

RÉSUMÉ OF FRÉMONT'S EXPEDITIONS.



A FULL account of the five exploring expeditions of John C. Frémont would form almost a complete history of the great West during that time—from June, 1842, to February, 1854. The three earlier expeditions were made at the expense and under the direction of the Government. The two later ones were private ventures—principally at the expense of Frémont's father-in-law, Thomas H. Benton, and himself.¹

The first expedition left Choteau's Landing, near the site of Kansas City, on June 10, 1842. The party consisted of twenty-eight members, with Frémont in command, Charles Preuss, topographical engineer, Lucien Maxwell, hunter, and Kit Carson, guide. It was accompanied by Henry Brant, a son of Colonel J. H. Brant, of St. Louis, and Randolph Benton, Frémont's brother-in-law, a boy of twelve. The remainder of the party, twenty-two in number, were principally Creole or Canadian *voyageurs*.² The party was well armed and mounted, with the exception of the eight cart-drivers. For some distance the expedition followed very nearly the route taken by the first emigrant train, of which General Bidwell was a member, and, like them, met vast herds of buffaloes and other game.

This route followed the general line of the Kansas and Platte rivers, and for forty miles beyond the junction of the North and South forks of the Platte it kept close to the latter. At this point the party separated, Frémont with five men continuing along the South Fork, while the others struck across country to the North Fork, and, resuming the emigrant route, passed by Scott's Bluff, Chimney Rock, and other landmarks. At Fort Laramie they were reunited early in July. Every obstruction was thrown in the way of their advance. The trappers, under the well-known mountaineer, Jim Bridger, warned them against the danger of proceeding; and the Indians at Fort Lara-

mie threatened them with destruction if they insisted upon advancing. But warnings and threats alike failed. In a council held at Fort Laramie Frémont announced his intention of pressing on in pursuance of his original plans.

On the 28th of July it was decided that the party should conceal its *impedimenta* and push forward in light marching order.

The Rocky Mountains were crossed at South Pass on the 8th of August, and the party then struck northward, now for the first time traveling over untrodden ground. After many adventures and much hardship they reached the Wind River Mountains; the highest peak, named, after the first man to make the ascent, Frémont's Peak, was scaled, and the American flag planted upon its summit. This mountain, perhaps the loftiest in the Rocky Mountain system, is 13,570 feet in height. From this point the party returned by way of the Nebraska River, reaching St. Louis on the 17th of October.

The second expedition started in the spring of 1843. Frémont received instructions to con-



CHARLES PREUSS,
TOPOGRAPHER OF THE FIRST AND SECOND FRÉMONT
EXPEDITIONS. (FROM A DAGUERRETYPE.)

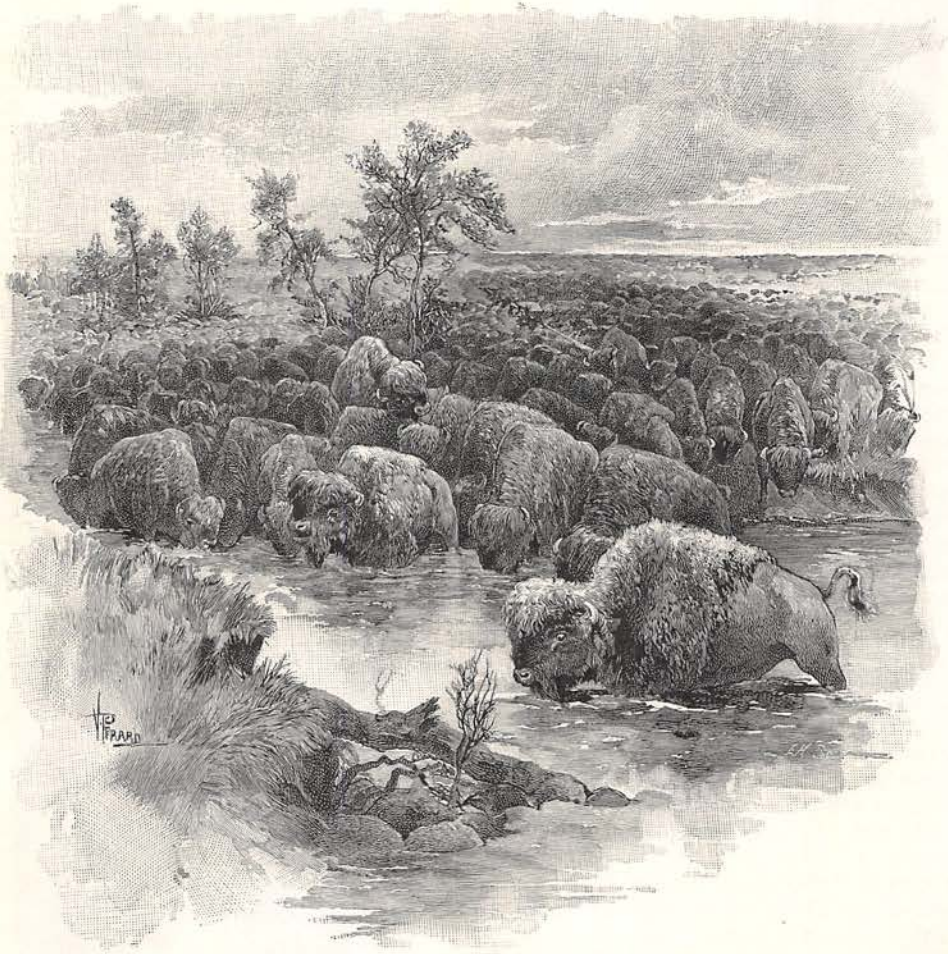
¹ For map of routes see "The First Emigrant Train to California," THE CENTURY for November, 1890.

