rain. The diameter of the lodges at the base is usually about ten feet; some of them are larger. In cold or stormy weather, the fire is lighted in the centre of the lodge. In warm and fair weather, the fire for cooking is lighted near the entrance, on the outside. The floor of the lodge is covered with buffalo skins, forming an excellent carpet. When the Indians decamp for the purpose of removing to another place, the poles are fastened to their pack-horses on each side, one end dragging behind on the ground. Short crosspieces are strapped on these, in the rear of the horse, forming a framework, upon which the baggage, and sometimes the children, are placed during the march. The small children are confined in cages, composed of willows, in the form of a common crockery crate, except that the door for ingress and egress is at the side. In this manner, these Indians travel fifty or sixty miles a day, according to circumstances; the women always taking charge of the luggage, pack-animals, and children.

The numerous herds of horses belonging to the Indians having grazed off all the grass from the plain surrounding the fort, and it being unsafe to trust our animals with theirs, we determined to proceed and encamp for the night about five or six miles further, at a point where we were informed there was good grass. Distance from our last encampment to Fort Laramie, 40 miles—to this camp, 46 miles.

CHAPTER VIII.

Procession of the Sioux—Purchase of mules—Extreme high prices for coffee, sugar, tobacco, flour, etc.—Shooting-match with the Sioux Indians—A return party from California—Denunciation of the country by them—Resume the journey on pack-mules—Vexations of mule-packing—Cañon of the Platte—First appearance of wild sage—View of the Rocky Mountains—Another Oregon return party—Swarms of crickets—An extinct volcano—Green peas—A good supper—Frost in the mountains—Effects of earthquakes—Hunters and trappers: their numbers, habits, etc.—Celebration of the 4th of July—Gnats and mosquitoes—Joined by Mr. Buchanan—Alkaline lakes—Impure water, its effects—Sweet-water Mountains.

June 24.—About 8 o'clock I started alone to return to Fort Laramie. I had not travelled far when I met processions of the Sioux Indians, who this morning broke up their encampment. Having resolved upon and organized an expedition against the Snakes and Crows, their design was to conduct their women and children to a point on the Platte about fifty miles above the Fort, where they intended to leave them in the care of the old men, until the war party returned.

In marching, as I met them, they seemed to be divided into numerous parties, at the head of each of which was a beautiful young female gorgeously decorated, mounted upon a prancing fat Indian horse, and bearing in her hand a delicate staff or pole, about ten feet in length, from the point of which were suspended, in some instances, a gilt ball and a variety of large brass trinkets, with brilliant feathers and natural flowers of various colors. The chiefs, dressed in their richest costumes, followed immediately in the rear of this feminine ensign-bearer, with their bows and arrows in hand. Next succeeding them were the women and children, and pack-animals belonging to the party; and in the rear of all, the warriors. The whole, as I met them, party after party, was a most interesting display of savage pageantry. The female standard-bearers appeared to

me more beautiful and fascinating than any objects connected with savage life which I had ever read of or conceived. It appeared as if this was a most solemn occasion, for not one of those composing the long column, some three or four miles in length, as I passed them, seemed to recognise any object or to utter a word. They marched at a slow pace, in perfect silence, with their eyes gazing steadfastly upon the vacancy in front. I bowed many times, but they took no notice of my salutations. Doubtless this stern deportment was expressive of their determination not to look to the right or the left, until they had penetrated into the country of, and wreaked their vengeance upon their enemies, the Snakes and Crows.

Arriving at Fort Laramie, the business I had to transact detaining me some hours, I was invited by Mr. Bourdeau and other officers of the American Fur Company, to dine with them. The dinner consisted of boiled corned beef, cold biscuit, and milk. These gentlemen (and some of them are *gentlemen* in manners and intelligence) informed me that this was their usual fare, when they could obtain flour, which was not always the case. In the absence of bread, they subsist upon fresh buffalo-meat, venison, salt beef, and milk. Mr. Bourdeau, the principal of the Fort, who is a man of about thirty, informed me that he left the settlements of the United States fifteen years since, and had never returned to them. Most of the others with whom I dined, had been absent from their homes and civilization several years.

