage smoking in the distance. After proceeding a little toward the agency we suddenly found ourselves before a group of indians who arranged in a circle were receiving their annuity of corn.²⁷ In a moment all eyes were upon us & a surprised murmur of Spuxpate Spuxpate ran through the throng. Several of the prominent ones immediately advanced & in most emphatic manner bade us welcome. After a lengthy & cordial greeting we commenced climbing the bluff thickly strewn with lodges after the son of the big chief who was conducting us to the lodge of His father. Oh what a sight or rather millions of sights on every side rich rare & novel. The day was warm & those in the lodges having thrown aside their robes presented groups of copper colored nakedness in every form. There was the noble limbed & stalwart armed

& lordly chested. There was the pigmy-boned the puny-sized & shriveled-muscled. The mass of Bowels & the mound of matted hair. The cat-eyed withered hag of a thousand moons with her squint sardonic & her scowl so saturnine & there was the chubby cherub of a child of not a hundred sleeps with its little bead eye like a drop of light flooded with intellect & there was every attitude. The proudly swelling chest erect & limbs whose knotted muscles might have lived beneath the chisel of a Praxeletes or lent a ray of immortality on the canvas of an Angelo—a Promethean looking man that seemed as tho he might battle with Thigras²⁸ & there were the chinck of grotesques squatting on its *haunch* monkey like holding up its heap of shiny greasy bowels with its arms that seemed as tho they have borrowed from the kangaroo while its head looked like a stranger on a visit to that pair of *showiest* shoulders. Generally however both form & attitude was good infinitely beyond that of so many whites. Presently the lodge of the chief was



“I have been down to the Fort over the river. It consists of a block house loopholed made of hewed logs two stories high. ... This at a little distance is surrounded by rows of small log cabins.”

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before us. It was a rude semi elliptical arbor formed by bending sticks stuck perpendicularly into the ground so as to form a gradual inclination open in front & covered with robes for roof, a few small sticks supporting it in front.²⁹ On the ground upon some cut poles were spread mats made of reeds & robes. Before its entrance stood the chief who was expecting us & now I might as well throw down my pen for no language would express the eloquence of the old man's bearing. He stood a few paces before his tent with his hand upon his mouth as if to keep down the rising heart & awaited us. His form proudly erect loomed up like some Emperors or rather like some rugged tree of his own river forest. As we approached a little nearer he extended his arms in advancing and uttering an emphatic Lenah Lenah he seemed as if about to embrace sister & George & then gently drooping he grasped them by the hand all the while uttering the most eloquent music of mournfulness through which now & then ran a thrill of joy. I could understand no word indeed for long

there was no word but yet so soul-rent & expressive were the eloquent gestures that the grand whole is written upon my heart never to be effaced. His noble face was draped in sadness through whose curtaining now & then like glimpses of stars thro clouds gleamed a ray glimpse of gladness. After a few moments greeting he invited us to recline & we seated ourselves on the robes in his lodge. The chief sat before us & all around were seated or reclining others chiefs & braves while thickly crowded farther off stood the women with the little papouse upon their shoulder & the girls through whose midst ran a continual murmur of Spuxpate Spuxpate while their eyes eager for a glance of recognition sought those of sister. There was no loudness of voice but rather a suppressed tone & more dignity strangely blended with more intense feeling than ever marked the greetings of civilization.³⁰ For awhile the Chief seemed struggling for mastery with fountains of pent up emotions while he told how his breast trembled & he feared when first he heard we were

there for it brought to his mind his son the Sioux had killed whom he knew sister much esteemed. Also the two wives ~~whom they had killed~~ & the who had fallen by the same enemy. He had then mourned long for them & grief in a new deluge swept over his soul as those who had then sympathized with him ~~by the~~ brought back by their presence old memories. Soon however his mourning ceased & a wild burst of joy ringing on a merry laugh heralded the return of gladness & now like a boy he caroled to Elvira of his new wives. One he said had been the wife of Valki.³¹ You know her he says. It is not the lazy squaw. She goes about wooing embraces from every one whose blood is warm. Valki had another squaw with a crooked nose. It is not she but it is the other one & oh she is so very good & I love her so much. One he had whom he loved (as was natural) above all the rest who was young & whom he called his virgin squaw. He told too of their famishing condition of the neglect of their great father to provide them enough corn. But through all his subjects of remark

ran his characteristic eloquence of expression & tho as I said before I knew no word yet the muscle, the feature, the motion, the tone, the voice of the eye, & the soul speaking eloquence of every member of the man charactered forth as so many living *hieroglyphics* the poem that was being voiced out in his heart & I too was stirred beneath the mesmeric influences of the only ~~true~~ oratory I ever failed to criticize while being enacted.

They seem to love very much their children & he did not fail to suggest their presence to Elvira. After a time the squaws became more bold & advanced to exchange greetings. When pleased very much they hold their mouth & give vent only to low “ahonah” “ahonah” effusing the voice very gradually into the surrounding space & after shaking the hand warmly they draw down the hands & off at the ends of the fingers & when extremely glad rub their arms from the elbow down & the highest possible expression is to press them the arms against their breast.

At length as night was approaching we arose to go to the agency. Our way lay thru the village & on every hand the word was “Spuxpate Spuxpate” & the women on every side were pressing to congratulate.³² I for my part felt as honored with a triumphal procession for with the beautiful & truly loveable woman who was the cause of all this demonstration hanging on my arm how could I other than feel that a part of the glory overshadowed myself. On arriving at Mr. Allis’s ~~house~~ who is the Gov. teacher of the Panees we were welcomed & a supper soon spread for us.³³ Here were the little girls that sister had had in this with her Julia & Ima Jane & several others whom she had formerly at their village instructed among whom were many named after the family. One Mary Plat another Emily Gaston &c. They were very glad to see Elvira but to some of them who remembered old times the visit was a source of sadness & one Ima Jane wept & evidenced much feeling while she hung on Elviras breast anxious to go home



“The lodge was formed by a frame of ribs cone shaped about 15 feet diameter at the base & as much in height wrapped tightly round with buffalo hide without hair sewed together so as to leave an aperture at top for the escape of smoke.”

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with her But ~~the~~ circumstances did not favor ~~altho Elvira would~~ I visited with George Gaston. All the white persons of note residing there consisting of Indian traders, Sarpie, Papine &c the Major Miller, Panee agent &c the gov Blacksmith &c.³⁴ Most are French & living with squaws in true indian filth.

After taking supper George & I sallied out to visit an Indian lodge by night. Perceiving in one a light we stooped & lifted the skin door that hung suspended so as to swing easily & getting upon our hands & knees crawled in. The lodge was formed by a frame of ribs cone shaped about 15 feet diameter at the base & as ~~high~~ much in height wrapped tightly round with buffalo hide without hair sewed together so as to leave an aperture at top for the escape of smoke. In the middle was a small fire faggots brightly blazing & by the side thereof a kettle full of smoking hominy. Around

were scattered at quite regular intervals two women & eight men busily engaged in devouring with large buffalo horn spoons, that looked more like grain scoops, the contents of the kettle which process was not at all impelled by our entrance. The only recognition of which was a gruff “Lenah Lenah.” One woman was a complete exteriorization of the idea shakespeare offers of a hag & it needed little reach of fancy to picture the caldron with its bubbling & troubling hell broth.³⁵ She had shoved down her charge & now stretched her carcass on a mat with her feet to the fire rolling her horrid blear eye on us ever & anon in wonderment while her throat gave half voice to some grunt as she changed her position. The other woman was the squaw of a white man who reclined by her side (Cleghorn by name) of whom we will tell presently. Surely she would make a poor & very contradictory wit-

ness to the sufferings & starvation of the Panees this winter for she was fat & luberly as a south sea whale & if fried out might produce half as much oil. She served those eating & now talked Panees & now Omaha & now Otoe & then *pick* as might be the respective taste of her guests. Her personal appearance wardrobe would not act as a fragrance in giving relish to her dish nor would the graces & charms of her person supply the absence of statuary to amateurs of the art aesthetic.

Near her as before said reclined the fraction of a man that called her wife or perhaps only a squaw. Cleghorn has been for 30 years among the Panees a scotchman by birth he has almost forgotten to speak english & as I could not speak indian I had to converse with him in French which he uses "*pau alint*."³⁶ He has been translator but his place is now supplied by Deroin.³⁷ A strange man truly is that Cleghorn (or socka^he[~]e[~]k) a white man indianized, a tame man gone wild & as I conversed with him I was strongly impressed with the great truth that civilization is very much a creature of circumstance & little dependent on race or cerebral conformation. Among the other was one Omaha every hair of whose looked as if it saw a ghost. He had greased & painted it so that each individual hair stood on its own personal responsibility like as independent as a quill in a porcupine or a cane in a brake. He shoveled down the corn as if he wished to garner it up for a famine. One was an Otoe. Around his neck & upon his bosom was a profusion of beads & necklaces. I thought of the world famous diamond necklace of the French revolution tho perhaps this did not cost as many dimes as that did ~~collars~~ millions of eagles.³⁸ The rest were common place braves all feeling that they had a cavernous stomach & that in that kettle was the means of solidifying it. Remembering however it might not be if they delayed the active exercise of spooning to to say more than "Lenah" to the intruder. George conversed for some time with in

Panee the interpretation of which I know not & I with Cleghorn in French. He told me how poor the Indians were, how unsuccessful they had been in their winter hunt, that many had killed & eaten their horses, that they had stolen



"...now & then from behind the Buffalo robe... peeps out a bright little sprig of indianism with the copper of its face sadly smeared with grease & dirt... its little eyes flash like lynx eyes in brilliance..."

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horses from each other to eat, that many chiefs who commonly owned 30 or 40 horses had now but one or two & some none.³⁹ He told how formidable were the Sioux that the Panees were not going back to their village through fear of them but intended making corn with the Otoes.⁴⁰ That two or three of their party had been scalped in coming in. That something must be done for the Panees or they would soon become extinct as they were at war with almost every tribe of Indians on the plains &c. As the hour was advancing we arose &

with a Lenah in Panee & a *bonne soir* in french we retired & were soon in bed. The blanket however was no opiate for my excited brain & visions of scalps & buffalo hunts & painted savages & Spuxpate on my arm usurped the dominion of sleep until long after midnight had wrapped her somber curtains round the hem of Earth, or night had put her black hood on Bellevue.

After taking breakfast with Major Miller who made himself excruciatingly interesting & deputed me too to bear a message to Commander Ruff of Fort Childs (or Kearney) which I must not forget *Deo volente*.⁴¹ One went up again to the Panee school where sis Elvira had stayed all night & here was presented a truly striking group. Imagine what follows & you may get a conception approximating this reality. Your seat is against the post of a bed. On your left leaning on the Bed are the most uninteresting part of the group—the whites—such as may be seen specimens of every day without going to the museum or managirie. On the right & extending across the line of your seat, neatly clad in the apparelds called civilized, sit on a bench a half dozen girls of the school all Panees. They hold scrols of manuscript in their hand & are very smartly singing & oh how wild a gush of melody you fancy yourself hearing as you gaze upon the indian feature. They are generally bird-voiced & in truth make rare music. Behind the table against which they lean sits a row of squaws. You might have seen ~~some~~ one of them there a week ago, then occupied as now in lugging back a thicket of grease & hair out of the holes in her face that she very naturally expects were made to see thru tho perhaps few naturalists finding them so naturally glommed up with their head-grass jungle would so naturally expect that now & then from behind the Buffalo robe on the shoulders peeps out a bright little sprig of indianism with the copper of its face sadly smeared with grease & dirt thru all which however its little eyes flash like lynx eyes in brilliance & now one on its mother's

knee squatting on its little haunchs all naked as it came into the big prairie, looks enquiringly upon the crowd. One young Panee with hair all nicely pulled out of his eyebrows & chin & the red blanket wound closely round his form has been flinging love glances at the stareyed girl who had charge of the potatoe bowl & the potato he peels with his nails & devours ~~with~~ as he peels rewarded his self sacrificing devotion. On a stool before the form on which sit singers sits the quizical character who suprintends the school. He is a whole hudibrastic poem in himself tho no doubt quite innocent of any such intention. Perhaps no one syllable of said poem might be intelligible to himself.⁴² Thru the window darkened much already by construction glares a *dozen* eyes belonging to all manner of heads from the "peron" to the aged warrior all intent on looking at the *music*. On the ladders ascending the left is perched a boy looking squaw with legs all bandaged as if she wished to curb their growth. She has been some ten minutes very delicately trying to get down but oh dear the Gentlemen are sitting below & the wicked rounds [of the ladder] are so far apart. Stately as a *saw log* set on end below her sits a warrior. He has just filled from a smoke colored bag his smoker with sumach & tobaco & now extacises beneath its soporiferous inspirings. From the dark corner behind the door peer out 3 or four faces some bent jealously on the happy lover feasting his soul on his potato reward. More substantial than most lovers get, we deem it well here to remark, tho perhaps not sitting so well on the stomach, while others direct their furtive glances to the singers. They perhaps for the first time are in the mission house & but for the name of it would much prefer the buffalo hunt even at five cups of flour to the robe. Through the open Door looks a little _____ of heads some hairful & hairless some streaked with vermilion along the sagital suture & some stiffened up with grease all over, some cut short enough to stand up all round & some

cut so short as to stand up nowhere, some with a braided scalp lock reaching down the back & terminated by a clasp of tin or lead & some with a little hedge along the sagital suture & terminating with the apex of the head & all the rest shaved so as to resemble a cocks comb which remains black was perhaps further assisted by the bloody hue of vermilion.⁴³ The ears offered every variety of ornament from three & four inch festoons of pipestem wampum & long pendulous masses of old iron & brass in every grotesque form to gentle lady-like ear-drops & rings that seemed quite civilized & some with only holes in the Ear which make abundant promise of supporting future masses of hardware when the Gods should send it on. The colors of the faces are various some coppered by natures pencil some rather bleached by the white man's art, some ringed with red & some striped with vermilion. The neck gear was quite as contrasted, some uncollered by ought save the tangled tracery of copper veins & some were garmented all round the neck with tinselry, vast masses of beads, strings of wampum curiously interwoven with ornaments suspended between looking like a neck & breast plate of thickly embossed needlework. Arms too did not fatigue with sameness. Some wear leaden & some steel wristlets & some have belts about the upper arm while some by choice or nec[essity] wear _____ leather & yet other some making a majority ~~who~~ deems the ornaments that god had given them enough. Some are just a mass of buffalo robe hair out with an eye or two peeping over the top of the closely hugged robe & a foot below, & some have gracefully swung the robe over one shoulder while half the upper body stood nobly bare borrowing dignity from its nudity & some are ~~more~~ less attired than Adam when he frightened poor innocent Eve into stiching him a leather apron. But one peculiarity in common they all had a desire to hear the children sing the white mans songs & earnestness is seated on every brow & all save one

little one who had only ~~doffed~~ assumed the white dress this morning & ~~did~~ does not know how to fix her shoulders or her hands & one other who in the other corner ~~was~~ is *pinching puss tail* ~~seemed~~ seems deeply interested in the music & indeed it ~~was~~ is a sweet thought that those who now so beautifully chanted with so harmonious cadence the songs of gospel grace were but a year ago as savage as those who ~~stood~~ stand around painted naked & robed in ~~around~~ Buffalo. After enjoying for some time most exquisite pleasure under the influence of the musical charm whose note of most thrilling melody swelled from the throat of my sweet sis Elvira, we prepared for our departure.

Elvira in the mean time had been visited by several of the Braves & Chiefs who came to pay their compliments & tell over their grievances & now as we sallied out to leave several were thronging round some to congratulate & some to beg to [go] home with her. They had had, said the Chiefs, a strong mind to go down & see her & Lester but did not know the way. We invited some of the Chiefs down & are now expecting them. Two Braves came with us running along & keeping up with our horses who most of the way trotted. I procured from the Panees a Bow & arrows for my little fellow & from a squaw of the trader a pair of mocassins for Mary. As we progressed one after another arrested us to talk & in some of the women I found an expression of beauty I had before failed to perceive. Perhaps it was the proximity of conversation with sister. Perhaps it was the interest of the subject. Perhaps it was the natural expression of her mind but whatever it was in one the mother of the Girls called after Elviras sister, Emily Gaston. I saw a beauty that I have often looked for in vain ~~for~~ in the crowded salons of city fassion. Her features were quite regular a fine open brow stamped with candor stood over a pair of deep black indian eyes in whose wells you might read much noble thought, an aqueline nose delicately chiseled gave a thought

“...in some of the women I found an expression of beauty I had before failed to perceive. ...that I have often looked for in vain in the crowded salons of city fassion.”

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of firmness to the face, which was gently softened by the lips slightly parted through which gleamed a row of exquisitely enameled teeth. Her chin was very delicately chiselled & slightly prominent telling of the *line* she was breathing on her sweet voice whose intonation was rich as the carol of a nightingale & imaged so well the emotions of her bosom. Oh how an indians womans voice contrasts to with the artificial whining, or the affected whimper, the consumptive whining, or the silly lipping of a city belle-full, rich, ringing, silvery, metallic out-gushing like the wharb-ling of a bird or a flute note of the still echoing ear of night. Her neck arching like a swans over the swelling sphere of her bosom was bound forever to accommodate the man easily the cradle & child upon her back. The cradle was very like a clock case & grotesquely painted & in it the little pe ro n winded around with a buffalo robe so as almost to hide its little sleeping face. The child was lashed to the back of the clock case & it was fastened over the shoulders of the woman with a strap over her forehead. She seemed unconscious of the load upon her & jogged on quite unconcernedly. One I saw rocking her child who was peeping out from under her buffalo robe. It was a strange motion for an Indian. Something like one might be supposed to make if that impudent animal called a flea bit one suddenly on the upper extremity of the os humerus first on one side & then while dodging to get the afflicted part away as suddenly on the other, or an exact illustration might be found in the affected walk of some ladies of my acquaintance who imagine it lends a facinating grace to the swing of their petticoats.

On returning again thru the village the same suppressed spuxpate murmured on every side & many were the warm greetings. At length we were crossed over the river & after having dinner at the hotel where we had left our horses & looking round to make a few purchases we departed for home

having 30 miles to ride before us.

I had learned much of indian character & have formed a more favorable opinion of the Panees than on my other visit. The Loup band that we mainly saw are a body of men of warm feelings, warm to their women, warm to their children & warm to those who have done them a favor.⁴⁴ They may be & no doubt are implacable in their hates & inexorable in their revenge but that is incident to all strong feeling whether it dwell in the bosom of the white or from in the breast of the savage. That they are susceptible of civilization & refinement is evidenced by those in the school who in many respects will compare well with the pupils of village schools generally & many of the chiefs are aware of the need of improvement & sanction it with all their arts & it is to be hoped that ere long all will realize that in it is their sole salvation. Their fate is a sad problem to attempt to solve. Inveterate stealers of horses & ponies to _____ they are continually at variance with most of the tribes on the border & their number is every year very rapidly diminishing before the tomahawk of their enemies. It has been proposed by the Gen. Gov. to erect a territory extending from the Mo. to the mountains between lat. 40 to 43 & thus form a barrier to the northern tribes who are most savage & terrible that if the Panees were in the south side might *save* them if it is not *done* their star is fast setting. Vile agents & licentious lustful & avaricious traders & indianized men, so called, are however a much greater curse than all tcheratats (sioux) & the Gov. is kept in profound *ignorance* of their real wants. If they give them *an* annuity it is very apt to be in something no more adapted to their needs than a dogs whistle to an archangel. I saw one there by name Edward Paul who had wintered among the Puncas on the north of running water.⁴⁵ He said snow had prevented them taking any buffalo & had killed all their horses. Look out poor Cal. Fellow for many of you will be homeless & some may be worse. I have just now been told of 60 mules stolen

from a company & eight men wounded. The poor indians must eat & when buf. is gone unless they learn to make corn they will eat us & horses too.

After dinner our horses were ordered & being duly mounted we retraced our steps towards Civil Bend.⁴⁶ About a mile from the village we were addressed by a man at the way side who inquired our place of destination & upon being informed, he told us we were upon the

shrub oak—then taking a long & graceful curve, they swept around till they almost seemed to kiss the noble forest trees under whose shade we had just been refreshed—the whole scene the beautiful lawn, the springing, swelling, curving bluff with its fairy like groves & clouds hovering like angels over it—& the stately forest all smiling in freshness, conspired to rival the painters surest skill or the poets most exquisite

Vile agents & licentious lustful & avaricious traders & indianized men, so called, are however a much greater curse than all tcheratats (sioux) & the Gov. is kept in profound ignorance of their real wants.

wrong track. At this we had a hearty laugh as each one of us except Pucs cut sene had expressed ourselves sure that we were right, as we remembered the very turn in the road where we learned we were wrong, while he feared it was not the way. However we were soon righted again & trotted briskly on our two Indians keeping pace with our horses. As we entered the timber skirting Keg creek the ladies in our party being weary dismounted & delivering their steeds to the Indians strolled leisurely along while we rode forward at a slow pace practicing the war whoop which echoed wildly through the surrounding forest.⁴⁷ Before leaving the timber the ladies were again in their saddle & as we emerged from its shade a scene of unearthly beauty burst upon us. The queen of spring in her recent pupage over the long level lawn upon which we rode had spread cast upon it her robe of emerald brightness—the bluffs which long ago had been wildly, beautifully fashioned by the Almighty Architect, kept for many miles nearly a straight line with our path, while from their deep ravines & gorges bewitchingly perfect with *miniature* forest of

breathings. This shadowey view lays upon our ~~right~~ left for some miles when scenery became less romantic & sunset found our wearied party longing for home. The Indians often inquired if the house was near & upon being answered that the distance to it was yet a little long, looked discouraged, our horses that had pranced & raced seemed sober & took a steady homeward jog, while their riders especially the ladies looked vary worn & weary & as night silently & sweetly drew her curtains around us, we separated, sister & myself riding forward ~~sometimes~~ amusing ourselves by singing, conversing or listening to the musings of our own souls, as they spoke within. Sorry to have a journey of so full of interest & pleasure, end & still glad to rest our weary limbs, we arrived at home about half past nine; but were almost tempted before we alighted to make a circuit of a few miles that we might enjoy a ride in the mellow light of the full moon that had just peered above the eastern edge of our Protean ball we call Earth.

The above from the top of the last page was pened by Elvira in exchange for labor in the garden performed by

Charles B. Darwin Diary, 1849

me. How much better it would have been had I labored in the garden all the time. We had this evening a fine thunder shower, hail stones (rocks) fell as large as pullets egg & in large numbers for a few minutes & then all was fair again. The latest news from the Fort tells of two more deaths by cholera. I have had for an assistant in gardening today a wild Panee all naked but a short shirt. I learned a few Panee words so as to boss him about. He *don't* lose work but says Lester is _____.

Sunday May 13th 49

Yesterday while fixing for a start the Indian (Panee) came from the river saying that an ox was mired on a bar. I mounted pony for the 1st time & rode over to inform Dr. Blanchard & George Gaston who with myself & the Panee went *on* down carrying rope and shovels &c. After working some time with ropes fastened round the horns we procured from Mr. Lamberts 2 yoke of oxen (the creatures were his) fastening by chains over the head 2 long poles reaching out to dry land pulled the first of the ox & then hitching round the neck broke the log chain without in the least moving the animal after which I came away & do not know what else was done but I saw enough of Mr. Mud for myself making a spring over a little run onto what I had deemed a dry bar mired down knee deep at once.

A volunteer (Alexander) had had for some time illicit intercourse with a Mrs. Lord above here a piece when he was discovered & fled before the indignation of her husband & the community. Mr. Lord was about going to Cal[ifornia] & has since gone. He was extremely distressed but finally concluded to return to his wife who was to remain here in his absence. She made the most solemn asseverations of repentance & he left this morning. Alexander has passed going up there. The people some of them are out after him. What will be the result we will see. I move he be hung.

Monday May 14/49

Very heavy rain last night. May find

some trouble to get along today in some places but must start. Alex was warned not to again appear in these parts & seemed quite alarmed at the manifestation of popular resentment & retired. Traded Lu to Dr. Blanchard for pony & fifteen dollars. Fear to lose him on the plains. Pony is no doubt very tough. Was a present last year to his eldest daughter from one of the chiefs of the Delawares. Dont feel like writing any more just now. All dull & _____ heavens above.

Tuesday noon May 15/49 salt creek

Yesterday morning after crossing the ferry at the old Fort I immediately struck out into the trail.⁴⁸ Strange thoughts came over me as the wide prairie bounded by the mountains rolled before me. No object was in sight but after pushing out some few miles I passed several teams all intent on forming into company at the 15 mile crossing. Having passed them I was again all alone till having mounted a little elevation I saw of to the left in a ravine a number of wagons whose white faces lent something of humanity to the solitude. I did not stop however but traveling on I at night overtook a company from St Louis mules two & fore legged. Riding up to their encampment I said I would stay there for the night. They made no reply but I _____ out my _____ & throw down my Buf beside him. Looked independently on while they ate & I also my biscuit. I would have invited them for shame had I been in their place. After dark they brought all their mules into the corral & I staking my pony off about 300 yards by the stream spread my robe by him & laid down for the night. Altho I told their Cap. I was going to do so & suggested to him he tell the watch yet the cussed fools seeing in the night my moving to restake my pony fired on me. The ball whizzed close past my head & I sang out before they could fire again. I have this morning passed several wagons & some bad creeks an now land on my robe by salt creek. My pony will eat

a little. He looks rather thin. I did not pass the best possible night for toward day it rained. Large wolf shied off from the rode a little ahead of me as the ravine ran almost *parallel* to the road. I rode over a little *knoll* a saw him very gently trotting on. He saw me & looked wild while his bristle rose up. If my rifle had been loded I might have shot him as he was not much of road & came directly back to his feast as soon as I had passed. The grass has been generally poor on the Mo. bottom. It is a foot high & very good over the bluffs low & most just newly burned. Here is a spot of good & I will let pony fill himself. Oh Lord how tired I am getting of Cal. not of the road for I am alternately enraptured delighted & bewitched with its ever changing beauty. Round my *vista* are scattered numberless rose bushes & flowers. Many hues already enrich the enameled mead. Wild sage begins to be abundant but is yet small. Well I recon my horse is gone I must be off.