² These were: Clément Lambert, J. B. L'Espérance, J. B. Lefèvre, Benjamin Potra, Moïse Chardon-
nais, Auguste Janisse, Raphael Proue, Louis Gouin,

J. B. Dumés, Basil Lajeunesse, François Tessier, Benjamin Cadotte, Joseph Clément, Daniel Simonds, Leonard Benoit, Michel Morly, Baptiste Bernier, Honoré Ayot, François Latulippe, François Badeau, Louis Ménard, Joseph Ruelle.

nect his explorations of 1842 with the surveys of Commander Wilkes on the Pacific coast. There were thirty-nine men in the party. Mr. Preuss was again topographical engineer; Thomas Fitzpatrick was guide. Theodore Talbot and Frederick Dwight joined the party for personal reasons. These with thirty-two white men, a free colored man, Jacob Dod-

party were delighted to meet Kit Carson, and to secure his services as guide. Several parties had been sent out to secure supplies. Failing in this, they returned to Fort St. Vrain. At this point Alexis Godey was engaged as hunter. Frémont says, "In courage and professional skill he was a formidable rival to Carson." Going through the Medicine Butte Pass, follow-



A HERD OF BUFFALOES AT THE PLATTE.

son, and two Delaware Indians, completed the number.

The preparations for departure being completed, on the 29th of May the party set out, following the general direction taken by the first expedition but farther to the south, crossing the two forks of the Kansas and reaching Fort St. Vrain on the Fourth of July. Instead of turning directly north to Fort Laramie, as he had done in 1842, Frémont took a westerly course. On the 14th, at the point where the Boiling Spring River enters the Arkansas, the

ing the Platte and the Sweetwater, they crossed the South Pass and struck directly westward to the Bear River, which, flowing in a southerly direction, empties into Great Salt Lake. After some exploration of its northern end, on the 18th of September the party were again united at Fort Hall on the Shoshone, and preparations were made to push on to the Columbia. The cold and the scarcity of provisions decided Frémont to send back a number of the men who had so far accompanied him. Eleven men, among them Basil

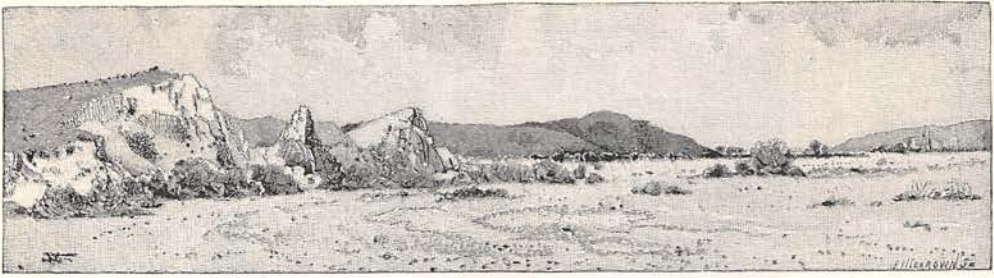


JIM BRIDGER, SCOUT AND TRAPPER. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY CARTER.)

