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MARCUS WHITMAN

AND

THE EARLY DAYS OF OREGON

BY

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of the Board, giving an account of the massacre, January 8, 1848. Page 300.

10. Letter from Rev. H. H. Spalding, dated January 24, 1848. Page 304.

11. Letter from Rev. Cushing Eells, with an address to the Indian chiefs by Chief Factor Ogden in behalf of the American prisoners held by the Indians after the massacre, and a letter from Mr. Ogden to Mr. Walker. Page 312.

12. Various accounts of the massacre, received *via* Honolulu, February, 1848. Page 317.

13. Letter from Rev. H. H. Spalding to the parents of Mrs. Whitman, dated April 6, 1848, and copied from the *Geneva Courier*. Page 323.

I

PAPER BY DR. WHITMAN ON INDIANS WEST OF ROCKY MOUNTAINS

BOSTON, April 7, 1843.

REV. DAVID GREENE,

Secretary of the A. B. C. F. M.

DEAR SIR: In presenting you with a brief account of that part of the Oregon mission to which I am attached I shall best make you understand all its parts by giving a general view of the migratory habits of the people, and the manner in which these govern and modify the opportunities for religious instruction and attention to agriculture.

The months of February and March bring a return of the Indians from their winter dispersion in order to commence the agricultural year and also to avail themselves of such provisions as were stowed the previous fall; of which potatoes, corn and wheat form an important part. The months February, March, and April are mostly occupied with the labor of preparing and plowing the ground. About fifty cultivate in the vicinity of Wailatpu varying from one fourth of an acre to three or four. A number of others have smaller patches mostly of potatoes which still do much for a poor and often fatherless family. I have been most agreeably surprised by being called on by individuals to grind corn for them the last of June, but more especially

by an old man that is deprived, by a rheumatic affliction, of the help of his wife, in providing food; who said to me last fall after the corn harvest, "I want to get four or five bags of last year's corn ground as my new crop is now secured." I adduce this as evidence of growing economy and industry. The first and second year all were furnished with one or two grubbing hoes by the Station who were thought likely to make a good use of them. Plows have of late either been lent or sold to all who were able and desired to use them. Seed was furnished the first three years without particular restriction not only to those near the Station, but to those also from a distance. Since that time we demand pay except when we are convinced there has been no neglect to save it for themselves. Our object has ever been to aid them in a way most effectually to call forth their own energy, economy and resource. I may remark that the effort to cultivate has not been confined to the Station only, but has had a very general introduction with more or less success among most of the Indians at their respective places of resort. At Lapwai, the Station of Mr. Spalding and its vicinity, there has been as much success in cultivation as at Waiilatpu and the number who cultivate are greater and I believe the quantity of ground is more. Near the vacant Station at Komiah a great addition was made the last year to the cultivated lands of the Indians besides the land of the Station most of which was cultivated by them also. At this, as also at the other Stations, the last season a number of cattle were brought from the Wallamette settlement in exchange for horses. One horse is given for a cow of the California breed. The Indians have from fifty to seventy horned cattle, mostly cows, which they have obtained partly from the H. B. Company, the settlers and Methodist Mission on the Wallamette, the Board's Mission, and then the last year from emigrants. One Indian only has been furnished with any sheep by our Mission. That was in payment for care taken of sheep of the Mission in the winter, to guard them from wolves. The number who resort to the Waiilatpu Station has not greatly changed since its formation, but all do not now attend our meeting as formerly; some having adopted the Papal forms.

Their migrations are much in the following order and number. The spring return is the most general and least changing of any of their visits to the Station. During this

period the congregations on the Sabbath have been from two to four hundred and from twenty to fifty on week day evenings. Planting commences about the middle of April, which is also the period for commencing the Kamsh harvest. To obtain this root, which is a farinaceous one, known by savages and traders as the biscuit-root, they have to disperse along the streams coming out of the Blue Mountains. Some are not more than ten or fifteen miles from the Station, while others are thirty or forty. This root forms a great staple of native food and will be likely for a long time to hold, in the minds of the natives, a collateral station with the cultivated roots and grains. From six to eight weeks are given to gathering, drying, and depositing this root. During this time from the tenth to the fifteenth of May, the salmon arrive and some fruits are ripe and each receive their share of attention. At this season all the smaller tributaries of the Columbia are barred by a web or wickerwork of willows for taking salmon. The skill and resource of the natives is well displayed in this simple construction and their small toil amply repayed by the ease with which a very considerable number are taken. While thus occupied, they visit the Station in order to attend to the hoeing and cultivation of their crops, a labor in most cases performed with care and neatness. The last weeks of June bring the usual period for those to leave who go after buffalo and the same period marks the time for getting the Kamsh. A migration of from forty to sixty miles brings them across the Blue Mountains to the southeast into the Grande Ronde, which is a large Kamsh plain. Here also the River of Grande Ronde abounds with fish and the mountains with bear, elk and deer. The wheat harvest, which begins the latter part of July, and the care of their other crops bring many around the Station from this time to the first of October, or until the potato harvest is passed. During this period there are more about the Station than at any period except the spring, and our congregation averages from fifty to two hundred. This period is marked by a great number coming and remaining for a short time and then going again and others coming; rather than by great numbers remaining stationary for any considerable time. During this period their attention is divided between their crops and herds, hunting and fishing and preparing dried fruit.