Camp at night

Salt creek is a pretty little stream of three or four feet deep & 15 or 20 wide said to run in summer salt. The bottom on the Mo. side is very wet & mirey & many teams are there encamped. Immediately on crossing the character of the land changes from very productive to indifferent. It is more steep in its bluffs & I was surprised to find some very large stone in it boulders. While the undulations were many of them very strong & the ground had exchanged its very deep jet Black for a coffee color while the grass was only just beginning to spring save in the ravines the same continues the case thus far. The land too is much worn by gullies & places are frequent where 14 yoke of oxen are needed to pull up a wagon. I have passed Pomeroy's head train & *peoples* who are carrying merchandise to Cal. *peoples* sells on the way.⁴⁹ Oh my God at what prices. Cheese 50¢ raisins 50 per pound. I bought a pound of each for I had no taste for my biscuits _____ as meal. Oh the variety of character on the



way to Cal. I am glad I am not going in truth. Ordinary Emigrants are linked together by a sort of brothership but these men being influenced by so direct a selfishness have started to get money & even on the way they think of nought else so that here on the praries you might starve if you had no money & having it you must pay it all for a bite. There are exceptions of course. Wolves were common today. Passed some soldiers at salt creek. They have lost some by cholera since leaving the fort. Every body is out of wood. They expected to find at least a little on the way but found none & cannot cook. Salt creek is riboned by a *thin* wood two or three trees deep only.

Wednesday May 16 49

Slept last night in the tent of a company from Platte Co. who like all or most from the southern states are gentlemen.⁵⁰ Slept well & feel quite rested. After retiring an hour or so the man Tim watching the *horses* cried out in very evident alarm that the *horses* were tearing up pickets very much

“the man...cried out in very evident alarm that the horses were tearing up pickets very much inclined to a stampede. ... It was only wolves & presently a pack of the fellows broke out in their emphatic short bark which they kept up in a circle around our camp for some time.”

May 16, 1849

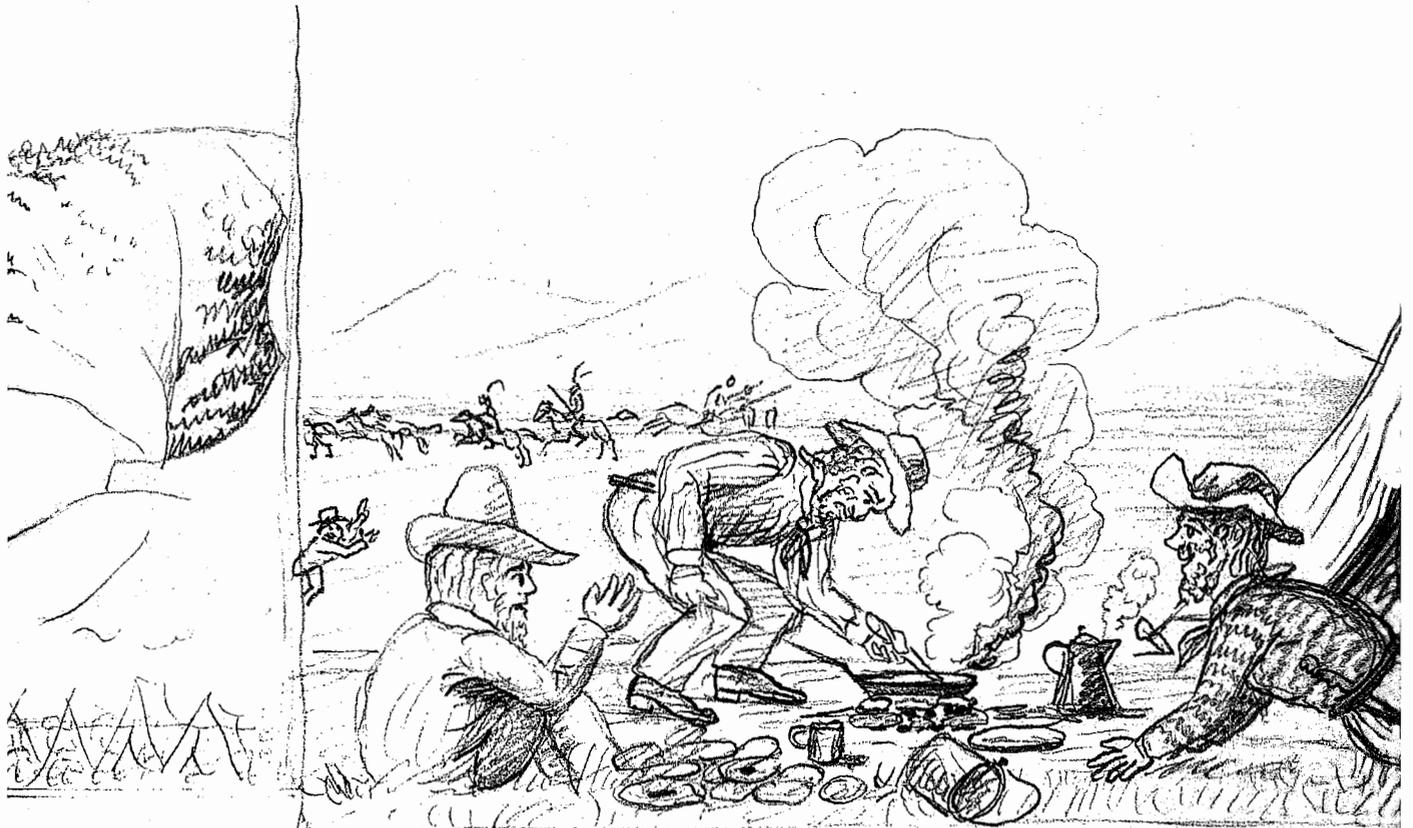
inclined to a stampede. He was told to go round on the backside of them. It was only wolves & presently a pack of the fellows broke out in their emphatic short bark which they kept up in a circle around our camp for some time.

Most of the men have been out before & told some adventures of much interest. One had a little Mexican dog he procured in santa fe which slept on his feet & made much show of fight in reply to the wolves. The men went some way up the creek & cut a solitary tree & packed [it] down for fire. A mule is running away & a man is off after him. These mules are the greatest of all fools & you can put no confidence in the ordinary instincts of mulality or horseality.

The sun is beginning to redden the east with his approaching smile & promises a beautiful day. I wonder if these men will invite me to breakfast with them? Of course they will. The Pomeroy wagons are just behind.

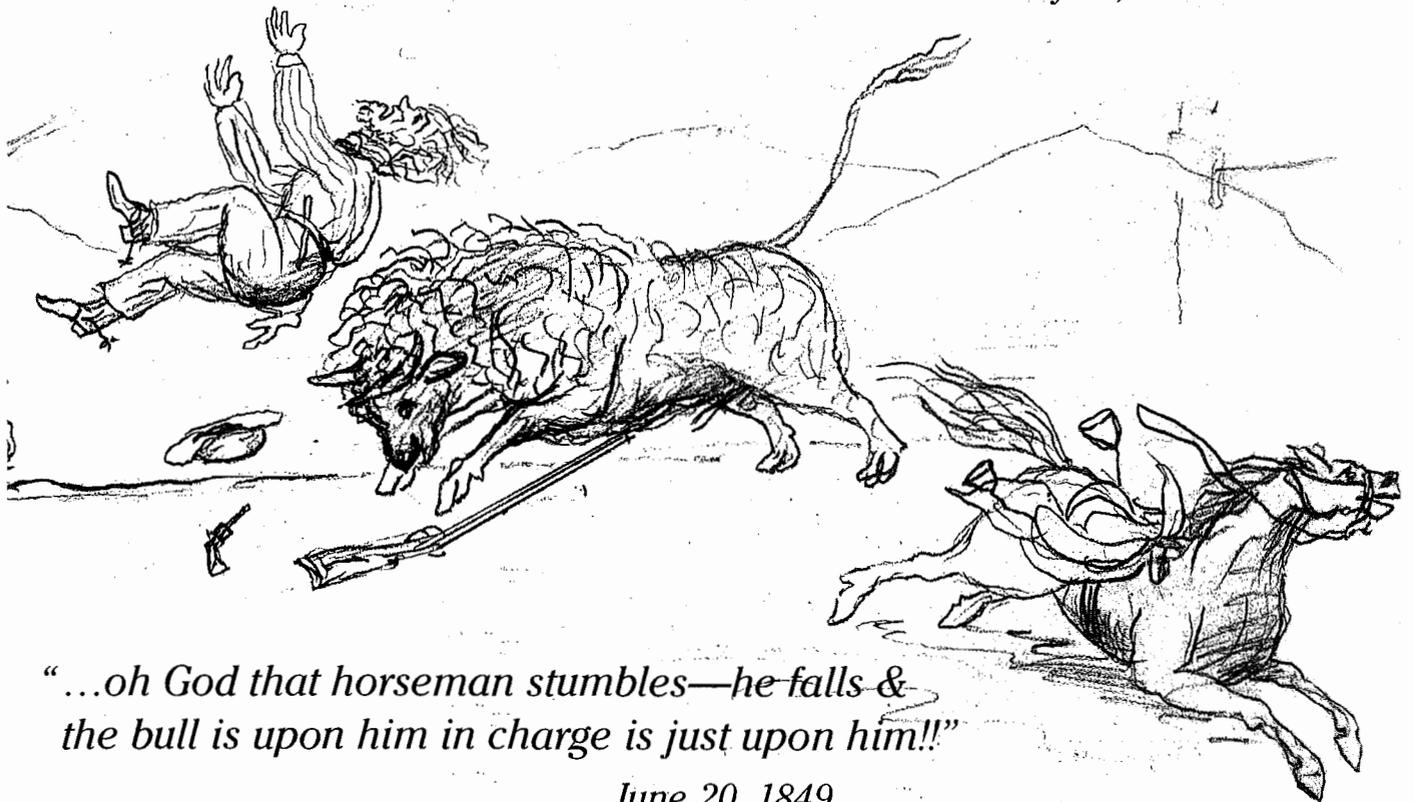
Noon

Those gentlemen did invite me to breakfast & invited me also to a sojourn. True gentlemen. I was on my saddle by sun rise. In an hour I came to a beautiful creek of very steep & high banks & a very thin fringe of timber nor any seen on the very water edge & all very large. Good place for camp. There had been a camp there lately & a wolf growled at me for driving him away from picking



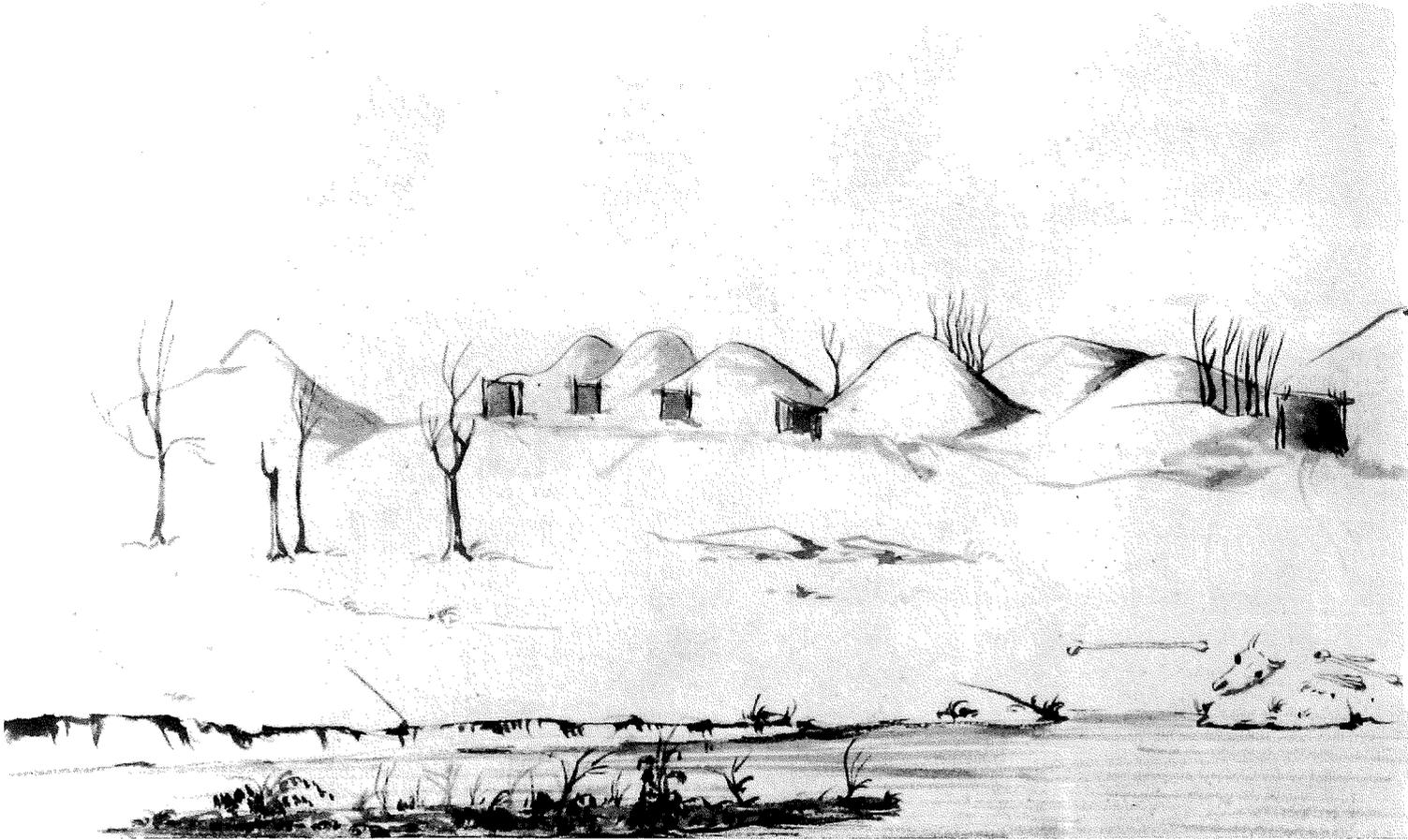
"Those gentlemen did invite me to breakfast & invited me also to a sojourn. True gentlemen."

May 16, 1849



"...oh God that horseman stumbles—he falls & the bull is upon him in charge is just upon him!!"

June 20, 1849



up the remains. Shortly after leaving it I got lost. The road I saw was very crooked & thinking a road that took off to the left to be a *nigh cut* I followed several miles till it had become lost in grass when I took its direction & stood off. At length I came to a creek of 40 feet banks & utterly impassible even for me alone.⁵¹ I then struck off observing the sun to where I supposed I must cross the road & I think I had to cross 20 of the worst possible ruts & mires out of which no pony save mine would have extricated himself. At length when I began to think of having to kill pony to eat I gained the top of a bluff espied the road a mile or two off & a little more jumping & dismounting & I was found again & swore never to leave the road again. The road for the last ten miles was under the top of high bluffs so that I could look over my right shoulder & see the way I had come & over my left & see the way I had to go. Many miles of road lay on ahead of me. I cursed out *loud*

_____ time in contemplating it for the last five on my right has been a *deep ravine* & trees in it & on my left far stretching a plateau ahead as far as eye can reach. I have seen no one this morning nor any new tracks. I expect to camp alone to night. I am now streached on my buff in a ravine a half mile from the road which I sought to find protection. My pony can get no water. Before me is raisins & cheese & my dry biscuit & I must eat.

Thursday May 17 49

My way yesterday afternoon lay along the edge of an elevated table from which I could occasionally catch beautiful glimpses of a rich valley of in the ten mile distance & it was lined down the middle with timber.⁵² Supposing it to be the Platte I often turned of toward it from the road but was obstructed by ravines. I was almost killed with thirst & when at last just in the twilight after riding all day without seeing a soul &

the afternoon dying of thirst thro a ravine I saw its glassy waters gliding on. I felt inexpressible pleasure & stopped to take off my hat for a _____ salute & oh what a fine sight before me. A valley 20 miles and all timberless save here & there on the Platte an Island of trees sometimes on its shore & again its middle the stream itself. 2 or 3 miles wide flowing smothly on while the plains on its two sides looked sweet as gardens richly carpeted with verdure. By Dark I had dismounted on its shores & was soon laid upon the grass talking big to a parcel of Indiana fellows who required me to play the mountaineer & which I tried to do perhaps sucesfully. Some of them had been wading the river. I tented with them & breakfasted & by day. This morn was in my saddle. My way today is up this valley. It is level generally bordered by the bluffs. There are several *rude* elevations collered over like sand drifts & from the top of them you may see *ahead* a day journey

“About 2 p m I saw a mass of huge somethings ahead for two miles & soon found it was the Panne village. ... On entering the village what Desolation.”

May 17, 1849



nearly. I am surrounded by flowers of every variety of hue all colored daisy blue azure white & pea vine roses &c. Am *reclining* in a ravine like place for dinner & grass. Have seen nobody since morning & no tracks have passed today. Saw some animal off not wolf—perhaps Elk—too far to see tho he run along paralel some time so as to see me—lips parched—skin black—thoughts of home—fine soil here—good pony very—must go for he has done eating. Grass is ____ good. Night camp

Well here I am as snug as a bug in a rug. My road all morning lay along the Platte varing in distance from one rod to one mile & the river was all the way skirted by trees some in occasional spots where *then I* saw the bluff on the other side. This afternoon the road has been all the way close on the river bank or bank is not the name for what is scarcely higher than its shore. If they did not seem like a rise to hold it in—such a river I never saw. Sometimes for a mile

the water not over 6 inches deep & the shore is skirted with willows but so undefined that you cannot tell what is & what [is] not shore. One million would not limit the islands. Some small as bird nests *set* in willows & some miles long crowned with forest but generally no thing large enough to obstruct the eye from the loup country. No trees except an occasional solitary one stands on the river—the grass is poorer much.

About 2 p m I saw a mass of huge somethings ahead for two miles & *soon* found it was the Panne village. On approaching a white glittering circle attracted my notice & on riding up I found it to be a line of 65 horse skulls all ball holed or broken skulled. They had no doubt been killed to eat. On entering the village what Desolation.⁵³ Some lodges burned tho perhaps no *survivors*. Most in a good state of preservation. They are formed by setting up a row of sticks in a circle 20 feet *wide* & about 4 feet high & around these are

packed hay & then mud. Then post from the ground inside ten feet high support plates which support rafters & which lays hay & mud several feet thick leaving a circular hole in the top & center for ____ & smoke. Long halls 12 feet or so are all made in the same way & all opening east. Bits of robes & rawhides horn spoons bow—saddle trees—shells—corn pounders & pestles—mats—bones shaped into chisels &c. were strewed around. I went into several & brought from one a shell for memento. The sious are not in the vicinity I recon as they would have burned down the village. Some of them *on stop last night* with the company who said they had been on a buffalo hunt. One was shot in the leg. They had good horses. 3 Indians were dead at salt creek. In this company are several from Adrian & one Henry French. I wonder if he is my old sweet-heart's brother. Perhaps so. We will see before leaving.

morning

Well we have seen & sure it is her Brother. Surely chance is a strange creature to throw thus upon my path one of whom I have heard so much & still cared not to see. He does not look like her save in the eye which has her sparkle. She is in Milwaukee living with a married sister there. He has been in O. studying & only left there a year ago. Henry his name. He knows all about me.

We are about five miles above the village. Before or near every lodge was a cache in the form of a stone jug in the ground 10 or 12 feet deep & 1 foot in the neck wide. Mats were in them. Stables are attached to many formed by sticking long poles in the ground close together & tying them with hide—about 12 feet square & as high. The village stands right on the Platte & the bluff here comes down to half a mile so that the Sioux might easily peep off the tops of those hills & see all that was done in the village. For miles 3 below & 5 above every little ravine & creek has been corned planted & places we would above all avoid as unfit & 24 or more distinct trails coming down through the sod follow the river while numberless ones ascend the bluffs in all directions I suppose to the corn patches—truly patches unfenced & irregular. The land around the village for miles below & so far above is of the poorest kind in the bottom. The Platte here runs through a number of runs over some of which you can step & none have any bank & is willow skirted. The mounds stand up against the sky on all the bluff tops.

Saw no one yesterday in my journey. Neither will I today as all the teams are at least two days in advance. Slept cold & getting up was afraid from his gentleness that pony was sick. He is a fine tough fellow & has gone over 40 per day since leaving with a heavy load. I am glad I did not bring Lu. She would have starved.

The river rose last night some inches. If it were to rise again it would inundate much country. A pale rose cheeked boy far more fit to minister in some ladies

boudoir lies by me asleep. He poor fellow with many an other will wish himself in his sisters arms or his mothers fond embraces before he crosses Sierra Nevada. Thus far things go well & all seems very lovely & contented but it will change before long especially after passing thru salt lake.

Friday May 18 49

Well this [is] so beautiful a place that I cannot pass on. The road here turns into the bluff which runs onto the river & I sit on top perhaps 500 feet high.⁵⁴ Below me flows smoothly on the majestic Platte beautiful in its verdant iles. Perhaps I could count near 200 some [have] a few shrubs & over magnificent _____ one stares down the river for miles over the top of its green head. The other shore looks green as an emerald just lifting its brow hairs breadth out of the water in their extension on into one unbroken plain till you look far into eternity. On my right afar stretch the long vista of water framed iles with the wall of *unbroken* bluffs forming protection. To my left extends for 40 miles the island forest set in water preserved by plain & called Grand Island at the head of which is the fort.⁵⁵ On my back *there* rolls the bluff the home of Elk, buffaloe & Antelope with deer & wolves &c. Bluff most wild [and] steep as to prevent grass rooting itself with valleys all verdure beneath my seat on the sod. Perhaps the ancient indian warrior sleeps for graves all along the hill tops are marked with skulls of steeds slain to use in the misty west. Above me is a clear sky & god to whom I now feel nearer than ever before & around me for a score of miles at last is solitude undisturbed by man save a lurking indian for who my gun lays by my side for use yonder where the eye fatigues itself with extent of *vision*. Elvira made her home & the *ghost* of Marcellas & Valk whom I will yet weave into story.⁵⁶

Noon

As I approached some Antelope bounded off from this spot & looking

down the ravine I spied a rich spot of grass so much so that a yard square of it would fill up a horse. It is the fringe of a little deep pool of water made deep by its fall from a little elevation. Pony does well. Very wild country most of the morning. I never was treated better than last night invitations on all hands to eat to sleep to drink & to breakfast. One man Barrie had had his finger shot off & manifested much fortitude. One Lovet was from Lenaway county Mic. & had left a hay farm for gold.⁵⁷ How lonely, some men would cry if here with me these last four days but oh I would not exchange them for a number of those spent in crowds. Now & then a head peeps up on the bluff. It may be Elk may be antelope more likely wolf & may perhaps be Indian (*Chernixy chemix*) enough to excite ones curiosity is all the times occurring deciphering signs distant objects sometime *transforming* themselves into wolves perhaps bushes. You can see so far here that perhaps a *pawnees* may [illegible line]. About a mile from the last nights camp I passed an old destroyed village. The corn fields extend full 12 miles up the Platte & even this far between 20 & 40 trails are worn down through the sod ~~perhaps~~ & bones are strewn all the way along & every now & then a skull of horse or buffalo or other. Storms are good for the prairie. The road was covered with birds further back—not now. No snags in Platte too shallow I think one might with a pole jump over it from island to island in some places. Pony says ready.

Sunday May 20, 49

Circumstances prevented my writing on *Friday* night or saturday morning & now having a little rested from my fatigue & excitement I will bring up my journal. On Friday evening I saw frequent signs of what I deemed Indians & had in the morning so much so as to cap my gun be when I reclined to my bite at noon. As night approached I became sure that Indians were lurking about & felt anxious to ride on even

after night & if possible to catch up to the train that might be ahead yet 25 or 30 miles judging by the signs about. The sun an hour high an object stood distinctly in the distance perhaps six miles from me as I approached it changed position frequently as if to command of me a better view while occasionally in the bluffs & on the reeds of the river & even behind me dark forms unlike Elk or Antelope & motions would seem observing. Presently as the distance diminished to two or three miles I could plainly see horsemen & now in a few minutes more they ride down in several direction upon me indians with all the gaudy tinselry of Indian wealth & lances & ~~four~~ insert with little banners floating pennon like upon it & all the habliments of savage war. Soon they were on me evidently by their manner intending to frighten me. They shouted when near enough to be heard home *in Tenn.* to which I deeming them Panees & having a little knowledge of Panee replied by a Lenah & as soon as I had given them in answer to their demand some men commenced telling them how much I loved the Panee & hated the Chararat at the same time with their spear I motion as if in striking an enemy & said by gestures that was the way to serve the Chararat a term of odium which the Panees give the Sioux & which I new would give me favor in their eyes by reason of the deadly hate for ever existing between the two tribes. Over all this they made while chewing my biscuit many manifestations of pleasure but with such an ambiguous expression of countenance & conversation as to very much perplex me & yet in my reply "Panee hi?" they would always reply "ahon" yes so that feeling I might be misunderstood I took out my book telling them it talked Panee & told by selecting words Spuxpate was my sister.⁵⁸ Now that would be an unfailing key to their hearts & that the Panee chiefs (naming them) had been to my brothers eating all together & that I loved the Panee very much & especially the Skeedee band.