Lajeunesse, who was an extremely valuable man, returned, for one reason or another, to their homes. The remnant of the party pushed on, following the course of the Snake River to Walla Walla. On the 4th of November they passed the Dalles of the Columbia, and a few days later reached Fort Vancouver. A number of excursions in the vicinity brought into view the snow-covered peaks of Mount Rainier (Mount Tacoma), Mount St. Helen's, and Mount Hood. On the 25th of November the party began its homeward trip, which was accomplished by a wide southerly sweep, and through much privation, danger, and suffering. The path lay first down through Oregon and California, over the snowy passes of the Sierra Nevada, by the waters of the Sacramento to Sutter's Fort. The experiences of travel on the snow-covered mountains, through which their way had to be broken, were terrible. Worn out, sometimes crazed by exposure and suffering, one man after another would wander off and get lost, and the strength of the rest, which was

weakness at best, would be taxed to hunt up the wanderers. At last the stragglers were all gathered in except Baptiste Derosier, who was given up for lost, but who turned up two years later in St Louis.

This expedition through the great valley lying between the Rockies on the east and the Sierra Nevada on the west opened up a country unknown except to Indians and trappers, and disproved the idea, which had hitherto been accepted as fact, that a great waterway led directly westward through the Sierra to the Pacific coast. After an excursion to San Francisco the route southward was resumed, along the direction of the coast and about one hundred miles east of it, to a point not far from Los Angeles, then curving up and proceeding due northeasterly and then northerly till Great Salt Lake was again reached at its southern extremity. This great reëntrant curve of three thousand five hundred miles was traveled over in eight months, during the severities of a winter in the mountains and



VIEW OF THE DRY BED OF THE SOUTH FORK OF THE PLATTE (1890).

never once out of sight of snow. During these eight months no word had come back to the East from the party, and grave fears were entertained for their safety.

The third and last Government expedition set out in the autumn of 1845. The object in view was to follow up the Arkansas River to its source in the Rocky Mountains, to complete the exploration of Great Salt Lake, and to extend the survey westward and southwestward to the Cascades and the Sierra Nevada, in order to ascertain the best route by which to reach the Pacific coast in this lower latitude. Matters were in a very unsettled condition; the Mexican war was impending, and trouble was brooding over our southwestern possessions. Before going on this expedition Frémont was brevetted lieutenant and captain at the same time.