Soon after the potatoes are secured they begin to disperse for winter quarters. From fifty to sixty only remain during the winter, and thus the year comes round and February and March bring them back again. As many are benefited by this Station who seldom, if ever, bring their families to the Station as there are who migrate to and from it. Individuals from these places visit the Station for the purpose of being taught and to receive medicine and other favors. Occasional visits are also made to some of these places and instruction imparted. In this way an extensive acquaintance is made and much useful information and religious instruction given. Those who resort to this Station are the Waiilatpu, Walla Walla, and Numipu Indians. A general good attendance is given to religious worship, and solemn and thoughtful and careful attention to instruction. Worship is maintained by the principal men morning and evening, to which a general attendance is given.

Those who do not attend in this way have what comes nearer family worship in their separate lodges. Their migrations do not form any exception to this practice that I know of. I have abundant evidence of the restraining power of religious truth upon the minds of the natives both from remarks and observations of their own, and from my own observation. A noted chief of great supernatural and charm notoriety has often told me what he would have done in cases such as he named; intimating in what way he would have taken revenge or resorted to violence, but he added, "I am made weak by what I have been taught of my future accountability." Murder, violence and revenge were a terror to him now. The most violent and vexed states of rage I have ever seen among them have calmly yielded into kindness and perhaps submission under its restraining influence.

The superstitions of the supernatural agencies of magic, charm and sorcery are universal and by no means easily eradicated. Their legend is that the present race of beasts, birds, reptiles and fish were once a race of men, who inhabited the globe before the present race. That they were doomed to their present state from that of men, but that still their language is retained, and these beasts, birds, reptiles and fish have the power to convey this language to the people into whom they transfix themselves as they think them able to do. For the very comfort and

purpose of obtaining this transfixure boys were required to leave the lodge and repair to the mountains alone, and there to stay for several days without food in order to be addressed in this manner by some of these supernatural agencies and receive the transfixing of some one or more beast, bird, reptile or fish into his body. Some return without any assurance of the kind. Others believe themselves to be addressed and are very free to tell what was said to them, and what beast or bird addressed them, while others profess great secrecy and claim great reverence on account of their magic possession. At these times they profess to be told what is to be their future character and in what way to secure honor, wealth and long life; how they will be invulnerable, and if wounded, by what means they may recover themselves. This generally consists in directions how to cast off the exhausted blood and then to sit in a stream of water and sing as he so teaches him to do and he will be cured. In this way they say one person becomes possessed of power to strike or shoot another with an invisible influence or arrow as it may be, so that disease and death will follow. This is the foundation of the system of sorcery as seen in the so-called Medicine Men, but truly conjurers. Most of their efforts to care for the sick consist in obtaining one medicine man to counteract another, who is supposed to have caused the sickness. This is attempted by calling on one of these sorcerers, who calls to his aid a number of persons to sing and beat upon sticks with a horrible noise, while he goes through with singing, talking, contorting himself and using incoherent expressions supposed to be repeating what he knows of the language of the former race of men as delivered him by the beast, bird, reptile or fish whose transfix, which he has in his body, is helping him to conjure. After a sufficient display of this kind and a full lecture to his coadjutors about the disease, its cause and cure, he proceeds to extract the evil by placing his hands on the diseased or painful spot and extracting, as it were by magic power, and then if successful he casts himself upon the floor with his hands in water as though what he had extracted burnt his hands. He then shows what he has drawn out and afterwards drives it off into the broad space and prognosticates a cure. But when he sees a prospect of death he often points out some one whom he says is causing the sickness and declares the other to be

possessed of a more powerful agent than himself so that he cannot overcome him. In the event of death in such a case as this, they watch the dying person to see if any expression is made by him to confirm and fix suspicion upon the person named, and all are careful to remember if any hard words had passed or any cause whatever confirms the suspicion. Very often in cases of this kind nothing can save the conjurer, but one or more conspire to kill him. The number and horror of the deaths of this kind that have come under my observation and knowledge have been great. In the same way individuals arrogate to themselves power over the winds, the clouds, the rain, the snow and the seasons. In short, all and every desired or desirable object is attributed [to] and looked for from this source: some are losing their confidence in such power, while others are yet strong in the belief.

A young man under this influence shot himself through the body last July in order to convince his countrymen of the strength of his supernatural and protecting agent. The ball entered the abdomen a little to the right and below the umbilicus and came out by an oblique line above and near the spine on the same side. This occurred sixty miles from my house at the Grande Ronde, and the third day he encamped near me for the night, and I saw him and examined his wound in the morning. He was walking round and getting ready to move on and rode off on horseback. This was the second trial of his strength, having shot himself through much the same way about two years before. The cicatrix where the ball entered was near the last wound on the right side below the umbilicus, and that when it escaped was behind but near the spine on the left side and higher up on the body. This must have passed the large artery called the Aorta in its oblique course across the body. The body was preserved from the flash by his leather skirt. He will now be able to make himself revered and thought to be a strong mystery or medicine man.

The school has been more interrupted at our Station than at Lapwai, where Mrs. Spalding has taught a number of people and children to read and write their own language.

This document is not signed, but is filed and marked
" Dr. M. Whitman, Rec'd April 7. Boston, 7 Apl. 1843."