

Northern Coast of California - Its Early Settlement.

MR. WOOD'S NARRATIVE

[Continued.]

Through this forest we could not travel to exceed two miles a day. The reason of this was the immense quantity of fall-wood timber that lay upon the ground in every conceivable shape and direction, and in very many instances one piled upon another so that the only alternative left us was literally to cut our way through. To go around them, was often as impossible as it was to go over them. We were obliged, therefore, constantly to keep two men ahead with axes, who, as occasion required, would chop into and split off sufficient to construct a sort of platform, by means of which the animals were driven upon the log and forced to jump off on the opposite side. There was not the least sign indicative of the presence of any of the natural vegetation, indeed it was almost imperceptible for them as for us, and doubtless was never resorted to save for purposes of shelter.

On the evening of the third day from our bear camp, as we called it, our ears were greeted with the welcome sound of the surf rolling and beating upon the sea shore. There was no doubt or mistake about it this time. The lofty tree tops caught the sound, which the deep stillness of a night in the forest rendered the more plainly audible, and echoed it back to our attentive ears.

The following morning Messrs. Wilson and Van Duzon proposed to go to the coast in advance of the company, and at the same time to mark out the best route for the animals; to which proposition all agreed, and accordingly they left camp. In the evening of the same day they returned, bringing the glad tidings that they had reached the sea shore, and that it was not more than six miles distant.

At an early hour in the morning we resumed our journey with renewed spirits and courage. For three long days did we toil in these redwoods. Exhaustion and almost starvation had reduced the animals to the last extremity. Three had just died, and the remainder were so much weakened and reduced, that it constituted no small part of our labor and annoyance in assisting them to get up where they had fallen, which happened every time they were unfortunate enough to stumble against the smallest obstacle that lay in their path, and not one single effort would they make to recover their feet, until that assistance came. At length we issued from this dismal forest-prison, in which we had so long been shut up, into the open country, and at the same instant in full view of that vast world of water—the Pacific Ocean.

Never shall I forget the thrill of joy and delight that animated me as I stood upon the sandy barrier that bounds and restrains those mighty waters.

It seemed like meeting some dear old friend, whose memory, with joy, I had treasured during long years of separation, and as the well-scented surf glided upon the beach, bathing my very feet, a thousand recollections like magic, flooded my mind. I felt as though there was yet

the redwood forest, which we were not in the least inclined to do, it was determined that we should retrace our steps and proceed south, following the coast to San Francisco, if such a course was possible. Traveling south about eight miles we made a halt at a point or headland, which we had passed on our way up from where we first struck the coast. This we called "Crogg's Point," and is now known as TRINIDAD.

During our journey over the mountains the old Doctor took several observations in order to prevent, as much as possible, a departure from the general course given us by the Indians. As we advanced, and our toil and sufferings were unmitigated, we gradually cultivated a dislike for such matters, and at an early day regarded his scientific experiments with indifference, while later in our journey they were looked upon with contempt. It was not unusual, therefore, for us to condemn him in most measured terms, for wasting his time and energies about that which would neither benefit him nor us in the least, or be of any service to others.

From an observation taken on the plateau, where the town of Trinidad is now situated, this point was found to be in latitude 41° 0' N. This the old gentleman took the trouble to engrave upon the trunk of a large tree standing near by, for the benefit, as he said, of those who might hereafter visit this spot, if perchance such an occurrence should ever happen. Here we remained two days living upon mussels and dried salmon which we obtained from the Indians, of whom we found many.

Again we resumed our journey. In crossing a deep gulch a short distance from the Point, the Doctor had the misfortune to have two of his animals mired down. He called lustily for assistance, but not one of the company would hinder his rescue them. We had been annoyed so much, and detained so long, in lifting fallen mules, while some remembered the treatment they received when in a similar predicament, that one and all declared they would no longer lend assistance to man or beast, and that from this forward each would constitute a company by himself, under obligations to no one, and free to act as best suited his notions. In obedience to this resolve, I immediately set about making arrangements in regard to myself. Having for some time noticed the rapid strides the company were making towards disruption, and anticipating a result similar to that which had just transpired, I visited the chief of a tribe of Indians who lived close at hand, and explained to him, as best I could, what I wanted and intended to do, provided we could agree. I gave him to understand that I desired to remain with him a while, and that if he would protect me, take care of my mules, and give me a place in his wigwam, I would furnish him with all the elk meat he wanted. To this he readily acquiesced, and in addition returned many assurances that nothing should harm either me or mine.