Presently a change came over their face & they told me I must go with them into their camp where ____ said they is "Chari" which I took to be Charley, an Indian boy that had been with brother some time & who could talk some english & was very glad to do so as I knew that to be known was enough to secure the most generous treatment. After about a miles ride off from the road another benevolent looking one came out & met me who as he exercised some authority I took for ____ whom I had not seen at the bluffs & asked him if he was that chief. All my

sented [them] with some tobaco at which the circle of faces 12 feet deep uttered various noises & their limbs various strugglings so that a stout fellow with a stout whip ran around them & drove them back a few paces tho they soon closed again looking as if they wanted my head & as all this was mixed with dark looks at all my Panee words which some of them understood & told the rest & pregnant expressions Panee steeté & then drawing the hand across the throat & seeking out with a gyratory motion the scalp lock it is no wonder that I thought myself fool hardy in com-

I found then at once my condition alone no white man near in the power of the Sioux whom in language intelligible to them through interpreters I had been cursing for the last two hours while I had been lauding to the skies the Panees their enemies whom even now they were out to destroy...

questions were answered it seemed in the affirmative just as one may act interested yet when we do not know abt the subject of conversation. Soon as we approached within speaking distance he shouted out something & a mass of 1000 men & women & horses all kind of garb & all kind of weapon & all kind of dress ran out to meet me. In one clad in a red blanket I fancied I saw the son of the Interpreter & called on him but was mistaken. The one who now conducted me gave me into the charge of another who lead me on far into the company thro an ally framed in heads to one I supposed to be their chief a huge ____ fellow who spreading a robe on the ground motioned me to dismount which I did taking with me into the circle my gun & saddlebags. After being seated I took out some biscuits & pre-

ing alone especially since they refused to smoke with me tho passing the pipe all around. Presently one presented me a paper in english stating that "Bull" was a Sioux chief generally friendly to the whites & dated April / Scotts bluffs.⁵⁹ I found then at once my condition alone no white man near in the power of the Sioux whom in language intelligible to them through interpreters I had been cursing for the last two hours while I had been lauding to the skies the Panees their enemies whom even now they were out to destroy as soon & as consistently as possible. I changed my tune & in as much as the Panee stole their horses thought they did right in punishing them. There before me sat three or four chiefs on a robe each in turn attempting to make me understand his gestures while I in turn would try to

make them understand mine. Around in a dense mass stood 500 heads all intent on getting a peep. Several indians were brought to me, all speaking different Indian tongues. Judging from the *crowd* who attempted to talk to me they had some strange idea of me I would like well to know. After an hour spent thus in unintelligible jargon they brought me my horse. After mounting I thought I might perhaps trade & crossing my hands pointed to my feet. In a minute a dozen pair of moccasins were before me & for a few biscuits I procured four pair & started on my way. Some rode after me a mile begging _____ I gave some & went on.⁶⁰

Soon it became dark. No companies were ahead within 18 or 20 miles judging by the tracks & fearing lest they might come after me & steal my horse or cut my throat for the getting of my blankets I turned about to seek their camp about 6 miles back & now I experienced a prairie storm such an one as I will never forget. The thunder rolled in one continual volume of terrific sound tho its din was almost lost in the rush of angry winds that madly raged by blowing my horse absolutely before them while the lightning with occasional wild glare made the darkness more dreadful. After an hour of the most terrible exposure to elemental rage I came into the vicinity of their camp & now I was afraid lest the watch should shoot me for a Panee for what had a white man to do these late in the night & in a horse stealing night too when the storm drowns all noises & the rain hides the eye of the lightning so I sang She _____ boy as loud as my organs would steam up & soon was answered by a replying something & an indian led me to a little blaze to see my face & was surprised to see without some of my blanketts &c which I had left back feeling they might be stolen. He thought the Panees had been upon me. He took my horse & led him on hallooing till at last he stopt before a semicircle of squatting forms one of whom after some vane attempt to talk staked out my horse

close by & invited me to sit. The pipe then passed round & I with the rest smoked. They brought me taguski & some pounded stuff I know not what.⁶¹ Looked like meat. No fire illumined the dark circle & the lightning only gave me a view of the grim faces. We were sitting in a semi circle of which I provided the end & a long piece of dressed skin was laid over the back & rested on the heads of each so that as we sat we were supporting our roof & only shelter. As I there sat I gave birth to strange thoughts. One & another would take hold of my hand & put it in his mouth intimating he wanted something to eat supposing I had some more biscuit. Getting tired I told them I wished to retire & puting his hand on my shoulder he leand me over right there & lay down by me each in his & her seat pulling the roof over so as now to form one large sheet. Truly have I been beneath the sheets with several squaws. I soon reconciled myself to my position not expecting to sleep however & I was so curled up to be covered & to keep my legs out of the way of the horses that were staked all about. The rain too poured in torrents so as even to arrest exclamations of surprise from the indians & soon stood beneath me some inches deep while my saturated rope hung heavy & wet all around my neck & head & it was as completely soaked as if I had been in the river that flowed nearby. So it stormed all night & oh I was glad when I could see a little gleam of twilight eastward. We got out of our pools & soon was in my saddle having first presented the chief with some tobacco.

On arriving at the coming in of the Ind & St Jo roads I found a vast number of wagons hundreds passed on & was soon at the fort having made the quickest trip ever yet made *from* Fort Kearny 5 days 200 miles.⁶² The fort situated at the head of Grande Island is a mass of sods thrown into a form to which they attach the name house stable tavern _____ &c as the case may be.⁶³ The house in which I taverened is on the inside

plastered with sheeting which is fastened with short wood pieces into the sods & very gracefully hangs in festoons occasionally both from sides & ceiling. The floor is prairie mud covered near the fire with buffalo robes hairless & the ladder upstairs is pegs drove into a pole which pole serves to support the roof which is very heavy being of sod also & now occasional *remaking* on account of the rain. The people I like very well from old lady two blooming daughters though a good many women look blooming after a man has been away from his for 2 months. The board is good enough. Much food can now be bought cheap as the emigrants have too much & are throwing away some have thrown away half a ton of hams on the grass. Pity but the starving Panees knew it. The _____ too are of sods. There is no grass near the fort all bare. 790 wagons have already passed & 150 is the average daily.⁶⁴ The wind blows so that is almost impossible to ride or put on a saddle or keep it on save by being in it & ballancing. I have to sleep on the ground floor on my robe & blankets & hope I may not have long to stay.

Yesterday the Sioux came up from their war excursion & stayed awhile at the fort. They had charged up in their way upon some wagons who like fools fired upon them. Luckily no harm was done & they were soon reconciled.⁶⁵ They are the finest looking men I ever saw & all very well clad. Quite opposite are they from the poverty stricken Panees. Leggins of all descriptions some plain broad cloth some one mass of beads some hung with the most faintastic tasal of *hairs* or skin. None were bare legged. Moccassins too of the neatest finish all nicely beaded or porcupine quilled & set with costly jewels & rich vested too adorned the body some mailed with beads & wampum & heavy as a coat of armor & nicely fitted to the muscles of their *hairy* arms & chests, which swollen with lofty bearing gave them a noble mien unknown among the luxurious sons of ease & dissipation. Blankets too of all

Charles B. Darwin Diary, 1849

manner of hues scarlet & Blue & white & Black & striped & robes wrought in all form of beads with every strange Indian-o-glyph & star & painted. The head was mostly bare but some had splendid comfortables wound around them & what an abundance of horses & mules perhaps every one big enough to ride has 3 or 4. The bridles were generally neglected but the saddles were sometimes richly beaded & had long tassels festooning them. The weapons long lance 10 feet or more & of iron perhaps 2 feet & sharp & terrible looking tho on most were chunks of pork the emigrants had given them. All had bows & quivers & some sabers. The squaws you knew by the hair or weapons. They were dressed as the men save that some had a *shroud* or peticoat of skin cut & fitted in most fantastic form. I sought to procure one but could not as she intimated she would be naked without it. The men are tall & well made & intelligent browed fine eyed. The women are fair kind featured chaste & affable & not so *distant* as Panee women tho infinitely more virtuous. Horses poor as they always go a gallop. Dogs too are in requisition & are mixed with wolf. They drag after them the poles (for I [know] not what) which are fastened to the neck & hang on the ground on the other end. The horses too some of them have poles like shafts dragging on the ground behind them and on them are robes & so & _____ food is carried in bags on which oft much labor is spent. They are attached to the saddle horn. When all these many hued groups are stretched over a mile of prairie in continual motion I can think of nothing not even the kalidescope, more changing in ever *rising* beauty & even enchantment. All manner too of voices those of gutural voiced, noises of pure tones, some of full powered men _____ of little ones chiming in to strange _____ many with the savage charm of Dress imposing motion. Altogether I never saw a more interesting spectacle.

A trader last night from Laramie told some interesting anecdotes of them.⁶⁶

One wanted a recommendation to white men which before giving him he made him swear not to injure white men or to steal. He laid before him a knife a buf horn an arrow & a ball. Now you know said he these are all medicine. If you are false this ball will



“Yesterday the Sioux came up from their war excursion... They are the finest looking men I ever saw & all very well clad.”

May 20, 1849

pass all your land & kill you or this arrow when you are strong on the chase will pierce you from your own *groin* when your horse stumbles or this horn when you are after buffalo will enter the flank of your horse & kill you or if you escape all this your wife jealous of some more favored one will by night drive this knife into your sleeping side. All this will befall you if you violate your faith. He says the women are very chaste & the way their virginity is tested is thus. A great feast is often made & all mariagable females are there. A dish of fruit is placed in a conspicuous position & all virgins must eat. If one attempts to

do so who is not a virgin he who is cognizant of the fact must go & prevent her eating when she is *hissed*. But if she eats she then approaches a high pole the middle of the circle & strikes it with the palm of her hand while all applaud & the chief makes a talk on chastity to both young & old women. The men are bound by the religious rites of the feast to prevent those eating if unchaste & the test is certain. Would it not be very improbable to have such a test among white ladies whose blood is less icy.

On my ride here this morning [May 20] to see to meet our wagons.⁶⁷ I have passed perhaps 200 wagons of all kinds some slowly droning oxen some sprightly Stepping mules whipped up to *heart most* speed some pack mules & some pack horses & some pack men—all sexes—the stout strong man & the big brawny woman the old too & young the gray beard old father of 60 winters & the boy of no more than six—mostly youth in bright hope of a golden harvest—many families—women in wagons & women on foot & women on horse aside & astride, pistoled & knifed & belted & rifled—some in mens garb some old & haggard & some young & beautiful going for the vilest purposes— & some who will give birth to the load living in their wombs ere they get 100 miles while some will hear their infant first cry when mountain cats & bears can give an answer. Some going yet in the embraces of a bride & blushing from the bridal bed of grass eve like & some wooing for the daughters that they fain would have another case for some old men with just enough of life to live whose eye as it dwells on golden vision & thinks of the years of abject toil long passed for nought but scorn blazes like a meteor & their stride is longer while the bosom big with hope swells with a newer life & some who know not why they came but that they find a yearning for adventure so it goes this world. Long far as eye can search miles miles away where only bison trod before or indians stand the foot prints of the civilized fast becoming not so all rushing dashing



“I have passed perhaps 200 wagons of all kinds...the stout strong man & the big brawny woman the old too & young the gray beard old father...& the boy...women in wagons & women on foot & women on horse...pistoled & knifed & belted & rifled...”

May 20, 1849

madly hooting burning for gold their God. Again I am glad I do not go—100 of miles one mass of living men, a blind folly seems to influence many & mad to go speedy least their god should be clutched by other fingers. They are throwing from them tons of food they will die for want of ere they reach Sacramento’s shore.

On my way here this morn (here 9 miles East of the fort) it was interesting to note the remarks made by the different individuals. There see that fellow now I tell you Bill he knows something of these parts. He’s a trader & knows indian like a book. See his skin clothes. Say Mister are there any Injins above here are they dangerous? Do you think they would kill a white man? Your lately from the mountains arent you? Oh Ma

see there that indian. See his whip. He’s a Sioux. Will he hurt Ma? Hush my child hell hear you? Oh but Ma just do look at his coat! Say my good man you be from the mountains I reckon and you meet many injuns. Is the grass better above? Have you any moccasins? Any buck skins? Holla haint you the man what carries the mail? I want to send a letter back to my folks! Are you going to the settlements? Oh turned back that isnt the way to Cal. Many trains ahead of us. Any body live at the fort any chance to trade a horse there? You been all thro this country haint you & can you talk injun?

At this spot I took a rest and laid back on my blanket when presently a man rode up. Said he if I had not come you would have had a fine shot. I

looked up over the little hill side & saw a fine antelope bounding off who had he pursued his course uninterrupted would have bounded near me & been a very welcome visitor. Pack mules are the policy. They go ahead of everything without difficulty. If ever I go to Cal. I will pack. Wrote home to Mary this morn also to Waddy & to Elvira.

**May 22nd Tuesday
30 miles east of Ft. Kearney⁶⁸**

Stayed all night with a company from Cooper Co. Mo.⁶⁹ Had good fare but cold sleeping not having my Buff with me. About midnight a cry arose of stampede & the guard cried out they heard womans yell in the distance. I hated much to go out into the dewy grass moccasined only. Several mules

had pulled up stakes but my pony was quiet another instance of his good sense. They continually perplexed me with questions of the route taking me from my garb to be a mountaineer or trader. I pass with some for an Indian. They told of some mules being stolen by the Panees on blue [River] & of several of them having been killed. This country between blue & Platte is more level than I had anticipated, tho grass is poor & _____ abundant. Can hear nothing definite of our teams. Surely Bus is not alone. One continuous stream of *emigration* pours on 200 wagons per day. 1500 have passed & those coming on say they are ahead of nearly all. Oh the horrors of starvation & their flood. The Sioux do not paint nor bare their _____ & thus differ from the Panees.

Fort Kearney Wednesday May 23/49

Yesterday continued on to Blue & there hearing that the wagons were as much as four days behind. After staying all night with Duncan Peck & others from East Tenn. came back to stay here [until] there coming be it long or short. Rode part way back with Major Chilton who comes to take command of this post in *stead* of Ruff who is assigned to Fort Hall.⁷⁰ He had his _____ & child with him & while in his company I had a fine facility to learn something of military self esteem & contempt for anything peaceful.⁷¹ His wife is a smart looking lady & seems quite resigned thou with sorrow to a stay upon the lone praries in the house of adobe. Poor soul I do pity her as I do all military mens wives as also the men themselves. He report the cholera as raging terribly in his *rear* having counted 25 or more graves saw three out of many interred in the same grave. Many cases occurred on this side of the Kaw many miles.⁷² Oh I have no doubt the scourge will break out among the poor fellows & many will close eyes of *saddnes* far away from friends with none about them save those who are too much interested in the yellow glare before them to have one thought for the poor sufferer before them & *only* to roll



“They continually perplexed me with questions of the route taking me from my garb to be a mountaineer or trader. I pass with some for an Indian.”

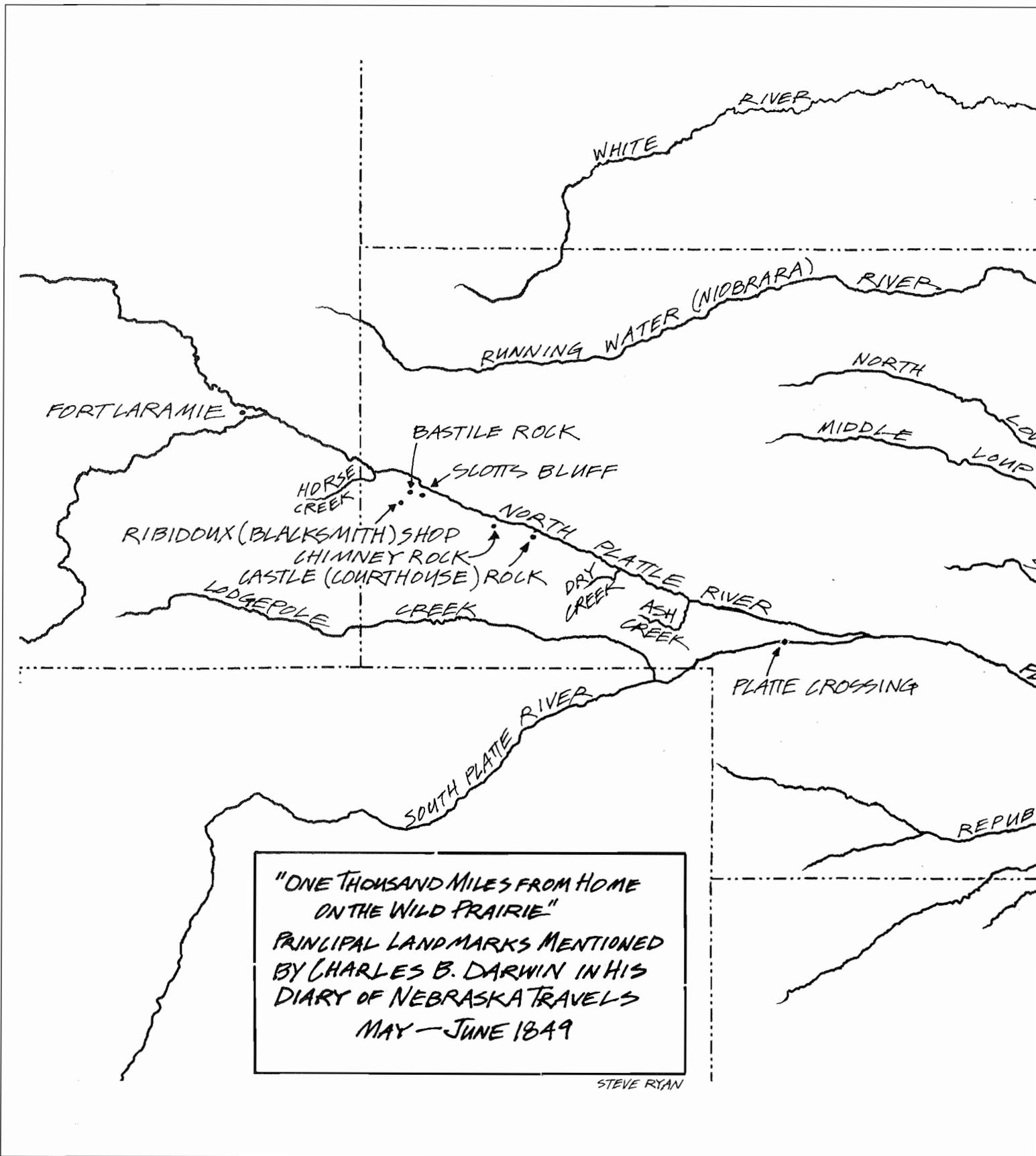
May 22, 1849

his carcass out of the path to gold. Accidents too are of very common occurrence. One man was shot through the heart. Another for whom now sits a man after a weapon by my side was shot through the shoulder. Another Barrel had torn of a finger & several other accidents of a similar kind all *through* carelessness in handling weapons or in Drawing them out of the wagons.

What contempt is heaped upon all

the emigrants without distinction by the officers here. One honest looking old man who was perhaps a substantial farmer in his home county & whose integrity was sought after to fill various offices of honor & trust was “whoohawing” along hatless. Oh look there! There is a specimen of the Emigration says one to the other. I looked & could see naught to remark save an honest countenance & a bearing of determination to go ahead in his undertaking & no sign that the hatless old man was in real manhood a particle behind his censors. True he did not wear *broad* cloth nor was his jacket brocaded & gilded but then I remembered that was no absolutely essential component of a man having once on a time seen one recognized by all to be a man divested of all clothing & remain a man not withstanding contrary it is true to the expectations of many but quite demonstrative of my theory while on another time I saw an _____ habited in finest fustian & epulettes & with sabre dangling by its side & yet no gods image sat upon its brow. The time of estimating men according to the cut of their coats ought to be passed in this wild wilderness. It is cursed enough to damn any nation that in smoking & in festering cities the maxim is admitted then man no longer made by god is struck of at the mint but oh how much to be deprecated there wherever an Epulettes glisten the principal *for* axiom of such dellettantum faith should be propagated & especially to be deplored that this should be done by those styled the defenders of the Republic. How much rather are they the assulters & destroyers of the republic while they are the erectors of monarchy & aristocracy.

Several stories are told of indian depredations. Three Panees attacked a man who was alone & took from him his horse. A large party attacked another band & took away sixty mules & wounded eight men &c. The St Joseph Ind. company say a poor Panee came to their camp on Friday night last shot thro the thighs & they fed & clothed &



FORT LARAMIE

WHITE RIVER

RUNNING WATER (NIOBRARA) RIVER

NORTH MIDDLE LOUP RIVER

BASTILLE ROCK
SLOTS BLUFF

RIBIDOUX (BLACKSMITH) SHOP
CHIMNEY ROCK
CASTLE (COURTHOUSE) ROCK
LODGEPOLE CREEK
NORTH PLATTE RIVER
DRY CREEK
ASH CREEK

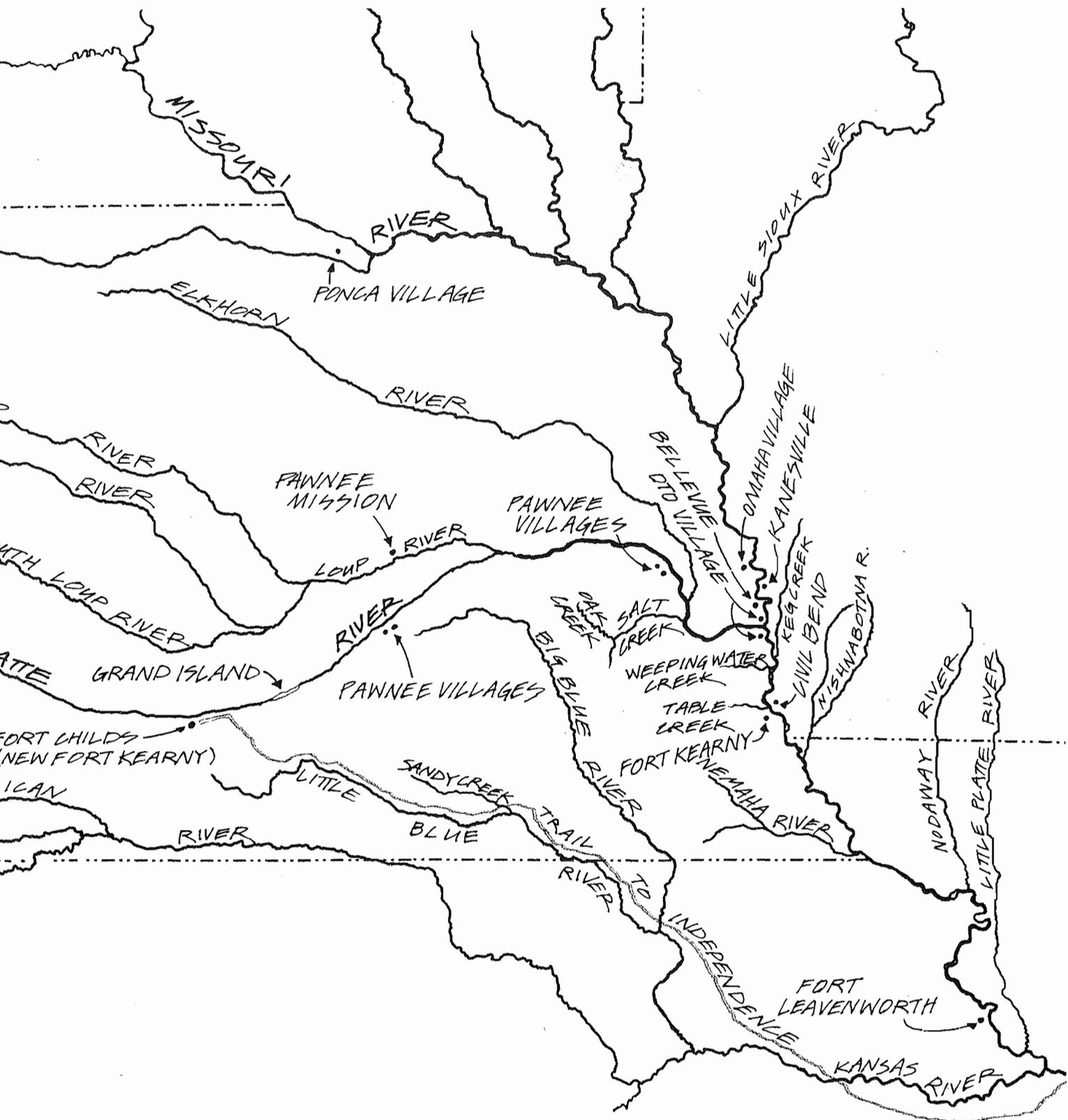
PLATE CROSSING

SOUTH PLATTE RIVER

REPUBLICAN RIVER

"ONE THOUSAND MILES FROM HOME
ON THE WILD PRAIRIE"
PRINCIPAL LANDMARKS MENTIONED
BY CHARLES B. DARWIN IN HIS
DIARY OF NEBRASKA TRAVELS
MAY - JUNE 1849

STEVE RYAN



Nebraska History – Summer 2004

nursed him & when they left in the morn they brought him some wood left him some provisions that soon after they had left their camp they came across a band of 40 Sioux & some of them told them of the Panee & they started on a gallop down toward him but they say they learned by another company that some of his tribe had taken him away.

Kearney Thursday May 24 / 49

On my trip yesterday I saw large quantities of pork & beans &c strewn on the way side. Grass is infinitely superior on the lower portion of the Platte to that on the upper *end* leading from St. Jo. or Ind. & yet those on that rout say they might have safely started on the 25th of April.

Kearney Friday May 25 49

A most terrible rainstorm continuing all night without intermission so as to pour through our mud roof & put us to much inconveniences as we were compelled to sleep on the floor. Perhaps 100 persons stayed here either to get supper or breakfast & to sleep. A most motley company they were all manifesting much displeasure towards the officers who conduct themselves toward them with a very offensive manner of whom I must on a future occasion make some remark.

