

## A BIT OF LIFE IN OREGON.

MY jaunt to Oregon was indirectly owing to the fertilizing powers of guano; although the action of that renovator of worn-out lands was not exerted in its usual manner. It happened thus: A fine clipper ship, which had agreed to carry us around the world, on arriving at San Francisco, consented to prostitute its noble powers to an ignoble office; and instead of visiting the Celestial Regions for teas, sailed to the Chincha Islands for guano, whither I declined going—not being tempted even by the bright eyes and sunny skies of Lima. In consequence I became that most unfortunate of beings, an idler in San Francisco; until one lucky day, when a friend requested me to transact some business for him in Oregon.

A bag, a pair of blankets, a red woolen hunting-shirt, and a revolver, completed my baggage; and we were soon sailing through the beautiful bay and along the Golden Horn, whose waters and shores require only associations and a pen to make them rank with many spots, less beautiful, but more praised. We entered the broad Pacific, then very boisterous, and coasting along past Punta de los Reyes, Cape Mendocino, Trinidad, Crescent City, &c., arrived on the fifth day at Port Orford, our destination. Spirits of the Pilgrims of the Mayflower! how little could you imagine, as you landed on that desolate rock, amid all that could depress the energies of man, that, in less than two centuries and a half, your descendants would be building towns upon the western borders of *their* country—a country broader than the Atlantic you had passed!

Camp-life was soon commenced in good earnest, as, there was no hotel in Port Orford. Provisions were unpacked and ranged in the cupboard (an old box), sundry cooking utensils were neatly hung on the pantry-shelf (the projecting limb of an old tree); and the fireplace was constructed after the most approved Indian mode; that is to say, a few stones for the hearth, with two upright posts and a cross-stick for pot-hanger. As night came on we began to prepare supper; but were much chagrined to find that our frying-pan had been stolen—a sad accident, as the fresh sea-breezes and plenty of out-door exercise had given us keen appetites. We were beginning to discuss the propriety of eating our bacon raw, when necessity seized the shovel, and we broiled what we needed in a style that would have delighted the great Soyer himself. Never was supper of bacon, potatoes, and coffee eaten with better relish.

But to be candid, I will acknowledge that there were some deficiencies in our culinary department. For instance, our party decided upon a rotation of cooks; and, as we were all neophytes, nothing could have been more unfortunate for our digestive organs. We should have been sorry to have had our first loaf of bread pitched at our heads. But pressing on under the Baconian or inductive system, our

productions passed successively through all the various degrees of density known to that article, until it finally arrived at spongy perfection.

One of our party, a lawyer, who, in his turn, officiated as cook, determined to distinguish himself by making a pot-pie. Circumstances favored the undertaking. We were all absent, shooting or walking, and there would be no critical cooks to spoil his operations. (Did any one ever poke a fire, or boil a potato, but some bystander could do it better?) The pot is boiling: in goes the rice; dough-balls follow; elk-meat, potatoes, &c., succeed in quick succession: but the remorseless pot still seems to cry, "More!" But what more is there! Pepper, salt, onions, are all swallowed up. Ah! the beans, Chili beans! capital idea! The beans follow the rice and the dough-balls. The party return hungry—famished. "Law-Papers," with flushed face and excited manner, serves up the pie, and awaits applause, with the air of a man who is determined not to be vain, although he has done a good thing; but imagine his feelings when, instead of a shower of thanks, there was a hail storm of *hard* beans, succeeded by a roar of laughter, at his expense, and in spite of our disappointment. "Green-Bag" has never been seen to eat beans from that day to this, and now goes by the name of "Bene," which is an abbreviation of "*bene, bene facere*," meaning, "When you make a pot-pie, boil your beans longer than you do your rice!"

While waiting here, let me sandwich a small amount of useful information respecting Oregon, more especially for the benefit of invalids. The climate is delightful, and although in the same latitude with New York, the summer is cooler and the winter warmer than those of the Empire State. Upon the coast above Cape Blanco, the prevalent winds are from the northwest, but even these are less unpleasant than the easterly winds at New York. At Port Orford, which is sheltered from these winds by a projecting bluff, the climate may challenge comparison with the most favored portions of Italy. The atmosphere is wonderfully clear and transparent. There were but two or three foggy days during the month, and these were far more pleasant than similar days in Florence, when the cold winds come down from the Apennines.

It was a common saying at Port Orford, among the sixty or seventy residents, that it was impossible to be sick there. The equability of the climate renders this perhaps the most healthful portion of the Union; and it can not be long before our Eastern physicians, instead of sending their consumptive patients to Italy or Cuba, will recommend them to take the Pacific Railway to Oregon, to recruit their health.