When the company were again about starting for the same direction, whether in comfort

adhering to the determination of proceeding without delay. Though decided, our animals were speedily crossed over, and our blankets and ourselves placed in canoes which we had procured from the Indians for this purpose—ready to cross. As the canoes were about pushing off, the Doctor, as if convinced that we would carry our determination into effect, and he be left behind, hastily caught up his instruments and ran for the canoe, to reach which, however, he was compelled to wade several steps in the water. His cup of wrath was now filled to the brim; but he remained silent until the opposite shore was gained, when he opened upon us a perfect battery of the most withering and violent abuse. Several times during the abjuration of the old man's passion, he indulged in such insulting language and comparisons, that some of the party, at least not a very formidable number, their disposition, came very near indulging upon him summary punishment by consigning him, instruments and all, to his beautiful river. Fortunately for the old gentleman, providential providence and we were soon ready and off again. This stream, in commemoration of the difficulty I have just related, we called DEAD RIVER.

We continued on down the beach, a short time, when night overtaking us, we camped. So long a time had elapsed since our departure from the Trinity river, and the constant suffering, toil, and danger to which we had been exposed, that the mind object of the expedition had been quite forgotten; and our only thought and sole aim seemed to be, how we should extricate ourselves from the situation we were in, and when we might exchange it for one of more comfort and less exposure and danger.

Immediately after halting, Buck and myself went in search of water. It had been our custom, wherever night happened to overtake us, there to camp—the almost incessant falling of the rain affording us a continual supply of water. This night, however, we camped in some sand-hills, about a mile back from the beach, without giving a thought as to where we were to get water. A short distance from camp we separated, Buck going in one direction, and I in another. I soon found slough water, which, although not altogether agreeable and pleasant to the taste, I concluded would answer our purpose, and returned with some of it to camp. Not long after, Buck came in and placed his kettle of water before us without anything being said. The Doctor, not relishing the water I had brought, and being somewhat thirsty, was the first to taste the other. The suddenness with which the water was spit out, after it had passed his lips, was a sufficient warning to the rest of us. The Doctor asked Mr. Buck where he had got that water. Buck replied, "about half a mile from here." The Doctor remarked, "You certainly did not get it out of the ocean, and we would like to know where you did get it." Buck answered, "I dipped it out of a bit of smooth water." This excited our curiosity, and Buck seemed at the time, to be rather dogged and not much disposed to gratify us by explaining

annoyance in assisting them to get up when they had fallen, which happened everytime they were unfortunate enough to stumble against the smallest obstacle that lay in their path, and not one single effort would they make to recover their feet, until that assistance came. At length we issued from this dismal forest prison, in which we had so long been shut up, into the open country, and at the same instant in full view of that vast world of water—the Pacific Ocean.

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It seemed like meeting some dear old friend, whose memory, with joy I had treasured during long years of separation, and as the well spent surf glided upon the beach, bathing my very feet, a thousand recollections, like music, flooded my mind, I felt as though there was yet some hope of deliverance from these sufferings. What a precious gift to man is hope! To no one is it denied, nor under any circumstances; it is a solace in affliction, and a support under adversity; it throws a ray of light over the darkest scene; it is a pleasure as lasting as it is sweet; it may be deferred but it never dies. To me, at times, its rays were as bright as the beams of a noon-day sun, and not obscure as the faint and uncertain glimmering of a dim and distant light.

Our appetites, having again been sharpened by more than two days' fasting, soon awakened us from our pleasing reveries, and reminded us of the necessity of immediately going in search for food. Not long after we had separated for that purpose, Van Duzen shot a bald eagle, and Southard a raven, which was doubtless a dead fish thrown upon the beach by the surf. These they brought into camp, and all, eagle, raven, and half-dead fish, were stewed together for our supper, after partaking of which we retired to our blankets and enjoyed a good night's rest.

Our prospects for a meal the next day were anything but flattering. Dr. Gregg therefore requested me to return to my mule which had fallen down the day before and been left to die, and take out his heart and liver and bring them to camp. I accordingly went, but judge of my surprise, when approaching the spot where I had left him, to find him quietly feeding. I determined at once not to obey my orders, and, instead thereof, drove him into camp.