From Laramie, I proceeded back to the small trading-post, known as "Fort Bernard," where I ascertained that arrangements could be made with the traders from Mexico for mules, by exchanging for them our oxen and wagons. I was joined here by the other members of the party which accompanied me from the wagons, and here we determined to encamp until the wagons came up.

June 25.—The mountain traders and trappers are not rich in luxuries; but whatever they possess they are ever ready to divide with their guests. In a trade, however, they are as keen as the shrewdest Yankee that ever peddled clocks or wooden

nutmegs. Coffee, sugar, and tobacco, are valued here at one dollar per pound; whiskey at a dollar per pint, and flour at fifty cents per pint. The last-named article is sometimes a dollar per pint, according to the supply, payable in buffalo or deer skins, buckskin shirts and pantaloons, moccasins, etc., etc. Money is of no value among the Indians. The traders, however, who come here from New Mexico and the United States, whenever they see their advantage, extort money from the emigrants.

Several emigrant companies which we have passed in the last day or two, arrived this evening, and encamped near the fort. A party of Sioux Indians, headed by two chiefs, on their way to join the main body in their expedition against the Snakes, halted here for the night. The two chiefs had recently returned from a victorious expedition against the Pawnees; bringing with them twenty-five scalps, and a number of horses. They held a "talk," and smoked the pipe of peace and friendship at the camp of Capt. Cooper. A contribution of flour and meat was then made by the emigrants for their benefit.

June 26.—Our wagon reached Fort Bernard this afternoon. We entertained at supper, this evening, all the trappers and traders at the fort. The banquet was not very sumptuous, either in viands or the manner in which it was served up; but it was enjoyed, I dare say, with a higher relish than many a feast served in a thousand dishes of porcelain and silver. The mountaineer who has subsisted for months on nothing but fresh meat, would proclaim bread, sugar, and coffee to be high orders of luxury.

June 27.—I concluded, this morning, a trade with Mr. New, a trader from the head-waters of the Arkansas, by which Mr. Jacob and myself realized seven mules with pack-saddles and other trappings for packing, for our wagon and three yokes of oxen and their appendages. The whole of the day has been busily occupied in selecting such articles from our baggage as we cannot dispense with, and in the arrangement of our packs.

Just before sunset we had a shooting-match at a target, with a number of Sioux Indians, in which the bow and arrow, rifle,

and pistol were introduced. These Indians shoot the arrow with great accuracy and force, at long distances. One of them handled the rifle with the skill of a marksman and hunter. The rapid repeating discharges of Colt's revolving-pistol astonished them very much. They regarded the instrument with so much awe as to be unwilling to handle it.

A party of eight or ten persons, some of whom were returning from California, and some from Oregon, to the United States, encamped a small distance below on the Platte. One of these came up to the fort to purchase provisions. He gave a most discouraging description of California; representing it as scarcely habitable. He stated, that he had resided in that country four years, during which time not a drop of rain had fallen; that no crops had been raised; that vegetation had perished, and that the population there must necessarily perish for want of food. His account of the people in California was not more flattering than that of the soil and climate. According to his statement, there was not a man in the country, now that he had left it, who was not as thoroughly steeped in villany as the most hardened graduate of the penitentiary. This man made himself very busy among the emigrant parties for California, who had halted here, or who were passing; and many of them, I have reason to suppose, were credulous enough to believe him. It was easy to perceive, however, that he had a motive for his conduct, more powerful than his regard for the truth.