Kearney Saturday May 26, 1849

I have this morning been furnished by Lieut. Woodbury with the Distances from Fort Kearny to this post which are as follows⁷³

From Table Creek to good encampment on the Nemaha	20 miles	20
Head of weeping water	14	34
Branch of Saline	14½	48½
Saline	7	55½
Cottonwood Bridge	16	71½
Oak Grove	20	91½

Foot of bluffs of Platte	17½	109
small stream near Platte	7½	116½
Point where roads returns to river	15½	132
Good Encampment on Platte	8	140
Panee village	8	148
Pt where road enters Bluffs	17	165
Encampment	3	168
"	21	189
"	13	202
Kearney	25	227

in Lat 40 38 Long 99 On the road on the Divide between Oak Grove & the Platte take the "cut off" left hand road & on descending the bluff take still the left making for the Platte obliquely. The table of Distances corresponds to the old route. On leaving the Mo. for several miles the land rises in some places quite abruptly but no where offering serious impediment to wagons. The grass not very good too dry. How fine the Mo. rolls off to the right. You cannot see its form but you know it to be there by the valley forest & by the huge wall of bluffs framing the opposite side of its vale many miles away but yet gorgeous in the sheen of sun beams sporting on their velvet hanging or straw *colored* tapestry richer than Damascus curtains.⁷⁴

After a ride of 100 miles a deep valley seemed occasionally in the far distance to fling glimpses of its loveliness towards me. Level as a floor was the table on which I rode & broken by no interruption. The land I had left was extremely bluffly & now as mile after mile I marked on the table & ravine after ravine to the right gave me views of a deep wide & timbered valley. Curiosity was all awake to learn if or not it was the Platte. A vast column of smoke away far away indicated the hand of man but whether of savage or civilized ones only vague conjecture. Miles & miles I rode after that *colum* of smoke but Distance did not diminish & weary of the search I struck back again to the road, on & yet on, no human face breaking on my

solitude & wolves & antelope with now & again an Elk only giving motion to the eye. Expectation all the time demanding of every ravine a solution of the Platte, or no Platte, problem till at once on approaching an edge bluff like a vision of Edon rose or Stretched before me miles up & miles down the wide spreading Platte. Oh what a splendid valley.⁷⁵

At length the Panee village arose in the distance. I have before spoken of its construction & corn fields. Nothing of interest save the Sioux encounter occurred & not at all fatigued I arrived here only wishing the season had been later that more prairie hearts might have blossomed upon my way. I neglected to remark the very peculiar conformation of some of the bluffs. They seemed to sit down on an inclined plane having very regular bases but were so irregular in the top that I had thought even rock could not have thus resisted the winds ragged brows as rough and grassless & so steep as to be inaccessible often, while in a strange imitation of art sometimes they were thrown together so as to form a vast arena while one arose in the center as for a forum from which the thunder throated orator shouted words of fire to those below perhaps the titans when he was with the god held sublime conclave there or the more real Indian when his wronged bosom swelled with bitter hate at the white robber & his encroachments might there gather his brothers from a wide continent & with a lion voiced shout to them the cry of liberty—liberty from pale face thralldom—liberty to live & or liberty to die as monarchs or as men.⁷⁶

Many I am told are returning on account of cholera &c. A Mississipi train of twenty lost ten & then returned. Several have on their wagon such chalking as two left & here we are, one left & here I am &c. The chol. [cholera] has no doubt been very bad among them—hundreds must have died. The weather is becoming more mild & people can endure being in the open air & not lose a man.

I saw by accident the Panee woman

& boy who were taken by the Sioux. As soon as I told her I was Spuxpates brother itahe katutu she became very communicative & by signs longed to tell me all about her flight her husbands Death & her boys captivity.

**Kearney Monday
May 28 1849**

Well the cholera has at last caught up to us. On last night seeing three men carrying a coffin a little distance off on enquiry I was told that that company had the cholera. I was a little alarmed & did not with my characteristic curiosity wish to approach but being told they were from Mo. near the Fort Kearney & thinking they might be some of my Brothers neighbors & learning too that

them. Perhaps he felt the bitter neglect of hundreds near who might. Did they feel the throbbing of *pity* in their bosoms render kindly assistance when I am sure heaven would bless his poor wife bathed in tears pressed to her bosom that seemed dried by grief a lean babe & the warmth of her embrace said much of her life & her fear. Two others were sporting heedless of their mothers pangs in the ashes where a fire had lately thrown out its cheerful glow but for want of fuel had perished looking a sad prognostic of the fate of the lone sufferer in the lone wagon on the lone prairie with none but the lone wife to weep the lone tear. I told her to call me at the house I[f] they wanted help in the night. They came not & this morn I went

written from this post six letters thus far to my Dear wife. Oh that I could see her & my sweet boy. How much I love them I never can fully know till after a separation of a short time. My curses on the mania for gold.

**Fort Kearny
Thursday June 7/49**

After an interval of some days I take my pen to add a word again to my journal. In the intervening time I have learned & suffered much. On Monday about noon I left in search of my comp [company] & on Friday at noon I found them near big sandy after traveling nearly 120 miles I stayed with them all night & as my affairs at the fort were not in a leaveable condition I set out on my return early next morn accompanied by Soule & arrived here on Monday to dinner having been absent one week.⁷⁹ The country through which I passed for twenty-five miles after leaving Platte is a high table without water or wood save in the last five miles an arm of the Blue containing timber thence forty miles along little Blue good timber & camping places abundant but water very bad perhaps from its rise.⁸⁰ Then over a bluff rise with here & there a little hole of water in beds of dry sandy soil and on which may be had a little timber to Sandy little & big 30 or 40 miles.⁸¹ Sickness had done terrible work on the wayside & almost every camp place was marked by a grave, graves being more numerous as you approached Ind. Two of the com. had died of cholera & some sick for whose death or *recovery* they waited at camp. For a journal of this trip see letter to Mary (no. 7) from the plains. I met very few gold seekers the rush having passed by the 25th of May & those I met were scattered far apart. I was coldly received by some to whom I applied for sale of food & generally preferred throwing down my blanket alone & eating the dry biscuit from my pocket & fearing only for my pony & more from whites than from Indians. On Friday I bent some willows Indian fashion & throwing my blanket over

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others were sick I went over. No one had called on them from the fort & when learning they had cholera it was decided to send them some remedy.⁷⁷ None till some *time* could be procured to act as messenger. One at last against the remonstrances of the rest went & him I met. These seven were down three very low one dead. They however were not from Mo. They soon moved on a little up not liking their position & to inter the dead leaving one poor fellow who had a wife & three children one little sucking baby. I called to see him. He had been taken at noon but by activeness was doing well tho he looked a skeleton. There lay he in the wagon floor & despondency marked strongly on his face that hath much fallen away under the influence of much opium. He did not seem inclined to *recover* perhaps poor lone man his thoughts were on his weeping wife & almost orphan babes far out in the wild plain with none if he were gone to care for

up to ask. The danger seemed to be passed but he was only a skeleton with deep eye deathlike. He begged for Brandy which he said he had attempted to get in vain. I went to Com Ruff & told him I must have some. He said if the surgeon said so I should. I sought the surgeon who proposed giving out of his own trunk to coming in contact with the patient but he was supplied & I felt had been able to do a poor sufferer a favor which did me more good than if on someone had done so to me. The other dead one now sleeps beneath the sod & will sleep happier perchance than the thousands that carelessly crowd on over his grave. Poor wanderer little did he when a few weeks ago he left a warm home & perhaps a soft mothers kiss or a young Bride close clinging embrace whose love pressure even yet lingers on his lips.⁷⁸

The weather has become very fine & the roads will soon be good. Yesterday met John Criddle here on for Cal. I have

My location on Darwin Bluff running in to the Blue & commanding several miles of beautiful country on both sides with the richly timbered stream below circling gracefully away & the two graves at my feet lent my home a charm no peopled city ever possessed...

them made a fire from the wood surrounding an emigrants grave & dried & wrote & read & slept alternately through the day. My location on Darwin Bluff running in to the Blue⁸² & commanding several miles of beautiful country on both sides with the richly timbered stream below circling gracefully away & the two graves at my feet lent my home a charm no peopled city ever possessed & indeed the whole journey tho full of fatigue & solitude with reason for occasional fear was one of vast pleasure. On one night just as the sun set after throwing ourselves down & tying the lariats to our saddle *horns* at once a noise as of a vast storm pouring down in fury came suddenly up & turning our eye upward the air was full of bugs large beetle-like. Millions of them were performing their gyrations in the air & as far as the eye could reach it was the same. When the last gleam of daylight vanished they at once subsided onto earth & spent the night in trying to eat us. At one A. M. we were in our saddles & by the beautiful moon were speeding our way on only fearing that some unpracticed camper might take us for indians & fire on us without hailing. Indeed we came upon one camp & were right into it before we saw them having been lost but they happened to be of the more practiced kind & we were surrounded before a word was said & with a little trepidation & no invitation to stop they pointed us on to the road which we had left to the right. At noon we would throw ourselves upon the grass & sleep two or three hours & then on till night & the same on day by day.

After riding one day in the rain all morning I suddenly came on something I was not able to define but upon near approach found to be the robe wagons of a trader from Laramie M. Brunette who very hospitably invited me in under

the skin spread over his wagon tongue & had a cup of coffee prepared for me. Whenever you find men who have been on the plains a long time you find they have *civility*. Perhaps all frenchmen are characterized by a politeness unknown to americans. Most of those men for the first time making the trip being of the meanest possible capacity, in this connexion it behooves me to remember the *Nemehan* crowd. Another trader by name Richat also from Laramie & a Gentleman passed here on his homeward way yesterday. He had eighteen years ago been in the mountains with Bonneville. Bonneville is here in command of the post.⁸³ A short thick set bald man, talkative, black haired, blue eyed, aquiline nose, moral pretending man. Also Dougherty who has a very pleasing face & address & looks like a gentleman & no doubt is one.⁸⁴ He talks many indian languages & french. Has been long on the plains & has less of the fustian than most of the military men here. He is sutler to the post. A host of vile clowns are here as drovers & in other such capacity talking obscenity & fustian. One is called Holliday & is from Clay county, a perfect specimen of a Bully & doubly ____ fool. Dr. Hammond is army physician a boy of perhaps 21 & noticeable here after.⁸⁵ 5000 wagons have passed here & the crowd will not add perhaps 500 more as the sum total of these perhaps 1/20 are pack mules 1/10 mule wagons & the rest oxen—20,000 men & 50,000 oxen & mules & many pack mules together with the Santa Fee train.

One man from Iowa whom I met on Sandy by name of Eli or Elo told me of finding a poor man sick of cholera by the side of a lone stream who told his story thus. He was with Ferguson & Walker with packs when taken sick. They left him a half mile from water

when unable any longer to go on. He crawled down to the stream & there had been alone three days when found with nought save the little dry biscuit he by chance had with him. He was very low & beg with agony in his tone for a little water. He was too weak to search. He was carefully cared for by the Squire & occupied the place of his wife who was removed for his accomodation but after traveling a few days he died & his murderers yet live I suppose & pass unharmed perchance respected among men. These men were from Hanibal Co., Mo. He was a man Waring, Ths. R. of talent and of worth & influence as evidenced by the papers in his possession perhaps a correspondent of a paper in Dubuque. Several instances of *impossible* brutality have occurred. A Pole Thomas Woinaski is now here & I have become well acquainted with him. He is a man of most excellent education & here comes my crowd I must *end* to touch again upon this matter.

15 miles above Ft. Kearny Saturday June 9th 1849

On *Saturday* morn I rode on after the company who encamped at this point after having given my trunk into the charge of Mrs. Donaldson who promises to send it to Fort Kearney to Lester Platt. Spent also time in fixing clothes &c. To resume the Pole he understands Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Spanish, French Russian English & Polish. He paid to John Keller fifty five dollars for fare and provided himself with provisions. After being out three weeks he put out his goods & left him upon the prairie. He has the first oath of naturalization taken before Buchanan Co. Mo. Court April 10th 1849 & signed by William ____.⁸⁶ He has also letters from most eminent men all over the country.

The Marietta com. came up yesterday

who had a difficulty with the Loup Panees who stole their oxen which they followed by track found slain sent back for a reinforcement & attacked 18 & with twice the number. The Indians gave the whope & rattled the robes & fired the arrows killed one horse shot an arrow into one mans leg but soon ran loosing five men killed & six wounded & thus ended the fight.⁸⁷ The Interpreter here by looking at the articles found determined them to be Loups.

Cacti round grown here & have a fine bloom.

Camp at night

The road & pass have both seem good today & close by the river we are now on a little creek about 35 miles above the fort. Do not know its name.⁸⁸ Tried to wade the river today on horse. It is full of holes now only knee deep & now dipping a horse even to the swimming point. Once on such a dip I came very near going over his head. Many indian trails cross the bluffs & penetrate the ravine. On ascending one the country off south looked as rough as the sand hills under my feet the river continually _____ with its timbered iles swept magnificantly on while the bottom on the opposite side seemed either covered with small bushes or else with Buffalo. Some said they saw buffalo & tomorrow we propose a hunt god speed as the Difficulty is to cross the river.

Two men continue sick & the Dr. now uses my candle to enable him to prepare some pills for a new cholera case. A grave made yesterday is near our camp. A sick pill is being made on the bottom of a tin plate with a Jack knife mixed up with cursings & dammings of prairie pill making. Passed a [prairie] Dog town which I did not see.

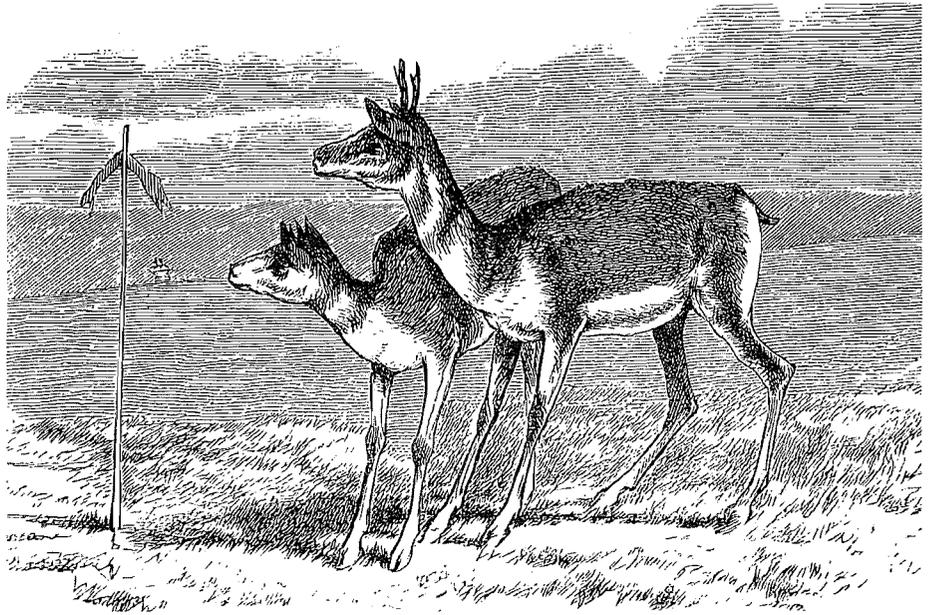
Ten Miles Below Left fork Platte Wednesday June 13/49

Noon. For some time I have not pen on my journal for when I returned from the hunt it rained & it has rained till now. On Sunday morn last "Coony Dunlap & McFarland" left camp rather

angry on account of the proposed delay of the day. Dunlap killed a Buffalo on the next day of which we found some yesterday. On the same day we started on a Buffalo hunt. "Dr. Felt" Soule Brown Hovey & Campbell & myself. I had seen some trails leading down to the river a few miles below our camp & as I was consulted as to the best point I suggested that one very imperfectly equiped we *start*. My pony would not take the river & springing in with my lariat in my hand they threw him in by main strength after me. The stream was strong & the sand worked out so fast from under my feet that I sunk several inches as also did my pony before I could mount & then commenced the crossing of the first branch of nearly a mile. Generally the water did not exceed in depth more than two feet but was full of holes into which one would plunge so suddenly as almost to throw him off his horse head foremost. After much floundering & up hill climbing (for the sand working out behind makes the horse appear to be climbing all the time) we reached the first island in safety having to swim only a few strokes near land. Crossing a few rods of land we dipped again & crossed a narrow slough & found ourselves on an island of a mile width at the far side of which broke on us a wide expanse of two miles water which made to stand out the eyes of the timid of our com & fain would they have turned back but that they feared to cross alone the way we had already made. Taking water we struggled on perhaps an hour sometimes plunging up to the saddle top & rising all pony power to extricate oneself & sometimes in only a foot water all anxiety for the next step & holding with both knees to the horse as well as by the mane to keep on in *spite* of holes or current without any swimming we made land. Dr. Felt slanting off to the nearest & the rest following my piloting which was the best. On landing we spent some time in drying guns & c & after filling our canteens & eating a little cheese & bread & meat in our saddles

when seeing some antelope in the distance we made for the bluffs but soon got lost that is I did from the rest & continuing on my course to the bluffs distant about twelve miles I thought by climbing them I could attract the observation of the rest & thus again unite. I shot at several antelope but failed to hit. Occasionally one would rise up as from repose directly in my path & *strane* to look at me but my gun was in so bad order that I could not avail myself of the opportunity to fire before they were off.⁸⁹ Soon I came upon a Dog town. For some distance I saw it by the elevations thrown up by the little miners upon which they sat shaking their tails & barking. The town is five or six miles square & contains thousands of holes or houses dug without any method. The grass is closely cropped all around. The dog is red colored & the size of a very large gray squirrel very active & shy running before you can well see him & standing directly over his hole & barking. If you shoot him he will likely drop in. Owls I there saw as if in companionship with the Dogs but no rattlesnakes which are also said to live with them. The towns although large were very numerous & in traveling forty miles we saw eight or ten some however small. After a long ride & passing a deep ravine & slough I gained the bluffs upon which I had scarcely seated myself when a fawn antelope came running *sighing* up to see what I was. I tried to fire my gun & the old thing would not go at all. I attempted several times without at all intimidating the gentle thing & at last fired at it a pistol but the ball fell a little short but as I had on a red shirt nothing could induce it to *leave* very far. Soon I distinguished five specks far off below which by close scrutiny I discerned to be men & concluded were my companions & in an hour they arrived. The fawn yet hung around till I shot at it with another *prime* & he left for the *iner* country. Antelope were very abundant & late signs of Buff. but we saw none. The country is a vast succession of bluffs interwoven with deep ravines but without any water.

There we wandered after antelope & Buff. the rest of the day. I seldom being with the crowd & only occasionally from some hill top catching a distant view of them. Just at eve when we began to feel very hungry & two of our company had some how left us for camp not liking to stay out. We shot an antelope & seeing in two miles distance down the ravine some two or three trees we started there with our game to stay for the night. There we found a deep gully but no water. We soon found some dry wood. Made in the hole a good fire. We chose that place for our fire to be out of the way of observation from indians should they be lurking in the neighborhood. Cutting off slices of antelope each man roasted for himself & having supped but yet being very thirsty we rolled ourselves in our blankets & slept. About two a.m. a most violent storm arose & springing up with my bed wound round me I made a line by lightning light for the tree standing in the gully. There I stood with two others who soon sought the same shelter till day. Thunder pealing most sublimely & rain pouring down in torrents. At day with extream difficulty we succeeded in kindling a fire & by it warming ourselves & drying our guns & reloading & cooking some more antelope we felt the joy of fire to the starving from cold & wet & hunger. We were soon in our saddles & concluding that it was best to strike for the camp as the rain had put our amunition & guns hors de combat. We took a direction so as to take the Platte twenty miles above our crossing place expecting the company had traveled so much. On leaving the bluffs a fine fawn very small started up near us & atho we discharged all our guns at it did not seem alarmed & now for a race. Giving bridle to pony off we went pistol cocked in hand over the plain scouring away fawn bounding on & pony exerting every muscle but in vain. When I began to approach all at once the little creature as if before merely *playing struck* out & distanced me directly & I pulled up. Scarcely had I breathed from the chase when up



*“I looked up over the little hill side & saw
a fine antelope bounding off...”*

June 13, 1849

sprang a prairie rabbit an animal gray with long hind legs as large as a hare & said to be the swiftest runner on the plains & surely he vindicated his pretension in our presence. Flocks of antelope of ten or more or less were continually before us but we had no desire to kill any more. Soon we made the river & laid down to let our horses eat before crossing as well as to sleep ourselves a little after a three hours rest & just as we were saddling up came down two men who were of a company fifteen miles above & were seeking oxen having lost by stampede 139. They said 500 had passed by that side that water & wood had been plenty & good roads. That the Sioux had killed one man at Loup fork that several indian difficulties had occurred but nothing of very great magnitude. They reported numbers of Buffalo & wolves & we left not being able to tell them ought of their cattle. On recrossing the water for a mile was shallow & save a quicksand into which

Dr's horse fell down in that distance we had no difficulty. Now the water began to deepen & Dr. who was ahead called on me at my suggestion to go first. The chance was gloomy nought but a wide waste of water all around a mile yet ahead & now up to the saddle seat & yet deepening. I drove the spur into my unwilling pony & struck into *swimming* water at the next step not knowing how far it might continue. I pushed on & in a few rods again touched bottom which continued till within twenty rods of an island a few rods from shore for the head of which I was making then all at one step in I plunged & now nought save my head & my ponys was out. The waters roared & boiled & crashed madly by almost sweeping me in spite of all my efforts from my pony holding with legs & arms however & keeping him sufficiently across make distance. We were carried by the current rapidly as a steam boat down several rods below the head of the island but at length got in &

Charles B. Darwin Diary, 1849

springing off on the land side for even there reaching shore my pony was swimming. I scrambled up the steep bank & my pony with almost super pony power sprang up after me poor fellow he looked soaked enough. On looking back there came puffing down after me Campbell. On he bore floundering to ride the current but was carried down to my locality & springing off on the shore side he had to take his saddle off before his pony could mount the steep ascent. The others on seeing us in the bottomless bore up the stream by keeping up several rods made the main land with a few strokes of swimming. We had yet a deep slough but soon we were on shore all drenched to the chin. The evening was cold & the com might yet be ten or

15 miles ahead. On we rode rapidly as I became chilled I wrapped around me my saddle blanket which tho wet kept me from the wind & after riding some ten miles we found the "Pioneer train" from whom we procured a stout drought of Brandy & after riding for five miles we found our com.⁹⁰ Darkness had gathered over us & I was completely

chilled but a change of robes gave comfort & a cup of coffee consolation & by morning I was as well as if I had not experienced anything more than every day life unmixed with Platte swimming. We all felt thankful that we had escaped with our lives. My Saddle girth was broken & a _____ saved the horse as also my guns &c which were fastened

"...just as we were saddling up came down two men who were of a company fifteen miles above... They reported numbers of Buffalo & wolves..."

June 13, 1849



to the saddle. The two who had left us had not been in camp but an hour. They on coming to the Platte the night before & entering encountered swimming water & not daring to attempt determined to remain for the night. They had means of making fire which they did & laid down. About midnight came down upon them a drove of fifty yoke of oxen running & *running* like fiends. They had been stampeded above thirty miles & had run so far blood passed thru freely. The next morning followed them twelve miles further down by much effort drove them over the river & had just as before said come in. Next day after traveling a few miles objects were described in the river. Several from the com staid on the bank & soon found them to be men wading the Platte. After they came to land almost exhausted from the effort we found them the owners of the cattle who from circumstance believed their cattle over here. They were supplied with blankets & *shoes* & ran on to overtake the wagons some of whom manifested much reluctance in giving up the oxen such for example as requiring them to pick theirs out & when the right & honest way would have been to deliver all that had been crossed. They reported much sickness among them. Sickness diminishes as we *progress* tho one man will die no doubt Taylor. Dr. Felt has the cholera this evening & Travis in the other wagon is no better. I am well & can endure any thing. The grass is good & has been the roads also. The water too & timber has been plenty. We are now at the junction of the Plattes. The way has been becoming more bluffy. The bluffs very abrupt so as to preclude ascent by horse & to command a view of many miles around. I ascended one. On my right rose bluffs far away towering equally high & walling the bottom & above the far edge blackened a thunder cloud that was flinging its lightning *attacks* the gloom in lurid lines. Behind me a table stretched off level as far as eye could reach. On either hand were deep gullies *carved* by



*“We are now at the junction of the Plattes.
The way has been becoming more bluffy.”*

June 13, 1849

many years of rain filled with cedar & pine whose tall tops fail by many times their length to come up to my feet. The cone I sat on left no room for another. Before me the Platte wound its silvery form through many wood fringed islands & all the scene conspired with the battling elements to form a tableau to fill the soul with grandeur & sublimity. I plucked in descending a pine-cedar limb & will send to my Mary a twig. A little further on the bluffs at once fell off to sand hills of whiteness & soon rock was mixed with them. I delayed some time & in riding on to camp I *saw a poor* fellow who had just had his arm broken by a wagon running over it. Two wagons had remained behind. It rained fast. Three men sat by him on the grass while one held an oil cloth coat over him poor fellow. He groaned piteously & he had need for desolation & grim horror stood around & before 500 Sioux are reported as being above a little. I must trade with them. The sun came out to-

day at noon & I dried my wet garments somewhat. Supper is ready.

10 P. M.

I am sitting at the feet of Dr. Felt in his tent sick of cholera. It rained when I stayed back to write my journal. He was well when I came up at camp he was in the wagon & had a violent attack of cholera. He now by the aid of powerful medicine appears a little easier. What a terrible thing it is to be sick upon these plains. Here we are 3000 miles away from the nearest settlement of man while each [is] mad to push on & none willing to delay for another's sickness or even death. Leave a few behind if he is likely to die or to inter him & they perhaps may bury him before he dies at least _____ in order to expedite matters as much as possible. Without the stars look down as if all were well here on earth & the frogs engendered by the late rains pour out notes of as pond like a _____ as ever greeted the ears of a mill

dam dweller in a land broken by a hundred plowshares. The cattle in the cane are *quietly* chewing their cud & now & then as one seems disturbed by the howl of the prowling wolf or the very near bark of the prairie wolf the guard indicate their wakefulness by a heavy cussion a loud command of order which is seldom disobeyed. In the next tent rolls from weary side to weary side one who is not long for this land of hurry & turmoil. Ever & anon he utters loud groans sometimes if I mistake not mixed with imprecations as poor weak man his poor weak body seek the repose it is in vain to seek any longer from him here below. Yet further off in the distance the wolf occasionally sends up his doleful howl or his sharp snapping bark. Mrs. Farris has just brought a can of hot coffee & I feel warmed up. The medicines are spread out upon the box before me. The camp generally is silent beneath the empire of morphia & the Dr. lies tolerably quiet by my side. I have written a letter to Mary a few *minutes* the _____ the emigration now going on are much less under the influence of hurry than those who passed two weeks ago—some returning report them as now only making four or six miles per day & many cattle broken down.

I have prevailed upon my fellow watcher to lie down & now I am alone alone with the sick. The sick chamber is a prompter of sober thoughts to any mood. The sick chamber in the peopled city is that but oh when that chamber is a tent on the shores of the Platte near the mountains when the time is night & you are alone the sober thoughts come liveried in most gloomy hues & still comes on my ear the groan of the dying man in the near tent & still the silence is broken into black fragments by wolf howls & still my thought revert to my distant home my gentle wife & my bright eyed boy & the contrast memory thus presents lends yet a _____ to the dye of darkness. The bowels of the sick man rumble. Oh what a sad thing must be death when he comes on those

unfriendly plains your grave to be noted only by the savage & dug into by the wolf. Your friends write a brief name & date & give it to the paper that marks your head but the next storm & no one knows who sleeps in that tomb. The wolf passes & no one notes that even bones of mortal moulder there.

