

JOHN HOBSON.—Mr. Hobson, with his father and brother Richard and three sisters, came to Oregon as early as 1843, being members of the first large immigration. The story of their trip and the influences which directed their footsteps hither is one of the pleasantest and most romantic among

our early annals; and there is no novel nor history more fascinating than to listen half a day as we did to the recital of his adventures.

He is a native of England, having been born in Derbyshire in 1824. His father was a hatter, and, losing his wife by death, sought a new region to bring up his children under better conditions than his means would allow in the Old Country. He determined therefore to emigrate to America, and chose Wisconsin as his objective point. In order to cross the ocean, he found it necessary to join a party of Mormons, who were under the leadership of a bishop and were going in a ship chartered by him. Leaving Liverpool January 11, they reached St. Louis in March following, but here found progress impeded by ice in the river. While waiting several weeks for the breakup, they made the acquaintance of Miles Ayers, who was one of the movers in the organization of a company to go to Oregon; and the father was persuaded by him to join the train. Doctor Whitman was also there and confirmed their resolution.

Mr. John Hobson, then a young man of nineteen, well remembers the Doctor, and the assistance which he rendered in procuring for them a dog, and later, at the Kaw mission, a yoke of cattle. The experiences of the trip of 1843 embrace a wide variety of details, according to the different portions of the train to which the various individuals belonged, and according to the scenes or exertions which impress different persons most forcibly. Mr. Hobson remembers distinctly the efforts of Doctor Whitman at the crossing of the Platte river; and that the danger of the cattle stopping and sinking in the quicksand was avoided by chaining the entire train together, and passing on *en masse*. A crossing of the Snake was effected in the same way; but at this point Miles Ayers was drowned.

Upon arriving at Wailatpu, Whitman's home, the travelers were disappointed by finding the gristmill burned, but procuring a little wheat made flour with their coffee mills. They also left their cattle there on the range, by advice of Whitman, and making a large canoe out of a cottonwood tree, with an Indian guide procured by the Doctor, proceeded down the Walla Walla river, and made the descent of the Columbia four hundred miles in this frail shell. At the falls of Celilo their experiences were thrilling and, indeed, terrifying; and a canoe following was overturned and one man drowned. At Vancouver they were generously accommodated by McLoughlin for goods, for which they gave a note.

Leaving their families at Vancouver, a company consisting of G. Summers, Thomas Owens, Holly, Harogus and Hobson went on down the river in their canoe looking for claims, spending nine days for the trip. Stopping at Chinook they met with the loss of their craft by its being dashed upon the shingly beach as the tide and sea swell rose. They were, however, put across to Tanzy Point by the Indians, and found the following white men there: Solomon Smith and Mr. Tibbetts, of Wyeth's expedition, Elbridge Trask of Wyeth's ship, and William T. Perry. Trask went to the mountains in 1836 to trap. On his return in 1842 he met and married Mrs. Perry's sister. Mr. Perry, his wife and her

sister were immigrants of 1842 with Mr. Crawford. Mr. Parrish and W. W. Raymond were living at the mission. After selecting claims they returned for their families, and with a *bateau* made the trip down the river once more. Five days on the river returning, it was Christmas night when they camped on the shore by the little cove at Astoria. One experience illustrates the shifts of the early times. After crossing over Young's Bay to Tanzy Point, their canoes sank; and all their flour became wet. They saved this dough by baking it, and had hard-tack for months.

The season of 1844 was nearly as eventful as the preceding to John Hobson. It was necessary to go back to Walla Walla for the cattle; and by the time they were collected from Whitman's range, and brought over the Cascade Mountains north of Mount Hood, and crossed over the Willamette to Linnton, and driven over the Portland hills, and across the Tualatin river, and through the gap by way of Chehalem Mountain to the riffles of the Yamhill at the farm of Amos Cook, and in short over the Coast Mountains to the ocean beach, and past Tillamook to the Clatsop home, the summer was well consumed.

The matter of living at all in those early days was accomplished with much labor. Potatoes for seed must be got of Birnie at Astoria, and paid back in time; and it was not until 1846 that this return could be rendered. Wheat must be taken a hundred and forty miles by canoe to Oregon City to be ground into flour; and eventful were the trips of Hobson in getting his canoe loads there and back again.

In 1845 young Hobson felt the desire to go into a region still more remote than the now comparatively well-settled Clatsop, and with John R. Jackson, Moore and Gardiner passed over to the Cowlitz prairie, but returned before winter to his place on Clatsop. The succeeding years, until 1848, were spent in the improvement of his home, and in various expeditions up the Columbia and up and down the beach, in wrecking the schooner *Shark*, the whaler *Maine* and the bark *Vancouver*, which were driven ashore on the Clatsop sands or upon the beach below Tillamook head.

It was early in 1847 that the people of Clatsop vindicated their love of order by breaking up saloons at Astoria, which were running unlawfully and corrupting the Indians. A posse *comitatus*, under Sheriff Caples, embracing nearly all the men on the plains, with Captain James H. McMillen, who was at work on a boat at the mouth of the Skippanon creek, ran down and nearly drowned one George Gear, who was selling "Blue Ruin," and had taken to the river to elude pursuit and to escape to Chinook. As the Clatsop party, who were in a large canoe, came near to seize him, he made an effort to strike Hobson with a hatchet, and perhaps to overturn the canoe in which his pursuers were seated, being prevented only by McMillen's covering him with a revolver, and declaring that he would shoot if he made a motion.

In 1848 Mr. Hobson with his brother and many other Oregon friends, such as Marcellus, Jeffers, Latty and Bradbury, went down to the mines; and all met with excellent success. The stories which

are told of taking out \$5,000, \$10,000 or even \$25,000 in a single season to the man seem almost fabulous. Hobson saved his money, and, returning to the green peninsula at the mouth of the Columbia, bought the quitclaim of Perry for the handsome place now owned by Mr. Wingate, paying therefor \$3,000. He was induced to sell for \$3,500 to Governor Gaines, who was delighted with the sea beauties of this region. The Governor, however, losing his wife by a distressing accident, sold it back again at a thousand dollars advance. Marrying Thomas Owens's eldest daughter, Diana, who was wont to be called the Clatsop belle, and who was indeed a very beautiful and attractive young woman, Mr. Hobson made his home on this place for many years.

In 1855 he saw a touch of the Indian trouble. Going with his wife and child and his wife's sister, Jane Owens, now Mrs. Hyman Abraham, to the Umpqua valley on a visit to Mrs. Hobson's people, he passed through Tillamook and the Grande Ronde. On the Upper Yamhill they passed by a cabin that was laid in ashes; and the calcined bones of human beings were distinguished. These, they learned afterwards, were the remains of an old lady, Mrs. Clark, and her son, whom the Indians had killed, and had then burned the cabin over them. Coming back a few weeks later, Mr. Hobson discovered that the murderers of these white people had seen himself and his little family, with some fifteen cattle, pass by, and that they had been practically at their mercy for some time.

Of late years Mr. Hobson has occupied a prominent position in business and society at Astoria, and is at present collector of customs at the port, having been appointed by President Cleveland. He is a remarkably upright and sincere man, of strong character and purposes, and of exceptionally firm mental and physical fiber.