June 28.—By hard labor all the arrangements for our new mode of travel were completed this morning; and our mules being brought up, saddled and packed, we resumed our march about 12 o'clock. The party which started consisted, including myself, of Messrs. Russell, Jacob, Kirkendall, Brown, Curry, Holder, Nuttall, and Brookey. Not one of us had ever seen a mule packed before this morning. Some New Mexicans who came in with the trading-party gave us our first lesson, and it was a very valuable one, although experience and necessity, the best of tutors, instructed us afterwards, so that many became adepts in the art of handling and packing mules. We

had not proceeded more than two miles, before several of our packs, which at the start were very bulky, and not well balanced, were swinging under the bellies of the animals. These being re-arranged, to the best of our poor skill, (and very poor skill it was,) in a short time other packs would be in the same condition. Although these incidents were vexatious, they nevertheless afforded us occasionally with matter for laughter and amusement, chiefly at our own ignorance. The mules, stupid as we regarded them, knew more about this business than we did; and several times I thought I could detect them in giving a wise wink and sly leer, as much as to say, that we were perfect novices, and if they could speak, they would give us the benefit of their advice and instruction. A Mexican pack-mule is one of the most sagacious and intelligent quadrupeds that I have ever met with. After much trouble of the nature described, we reached our old camp, six miles beyond Fort Laramie, where we halted for the night. We passed a company of Oregon emigrants, from one of whom I learned that Ewing had joined a party of traders, bound for Taos or the head-waters of the Arkansas. I did not hear from him after this.

June 29.—Colonel Russell and myself left our party in the valley of the Platte, in order to visit Governor Boggs's train, which we could see moving on another trail along the crest of the bluffs to our left, about three miles distant. We followed this trail, after bidding adieu to our late fellow-travellers, some ten or twelve miles, and then struck across the country for the Platte, expecting to intercept our party. We travelled several hours over a broken country covered with wild sage, and reached the Platte about three o'clock, P. M., near a grove of cotton-wood trees, and just below a *cañon* of the river, formed by perpendicular walls of red sandstone 200 or 300 feet in height. A small creek flows into the Platte at this point, the banks of which are dotted with occasional clumps of timber. The trees, although not large, are the largest and most symmetrical we have seen for 300 miles. A few stunted pines show themselves on the hills bordering the Platte, above and below the *cañon*.

Contrary to our expectation, we found no trail near the river. Following the bank of the creek, we struck the path which we had left; and ascertaining, by an inspection of the footprints in the road, that our party had not passed, we halted under the shade of a small tree, and struck a fire to keep off the mosquitoes and gnats until they should come up. Our mules appeared to understand the object of the fire, and instead of grazing, as usual, they took their positions close to the blaze and smoke, by our side. Being much fatigued, we fell fast asleep. Just before sunset our party came up, and roused us from our slumbers. They had experienced great difficulties with the packs. Some of the mules had become unmanageable, and had to be reduced to discipline and subjection by the usual process of roping, throwing, etc., etc., which occasioned long delays. Hence their slow progress. We encamped on the bank of the creek. Distance travelled on the trail, 20 miles.

June 30.—Crossing the creek a few miles above our camp, we entered the dry bed of one of its branches, which we followed some six or eight miles to the summit of an elevated dividing ridge. The dust from the disturbance by our mules of the deep, light sand along the trail, has been at times almost suffocating. We descended from the ridge through a narrow ravine plowed out between the hills by the melting snows or torrents of water in rainy seasons, and entered a narrow valley through which flows another small stream of pure, limpid water. From this valley we ascended by a steep and difficult defile another ridge of hills, of greater elevation than the last described. The view from this ridge, to one unaccustomed to mountain scenery, is strikingly picturesque, although the extensive landscape presents a wild, desolate, and inhospitable aspect. On our left are numerous mountain-peaks of great altitude, composed of barren rocks, and rising one behind another in spiral forms. To the right and in front there is a vast prospect of low conical hills far below us, ornamented with occasional groves of small pines, which, from their linear and curvilinear shapes, appear in the far distance like immense armies drawn up in battle array. We have passed to-day Laramie's, or

James's Peak, and what are called the Black Hills. We encamped at a small spring-branch, in a depression of the ridge. The atmosphere has an autumnal feel, and the wind blows fresh and cold from the northwest. Distance 25 miles.