Eleven o'clock 1000 miles from home on the wild prairie.

Grim night looks down & threatens storms. Winds moan woefully through the tents & wagons & cold makes me draw close my blanket about me. All sleep 'tis as the general pulse of life stood still & nature made a pause an awful pause prophetic of her end." My Mary is sleeping now with her boy by her bosom but she dreams of her far of husband & with him her thoughts are much by day. God bless her gentle soul noblest of earths womanhood is she. May her husband be ever deserving of her!

Many stampedes went among cattle. We are fortunate thus far. Some by day while in the yoke are suddenly seized with a panic & no human power can arrest them *til* chance or fatigue bring them to a rest. The most terrible of noises they utter & are absolutely distracted. Last night just after carling [corralling] a violent storm arose & poured down torrents for hours. I slept in the wagon & suffered not. The lightning which flashed incessant struck *Cooney a Georgian* & knocked him down as if dead. The old man too was shocked much.

Howard & somebody else came to me today with smiling countenances. We have said they found a gold mine at the same time exhibiting a quantity of sand glittering with mica. I did not partake of their enthusiasm & soon they ran where they anticipated more sympathy whether or not they found it I know not. I see they are here yet & so conclude they are sane that is if any who go to California are sane. Eno is the name of the man who told me of Warring's case. A prairie fox too we saw when over the

river. He did not run far preferred hiding & was small & could run well. I think I will look over the medical journals by my side.

Thursday—Junction of the Plattes June 14th

I am yet panting from the Buffalo chase & all worn down this morn by reason of *intestine* sickness. Four wagons remained here to await his recovery or death. Before _____ the teams leaving had *started*, the cry was a Buffalo & all eyes were turned towards a huge stately fellow about a half mile off. The most enterprising were off on foot & on horse. By mismanagement he _____ to take the buffalo soon disappeared among the _____ followed by a crowd of *all sorts*. I went on sufficiently far to see the _____ of the chase & turned back. The teams had gone only the four wagons remained. We had not been in camp an hour before the boys cried Buffalo. *Five* large Bulls were slowly _____ a mile's distance east. We mounted with dispatch & yet with some system four of us Campbell White another & I & soon were down upon them & now commenced the race. Whoop! Whoop! Hurra you foremost one give him your load behind the shoulder but he turns. Now is your chance second one! Cross his path & as he passes pour in your charge but your horse balks & you are tilting full speed the other way. Well done first one. Now you near him & a moment more & shoulder to shoulder is the race but oh see rider & horse rolling over each other & forming a very mixed group. Up! up! Yes but your gun is full of mud. Take my horse says he as on another speeds but his horse will do for he has his rifle cocked & set & holds it in one hand to fire pistolwise & rides windlike up to touch before he fires. See he nears the shaggy headed monster & now not twenty paces intervene but he is not near enough to satisfy his zeal & on his snorting pony bounds each bound gaining many feet & see he reaches to fire. But look! He lies upon the ground while his pony like a mad

thing rushes down to the camp. A sudden bound to the left & a stop had laid him on his back a few paces from the bison's head & his wild steed breaking his bridle from his grasp poured down like *wind home*. But see he is up & on afoot. What if the monster turns upon him? Those mounted flee his very pregnant attacks. Nothing heeds he. He does not feel the pain in his lamed back & with gun in trim he runs panting on but something interrupts him. The load of balls in his pocket have broken down into his boot & while he makes the necessary delay the troop is off far. See how he runs on. One horseman who now emboldened by acquaintance lodges a ball in his head then runs another pour a charge into his legs & at length after four miles chase a well directed shot through the breast drops him & the chase is done. He is soon

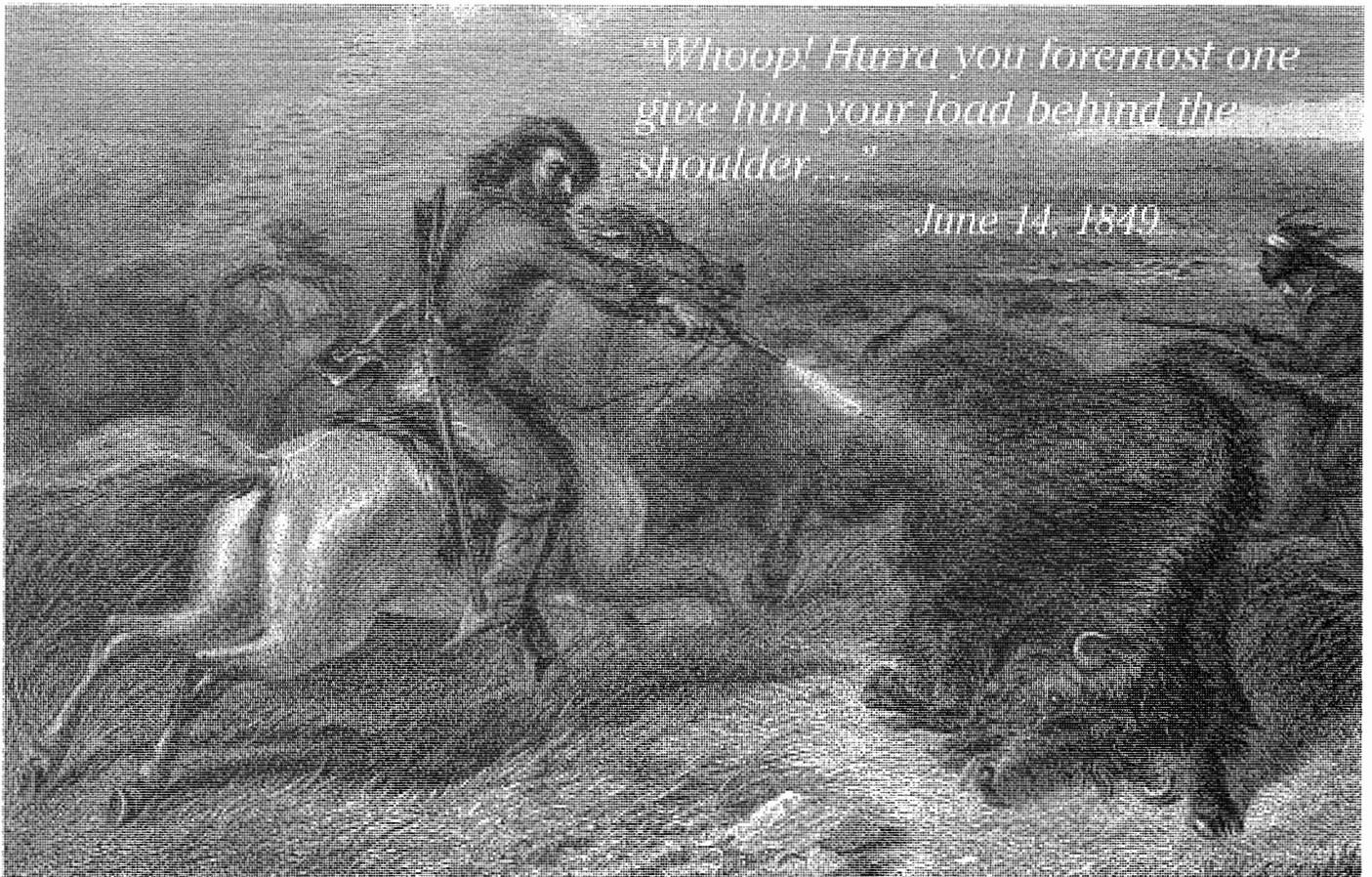
skinned & cut up & but see while the work goes on another huge fellow bounding like a hound along the river bank. If he holds his course he will be struck a miles run riverward. Saddles my boys & I altho very lame from my fall am the first chase the first off, whoop bare-headed scouring the plain. By heavens but this is glorious sport on pony. Never heed the holes in the town of dogs. What matters the sloughs. Necks are cheap here on a chase. On rolls the monster & on like wind fairly skimming the plain over tufts & trails & holes & branches & hills & vales on, on, on, hurrah barehead hair floating in the wind. Well done Campbell. Give him another charge. Five miles we have run but he lolls out his tongue & runs on steady pace not heeding his pursuers. Our horses are wearied. Let us stop. Fresher ones are ahead & he takes the

bluffs. He will find them. See he has done so. They fire. They kill & [come] home laden with meat in _____ & down in the grass I *throw* myself & write this, lame, sore, tired, exhausted.

The Dr. is no better. May die hope not.

Junction of South & North fork of Platte Friday June 15/49 one & half AM.

I am sitting by the Dr. who has been fast failing for some time. I begin to fear will not recover. He has taken opium enough to kill an ox. He has taken two sets of Hawthorns pills but the mischief is he has not the liquid preparation. Poor fellow he is beginning to be quite low spirited but does not express it in words. What business has that little bird singing on this dull night when skies are all draped in cloud dull & gray cold &



Charles B. Darwin Diary, 1849

yet not more so than those that shroud our tent sky for one whom we love who by his many good quantities has entwined himself close around our heart strings is fast fading away from us. The muscles of a countenance that only a day ago groupeth themselves into much expressive meanings of humor of feeling or sorrow or of joy are fast shrinking into meaningless lines beneath the cold grip of the destroyer & the pictured tablet of a face that almost always had a word of joy emphatically pronounced upon it is deadening like a skeletons stare & only says death. The eye too so expressive falls back into its doom as if it had no further look to plant on the face of time. We talked together of a glorious *hunt* that we were to enjoy together but the prospect seems fading & of a visit _____ alone unknown to *any* to the Sioux for *western* trade. But I fear my friends next visit will in body will be to the *narrow* home to which all are hastening poor fellow. I love the Dr. for many thoughts & sentiments kindred to my own. That brow now fevered is the paliace of lofty aspirations & beneath its alabaster whiteness lie volumed many a god like thought. His worth has not always been fully recognized & when was ever true worth recognized & if we mistake not we see beneath the sarcastic turn of many a pointed sentence the ashes of early hopes kindled by a lofty ambition. But it is two and time to administer some medicine.

The poor fellow in the adjoining tent groans most pitiously. To die would be much relief to him & all his mess & yet who would even to gratify a mess or a town of messes fling away this bounding life with its joys & its woes its horse racings its antelope chases & its Buffalo hunts. A blister or perhaps 12 _____ on the Drs stomach will not drain & has just been taken off. Buffalo meat is abundant in camp & yesterday Swift shot a wolf & deems himself *lionisch*. I would not waste powder on one. They will presently set off a few yards & ask to breakfast with us. The birds are begin-

ning to carol sweetly & I will go & picket out my good little pony further from the tent in better grass. Day light & four oclock no moving today tho the Dr. now seems a little better tho my sore lip suppered almost useless. Hands all sores & bruises & black or rather red as an Indians. Face all hair & dirt. Who would now take me ever to have been any thing else than a sun burnt laborer in the field unused to ought else. How much we judge men by appearances & even here some men are prim & starched but they will lose their buckram *by & by* or I am no prophet. Yesterday evening in looking for game or adventure down the creek I came upon an old camp where was a grave. Two tents were there thrown away & many clothes. I took four shirts thinking to trade them to the Sioux whom I expect to find near the crossing. The Pioneer train is a humbug & the proprietors ought to be punished by law for their gross imposition. The sun begins to shed a rosy hue around his way by the reflection of his countenance upon the curtains that have been drawn by evening around his slumbering head. How sweet his inaugural smile after long storm to the way worn pilgrims to Mecca or California & not ~~not~~ less sweet to the lone watcher in a sick mans tent when the lone prarie solitude broods cloud like about him & cold damp drop from the canvass while be vies of mosquitoes buzz & bite as if their sole mission were to bite & die with scarcely time to *live*. 300 miles away in the nearest line to the home of man & night & gloom & damp & sickness & watching make of it so many thousands & yet a million charms, unexpressible by words hang over all the enchanting scene as a rare rainbow over a floods devastations or as a heavenly memory round a thought of dead. Farewell my journal for a time. It pains me to leave & yet I put on the _____ face much that will lend no inducement or pleasure to future perusal yet are thou my sole companion. If I look upon the faces of those about me I see there no sympathy beyond the

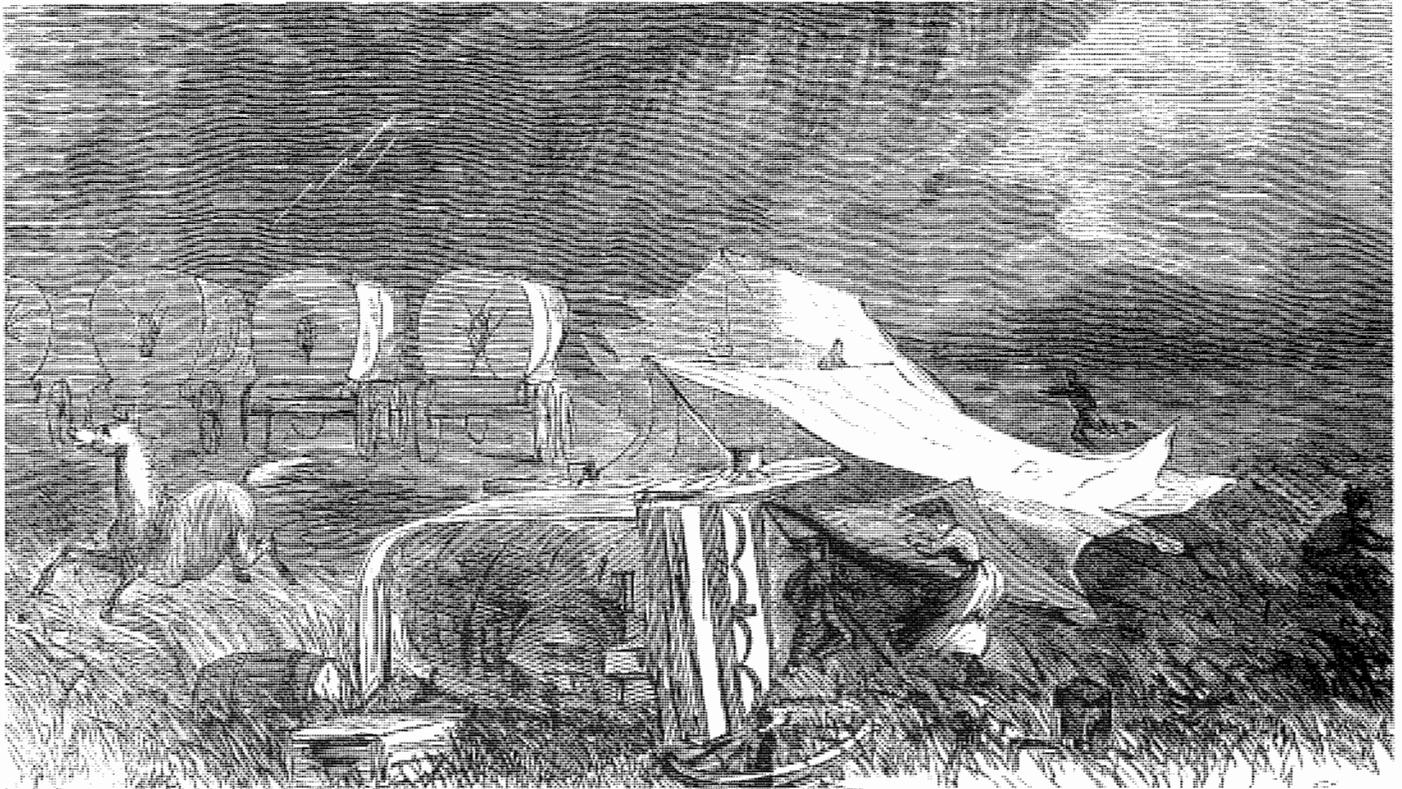
mere feel of humanity. If I were sick they would minister to me if hungry feed me but for my spirits wants when the wild excitement of the chase is past they offer no food. Gold is the sole idea of most & many have no thoughts else that one is some sort related to stomach or person the flesh person that eats & sleeps & wears a shirt & pants. Well it is always so. The refined of thought & sentiment are alone among the mass as in the wildest solitude & whatever may be my letters or natural mind I feel my taste has been so cultivated that I can not take pleasure in many pursuits affording exquisite enjoyment to others. My source of pleasure is mental, the crowds physical. Good by journal good by till we meet again.

Same camp 12^{1/2} A M Saturday June 16 1849

I have been called up at twelve to sit with the Dr. who is much better & will no doubt today jog on a little. We thought yesterday morn he would die but he now seems to be decidedly convalescent.

Poorest chance for writing I ever saw. A prairie wind raves through the tent flapping every loose cloth & candle has to be kept in saddle bags, water bucket, book, tin pan, & all else available so as to keep it illumined. I write my book laid upon the ground of the tent, streached by it, resting on my elbow, candle only very faintly now & then flinging here a gleam. Very audibly groans the sick man Taylor in the near tent but yet he lives. Oh how we cling to life surround us with every ill pile evil upon evil over us & yet & yet with terrible tenacity we cling to life.

Here I was constrand to drop my pen for wind & dark were two powerful enemies composed against me. On looking out just before day to see what might mean a cry that fell on my ears a huge tent was winging its flight on the bosom of the wind *swerving* with a fearful velocity. On it sped while Blankets pants hats &c. sped on breakneck after it & the men who but a moment before



“Poorest chance for writing I ever saw. A prairie wind raves through the tent flapping every loose cloth & candle has to be kept in saddle bags, water bucket, book, tin pan, & all else available so as to keep it illumined.”

June 16, 1849

were snugly ensconced beneath its ample roof now were practicing all manner of teeth chattering & vocal gymnastics of the gutural kind by reason of the cold breath of the breeze that in this lat. & at this elevation wants much the mellow softness of italian zephyrs. May have to leave without being able to cook breakfast but finding the boys rather disinclined to begin & having quite an appetite from my early rise I myself chopped out & built up of sod a high chimney wall which may enable them if hungry to get a coffee pot boiled.

Yesterday after dinner the cry arose Buffalo & eight were quietly feeding a

mile east. The Pioneer train & another was near & soon twenty horsemen were bearing down upon them & presently the chase began for the Bluffs. I had determined not to run my pony as the day before his race had been long & swift but as soon as the cry arose he seemed to know the game & with outstretched neck & mane upstanding screamed to be off but I said no & looked on. Presently one called Derion see your pony & there sure enough was the little Devil scouring on like mad after the rest. He had torn out his lariat pin & with nostril dilated & loud snort & cry & head up like a column arched bounded on in the chase. By much

effort he was stoped as he dragged his lariat but I could not hold him & so I put on his saddle but before I could off three were killed & the rest fled away & so I went not. Oh what might a horse feels under you as you rush breakneck onward. Not hound after stag feels more pride. You feel his proud heart throb below you as feels a ship the swelling of the billow it rides when the billow is pregnant with strong winds.

Mormons returned to the settlements yesterday but I slept as they passed & had not thought of sending back letters. Today we go on. May god speed us amen.

**Camp on North Platte
twenty miles above junction⁹¹
June 17 49 Sunday**

On yesterday morning I started out ahead to find the company leaving the Dr. in the wagon coming on. I had not rode far before I saw two men in hot pursuit after two Buffalo calves. On riding 7 miles further I learned from the company to which they belonged that on the night before a large number had come *with* their camp & they in confusion & excitement incident to such a surprise had shot a horse & while talking a few Bulls were seen in the bottom a little below after which was a party of four horsemen desirous of turning them toward the teams. I rode down a little toward the river where they turned & *ran* directly between the wagons who fired without effect upon them. I immediately came on a rattle-snake the first I had seen on the way. The ford soon hove in view & here was grouped in a mixed mass of a mile by five rods much of the ridiculous and the grand & the terrific. The grand is the wide river sweeping with a graceful curve down to mingle with the wide master of water pouring from the other branch & bordered above by huge piles of rock ribbed bluffs that were edged with greenness. The ridiculous in the struggling teams now climbing a bar a few inches deep & now dipping into a hole far up their sides. Now one man screamed as he got out of a hole where he had supposed himself finding no bottom. Another yelled at the stuck mules while another with a heavy curses leaped from his pony, or ox, or wagon into the stream to help up the fallen animal. One ran downstream after a swimming away camp kettle another after a bucket. One had lost her bonnet & her lover or Brother or husband was after it on foot or on horse but all dipping off the bar into holes turned with screams or pleas or cusses as the temperaments of each respectively indicated prompted & the terrific was furnished by the imagination which loomed to dwell on the memory of

other rivers & paint on the canvas of the present armies whelmed beneath wide waters & deluged wasted cities.

After crossing I took up the north branch a few miles when a herd of about 40 Buffalo that had been grazing on the bottom were seen followed in the distance by a horseman. I struck off to head them in the bluffs. I had no fire-arms but could not well keep my pony from the chase. On ascending an intervening bluff I came within gunshot of them. Below me lay the horseman. He soon rose heaving off his saddle as he limped back campward while his horse

surrounded while little wreathes of smoke ever & anon told of discharges but I could see none fall. Most men are too much excited to fire with effect. They had crossed the river before I got down. They have a fine faculty for getting down hill & then run the faster. I had not rode a mile up the river before I saw the head of another line just entering the Bottom. On they proceeded coming down the bluffs a mile of this _____ snake like length had extended over the plain. Soon some horsemen the same that chased those below to whom I made a signal came on just in time to

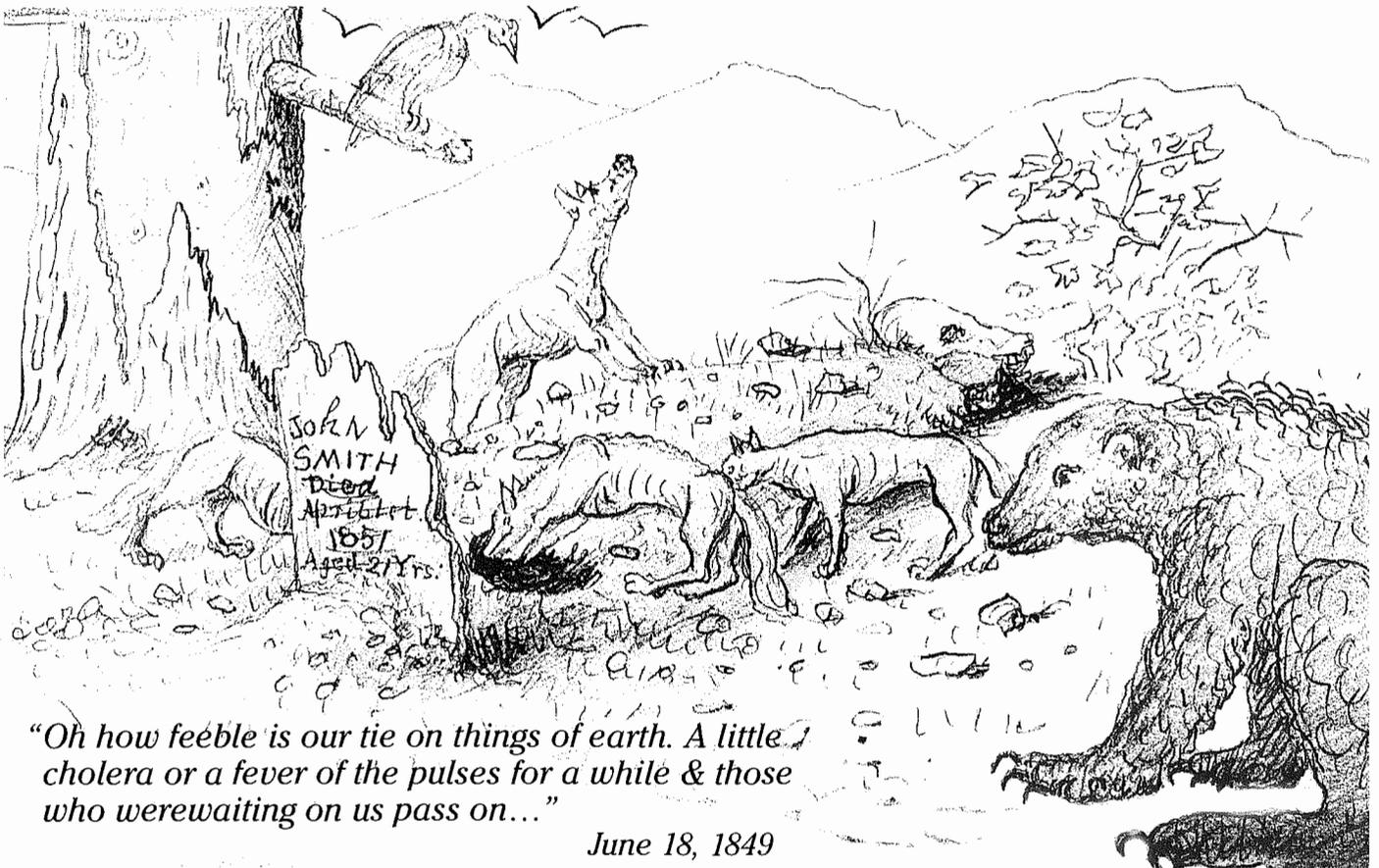


“Now one man screamed as he got out of a hole where he had supposed himself finding no bottom... One ran downstream after a...camp kettle... One had lost her bonnet & her lover or Brother or husband was after it...”

June 17, 1849

was *scurring* like wind as if in the greatest terror. I kept slacking as much as I could my pony & as I mounted the bluff of the other river the most imposing sight broke on me immediately on entering the plain they [the buffalo] had been attacked by four horsemen who were directly on their way. They grouped together & for some time appeared to me to be stationery &

cut off two from the herd which pitched right into the river. I paid no attention to the rest but stood to see the movement of those in the flood. Rushing, dashing, horns clashing, water splashing, spouting, sinking & rising & running & swimming. Throwing themselves at first on each other they seemed like a vast serpent fit to prey upon a continent. Winding over under through & across



“Oh how feeble is our tie on things of earth. A little cholera or a fever of the pulses for a while & those who werewaiting on us pass on...”

June 18, 1849

the river which lashed with a thousand heads fins & tails till a Niagara’s roar & a Niagara’s spray filled the bosom of the air. I stood long there & watched the Bulls & cows & calves & when I turned they were ascending the other bluff bank. More stray ones were coming down. They kept on & passed close by me. Oh how they can split that stream breasting it with muscles of steel (or buffalo meat) & *stiring* it truly with hearts of controversy.