Just in front of Port Orford there is a small island, just large enough for a snug little house and garden. Eighteen months since it was the scene of a bloody fight. The Indians, seven hundred in number, drove Kirkpatrick, with the

whole population of the town (eight men only), upon this natural castle, where, after attempting to slaughter them and failing, they determined to starve them. Kirkpatrick had one large gun, besides rifles, and shot down over seventy of the savages as they attempted to climb the steep side of the island, or showed themselves upon the beach. After waiting a month, however, and finding the whites superior to both arrows and want, the patience of the Indians became exhausted, and they made a treaty, which they have kept to this day.

It was upon this hill that, having accomplished the business which I had undertaken, I spent the afternoons of two weeks awaiting the steamer. My companions were too lazy to climb it, and I was left alone to my book and meditations.

I said *alone*, but I was not quite so. Half the charm of that spot consisted in the company of a young Indian girl, who could not have seen more than sixteen summers, and who was almost the only handsome Indian woman I had seen. She had seen me mounting the hill frequently, and thought it no harm to follow, owing perhaps to my having paid her more deference than she was accustomed to receive, and perhaps also on account of some trifling presents I had given her.

It was a beautiful spot where we used to sit, this wild Indian girl and myself, and watch the sun setting every evening in the Pacific. The trees and shrubbery completely sheltered us from the wind, as well as from observation, behind; while in front of our grassy little nook, the view was open to the endless blue waves of the ocean. The atmosphere was of that pleasant nature which makes the mere sensation of existence happiness. I was reading "My Novel;" and here were sketches of the most polished style of life on earth placed beside the most uncivilized: "Violante" and sweet "Nora Avenel" beside this child of the forest; and was I blind or smitten, that I say the latter did not suffer by the contrast! Then you also would have been blind had you sat and seen those large Oriental eyes beaming on you. You would have been smitten too by those delicate features, and that fair form, just rounded to womanhood! I named her "Graziella," and appointed her my teacher of the Indian language. She laughed immoderately when I wrote down the names which she translated into her tongue, being as much puzzled by my hieroglyphics as I was by her barbarous speech; and I must confess that whatever of the savage was wanting in her appearance, was fully made up by the harsh sounds issuing from her mouth. Her language seemed to abound more in consonants than the Spanish does in vowels. For instance, she called boots *khrehr* (a word to test one's guttural powers); pantaloons were *tlsoos*; hand was *shlah*, and so on.

The dress of my young teacher was very unique, and would have attracted attention in

Broadway or Regent-street. Her head-covering was nothing more than an inverted basket, of various colors, tightly woven, and fitting her head closely, like a jockey cap, having withal a very coquettish air; her dark locks flowed down from underneath, and hung loosely over her shoulders and neck; her waist was encircled by a skirt, which, in size and shape, appeared to have been cut after a pattern sent out by some of our theatrical *danscuses*, only it was of very different texture, being made of strings of bark, instead of lace, which hung down to her knees, displaying a limb of which the Venus de Medici might have been proud. A skin, thrown loosely over her shoulders, completed her attire, excepting the usual ornaments of beads in the nose and about the neck. And truly, however ridiculous nose-ornaments may appear to our civilized ladies of the East, I certainly thought they were an advantage in the present instance. Rings belong as naturally to the nose as to the ears, for this practice of boring the body for ornament is at best but a barbarism, whether the nose or the ears be the sufferer. Pardon me, ladies!

Apropos of Indian dress; at Crescent City I saw a most laughable specimen of taste in two young squaws. One of them had on a skirt similar to the one described, and above it a dragoon jacket, which completed her costume; the other marched up with great dignity, with nothing on but a black frock coat, tightly buttoned.

Graziella was beginning to make rapid improvement in English, while I was making a corresponding advancement in her language—not to say in another too, which is common to all nations. She was good-natured, playful, and of great natural intelligence, as could be easily discovered by the readiness with which she acquired the English. Why not educate and marry her! She was the daughter of a chief, and her father offered to sell her for a gun and a pair of blankets! To an Indian the word *gun* involves all the happiness attached by us to houses, lands, furniture, books, &c.; therefore the price was not depreciatory of the *article* offered for sale; and considering the scarcity of wives in California and Oregon, and the romance attaching to the act, my lady readers will not be in the least surprised that I should have been tempted to accept the offer. But, on the other hand, a salutary doubt as to the reception my uncivilized bride, although of noble blood, would meet with from the female portion of my family of ignoble blood, decided me to let the forest retain its own, and I declined alliance with the blood of the Tagonishas!

But the steamer comes in sight. Would you like to see my parting with Graziella? Of course it was touching in the extreme, and my last act was to present her with my red hunting-shirt, in virtue of which she now undoubtedly reigns as the belle of Oregon.