July 1.—Leaving our camp this morning, we crossed a country exhibiting a surface of conical sand-hills, and furrowed with deep chasms and ravines. In the course of our morning march we had a view, at a distance of some twenty miles, of the waters of the Platte. The diameter of the landscape exhibited to the eye from several positions during the day's march, was at least 100 miles. It presented a broken, barren, and desolate appearance.

We met this afternoon, just after crossing a creek upon which we had nooned, a company of sixteen men, driving before them about thirty horses, returning to the States from Oregon. I conversed with several members of this party. They manifested considerable curiosity and anxiety in reference to the Oregon negotiations in progress with Great Britain. They expressed themselves as highly pleased with the country on the Pacific, from whence they came, and avowed their determination to return to it and make it their residence for life.

I noticed, to-day, in the trail, immense numbers of insects, in color and motion resembling the common cricket. They are much larger, however, and their bodies more rotund. In places, the ground was blackened with them, and they were crushed under the feet of our animals at every step.

We encamped, this afternoon, in a small, oval-shaped valley, through which flows a rivulet of pure, limpid water. The valley is surrounded on all sides by high, mountainous elevations, several of which are composed of granite-rock, upheaved by the subterranean convulsions of nature: others are composed of red sandstone and red clay. A volcanic debris is thickly scattered in places. Many ages ago, the spot where we are encamped, and where the grass is now growing, was the crater of a volcano; but its torch is extinguished forever. Where then flowed the river of liquid fire, carbonizing and vitrifying the surrounding districts, now gurgles the cool, limpid current of

the brook, in its laughing and fertilizing career towards the great Father of Waters. The thunders of its convulsions, breaking the granite crust of the globe, upheaving and overturning mountains, and "crushing the waters into mist," are now silenced; and its volumes of sulphurous vapor and heated cinders, darkening the atmosphere and affrighting the huge monster animals which then existed, when gazing from afar, are dissipated, and will never more be seen. Instead of these, the sweet chirp of the wren, and the chatter of the magpie, are heard among the trees bordering the stream, and light, fleecy clouds are floating through the azure vault of the heavens. Such are the beneficent changes ordered by that Power whose wisdom can render perfection more perfect.

A company of emigrants, composed chiefly of those who had belonged to our original party, at its organization, encamped near us. I was invited by Mr. Branham, whom I have before mentioned, to take supper in his tent. He had gathered, during the day, a mess of green peas from the wild pea-vines along the trail. These had been prepared under the superintendence of Mrs. B., and were a genuine luxury. But, that the epicure of the "settlements" may not sneer at our mountain entertainment, I will state, that in addition to the dish just named, there were on the table smoking biscuits, fresh butter, honey, rich milk, cream, venison steaks, and tea and coffee. With a hearty welcome, what more could a man with an appetite desire? Distance 20 miles.

July 2.—Mr. Kirkendall, whom I expected would accompany us, having changed his destination from California to Oregon, in consequence, as I suppose, of the unfavorable representations made at Fort Bernard in reference to the first-named country, we were compelled to strengthen our party by adding to it some other person in his place. For this purpose we remained encamped during the day, waiting for some of the rear emigrant parties to come up. None appearing during the forenoon, in the afternoon, accompanied by Brookey, I rode back some five or six miles, where I met Governor Boggs's company, and prevailed upon Mr. Hiram Miller, a member of it, to join us.

July 3.—The buffalo-robes (which compose a portion of our bedding) were hoary with frost, and the grass through the whole valley was stiffened and white with the congealed moisture which had been condensed upon it during the night.