Further on I found two wagons left with a sick man who was dying. He lay on a blanket behind the wagon on the ground his head rolled up in the blanket to protect it from sun & muscutoes. In full dress two sat near him. One told me he was dying. Many cases of cholera have lately broken out—some two or three in one camp. I had a fine *view* on crossing the bluffs between the Plattes,

the silvery streams on each side with their opposite bluffs & rich bottoms on which Buffalo could be seen grazing & in the *ten* mile distance smoke indicating camps. I must this day write a letter. Some are now on a hunt after twenty Buf. They were seen crossing a mile below. Some are singing—some sleeping—some reading some blacksmithing—some taking some washing & some groaning in disease.

**Camp on North Platte
four miles above junction
Monday 11 A.M. June 18 /49**

This morn I concluded to come back to help the sick & tell them the progress of the crowd ahead. I found them at the *junction* ford on this side. They had buried Taylor on yesterday. His disease had prior to his death [been] determined as typhoid fever. He was buried

by the side of three other graves all of which had been filled since June 10th. Poor fellow may he sleep in peace. Much trouble & sore anguish weighed upon his feeble body long prior to its dissolution but still the angel of hope seemed not to have forsaken him for while his eye glazed in the ice of death he would dream of the days of pleasantness to be borne on the *promises* of future years. Alas no such days will ever dawn upon the poor plain sepulchered boy. Oh how feeble is our *tie* on things of earth. A little cholera or a fever of the pulses for a while & those who were waiting on us pass on forgetting that ever we made a material part of their circle a segment. The guard tonight on his post or round whistles as he passes on thru the last home of his camp mates holds up its newly spaded face to the Otos not four miles off.⁹² Poor fellow he

thinks per chance of the fond sister far behind him & of the dear mother whose sweet face even as he pictures it on the darkness around him bring tears to his eyes even as now memory does to mine. Has he lost his natural kindness his human sympathy? Some lured on by a base madness for yellowness have become dogs! But he poor fellow is as kind as ever. But a new energy lives in his soul & the weak effeminate boy that two months ago would have shrunk _____ from a grave yard now looks on death with eye unblanched. One after another one two three he can watch quickly droop & die out he can close their dead eyelids he can pile the sods upon this blanket coffin & at night walk his round rifle on shoulder & whistle as he walks & yet poor boy a sad presentiment oft arises that he yet may be next—yet he turns his back upon it & whistles on. An object is on in the distance that promises an ample reward for his toil should he secure it & if he fail what is there in life to woo him.⁹³

Dr very sick yet unable to move much think he will die tho I hope not. The sand at the camp to day blew so much about that we ate drank & breathed it & to stay there long would have given any one the *ophthalmia* same this afternoon. Some ponds whose edge were encrusted with salt & on our going there for water we find it impregnated with salt & have consequently to go 3 miles to the river⁹⁴

**Same camp Wednesday
2¹/₂ AM June 20 / 49**

Oh what a time of concentrated sloven never did I *reely* dread camping so much not for myself for I can endure anything in the way of exposure but for the sick doctor who lies trembling with so much uneasiness & fatigue. No wood near and bois de vache [literally, *cow wood*. Buffalo chips] all wet. We had no supper last night & since then it has poured one stream of rain & more this morning we must fast also or eat some meat & biscuit. The last twenty four hours has been an epoch in our plains life & a very eventful one. On yesterday

morning two wagons left us going on to the com. who must be some fifty or sixty miles ahead & whom I never again expect to see. Till noon we lolled about careless & sleepfully while at dinner the cry arose loud & long a Buffalo in camp & looking over my shoulder there came a huge bull direct on us galloping with more than ordinary speed. To spring to our guns was the work of an instant & in a minute more three good balls were lodged in his body distracted him no more than would have *done* the lash of a boys top whip but rushed madly on. Our horses were *picketed* all around & with a kind of satanic malignity singling out the handsomest & best with the power of an avalanche he came down upon her & her bowels lay scattered upon the ground wild with pain the poor eviserated animal bounded off & all the rest with her & now stampede was the word with manes & tails erect & speed of _____ steed off they scour to the settlements on & put on of coats & hats & boots & neckerchiefs & lighten your loins for a race while some _____ a most deadly vengeance on the monster. In three miles the mare lies down to die & three stay with her & poor dumb brutes how much true beastly sympathy is written on their frightened faces or else on the retina of my minds eye. Two are mounted & spured on after the rest who stop not till they reach the ford where they are taken. In the mean time comes spurring up one of the company Campbell who having been out after antelope had seen the Bull make towards the camp & was in pursuit. Shall he go after the lost horses he is well saddled & they may never following far? No by the _____ god! let horses go but Death to the Buffalo Death to the Buffalo he responds & driving his spurs deep into the flank of his good pony he bounds on riverward where four miles off the Bull is yet seen while I brandshing the knife get wet with the blood of the poor mare whose vein we had cut to end her misery swear with an oath to sink it deep into the heart of the Bison on we

go. One on horse & one on foot after the Buffalo two after the *gone* horses & the rest to camp. Oh horseman you are too fleet for our legs unused to running but rush on and we may come up in time to turn him upon your gun (for we have nought save a big Knife) before he yet receives his death shot. Oh horseman & the footman too feels like an antelope in _____ mile upon wears away & smoke & fire in the half mile distance tells of the battle. As a wounded Demon the fierce bison charges on the horseman he retreats & in turn charges & again again & again he retreats & charges—again & again victory is doubtful for the Buffalo is nearing the *river* _____ of the footman never had the danger of heading a wounded horse killing Bull Buffalo on on & throw the little weight of this aid in the scale of victory & the footman throws himself upon the side of a hole & swallows a draught of tadpole water & speed on with new vigor—but stop—oh God that the horseman stumbles—he falls & the bull is upon *him* in charge is just upon him!! Oh Christ save him! God what a gallant steed! with one leg hung over his neck his only tie on life he clings with deathly tenacity & he is borne out of danger breathe once again freely & now he in turn charges as the monster panting seems staggering for _____ will not fall but walking calmly off to a place of his own selection like an Eastern monarch mounting his funeral pile he lies himself down—but see his energies revive & he makes one more struggle for mastery how king like! Stop cries the horseman for god sake approach not nearer let me load but the impetuous footman has soon to dip his blade in its best blood & he springing upon its trembling side & drives deep even to his hand the blade & drawing it all stained with crimson he feels revenge is sweet. Cutting from him several pounds & parts wend our way home when we find the horses & all as before save the poor mare over whose peaceful body even as I now write the long melancholy howl of the wolf comes solemnly

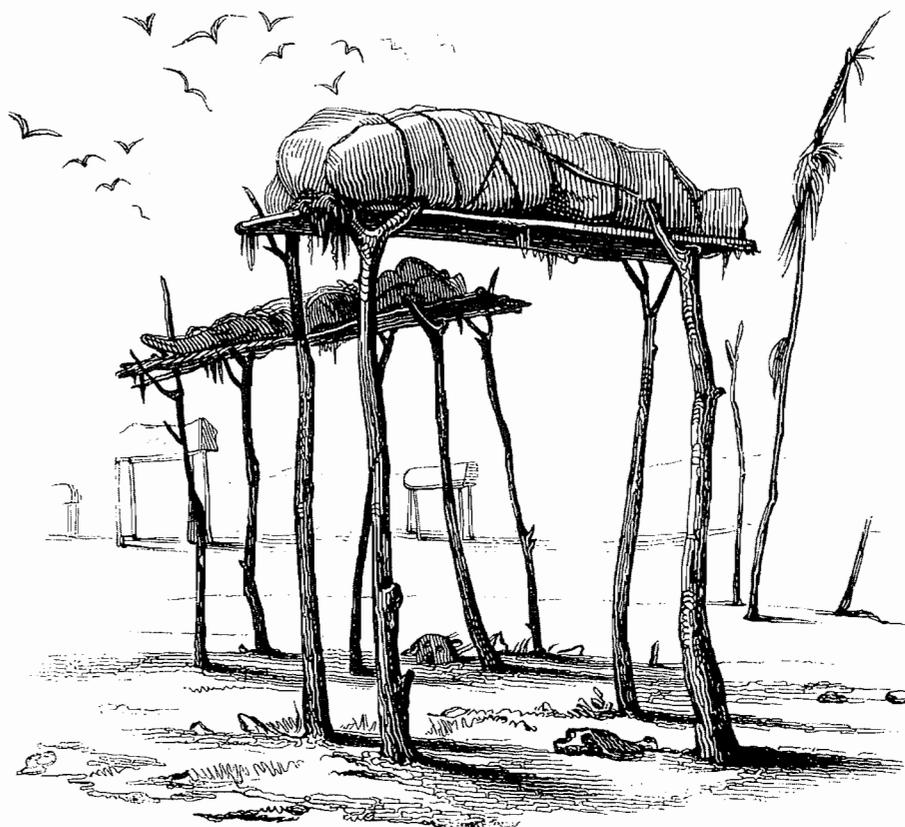
Thursday June 21- 49

11 PM camp on

N Platte 45 miles above junction

Scarcely had I completed the *above lines of wolf* howls when I was called as it had become day by the alarm that Buf were with the cattle. We rode out & by *care* prevented a stampede tho the animals made some effort to run of with the Buff.

Our rode lay all day on the Platte bottom edged by high bluffs piles of rock & occasionaly trimmed with cedar no wood else in sight. Came on to day about 20 miles road most of way *over* a high bluffy country filled with deep ravines thickly lined with cedar. I saw no buff & no water. The Platte is a desultory stream near _____ in the distance we saw on the rise what appeared to be a fraction of a tent. We directed our course thither and it was the tomb of two Indians. A *scaffold* was made six feet high by setting long lodge poles intertwined with each other at top where they were bound—from half way down there were fastened cross pieces of pole & skins on which were placed two biers made of bent stick interwoven with some hide on which was laid robes & the bodys others too were placed near them & all the apparatus of the savage was there. There were seven bodies near the same place one however lay on the plain unburied & much destroyed by wolves & other causes how they died I was unable to determine. They were not scalped. Some were _____—pipe pipe & tobaco bag—paint bag—saddle—_____—root knives & blankets and all else constituting indian furniture was there. I brought away a kind of Haversack of raw hide a pillow of skin stuffed with antelope hair—a shell ornament a *charger* & a round red stone & these lay on the _____ indians. The river rolled by with a *fierce* current a wolf moved off as we approached but all else was silence as at the space _____ is by god. Went in to day river swimming into platte so strong a current not possible to stem it must go down musquitos last night so numerous as to darken the air & render



“A scaffold was made six feet high...on which were placed two biers made of bent stick interwoven with some hide on which was laid robes & the bodys others too were placed near them...”

June 21, 1849

life intolerable. Nearly same to night. Boys with _____ Buf meat & I have to cook it or get none. Read & heard read today on the way *Earnest Meltreves* by *Bidmer* like very much the story no not the story but the style the imagery the rich philosophy the deep reflection the profoundly suggestive manner. Dr Francis & Soule & self read by turns to night for the first time since leaving the settlements. I am on watch & yet it seems I do not very well perform my duty. Oh yes

the Platte lolls on not more than five rods before me & between it & myself I have the horses staked. The oxen which are behind tied to the wagons are no inducement to the indians in the Buf range & setting off the mouth of the tent I can scan the whole pony stock. We are in truth at the mercy of the savage & if he comes no watch of ours could keep them off over the river & a little above burn two very large fires. Two miles hense & the boys say they see indians

Charles B. Darwin Diary, 1849

moving before them—all guns & pistols are loaded. Dr. Felt is some better tho far from well. The night is dark. Millions of sweet stars look out all over the sky save where a blessed cloud indicates a storm in preparation of _____ day & large numbers of flowers are every day springing up new upon our path. A small globular cactus with a fine red flower thick petals & spear pointed & wide leaved. One with a white flower quite large & like a hollyhock & a thistle with a fine white very delicate bloom like a large *mallones*.

note Indian Burrial place!!

Camp on Platte at Ash Creek Friday 22 / 49⁹⁵

Two more cases of cholera today not however thus far violent. Dr. much better. Road today has laid along the bottom in the morning which was walled in by bluff based on deep perpendicular foundation of solid rock leaving but few passes thru which Buf could pass & these few were generally full of trails & often beds of wide & sandy streams. This afternoon we have been on the bluffs & then down ash creek to the Platte between which the high rock bank of ash creek which is full of ash trees & has plenty of fine spring water. A most excellent spring of water is found at a little clump of cedar & ash six or eight miles east of this point. On emerging from the creek bottom we were directly in view of seven Indian lodges. Who they are we know not. I rode on & after camping took some articles for trade & not being able to find anyone to go with me I started alone but I was too late & I was not able to cross so strong was the current so deep the water & so dark the night promised to be ere I could make shore that I deemed it prudent to turn back & did so and accordingly. The bluffs bare & very high rock & sand & quite precipitous. On several are piles of stones of old date. Grass is poor vary & many wide streams of many yards wide are continually emptying their tide of sand

into the river. Have seen no Buf today. Expect a visit from the indian tomorrow & will pay them one. Vague stories of a battle & many killed just a little below. Are safe in camp tonight. We are now encamped in a deep ravine of a few rods wide & deep edged with tall rocks whose top crowns its base with massive *cornish* & needs little stretch of imagination to convert into vast ruins moss grown of antique amphitheatre.

First Creek west of Dry Creek Sunday June 24 1849⁹⁶

Attempted again in company with Soule to ford Platte to find Indians but could not succeed. Passed during the day through a two mile salt marsh full of mire & where dry encrusted with salt. Mosquitoes so bad as to constrain us to gallop thro wherever we could. Road fenced by bluffs based on rock where not thro sand bank in which last was no grass. Sand flies first made appearance. Heard of advanced company & came on to them. They seen Sioux & made some excelent trades with them in ponies for horses. Reported that the Panees had fallen upon them a day before & killed many & in grief they had painted their faces black. They were hungry & thevish. The battle occurred where we saw the dead telling us that several other dead were in a lone tree on dry creek two miles back. I this morning repaired there & found on a lone cottonwood five feet through a large pile of dead perhaps seven perhaps many more. They were wrapped in dressed robe & very high upon poles resting upon two main branches & tied fast with hide. A wolf ran away at my approach.

Curiosity led me to follow the dry bed of the vanished stream up some distance & I found fine running cold crystal water increasing in volume as I advanced with *but* then a tier of cottonwood (the tree of the desert of the west) Have seen no buf. lately. Much here looking like southern wood & smelling _____. Sand banks altogether destitute of verdure even a blade are now begin-

ning to appear. Country very irregular. Cactus is not abundant & is mostly of the elliptical leaf occasionally a globular one. To the left has been seen for some time a fine grove of cedar on an eminence about four miles from the Platte. The creek on whose bank I now sit is clear deep cool & full of fish. A numerous flora is opening but I have no facilities for studying it. Intend leaving in the morning for Laramie. One of the men says the Panees chased & fired upon him the other day while after a Buf & he shot one & ran all _____ Bagatelle. Days very hot & night teeming with mosquitoes absolutely insuferable. More sick. Numbered my last letter from the plains to my Mary (13). (note the Indian dead on the tree)

Castle Rock Monday June 25 11 A M.

Others of a more military spirit call this grand pile Castle Rock.⁹⁷ Let me with more of Devotional feeling name it prarie alter. Flowers have I gathered & grass & lain upon its summit to spread their wild fragrance on the _____ air & where others have cut in deep letters their own names I have engraved upon its very crown crag "Mio Deos." [probably misspelled Spanish or Italian, "My God"] Tis a *massive* pile & here while my long hair floats in the breeze & my eye tired of distance rest on the winding stream hundreds of feet below I feel I am alone with the sky & nature. On my right winding most gracefully thru the deep verdure of the prarie sweep a beauteous stream & far off rise like a huge wall to shut out some anticipated flood of Platte the line of bluff which every mile becomes more abrupt. On ahead _____ the sun becomes yet aslant & dim vision after a dozen miles observance on the left sweetly over a velvet carpet rolls Platte all as smooth as a mirror & on its other side a vast Brown ribbon till the line of bluff on which dim objects look tree like & ahead up the river bluff on bluff far stretches & off a dozen miles rises the needle form cloud piercing called chimney rock. This pile

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of soft sand stone easily cut is about ten rods east & west & half that size north or south. For some distance a very steep ascent leads up & for most the way is on steps cut into the rock & by holes in the perpendicular parts for hand & feet. Its height I can not tell perhaps a hundred yards.⁹⁸ Names of all forms & sizes are cut upon it & much of the character of the namer may be learned by the characters of his carving some in very small letters never to be seen save by aid of a microscope & some as if intended to be seen from the road.

Chimney Rock
Monday June 25 49
12 Day

If my foot slip I am precipitable down an inclined plane of soft rock 100 yards & in a deep ravine below as many more. Steep almost perpendicular is the declivity & my horse on the plane almost at my feet looks like a foal. Above me 100 yards stands cliffing over me a continuation of the same wall rearing its head into many clouds. I saw it

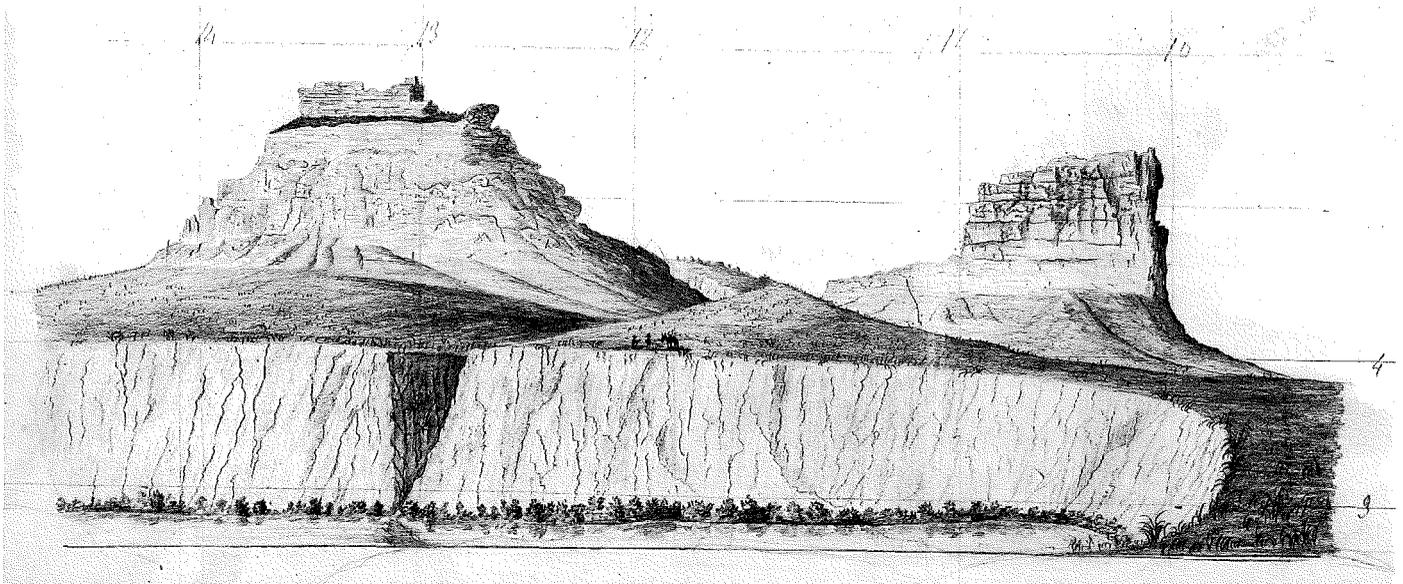
this morning at day light & have since been traveling in haste to make it. Jutted out into a hundred gullies all rock edged is the base of the mountain & they carry the sweetest of springs down into the plains aye through deep sluices that never see the light for the cedars that grow over them & in them & the narrowness of the chanell. I have torn a limb from one & I will send it to my Mary. Chimney Rock is a few rods to my left. I must now these

Sioux words

I want	marko
to eat	utah
to drink	menne
to come	Hoah
to go	stemah
to trade	umpatan
pony	shongkakang
gun	mazakang
buffalo	peta

to live	lematchiuah
I love	[no translation]
no	[no translation]
not	[no translation]
will you	ouichellah
how do	norn
good bye	milukatchah
good	washita
bad	sutchah
very	auto
pretty	[no translation]
tired	anankishnu
I am going west	ashtamainkt
one	[no translation]
two	[no translation]
three	[no translation]
four	[no translation]

The above are Sioux words I have got from Mr. Roubidoux. I am now waiting to take some dinner with him when I

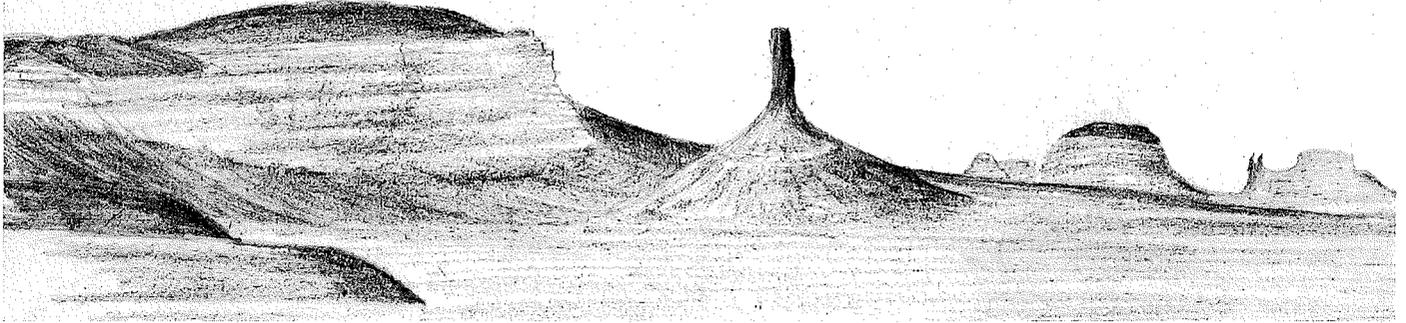


“Others of a more military spirit call this grand pile Castle Rock. Let me with more of Devotional feeling name it prarie alter. Flowers have I gathered & grass & lain upon its summit to spread their wild fragrance...”

June 25, 1849

“...off a dozen miles rises the needle form cloud piercing called chimney rock.”

June 25, 1849



will learn. A violent storm was predicted a few hours ago by the terrible roar of thunder & blackness of sky but he said it never stormed here & sure enough it passed off. I have here tasted for the first time some blanch du terre.⁹⁹ They are very good. By mistake these were put in this space which was left to be filled out & I will be constrained to look up another place for the Chimney Rock story.

Monday, June 25/49
Camp opposite the Bastile Rock sunset

My road this day has been thro the most picturesque country or rather system of ruins. One would think that he was in ancient Egypt & looking upon its proud mass of antique monuments. I am now 60 miles from Laramie which is 73 from Chimney rock which stand in looks a few rods behind me. Have traveled about 30 miles & have not been on the road but a few miles. A huge pile of rock stands off to the right left which as it resembled the Bastile Francais I call by that name.¹⁰⁰

Felt a little sick & took a pill of opium. Do not now feel like pening more.

Tuesday, June 26 49
Noon Scots Bluffs
Blacksmith Shop

My way this morn has lain thro a most beautiful valley not being more

than two miles wide & yet _____ lined with old ancient ruins of every character. Imagination can find there everything of architecture. The Bastile frowning down its towers & turrets & Bastion & many parapet & the stunted pine upon it will supply soldiers while a cloud of sand oft rising in the wind put in mind the famous storming. Port holes are formed by trees & look teethed with cannon & about to speak in anger. The _____ come next & sure nothing in architecture was ever more _____ or fantastic. Now a Chinese mansion all turreted & coined & now a mansion grecian structure cubelike in its grand sublimity a giant _____ of 1000 yards by an altitude of two hundred & gleaming in the air in naked rock _____ now a Domed capitol that _____ speachs thro your head. A coliseum that bring on memory dreams of old Rome. A Parthenon that or Acropolis that make solemn thoughts of Areopergi in fancy now a little Illissus all columned & now a Gothic temple of the olden time with its many points & spires & branching buttresses & how clear the air so as to make all look directly off to right & left a mile & yet I have rode all morning in almost direct paralleling & now for thirty-five miles back my eye can reach & see distinctly the hoary temples with the many other masses all scattered by the way.

Here is a Blacksmiths shop by Ruebidue & a trading post 55 from

Laramie. The man has two wives who look pretty well.¹⁰¹ He says the tribe below who fought with the Panees were Oglallahs.

at night

And Antoine Robidoux is a gentleman. He taught me much of the Sioux & gave me some words for which see 124 page. He says they change occasionally the bones of the dead from tree to tree & even the bones a little girl who had been dead ten years had lately been moved near his house. He had been among them 13 years tho only last spring came to Scots Bluffs. Says the Oglallahs live near the junction of the river on the north while the Cheyenne live on Crow Creek a tributary of South Platte & about 25 miles south of his residence.¹⁰² He procured my reading of some medicinal directions which was in french as he could not read & oh they smallest kind of pill not larger than a mustard seed were in the paper & one packet for cholera & would not fill the inside of an ordinary pill. I read too for him a letter from his Uncle Joseph Robidoux of St. Joseph in which he insisted on his not going to California but staying to make beaucoup d'argent.¹⁰³ He invited me to take dinner with him which I was pleased to do. It consisted of pork fried batter cake & milkless coffee. We sat on a cedar stool made of slabs & ate of a similar table

with our fingers for forks as he had not knife or forks enough. He seemed very happy. Had four children on one of whom he fairly doated & he was indeed a beautiful boy combining all the fire of the indian & the deep sagasity of the frenchman & beamed in his eloquent eye & stood proud prominent in every muscle. His wives were homely & cross in looks but seemed fond of their offspring. Perhaps only one was his wife dont know. Never did I look on so beautiful a spot as the valley of his residence enthroned in high city looking bluffs & deeply *imprinted* with gullies.