The point at which we struck the coast was at the mouth of a small stream now known by the name of Little River. From this point we pushed on northward, following the coast about eleven miles, where a small lake or lagoon arrested our progress. Finding it impossible to proceed further, without again encountering

troubles. In obedience to this resolve, I immediately set about making arrangements in regard to myself. Having for some time noticed the rapid strides the company were making towards destruction, and anticipating a result similar to that which had just transpired, I visited the chief of a tribe of Indians who lived close at hand, and explained to him, as best I could, what I wanted and intended to do, provided we could agree. I gave him to understand that I desired to remain with him awhile, and that if he would protect me, take care of my mule, and give me a place in his wigwam, I would furnish him with all the elk meat he wanted. To this he readily acquiesced, and in addition returned many assurances that nothing should harm either me or mine.

When the company were again about starting—for they all seemed bound in the same direction, whether in conformity to an agreed plan, or involuntary, I did not know—they discovered that I was not prepared to accompany them, and demanded to know the reason why I did not get ready. I then informed them of my determination, and the agreement I had made with the Indian chief. All were violently opposed to the arrangement, and urged as a reason why I should not persist in such determination, that when all together we were not sufficiently strong to pass through the Indian country in safety, should they see fit to oppose us, and that to remain with them would be to abandon myself to certain destruction, while at the same time it would lessen the probability of any of them reaching the settlements in safety. I told them I had no horse that could travel, that I was not able to walk, and I would as soon be killed by the Indians as again to incur the risk of starvation, or, perhaps, that which was worse, fall a victim to cannibalism.

Drusdell, who had two animals left, offered to sell me one of them for one hundred dollars, if I would continue with them. I finally accepted the offer and proceeded with them.

Little River was soon recrossed, after which nothing occurred to interrupt our progress until we reached another stream, which was then a large river, being swollen by the heavy rains. Its banks run tall, and its waters, near the mouth, appeared deep and moved so slowly and gently that we concluded it must be a navigable stream. Our next difficulty was to cross this river. Here the harmony that had existed for so short a time was again disturbed.

The Doctor wished to ascertain the latitude of the mouth of the river, in order hereafter to know where it was. This was of course opposed by the rest of the company. Regardless of this opposition, he proceeded to take his observation. We were, however, equally obstinate in

finding enough water, which, although not altogether agreeable and pleasant to the taste, I concluded would answer our purpose, and returned with some of it to camp. Not long after, Buck came in, and placed his kettle of water before us without anything being said. The Doctor, not relishing the water I had brought, and being somewhat thirsty, was the first to taste the other. The suddenness with which the water was spit out, after it had passed his lips, was a sufficient warning to the rest of us. The Doctor asked Mr. Buck where he had got that water. Buck replied, "about half a mile from here." The Doctor remarked, "You certainly did not get it out of the ocean, and we would like to know where you did get it." Buck answered, "I dipped it out of a bay of smooth water." This excited our curiosity, and Buck seemed, at the time, to be rather dogged and not much disposed to gratify us by explanations. It was dusk, and he could not tell the extent of the Bay. This was the night of the 20th of December, 1849, and was undoubtedly the first discovery of this Bay by Americans, notwithstanding a Captain Douglass Ottinger claims to have first discovered it. We gave it the name of "Trinity Bay," but before we could return to it, Captain Ottinger, with a party by water, discovered it and gave it the name of "Humboldt Bay," the name which it still retains.

The next morning, by daylight, we wore up and moved our camp over to the Bay, and hid over there during the day. This was opposite the point where Bucks' port now stands. We encamped, the night previous, under a group of small trees in the sand hills lying between the Bay and the ocean, on the strip of land now known as the "Peninsula," or "North Beach." The reason we had not discovered the Bay the day previous, in traveling down from the mouth of Mad river, was because we followed the beach—it being hard sand and easy traveling—and the low hills and timber, on the strip of land, lying between the ocean and the Bay, shut out the latter entirely from our view.

During the day that we remained here, the Indians came to our camp, and we learned from them that we could not follow down the beach, on account of the outrance to the Bay, which was just below us. Mr. Buck, however, to satisfy ourselves, took an Indian with him and started down to the entrance. When he returned, he reported quite a large and apparently deep stream connecting the Bay with the ocean, and considerable swell setting in, which he thought would make it dangerous to attempt to cross. The Indians also represented that it was deeper than the trees growing on the Peninsula were tall, so we abandoned the idea of attempting to cross it.

(To be continued.)