As we gradually ascend towards the summit of the Rocky Mountains, the face of the country on our right and left becomes more and more sterile and broken. We passed, this morning, through a deep, circular hollow, surrounded on all sides by masses of rocks of great altitude, thrown up by earthquakes. In the centre of this valley, the bottom of which is a flat plain, there rises a conical mass of loose rocks, piled one upon another, about one-eighth of a mile in diameter at the base, and rising to the height of several hundred feet. This pyramid has evidently been raised by subterranean combustion, but at a remote period of geological history.

We encamped this afternoon at one o'clock on Beaver creek, an affluent of the Platte. The grass and water are good, and the wood is abundant. The timber which fringes the margin of the stream is chiefly box-elder and large willows. I noticed scattered among and enlivening the brownish verdure of the grass, many specimens of handsome and brilliantly colored flowers. One of these was of the lily family, presenting peculiarities distinguishing it from any flower of the same genus I have before seen. The prevailing vegetation during the day's march, except immediately along the water-courses, has been the wild sage, (artemisia.) In this region this shrub grows frequently to the height of two or three feet. Its stalk is ligneous, and is sometimes of a diameter of two or three inches.

We were joined to-day by Capt. Welles and Mr. McClary, the first a mountain-trapper, intending to accompany us as far as Fort Bridger, and the last an emigrant bound for California. Capt. Welles, as he informed us and as I was informed by others, had once held a commission in the British army. He was in the battles of Waterloo and New Orleans. He was a man of about sixty, vigorous and athletic, and his manners, address, and general intelligence, although clothed in the rude buckskin costume of the wilderness, confirmed the statements in regard

to him, made by himself and others. The Rocky Mountains have their white as well as their copper-colored population. The former I should estimate at from five hundred to one thousand, scattered among the Indians, and inhabiting, temporarily, the various trading-posts of the Fur Companies. Adventure, romance, avarice, misanthropy, and sometimes social outlawry, have their influence in enticing or driving these persons into this savage wilderness. After taking up their abode here, they rarely return, to remain permanently, to civilized life. They usually contract ties with the Indians which are sufficiently strong to induce their return, if they occasionally visit the "settlements." Many of them have Indian wives and large families. Polygamy is not uncommon. They conform to savage customs, and from their superior intelligence have much influence over the Indians, and frequently direct their movements and policy in war and peace. Distance 18 miles.

July 4.—Gov. Boggs's emigrant company having arrived and encamped just above us last night, it was resolved, out of respect to the birthday of our National Independence, to celebrate it in the usual manner, so far as we had the ability so to do. Mr. J. H. Reed had preserved some wines and liquors especially for this occasion—an anniversary, by the way, which in this remote and desert region crowded our memories with reminiscences of the past, pleasurable from the associations which they recalled, and painful from the position which we now occupied.

At nine o'clock, A. M., our united parties convened in a grove near the emigrant encampment. A salute of small-arms was discharged. A procession was then formed, which marched around the *corral*, and returning to the grove, the Declaration of American Independence was read, and an address was delivered by Col. Russell. A collation was then served up by the ladies of the encampment, at the conclusion of which, toasts suitable to the patriotic occasion were given and drunk with much enthusiasm, a discharge of musketry accompanying each sentiment. Songs were sung, patriotic and sentimental, and I thought, on the whole, that the "glorious fourth" was celebrated here in this remote desert with more spirit and zest, than it

usually is in the crowded cities of the States. The pageantry, of course, was not so imposing.

After participating in these ceremonies and festivities, in the afternoon we resumed our journey, making a short march over a country exhibiting greater fertility than has been presented for several days past. The wild sage is the prevailing vegetation on the table-land and on the sides of the hills, giving to them a dark and shaggy aspect. Occasionally there are patches of bunch-grass, which is heavily seeded and appears to be highly relished by our animals. The cactus continues to display its yellow and sometimes crimson blossoms on all sides.