**Wednesday, June 27 49
night “Eno” Camp**

I had got just here last night when it began a most violent storm. I blotted some what my paper. The first incident in my todays ride was swimming Horse Creek which was very deep having been risen by the storm at two PM I met the express from Laramie carried by Johnson & a Spaniard for two dollars per load & sent by them five letters home for the safe conducting of which I have many doubts but may as well risk. For one I paid 25 & for four 50 cents. Very rough looking fellows those same & while I slept a little as my pony fed & his mules a voice broke on my ears & looking up I saw two perfect specimens of indianism. They were going on foot to Scotts Bluffs. One returning & the other supplying the place of one Robidoux had send down after some stolen horses & who had died of cholera. The Mississipi & Virginia Company when I tried, rode up & told them I had money enough & desired to stay. Told me they were full. I left telling them if everybody was full a man might soon become wolf’s meat. I rode on three miles & stay with Squire Eno. The Black Hills were in view at day & are yet in the distance frowning darkly very.¹⁰⁴ Mountain goat Bear are here plenty grass very good as also road—Platte very little & timbered with small stuff with occasionally a large tree. A storm

corronetted with two rainbows gave me chase this afternoon. It was trumpeted on too by thunder drums & loud storm lashings. It *caught* me & I am soaked. I hated to be caught because then it took down its banner of bowes. The poor fellow I saw at left Platte died Eno says.

**Thursday June 28th 49
Fort Laramie**

Crossed Laramie branch this morn & came on. Quite deep up into wagon beds. Directly after crossing the white walls of the Fort broke on the eye & old Fort John stood before me in view.¹⁰⁵ Laramie is a square enclosure of adobe with houses inside blacksmith shop & cc. Major Sanderson is in command of this post & is a perfect gentleman as ever breathed as also Lieu [Lieutenant] Woodbury who gave me the distances found on _____ 132 page.¹⁰⁶ Just as great a waste of property has been suffered here as at Kearney. All kinds of provisions being thrown away. Fort all confusion from the company leaving & the army moving in. Fergesson from Atchison Co. is going to keep mess house & today spread a very good table. French Spanish & indian & mixed are very common here & all languages are being jabbered in promiscuous interchange. One is going to Taos another to the sources of the Arkansas & another is off for the upper Missouri to which the distance is 340 miles & to Taos 400. Many are sick here of cholera & many have died. The hills frown darkly upon the post & the clear cold Laramie runs swiftly by. The Platte above is clear & deep. Some of the officers have very pretty wives & they themselves are much better looking & acting much more of gentlemen than those at Kearney & show much kindness in imparting information to those asking. Five dollars per head for shoeing horses or mules. Some are cutting hay to carry with them. Some difficulty seems to be experienced in crossing Platte & 1.50 is the ferriage per wagon. Bugs are very numerous in the fort. Larimy Peak stands very prominent this morning like

a sentinel watching over his sleeping brothers. The mountain men think it is very dangerous to live in the states & would look on one from the states as a prodigy had they not seen so many this spring. They manifest much ignorance of the roads having only traveled on water courses. I have today refused seventy dollars in gold for my pony & am resolved to start off from the crowd immediately & thought with all alacrity as far as pony flesh will carry me.

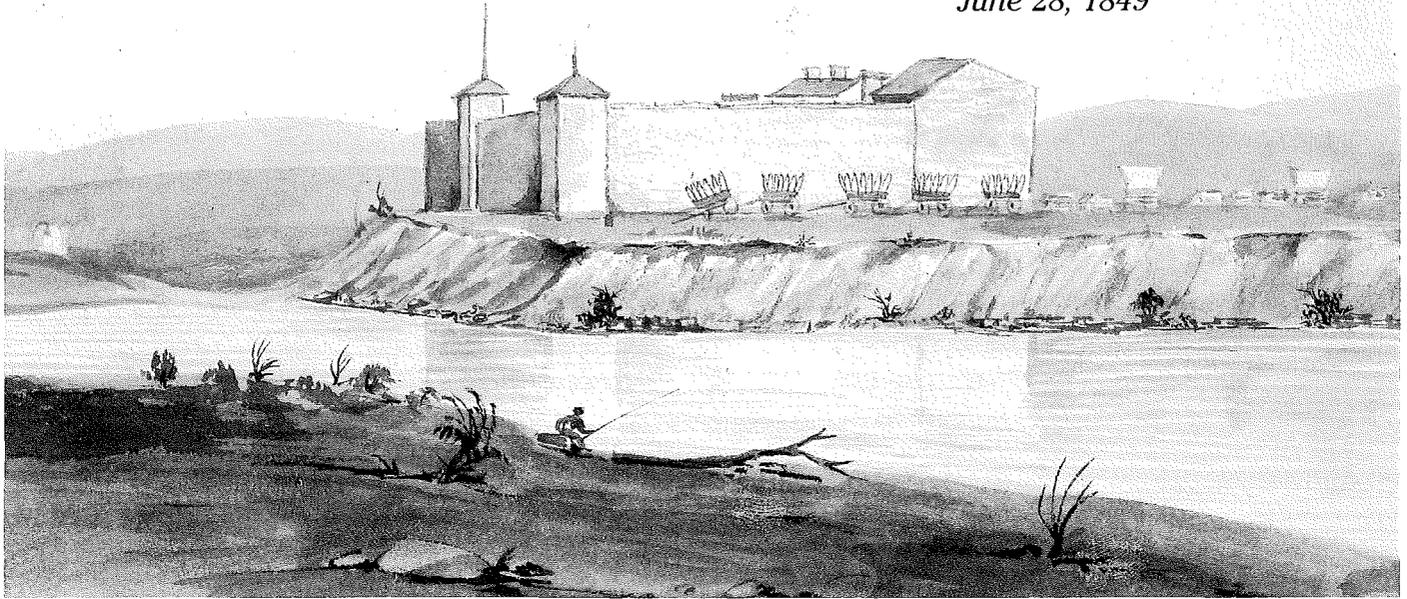
Lieu Woodbury has given me the notes of his journey. Distances from Ft. Kearny—Head of Grd Isl Platte Riv¹⁰⁷

Plumb Creek	36	miles
Small "	64	"
Bradleys Island	86	"
South fork lower ford	124	"
Ash hollow	188	"
"Court House"	244	"
"Chimney Rock"	258	"
Scotts Bluffs (Spring)	290	"
Horse Creek	303	"
Ft. Laramie	340	"
Warm Spring	354	"
Bitter Water	363	"
Horse Shoe		

On distance no inconvenience save a very slight one in the sand hills was felt for grass & I think I could lead a company to wood every night either on the Platte or in the bluffs. Roads too are very good save some sand hills & indeed are the best in the world most of the way. Buf were plenty near the union of the Plattes but are not now to be seen & yet were very abundant here a few weeks ago. Fort Pierre is 340 miles north of this point & a cart of three leave for there today.¹⁰⁸ They go to hunt & expect to get 25 per month. One irishman & two frenchmen or creoles. The rush passed here some time since & is now well up to the mountains. I must seek a camp for the night some grass for my pony.

"Laramie is a square enclosure of adobe with houses inside... French Spanish & indian & mixed are very common here & all languages are being jabbered in promiscuous interchange."

June 28, 1849



Friday June 29th 1849
On Laramie near Platte

On last night I sallied out of the fort for pony grass & made my home with the trader who had moved that day out of the fort & were encamped here. The party consisted of eight all french save myself & another & two Arapahoe squaws & several children. They had purchased two tents that day from the govt & not one of the whole party knew how to put them up. Pierre *Gonnier* who is the head of the establishment is like all traders a gentleman in nature & disposition & I recognize no other. I had made arrangements to stay all night with them but when I showed them how to put up the tents my welcome was guaranteed. Antoine Ledoux¹⁰⁹ is one of the party a half breed with a sweet expression of face & a fine eye & said to be the best hunter in the mountains. His courage & calmness under danger being his principal characteristics. Thousands of Bear & Buffalo have fallen

before his deadly rifle. He is tacturn & not inclined to gratify curiosity or inquiry. About 30 of age. ~~Troct Troce~~ Troque is the name of another an old frenchman from the extreme north the British possessions & has many a bloody fray with Blackfeet who always in his words "kill white man."¹¹⁰ 30 years he has spent in the mountains & been but once in the states. Oh he says he would not go to Cal. White men will fight. They fight even in coming here. He never knew that white men did that. He is quite wrong about them. He would much rather live with indian. Such is the sentiment of an unsophisticated son of the mountains. Poor fellow he dreamed that as all indians are friends all white men of the same nation were so too. In speaking of hunting oh many beaucoup &c indians are killed every year by buffalo in the hunt but white man has driven him all away. He preferred the indian lodge & cutting some willow poles & setting them up to

a point & wrapping around them a skin he was with his tobacco smoke snugly ensconced beneath it at early dark while his *laid* down before it. [Bruce] Husband who has been company clerk the past winter here is I think a Scotsman tho he talks french well & is clever tho no extraordinary person in any way perhaps feels his dignity as much quite as he ought. Two others I did not feel disposed to inquire about as they seem morose fellows. One has a squaw. The other seems a great dissatisfied gent. One old hag indian is perhaps the *mama* of the younger. She says nor does anything but gazes with watchful Arapahoe eye on all done by others especialy myself. The younger is passable looking & cooks & does all the work & seems a kindly well disposed woman dressed after the fashion of an american woman. She stirs around as lively as any yankee housewife & _____ considered quite as good a table. William LaSart I have learned to be the name of the one

“...one of the party a half breed with a sweet expression of face & a fine eye & said to be the best hunter in the mountains. ... Thousands of Bear & Buffalo have fallen before his deadly rifle.”

June 29, 1849



Charles B. Darwin Diary, 1849

whom I regard as very sullen. They all ask me if I meter la tous les noms.¹¹¹ I told them my purpose in keeping my journal & they look somewhat surprised. No forks ever grace an indian spread table & the same may be said of that of a mountainer. One of the party has only been on the Hill a few weeks & looks a very cityfied red & is rather the fresh-man of the crowd as far as Frenchman can indulge in _____ or make one a but of ridicule. They are very proud of mountain glory. Several little ones run around half indian & some are as highly useful as white girls of the same age & I am sure while I heard their singing laugh which without exaggeration exceeds in sweetness any sound ever I heard (& here I mean an indians womans laugh in general). I could not but fancy them the happiest people in the world so much sweet good nature soft feeling mixed with such a rich coquetry that I would rather imagine it to be the gushing out of a heart full from some happy & good angel. I never can tell the impression it has always made on me. I am sure that people who can laugh in such *melodious* music have hearts & heads capable of all refinement & delicacy.

The wagons are covered with dressed buff. They preferred sleeping on & under buff to any other mode. The crows they say are in the habit of coming down after the sioux & generally cause them to flea & often kill them. Scotts Bluffs is spoken of as the most available as well as most likely place for a company fort in future. The sioux too know all the bluffs well & could avail themselves of them as defense & retreats. The Big mass of marl to which I gave the name Capital next after Chimney rock is called Davis Bluff from a poor fellow who was sick & being with his fellows pursued by indians took refuge in its cleft on the summit & when he failed to recover was left by his comrades to die. His bones were found there afterward.¹¹² The Utas are now in. Stern was with the whites & it is said to

be very dangerous to approach their country as they take no prisoners save for torture.¹¹³ The Crows live some north of us & will probably not be found on the way.¹¹⁴ Captain Bonhome made another at our mess this morning. I yesterday wrote home No. 15 from the plains. Buff jerkey is very good raw or fried in fat.

Near Warm Springs Sunday July 1st 1849

Left Laramie on Friday & coming out 6 miles camped on the Platte in good grass & now comes the time for destroying & abandoning property each on realizing that the difficulty of the Black Hill required as light as possible. Loads and goods of all kinds were thrown out. Boxes-trunks-pots-barrels-bags-tents-pants-coats & indeed all kind of wearing apparel could be found on the camping ground & when some offered to give coats to any one wishing them none could be found who would take. Beer & one or two other miserly ones who will while they can move a wheel hang on to the rind of the Bacon. In truth it was a sight to make one grieve to see so much brought so far & then thrown to the winds & grass. Dr. Felt threw out of medicines & jars three hundred dollars worth & perhaps none threw out less than fifty save the above said for whose turn will come soon indeed one has broken down & now we are delayed for him to mend a wheel. The Dr. & Soule & I start to pack tomorrow. We stayed back to prepare today & packed on thus far finding myself too heavy I drew off & threw away my skin coat indian given coat & cc & Soule likewise. Road here very steep & rough & short in pitches. Air full of odor from artemesia which is quite large & sage-like grass poor & here is a very fine spring clean & cool timber pine. The gorge through which the Platte leaps from the hills into the plains is a picturesque one based on red rock & crowned with green timber & looks romantic under the distance.

Notes

¹ In the 1840s raids by the Lakota Sioux upon the Pawnees were becoming increasingly ferocious. By 1849 the Pawnees had moved to the south side of the Platte River in northeastern corner of present Saunders County, Nebraska, in an attempt to distance themselves from their aggressors. Roger T. Grange, Jr., *Pawnee and Lower Loup Pottery* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1968), 24-25.

² Elvira Gaston Platt and her husband Lester W. Platt came to Indian Territory from Oberlin, Ohio, in June 1843. They probably met Darwin when he was in Oberlin. Agent Daniel Miller invited them to join a mission to the Pawnee on the Loup River in present Nance County, Nebraska, upon the recommendation of Mrs. Platt's brother, George Gaston. D. Miller to T. Crawford, Sept. 27, 1843, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Council Bluffs Agency (National Archives Microfilm Publication 234, roll 217), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, NARA (hereafter cited as Council Bluffs Agency letters).

In 1844 Lester Platt was hired as a government farmer. In addition to doing the farm labor, he was to encourage Pawnee men to follow his example. On April 1, 1845, he was employed to teach the Pawnee children. Statement of Persons employed for the quarter ending Dec. 31, 1846, Council Bluffs Agency letters. The Platts had had Pawnee children living with them since the fall of 1843. Elvira Gaston Platt, "Some Experiences as a Teacher Among the Pawnee," *Kansas State Historical Society Collections*, 14 (1915-1918): 785. After the mission on the Loup was abandoned in mid-June 1846, they moved to Bellevue (present Bellevue, Nebraska). They had twenty Pawnee children with them, and Lester was still employed as a teacher. After about a year he was fired. Mrs. Platt blamed "the liquor element among the fur traders" for her husband's dismissal. They then moved to the vicinity of old Fort Kearny on Table Creek at modern Nebraska City, Nebraska. Later they went to Civil Bend, Iowa. J. Sterling Morton, *Illustrated History of Nebraska*, 3 vols. (Lincoln: Jacob North and Co., 1906), 2:215.

There is no evidence that Oto and Omaha children were at the Pawnee mission in Nance County. They must have joined the Platts after the mission was abandoned.

³ In his diary Darwin compiled a list of Pawnee words and the English translations. "Peron" was "child."

⁴ The Rev. Edmund McKinney and S. M. Irvin, representing the Presbyterian Board of Missions, came to Bellevue in May 1846. They discussed the possibility of a mission with the agent and the Indians. Ray H. Mattison, "Indian Missions and Missionaries on the Upper Missouri to 1900," *Nebraska History* 38 (1957): 134. The McKinney

family returned on September 2 and built a house and later constructed a large boarding school. E. McKinney to D. Miller Sept. 16, 1847, Council Bluffs Agency letters.

⁵ Big Elk, an Omaha chief, was buried on the bluff top overlooking Bellevue. His remains were moved to the Bellevue cemetery in 1954, when housing construction threatened the original burial site. *Omaha World-Herald*, Sept. 13, 1954.

⁶ Darwin's comparison of a cradle board to a crucifixion is, of course, exaggerated.

⁷ In Dunbar's list of Pawnee words "spuxpate" was "curly head." Sometimes he spells it "spuxspate."

⁸ Kanesville was a Mormon settlement founded in 1846. It was located approximately at the center of present Council Bluffs, Iowa. Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press Bison Books, 1992), 55. Darwin could have crossed the Missouri River on a ferry boat at Bellevue or at Kanesville. Merrill J. Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1969), 125.

Orson Hyde, a Latter Day Saint, was the owner and editor of the *Frontier Guardian*. Most of the newspaper was devoted to church news and information useful to the Mormon pioneers, although national news was not ignored. The seventh issue came out on May 2. *Frontier Guardian*, May 2, 1849. The *Frontier Guardian* listed prices for some commodities. Eggs were five cents a dozen, flour sold for \$3 per hundred weight, and beef cost \$2 per hundred weight. *Ibid*.

George Byron (1788–1824) was an English poet and satirist.

⁹ Some bands of Pottawatomies settled in the area in the 1830s, but treaties signed on June 5 and 17, 1846, resulted in their removal to north-eastern Kansas. Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties*, 3 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1904), 2:557–60. Later Darwin mentions the Pottawatomie purchase, referring to the land surrendered by the tribe.

¹⁰ Maggert's house would have been in the vicinity of modern Glenwood, Iowa. They spent the night of May 3–4 there. The new schoolhouse would have been near the Platt family home at Civil Bend.

¹¹ In April 1833 Ira D. Blanchard, a young, self-appointed Baptist teacher and missionary, agreed to stay with the Delaware Indians in Kansas. Louise Barry, *The Beginning of the West: Annals of the Kansas Gateway to the American West, 1540–1854* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1972), 225–26. In 1848 he moved to Civil Bend, Iowa. Gertrude Handy and Bob Handy, *Someday* (n.c.: Interstate Printers, 1973), 19.

Cholera was rampant in the spring of 1849. Barry, *The Beginning of the West*, 829–31, 845–47. The disease was caused by ingesting water or food contaminated with fecal matter. Vomiting and

diarrhea resulting in severe dehydration caused death in about half of the cases. Doses of calomel with a dash of opium was commonly administered. A Dr. Lord preferred a dose of laudanum with a stimulant, such as pepper or ammonia. Lyle E. Mantor, "Fort Kearny and the Westward Movement," *Nebraska History* 29 (1948): 188; Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 86.

¹² The Kaw or Kansa Indians were native to Kansas. William E. Unrau, *The Kansa Indians: A History of the Wind People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971).

The Delawares had been forced westward from New Jersey ahead of the advancing whites. In 1832 they relinquished their holdings in Missouri and moved to Indian Territory in what is now north-eastern Kansas. Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, 371.

¹³ James Case was hired on September 15, 1836, to be the farmer for the Oto Indians. "A List of All Persons Employed. . . 30 September 1836," Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Upper Missouri Agency, 1836-51 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M234, roll 884), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, NARA (hereafter cited as Upper Missouri Agency letters). Later he was hired as a farmer for the Pawnees. D. Miller to T. Harvey, May 1, 1845, Council Bluffs Agency Letters. Indian agent John Dougherty described this New Yorker as a "very moral religious and able bodied man." J. Dougherty to W. Clark, July 5, 1836, Upper Missouri Agency letters. In 1842 he was severely criticized for incompetence. D. Mitchell to T. Crawford, Apr. 28, 1842, Council Bluffs Agency letters. Agent Daniel Miller fired him on March 29, 1842. J. Hughes to T. Crawford, Mar. 20, 1844, Council Bluffs Agency letters. Case became a Latter Day Saint and claimed he was fired as a result. William Clayton, *William Clayton's Journal: A Daily Record of the Journey of the Original company of "Mormon" Pioneers from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1921).

The Wyandots joined the Delawares in 1843 in northeastern Kansas. Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, 793–94.

¹⁴ William Lambert has been credited with being the first white settler in the area, arriving in 1843. Civil Bend was a bend in the Missouri River west of present Percival, Iowa. The people "lower down" lived in the next bend in the river. It was referred to as Devil's Bend because whiskey traders were believed to live there. Handy and Handy, *Someday*, 13, 21.

George Belcher Gaston, Elvira's brother, was born in Danby, Tompkins County, New York, in 1814. In 1834 he moved to the vicinity of Oberlin, Ohio and it was here that a religious fervor began to develop that continued throughout his life. He and his wife joined the Pawnee mission and when it failed he returned to Oberlin. In the fall of 1848 he settled at Civil Bend. He died at Tabor, Iowa, on May 1, 1873. His obituary described him as active and mechanically inclined and "not

especially fond of books or study." *Lorin County News*, June 12, 1873.

Gaston Post Office was established on January 18, 1849. Lester Platt was the first postmaster. In 1868 the name was changed to Percival. Guy Reed Ramsey, *Postmarked Iowa: A List of Discontinued and Renamed Post Offices* (Crete, Nebr.: J-B Publishing, 1976), 167.

¹⁵ When the Kansa agreed to a treaty in 1846, Hard Chief was the first to sign. Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, 554.

¹⁶ In Dunbar's Pawnee vocabulary "Lenah" is "How do you do."

¹⁷ In 1844 Stephen A. Douglas introduced a bill in the House of Representatives to create Nebraska Territory. As a senator he introduced a similar bill in 1848 but neither bill passed. The territory was finally created in 1854. James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 69–70, 74.

¹⁸ This is followed by a long and barely comprehensible section that has not been included. It includes his thoughts on the United States as a "titanic land & even with babyhood stands a match for hoary monster continents" with "whole acres of untilled brains" and "eyeballs that burn."

¹⁹ The news about cholera came from the original Fort Kearny on Table Creek at present Nebraska City, Nebraska. In 1846 Congress authorized construction of military forts along the trail to Oregon to provide protection and assistance to the emigrants. Col. Stephen Watts Kearny selected this site, which he thought would be a jumping off place for the westward-bound travelers. In May 1846 a company of the First Dragoons began construction. The army realized the new fort was many miles from any trail and the buildings were never completed. D. Ray Wilson, *Fort Kearny on the Platte* (Dundee, Ill.: Crossroads Communications, 1980), 19–20; Raymond W. Settle, ed., *The March of the Mounted Riflemen* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1940), 13–16.

Fort Childs was on the south side of the Platte River opposite present-day Kearney, Nebraska. Construction began in the spring of 1848. The name was changed to Fort Kearny in December. Wilson, *Fort Kearny on the Platte*, 23, 30.

Fort Leavenworth preceded both Kearny and Childs and continues today in northeastern Kansas. Construction of the fort began in May 1827, by troops of the Third Infantry. Elvid Hunt, *History of Fort Leavenworth* (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: General Service Schools Press, 1926), 20.

Darwin was quite right that travelers on the Plains would contract cholera. One Forty-niner estimated that one out of every seventeen people died on the trail between Missouri and Fort Laramie. This included all fatalities, but cholera was the "ruthless destroyer" that accounted for the majority. Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 84.

²⁰ Here Darwin launches into a page-long aside about the demon gold. He muses about the young

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man who "leaves his mother's kiss & love ones fond embrace & bronzes beneath the blighted suns that shine on golden bedded streams his noble brow that might have in his father adorned a coronet for thee." The section has been deleted. Darwin expressed his negative thoughts more lucidly in later entries.

²¹ Endymion was a young shepherd who was loved by Selene (the Moon) in Greek mythology.

²² Darwin occasionally mentions letters he wrote. In his entry on June 7 he mentioned letter "no. 7" to his wife. Unfortunately these could not be found.

²³ The Missouri Mounted Volunteers and units of the regular army were stationed at the original Fort Kearny intermittently from 1846 through 1849. Wilson, *Fort Kearny on the Platte*, 20.

The description of the blockhouse is accurate. Sixty log cabins were built in 1846 to house the soldiers. Perhaps a few more were added but Darwin's estimate of 300 seems grossly exaggerated. Lillian M. Willman, "The History of Fort Kearny," *Nebraska State Historical Society Publications* 21 (1930): 220.

²⁴ David Hardin and his family came west with the Potawatamie Indians when they were relocated in the vicinity of present Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1837. He was employed by the government as a farmer for the Indians. D. C. Bloomer, "Early Days in Council Bluffs," *The Trans-Mississippi* 1 (1897): 3; D. Hardin, "Before Iowa Fast Mails," *Ibid.*, 16.

Moses Merrill, missionary to the Otos, kept a diary and in his entry for August 21, 1838 mentioned that he "received a visit from . . . two daughters of Mr. Harding." "Extracts from the Diary of Rev. Moses Merrill, A Missionary to the Otoe Indians from 1832 to 1840," *Nebraska State Historical Society Transactions and Reports* (1892): 188.

²⁵ George Gaston married Maria Cummings. *Lorin County News*, June 12, 1873. They joined the mission to the Pawnee in May 1840 as lay missionaries. J. Dunbar to D. Greene, "Letters Concerning the Presbyterian Mission in the Pawnee Country, near Bellevue, Neb., 1831-1839," *Kansas State Historical Society Collections* 14 (1915-19): 641.

²⁶ The mud soup was the flood waters of the Missouri River caused by the snow melt in the Dakotas. A June rise in the river came about a month later from the melting snow in the mountains. In Greek mythology Charon was the ferryman who transported deceased people across the River Styx.

²⁷ The Council Bluffs Indian Agency was located at Bellevue. John Miller had been the agent since 1846. T. Harvey to W. Medell, Aug. 19, 1846, Council Bluffs Agency Letters. Tribes received various kinds of annuities as stipulated in treaties with the government. On rare occasions corn was given at the request of the tribe when a food shortage seemed imminent.

²⁸ Praxiteles was a sculptor who lived about 350 BC. Prometheus was a benefactor of mankind in Greek mythology.

²⁹ Darwin's description suggests a wickiup. These were more commonly built by the Otos than by the Pawnees.

³⁰ Darwin's portrayal of the euphoric greeting extended by the Pawnee chief is somewhat surprising. Five years earlier when the Platts were at the Pawnee mission, Rev. John Dunbar reported to the Indian agent that Lester Platt was one of a small group whom the Pawnee chiefs "accused of being ill-natured and unaccommodating, also of various acts of violence, such as whipping, beating, and in one instance an Indian had a charge of small shot lodged in his back." Dunbar went on to report that Platt attempted to forcibly evict an Indian visitor from his home "without provocation farther than the quiet sitting of an Indian in the house." Apparently a showing match occurred and then Platt struck the Indian with a shovel and "his (the Pawnee's) anger became excited and he seized his antagonist by the throat and thrust him against the walls of the house, and held him quite uncomfortably till a white man interposed and prevailed on the Pawnee to relax his grasp." J. Dunbar to D. Greene, Oct. 9, 1844, "Letters Concerning the Presbyterian Mission in the Pawnee Country," 668-71.

³¹ Valki is probably the Loup chief Falki discussed later.

³² The village was the Pawnees' temporary tent camp near Bellevue.

³³ Samuel Allis was born in Conway, Franklin County, Massachusetts on September 28, 1805. At age of seventeen he apprenticed in the saddle-makers trade. In 1826 he moved to Williamstown, then to Troy, and finally to Ithaca, New York in 1828. He was a member of the Presbyterian Church and it is likely he was present on January 6, 1834, when Samuel Parker made a plea to the congregation for support of a western mission that would ultimately bring Allis to the Pawnee. Samuel Allis, "Forty Years Among the Indians and on the Eastern Borders of Nebraska," *Nebraska State Historical Society Transactions and Reports* 2 (1887): 133-66.