We encamped this afternoon near a grove of box-elder, willows, and alders, on the bank of a creek fifteen or twenty feet in width, with pure limpid water running over a gravelly and sandy bed. The grass surrounding our camp is more abundant and luxuriant than I have seen for several hundred miles. Our mules as well as ourselves suffer much from the myriads of buffalo-gnats and mosquitoes, which take up their abode near all the water-courses and every fertile spot. The evening is perfectly calm and very beautiful. The howling of the wolves and the low hum of the insects, are the only sounds which disturb the profound solitude. We have seen but few birds or signs of animals since we left the Platte bottom. I noticed several magpies this afternoon. Distance 12 miles.

July 5.—The sun rose clear, with dark banks of clouds in the west, which soon disappeared. The little grove near our camp was rendered musical by the notes of the wren and other feathered choristers. The buffalo-gnats and mosquitoes, as usual, were excessively annoying just after sunrise.

The face of the country for several miles of our march this morning, presented more habitable indications than I have observed since leaving Fort Laramie. Deer and antelope were frequently seen grazing at a distance, and birds of various plumage and notes were flitting across our path and perching themselves upon the low shrubbery. These moving objects relieve the death-like torpor and silence which generally prevail. Crossing two small branches we struck the Platte once

more about ten o'clock, A. M. The channel of the Platte here is not more than two hundred feet in breadth. We travelled up the south bank of the river until we encamped for the day.

Our camp is in a handsome bottom covered with green, luxuriant grass, and ornamented with a grove of tall, straight cotton-wood trees. Jacob brought into camp a specimen of coal taken from the bank of the Platte by one of the emigrants. It resembled our commom bituminous coal, but when placed on the fire it did not seem to ignite or blaze freely. This is the first positive indication of the existence of coal I have noticed during our journey. A shrub called grease-wood, about three feet in height, with a bright green foliage containing a fetid, oily substance, in places disputes the occupancy of the soil with the wild sage. The sun-flower, wild daisy, and a flower emitting an odor resembling the heliotrope, have exhibited themselves. We found here two emigrant companies, one for Oregon and one for California. One of them was encamped on account of the illness and expected death of one of its members, a woman. No rain appears to have fallen in this vicinity for a long time. The ground is so hard that it is with difficulty that we can force our mule-pickets into it. While on the march, we are frequently enveloped in clouds of dust. Distance 28 miles.

July 6.—Travelling up the river seven or eight miles, on the south bank, we forded it just below a grove of cotton-wood trees. From the ford the trail ascends the high bluffs overlooking the valley of the river, from which we had a view of several green islands, one of which resembles a *heart* so nearly in shape that we named it *Heart Island.* Vegetation over the expanse of table-land on our right is brown and dead with drought. After a march of several miles on the bluffs, we crossed a deep ravine or chasm, through which we descended again to the bottom of the Platte, where we found Capt. West's company of emigrants encamped for the day. Several of the emigrating parties have been encamped here, and have *jerked* buffalo meat. By invitation, Mr. John C. Buchanan, of Lexington, Ky., joined us at this place.

After halting a short time, our party, with the exception of myself, moved on. I waited for Mr. Buchanan to complete his arrangements for separating from those with whom he had heretofore travelled. We left the emigrant encampment, both of us much encumbered with his baggage, about five o'clock, P. M. The trail here finally leaves the Platte river. Ascending the bluffs on the right, we pursued our way over an arid plain, the only vegetation upon which is the wild sage, grease-wood, and a few perishing plants. We passed immense piles of rocks, red and black, sometimes in columnar and sometimes in conical and pyramidal shapes, thrown up by volcanic convulsions. These, with deep ravines, and chasms, and wide-spread sterility and desolation, are the distinguishing features of the landscape. We reached our camp at a spring impregnated with salt and sulphur, about ten o'clock at night. An emigrant company had made their camp here. In the course of the march we have passed several small lakes or ponds, incrusted with the carbonate of soda or common saleratus. Their appearance resembles congealed water. A few buffaloes have been noticed at a distance during our march. On our right, this afternoon, at a very great distance, I observed the summits of several high mountains covered with snow. Distance 28 miles.

July 7.—I was seized, during the night, with a violent and exhausting sickness. The soil and water of the country through which we are now travelling, are strongly impregnated with salt, alkali, and sulphur; rendering the use of the water, in large quantities, deleterious to health, if not dangerous. I was scarcely able to mount my mule when we commenced the day's march.

A ride of fourteen miles, over an arid, undulating plain, with a growth of stunted wild sage, brought us to a small grassy hollow, through which runs a faint stream of limpid water. Nothing, in my condition of extreme thirst and feverish excitement, much aggravated by the hot sun and dust, could be more cheering than this agreeable sight. Dismounting from my mule, in an almost fainting state, I hastened to the stream,

and sitting down beside it, filled my cup with the water; but great was my disappointment, when raising the cup to my lips I found the liquid bitter with salt and alkali, and undrinkable. I dug several holes with my hand and cup in the sand, close to the stream, hoping to obtain water less impregnated with these disagreeable substances, but without success. Some one of our party in searching about, however, discovered at the lower end of the little valley, in the side of a bank, a small spring and a basin of fresh cold water. To describe the deliciousness of this, as it tasted to me in my diseased and feverish condition, would be impossible. I drank draught after draught, and then making a shade from the sun with my blankets, laid down to rest while our mules were grazing.

The cooling water of the spring, and an hour's rest, revived my strength; and at three o'clock we resumed our march. Five miles from this we passed another spring of cold water; the purest I have tasted since leaving the Blue River. It is on the right hand of the trail, and surrounded by clumps of witch-hazel and alders. Ascending from this spring several miles, we mounted the summit of a dividing ridge, from which we had a view of the Sweetwater River Mountains, raising their bald rocky pinnacles at a distance of some twenty or thirty miles. Descending from this ridge, we reached, about sunset, a small stream, and encamped upon its grassy banks. A number of small herds of buffalo have been seen during our day's ride. We have passed several dead oxen, and others alive, but exhausted by the journey. Distance 30 miles.

CHAPTER IX.

Independence Rock—Sweetwater River—Devil's Gate—A solitary traveller—Distant view of Wind River Mountains—Chalky Lakes—Deleterious effects of milk—Sickness in emigrating parties—Another return party from California—Buffalo-chase—Mortality among the oxen of the emigrants—Wolves in chase of diseased oxen—South Pass of the Rocky Mountains—Pacific Springs—Last view of the Atlantic slope—Jacob's Tower—Little Sandy River—Troublesome visiters—The Mirage—Big Sandy River—Greenwood's Cutoff—Curious incident—Snake Indian hunting-party.

July 8.—We reached about noon a well-known landmark of the mountains, called "Independence Rock;" from the circumstance of the celebration of the fourth of July here by one of the first emigrant companies to Oregon. It is an isolated elevation, composed of masses of rock, about one hundred feet in height, and a mile or more in circumference, standing in a central and conspicuous position near the northern bank of the Sweetwater river, and between the ranges of mountains which border the valley of that stream. A multitude of names, to the number, I should suppose, of several thousand, are painted and graven upon this rock. I did not follow the example of those who have preceded me, and my name is not there. Near this place are several small lakes, the waters of which having evaporated, have left a deposite or incrustation of the carbonate of soda. They resemble ponds of frozen water. Col. Russell and myself supplied ourselves with saleratus, for culinary purposes, from this bountiful natural manufactory of this article, without price.

Proceeding up the Sweetwater river about five miles, we passed what is called the Devil's Gate; a remarkable fissure in the rocky mountain-wall, which, above this point, runs parallel with and within a short distance of the stream. The fissure is about thirty feet in breadth, and the perpendicular walls on each side of the channel of the stream which flows through it, are, by estimate, between two and three hundred feet in height, perhaps more.