Allis's home at Bellevue was an abandoned trading post. Visitors in 1851 described the situation: "The family, besides ten or twelve Pawnee children, and several white children, are obliged to live in one small room, the only one hardly fit to be occupied, about eighteen feet square." Gottlieb F. Oehler and David Z. Smith, "Description of a Journey and Visit to the Pawnee Indians," Reprinted from the *Moravian Church Miscellany of 1851-1852* (New York: 1914), 7.

³⁴ Peter Sarpy began his career in the Missouri River fur trade in a minor position, probably in the 1820s. By the mid-1830s he had a post in the vicinity of Bellevue and also made a successful trades high on the North and South Platte rivers. He continued to expand his business at Bellevue

until 1862, when he retired to Plattsmouth, Nebraska. John E. Wickman, "Peter A. Sarpy," *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, ed. LeRoy R. Hafen 10 vols. (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1966), 8: 283-96.

Papine was probably Alexander Papin, a long-time Bellevue resident.

Albert Fontenelle, son of one of the founders of Bellevue, was the government blacksmith. J. Barrow to D. Mitchell, June 1, 1849, Council Bluffs Agency letters.

³⁵ Darwin is referring to William Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth*.

³⁶ James Cleghorn had been a trader to the Pawnee. John Treat Irving, *Indian Sketches Taken During an Expedition to the Pawnee Tribes*, ed. John Francis McDermott (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), 171 n.2. Later he was hired as an interpreter for the government. D. Miller to D. Mitchell, Sept. 8, 1844, Council Bluffs Agency Letters. Samuel Allis wrote about him briefly in 1844: "James Cleghorn, Govt interpreter. . . is a Frenchman who has lived with the Pawnees for 28 years; and the only objection to Cleghorn as a man is that he lives with two squaws, to either of which he is not lawfully married, but treats them and his children, as respectful as a married man would his family." S. Allis to D. Greene Oct. 14, 1844, "Letters Concerning the Presbyterian Mission," 733-37. Agent Daniel Miller expressed his distrust of Cleghorn: "I cannot but insist that James W. Cleghorn (late Interpt. who neither speaks nor understands the English language) be denied the right of remaining in Pawnee country. I am thoroughly convinced that he is exercising an influence over the Pawnees that will retard civilization with them." D. Miller to T. Harvey, May 1, 1845, Council Bluffs Agency Letters.

³⁷ John Deroine was the interpreter. Statement of Persons Employed. . . Dec. 31, 1846, Council Bluffs Agency Letters.

³⁸ An elaborate confidence game in 1784 involved the French royal court, the church heirarchy, and perpetrators to obtain a very valuable diamond necklace. The event captured the imagination of popular authors such as Alexandre Dumas who based fictional accounts on the incident half a century later. Frantz Funck-Brentano, trans. H. Sutherland Edwards, *The Diamond Necklace* (1901).

³⁹ Capt. Charles Ruff was stationed at Fort Kearny on the Platte River and reported on the condition of the Pawnees:

I have the honor to state to you that the Pawnee Indians residing within your agency have been (on their return from their winter hunt) coming into this post in the most miserably destitute & Starving condition, their sufferings have seemed to me to be intolerable, many (particularly their very young & old) have perished on the prairies, from absolute Starvation, their hunt has been entirely unsuccessful not

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obtaining enough Buffalo to live upon & in consequence in most instances have been compelled to eat their horses.

C. Ruff to J. Miller, Apr. 1, 1849, Fort Kearny, Nebraska, Letters Sent 1848–71, Records of the U.S. Army Continental Commands, Record Group 393, NARA.

⁴⁰ The Otos had lived in a village on the Platte River west of Bellevue until the late 1830s when they moved downstream near the mouth of the river. Here the tribe divided and built two villages, one on either side of the Platte. J. Miller to T. Harvey, Sept. 10, 1847, Council Bluffs Agency letters.

⁴¹ Charles Frederick Ruff entered the military academy in 1834, but resigned from the army in 1842. Then in 1846 he briefly served as a lieutenant colonel in the Missouri Mounted Volunteers and then became a captain in the Mounted Rifle Regiment of the regular army. He continued to serve in the army until his retirement in 1864. He died in 1885. Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (Washington, D. C.: GPO: 1903), 850. Captain Ruff was the commanding officer at Fort Kearny from October 28, 1848, until May 30, 1849. Wilson, *Fort Kearny on the Platte*, 29–30.

⁴² Samuel Allis was the schoolteacher. His innovative spelling suggests a man of limited education, which may have prompted Darwin's derogatory comment. The poem was Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, a mock-historic satire on the Puritans.

⁴³ Today Darwin's cock's comb hair style would be called a Mohawk.

⁴⁴ The Loup or Skidi band traditionally lived apart from the other three bands. They also practiced somewhat different traditions. George E. Hyde, *The Pawnee Indians* (Denver: University of Denver Press, 1951).

⁴⁵ It is likely that Edward Paul was with the group of Mormons who spent the winter of 1846–47 with the Poncas. In 1846 the Mormons planned to establish a way station on the road to Salt Lake near the Pawnee villages on the Loup River. Indian Agent R. B. Mitchell mentioned a Mr. Paul who was at the village that summer. The Mormons became fearful they might be molested by the Pawnee and accepted an invitation from the Poncas to spend the winter at the tribe's village on the Niobrara River. Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion*, 84–85; R. Mitchell to T. Harvey, June 28, 1846, Council Bluffs Agency letters. The "running water" is today's Niobrara River in northern Nebraska.

⁴⁶ This paragraph was written by Elvira Platt

⁴⁷ Keg Creek emerges from the bluffs near modern Glenwood, Iowa, and historically paralleled the Missouri for varying distances. Darwin was probably about five miles southwest of Glenwood.

⁴⁸ The "old fort" is Fort Kearny on the Missouri River. Darwin was on a trail to new Fort Kearny on

the Platte, known as the "Ox-Bow" trail. He wrote this entry at Salt Creek near present Lincoln, Nebraska.

⁴⁹ This was probably Ebenezer and Thaddeus Pomeroy's mercantile train of thirty-three wagons. Bary, *The Beginning of the West*, 806.

⁵⁰ Platte County is just north of Kansas City, Missouri.

⁵¹ Darwin's route is conjectural at this point, but he was probably crossing Oak Creek northwest of Lincoln, Nebraska.

⁵² He would be able to glimpse the Platte valley from the vicinity of Bellwood, Nebraska. The timber "down the middle" was trees on islands.

⁵³ The archeological remains of three historic Pawnee earthlodge villages have been identified in northwestern Polk County. The sites were occupied by the Grand band and some of the Tapage and Republican Pawnees. The Skidi band and the remainder of the Tapage and Republican bands were in Nance County. Grange, *Pawnee and Lower Loup Pottery*, 22–24. Later Darwin passed a second abandoned village. At least one and probably both of them were occupied when William Henry Tappan visited the area in the summer of 1848. William Henry Tappan, "A great place for gambling whiskey drinking & roguery' A Fort Childs Diary," eds. Ellen F. Tappan and Richard E. Jensen, *Nebraska History* 82 (2001): 94.

⁵⁴ The highest bluffs in this area rise no more than 200 feet above the river.

⁵⁵ Grand Island resulted from the braided nature of the Platte River. Darwin would have seen it first south of the present city of Grand Island. The new Fort Kearny was just beyond the head of the islands.

⁵⁶ Marcellus Mathers was about fifteen years old when he came with his parents to the Pawnee. Agent Daniel Miller hired him as an "agriculturalist." When Marcellus was eighteen the agent nominated him as the Pawnee interpreter, but the nomination was not approved. D. Miller to T. Harvey, May 1, 1845, Council Bluffs Agency Letters. Darwin included "Valki-ussawake-Marcellus" in his list of Pawnee words thus making another connection between the two. Valki is undoubtedly the Loup chief Falki who was killed in 1845. That fall the Pawnee Indian agent gave some gunpowder to James Mathers, Marcellus's father, to deliver to the Pawnee as required by a treaty with the tribe. When the Pawnee asked for their powder, Mathers claimed some Oto Indians had stolen it. The Pawnee were convinced Mathers still had it, because they had seen several powder horns in his house. When Falki tried to take this powder the two men fought. Mathers, armed with an ax, struck the chief and nearly amputated his hand. Despite the wound, Falki disarmed Mathers and then used the ax to kill

Marcellus who had come to help his father. When Falki died a short time later, the Loup band was ready to massacre all the whites in the mission. Some of the other chiefs came to the rescue by convincing the Loups to abandon the idea and leave on their winter hunt. The Mathers family left the Pawnee country before the Loups returned and the matter was not reopened. John Dunbar, "Missionary Life Among the Pawnee," *Nebraska State Historical Society Collections*, 16 (1911): 284–85. Elvira Platt's recollection of the incident was essentially the same but expresses strong opinions about the protagonists. Marcellus was "a young man very much loved by all of us" while Falki, whom she called Spotted Horse, was not a hereditary chief but one "appointed by a former agent and was mortally hated by the tribe." Elvira Gaston Platt, "Reminiscences of a Teacher Among The Nebraska Indians, 1843–1885," *Nebraska State Historical Society Transactions and Reports*, 3 (1892): 136–37; Elvira Gaston Platt, "Some Experiences of a Teacher Among the Pawnee," *Kansas State Historical Society Collections*, 14 (1915–1919): 786. James Cleghorn, who had lived with the Pawnee for years, identified Falki as a Loup band chief. J. Cleghorn Deposition, Dec. 26, 1844, Council Bluffs Agency Letters.

⁵⁷ Lenawee County is in southeastern Michigan.

⁵⁸ Apparently Darwin had an English-to-Pawnee dictionary.

⁵⁹ The Sioux chief was probably Bull's Tail. His followers totaling 150 to 200 lodges were camped on the South Platte River. Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives*, entries 451, 454.

Scotts Bluff in western Nebraska was a well known landmark on the trail. Darwin had more to say about it when he reached the bluff.

⁶⁰ Darwin was fortunate to have survived after his ranting denigration of the Lakotas. In 1849 the tribe was generally friendly towards whites but this would change dramatically in the next decade as the white invasion into Sioux country gained momentum.

⁶¹ "Taguski" is "dried meat" in Dunbar's Pawnee vocabulary.

⁶² The Independence and St. Joseph, Missouri, road entered the Platte River valley about fifteen miles east of Fort Kearny.

Darwin's estimate of the distance between the forts is slightly high. Later he received the army's mileage totaling 227 miles.

⁶³ John Banks arrived at Fort Kearny on May 28 and left a brief note.

It consists of about twenty houses made of sod, some roofed with the same material, walls two feet thick. They must be very warm. There is neither blockhouse nor palisade. A few soldiers and two or three cannon are all the evidence one has that it is not some outlandish village. . . . There is a store and a blacksmith shop.

Charles B. Darwin Diary, 1849

Howard L. Scamehorn, ed., *The Buckeye Rovers in the Gold Rush: An Edition of Two Diaries* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1965), 11.

William Kelly stopped at the fort about this same time. He was not favorably impressed with the soldiers, "unshaven, unshorn, with patched uniforms and lounging about." This "unsoldierly-looking lot" were willing to pay one dollar for a half pint of whiskey. William Kelly, *Across the Mountains from New York to California*, 2 vols. (London: Simms and McIntyre, 1852) 1:78.

⁶⁴ Darwin undoubtedly received the number of wagons from army personnel at the fort. A total of 790 wagons is not unreasonable since an estimated 30,000 people went past the fort in 1849. Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 15.

⁶⁵ The Sioux were fired upon by members of the Lockport Mining Company. This fifty-four man outfit was bound for Sutter's Fort, California. Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives*, entry 439.

⁶⁶ There had been a trading post near the mouth of the Laramie River in eastern Wyoming since 1834. Remi Nadeau, *Fort Laramie and the Sioux Indians*, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1967), 64.

⁶⁷ Later Darwin explained that he was at the junction of the road along the Platte River with the one from Independence and St. Joseph.

⁶⁸ Darwin was on the Independence and St. Joseph trail southeast of the fort in the southern part of present-day Adams County, Nebraska.

⁶⁹ Cooper County is south of the Missouri River near the center of the state of Missouri.

⁷⁰ Fort Hall was a trading post on the Snake River in southeastern Idaho.

⁷¹ Capt. Robert Chilton, First Dragoons, joined the Fort Kearny staff on May 25. He assumed command on July 16. Post Returns, Fort Kearny, May 1849 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M247, roll 564), Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, NARA. Capt. Benjamin Bonneville, Sixth Infantry, took command of the fort from Captain Ruff on May 30. At this time there were nine officers and 135 soldiers at the fort. *Ibid.*

⁷² Graves were very common. Bernard Reid, who may have been more observant than other Fortyniners, mentioned one or more nearly every day. Bernard J. Reid, Mary McDougall, ed., *Overland to California with the Pioneer Line: The Gold Rush Diary of Bernard J. Reid* (Sanford: Sanford University Press, 1983).

The road out of Independence followed the Kaw or Kansas River in eastern Kansas before turning to the northwest.

⁷³ Lt. Daniel P. Woodbury enrolled in the military academy in 1832. He rose to the rank of brigadier general in the Civil War before his death in 1864. Heitman, *Historical Register*, 1056. In 1847 he was sent from old Fort Kearny to select a site for the

new fort on the Platte River. Wilson, *Fort Kearny on the Platte*, 20.

⁷⁴ Darwin continued with a page-long description of the Missouri River valley and the "cristal islands floating in seas of light." He succumbs to a romantic and largely unintelligible style to describe his fantasy about the future on the Plains where "golden walls of brick & roof. . . attracts the eye while street on street open wide their gates till on the ear the hum of busy industry steals." He ends his reverie with, "Oh how much more joyous are the creatures of imagination than the muddy reality." This section has been omitted.

⁷⁵ Here Darwin launches into a page and a half of verbosity about the beautiful flora in the Platte River valley. He writes that the "beauteous & sublime may be gathered from the bluff walls on either side while the garden neath you riots in the most quiet beauty green." There are "flowers white & blue as heavens own eye" while others were "white as robes of saints." This has been omitted.

⁷⁶ Darwin continued with a two-page entry, deleted here, in which he begins to question the humanity of his fellow gold rushers. He writes of those who are "broken down" and "the sick and weary" and asks "What is it to us that they cry for aid. . . gold is ahead. On On!!" He continues with examples of callousness in the headlong race for gold. This leads to a comparison with the Crusades when "Europe threw itself in one convulsive heart throb onto the shores of Asia, & misery devoured them while men's bones marked the way. This is the 1849 goldade. America with one heave throws her life toward Sacramento. She too wishes to worship in the very Sanctim Sanctorm of her God."

⁷⁷ Patent medicines touted to cure cholera were available at the time. Later Darwin mentions Hawthorns Pills. The *Frontier Guardian* (May 16, 1849) declared that brandy was "a valuable remedy when the disorder is upon you" but warned that it was not a preventative.

⁷⁸ Darwin continues his musings for two pages about "gold pilgrims" who died on the trail. He laments the "loving wife with thy beauteous duske eye press close to thy bosom thy babe. Tis all of him that is left thee now."

⁷⁹ Darwin's company was probably a loose confederation of travelers banded together for mutual protection and assistance. He does not explain the affairs that "were not in a leaveable condition."

⁸⁰ Darwin's route is conjectural but his "arm of the Blue" was either Sand Creek near Norman, Nebraska, or Cottonwood Creek near Holstein.

⁸¹ He was on Big Sandy Creek in Thayer County, Nebraska.

⁸² Darwin would have been in eastern Thayer County where he could see the Little Blue River from a bluff he named for himself.

⁸³ Capt. Benjamin Bonneville received an eight-month leave of absence in 1831 to explore the

Rocky Mountains. He left Missouri in 1832 with 110 hunters and trappers and spent the next three years in the Far West. He arrived at Fort Kearny on May 29, 1849, and took command of the post the next day. Edith Haroldsen Lovell, *Benjamin Bonneville: Soldier of the American Frontier* (Bountiful, Utah: Horiaon Publishers, 1992), 49, 55, 168.

⁸⁴ John Dougherty was a former Indian agent who turned to freighting for the army and trading with the Indians in the 1840s. Marilyn Irvin Holt, "Joined Forces: Robert Campbell and John Dougherty as Military Entrepreneurs," *Western Historical Quarterly* 30 (1999): 183-202. Since Darwin mentioned a knowledge of Indian languages, he was undoubtedly referring to John Dougherty. Dougherty's son, Lewis, took charge of the store at the new fort in December, 1848. Ethel Massie Withers, ed., "Experiences of Lewis Bissell Dougherty on the Oregon Trail," *Missouri Historical Review* 24 (1930): 361.

⁸⁵ Dr. William A. Hammond would not receive official word of his appointment as assistant surgeon until June 29. He continued to serve in the army for fifteen years. He died in 1900. Heitman, *Historical Register*, 496.

⁸⁶ St. Joseph is in Buchanan County, Missouri.

⁸⁷ E. D. Pierce participated in the fight. He thought there were twenty-two Pawnees and that six were killed. Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives*, entry 592.

⁸⁸ This was probably present-day Plum Creek.

⁸⁹ Travelers frequently mentioned the difficulty they encountered when hunting the fleet-footed antelope. James S. Pritchard wrote about the animals in his 1849 diary. He concluded, "All efforts to approach them within gunshot are entirely fruitless unless you can steal a march on them behind an object or hill." Dale L. Morgan, ed., *The Overland Diary of James A. Pritchard from Kentucky to California in 1849* (Denver: Old West Publishing Company, 1959), 66.

⁹⁰ The company of Turner and Allen took customers to California in light six-passenger carriages. Barry, *The Beginning of the West*, 861.

⁹¹ Darwin's handwriting is legible, but a camp on the North Platte twenty miles from the junction cannot be reconciled with the rest of the entry. He must have been on the South Platte, which he describes crossing in this entry. The closest popular crossing was about twenty miles from the forks of the river southeast of modern Paxton, Nebraska. Then he went a "few miles" before pitching camp. The following day, June 18, he gives his location as the North Platte four miles from the junction. He had retraced his steps to help a sick traveler.

⁹² The Otos would have been on their summer hunt in a temporary camp.

⁹³ Darwin continues for two more pages. Perhaps fatigue was having an effect because this concluding

section is a repetition the same themes in different words. His handwriting also deteriorates into an nearly illegible scribble. This latter section is not included here.

⁹⁴ Other emigrants rarely mention salt in this general area. Capt. John Fremont traveled up the Platte in 1842 and did notice “that the ground was covered in many places with an efflorescence of salt, and the plants were not numerous.” Bvt. Capt. J. C. Fremont, *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842 and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843-44* (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton Printers, 1845), 18.

Farther west there is frequent mention of chalk, potash, and saleratus, which Darwin could have confused with salt.

⁹⁵ Ash Hollow opens into the North Platte River valley opposite Lewellen, Nebraska. Diarists who were traveling in wagons had much to say about the precipitous drop into the valley.

⁹⁶ There are a number of intermittent streams flowing into the North Platte River west of Ash Hollow that could be logically called Dry Creek. Lieutenant Franklin’s record of an 1845 trip up the North Platte River makes mention of a Dry Creek. The mileage given in that account suggests it is present-day Pumpkin Creek midway between Broadwater and Bridgeport. Frank N. Schubert, ed., “March to South Pass: Lieutenant William B. Franklin’s Journal of the Kearny Expedition of 1845,” *Engineer Historical Studies* 1 (1979): 8.

Darwin’s “First Creek west” seems to have escaped notice by other travelers. Perhaps it was no more than a gully.

⁹⁷ Later Darwin says the Castle is a “dozen miles” from Chimney Rock, which is the approximate distance to Court House Rock. There is a Castle Bluff a few miles west of Ash Creek but Darwin is well past this landmark. Some diarists mention a Castle Rock further west along the trail southeast of Melbeta, Nebraska, but Darwin had not yet gone so far.

⁹⁸ Chimney Rock was mentioned or described by 95 percent of the diarists who passed within view of it. The conical base of Chimney Rock is about 350 feet high. The chimney or spire atop the base continues to erode but at the time of Darwin’s visit it probably rose about 200 feet above the base. Mattes, *Great Platte River Road*, 380.

⁹⁹ The prairie turnip is a white, egg-sized tuber. It has been compared to potatoes. Waldo R. Wedel, “Notes on the Prairie Turnip (*Psoralea esculenta*) Among the Plains Indians,” *Nebraska History* 59 (1978): 155–79.

¹⁰⁰ Bastille Rock was probably what most emigrants called Dome Rock. It is southwest of Gering, Nebraska.

¹⁰¹ Antoine Robidoux built a log cabin to house a blacksmith shop and a store in 1848 or early in

1849. He lived in a tepee with his Lakota wife (wives?) and children. Merrill J. Mattes, “Robidoux’s Trading Post at ‘Scott’s Bluffs,’ and the California Gold Rush,” *Nebraska History* 30 (1949): 108.

¹⁰² Crow Creek flows southward to the South Platte River just east of Greeley, Colorado. It is seventy miles from Robidoux’s to the closest point on the creek.

¹⁰³ The uncle was probably the third Joseph Robidoux in this large family of fur traders and business people. Joseph III was president of the first board of trustees of St. Joseph. Merrill J. Mattes, “Joseph Robidoux,” *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, ed. LeRoy R. Hafen 10 vols. (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1971) 8: 289.

Literally “much silver.”

¹⁰⁴ The Laramie Range in southeastern Wyoming was called the Black Hills.

¹⁰⁵ Fort John was the name given to the fort, commonly called Laramie, when it was acquired by Chouteau and Company. The firm rebuilt it with adobe. Charles E. Hanson, Jr. and Veronica Sue Walters, “The Early Fur Trade in Northwestern Nebraska,” *Nebraska History* 57 (1976): 298.

¹⁰⁶ Maj. Winslow F. Sanderson purchased Fort John/Laramie for the U. S. Army and the soldiers moved in two days before Darwin arrived. Bruce Husband, who Darwin would meet later, was the fur company’s resident trader. The traders relocated a few miles down the North Platte River. Nadeau, *Fort Laramie and the Sioux Indians*, 64. Sanderson received his captaincy in the Mounted Riflemen in 1846. He served in the Mexican war and was promoted to major in 1848. He died in 1853. Heitman, *Historical Register*, 589.

¹⁰⁷ The distances from Fort Kearny were written in small legible script and certainly not in Darwin’s hand.

¹⁰⁸ Fort Pierre was on the Missouri River near the present-day Fort Pierre, South Dakota. It was owned by the fur trading firm of Pierre Chouteau and Company. Furs and pelts gathered around Fort Laramie were carried to Fort Pierre and then shipped out on steamboats. The overland carriers would then return to Laramie with supplies and trade goods. Although the trail between the two forts was about 325 miles the cost savings of shipping by boat made the trail financially practical. James A. Hanson, “A Forgotten Fur Trade Trail,” *Nebraska History*, 68 (1987): 2–9.

¹⁰⁹ Antoine Leroux’s mother was Mexican and his father was French. Antoine spent much of his life as a trader and guide in the Southwest. He may have had time for a hurried trip to Fort Laramie. In March of 1849 he was appointed chief guide for an army expedition against the Utes in southern Colorado. In September he was elected to the territorial organization convention in New

Mexico. Forbes Parkhill, “Antoine Leroux,” *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, ed. LeRoy R. Hafen 10 vols. (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1966) 4: 178.

¹¹⁰ The homeland of the Blackfeet was in eastern Alberta and extreme northern Montana east of the Rocky Mountains. Their reputation as inveterate enemies of the white man was not entirely undeserved. John C. Ewers, *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958). 47–71.

¹¹¹ They all ask me if I have put all the names down.

¹¹² Darwin’s story of Mr. Davis is similar to the folklore about the demise of Scott for whom Scotts Bluff was named. Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, 426–35. Davis Bluff was not mentioned by other diarists of this era.

¹¹³ Western Colorado was the homeland of the Ute Indians. They were not as dangerous as Darwin was led to believe.

¹¹⁴ The Crow Indians frequented northern Wyoming. They were generally friendly towards whites. Robert Lowie, *The Crow Indians* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart Inc., 1935), xiv.

Illustrations

58: *Illustrated News*, Feb. 5, 1848; **60:** Huntington Library, San Marino, California (Reproduced from a photocopy); (Insert) Huntington Library, San Marino, California; **63:** William Henry Tappan, 1848, Courtesy Ellen F. Tappan; **66:** *Harper’s Weekly*, May 9, 1868; **68–69:** James F. Wilkins, 1849, Wisconsin Historical Society image no. Whi-3935; **70:** Karl Bodmer, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha; **71:** Karl Bodmer, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha; **73:** William Henry Tappan, 1848, courtesy Ellen F. Tappan; **76:** *Harper’s Weekly*, July 10, 1858; **77:** J. Goldsborough Bruff, 1851, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; **78–79:** James F. Wilkins, 1849, Wisconsin Historical Society image no. Whi-X32-20432; **83:** Karl Bodmer, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha; **84:** *Harper’s Weekly* Dec. 23, 1871; *Ballou’s Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, 1856; **85:** *Harper’s Weekly*, Jan. 30, 1858; **90:** *Harper’s Weekly*, Apr. 4, 1874; **91:** *Harper’s Weekly*, Aug. 5, 1871; **92:** William Henry Tappan, 1848, courtesy Ellen F. Tappan (Reproduced here as painted. The same image, in reverse, appears on the cover.); **94:** *Harper’s Weekly*, Aug. 26, 1871; **96:** *Harper’s Weekly*, Oct 13, 1866; **97:** *Harper’s Weekly*, Aug. 13, 1859; **98:** J. Goldsborough Bruff, 1851, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; **100:** Karl Bodmer, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha; **102:** William Minor Quesenbury, 1851, *The Omaha World-Herald* Quesenbury Sketchbook; **103:** William Minor Quesenbury, 1851, *The Omaha World-Herald* Quesenbury Sketchbook; **105:** James F. Wilkins, 1849, Wisconsin Historical Society image no. Whi-3935; **106:** *Harper’s Weekly*, July 10, 1858