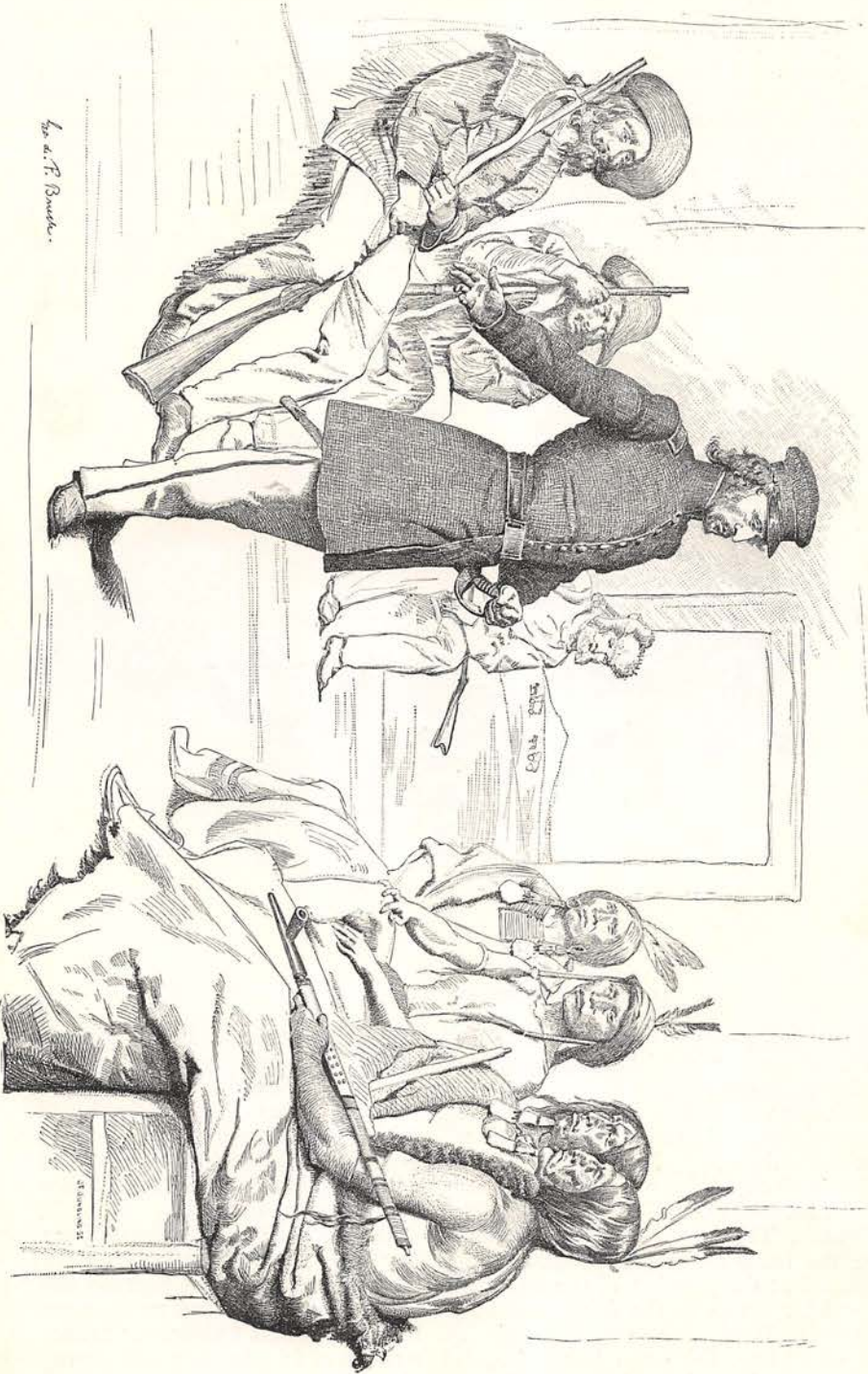
Bent's Fort was reached as expeditiously as possible, since the real object of the exploration lay beyond the Rockies, and the winter was fast approaching. The *personnel* of the party it is difficult to find. Edward Kern took the place of Mr. Preuss as topographer; he

was also a valuable acquisition to the party because of his artistic ability. Lieutenants Abert and Peck were under Frémont's command. Jacob Dodson, the colored man who accompanied the second expedition, and a Chinook Indian who had gone back to Washington with Frémont, and two gentlemen, James McDowell and Theodore Talbot, accompanied the expedition. Fitzpatrick again served as guide and Hatcher as hunter. Later they were joined by Alexis Godey, Kit Carson, and Richard Owens, three men who, under Napoleon, says Frémont, would have been made marshals because of their cool courage, keenness, and resolution. When they set out from Bent's Fort the party numbered sixty members, many of them Frémont's old companions. After a short and easy journey they reached the southern end of Great Salt Lake, and spent two weeks exploring it and fixing certain points. Then they struck out in a westerly direction, across the dreary, barren desert west of Great Salt Lake to the foot of the Sierra, by way of the Humboldt River. When the party, after following two routes, met again at Walker's Lake, Frémont found his men too worn and exhausted and the stock of provisions too low to think of trying to cross the mountains together, so the party was again divided. Frémont with fifteen picked men undertook to cross the mountains, get relief at Sutter's, and meet the other and weaker party. These he ordered to go southward, skirting the eastern base of the Sierra till a warmer climate and more open passes were found, and to meet him at an appointed place. In ten days Frémont reached Sutter's Fort, laid in his supplies of cattle, horses, and provisions, and proceeded to the appointed place, but no signs of Talbot's party were to be seen. Owing to a mistake each party went to a different place. Both halted, and turned about, hoping to effect a junction, but to no purpose. Frémont suffered severely from the attacks of hostile Indians. Finally each party found its way separately to the California settlements. Then followed a conflict concerning which there is much controversy. Frémont was compelled by the Mex-



ALEXIS GODEY.

(FROM A DAGUERRETYPE LENT BY H. B. EDWARDS.)

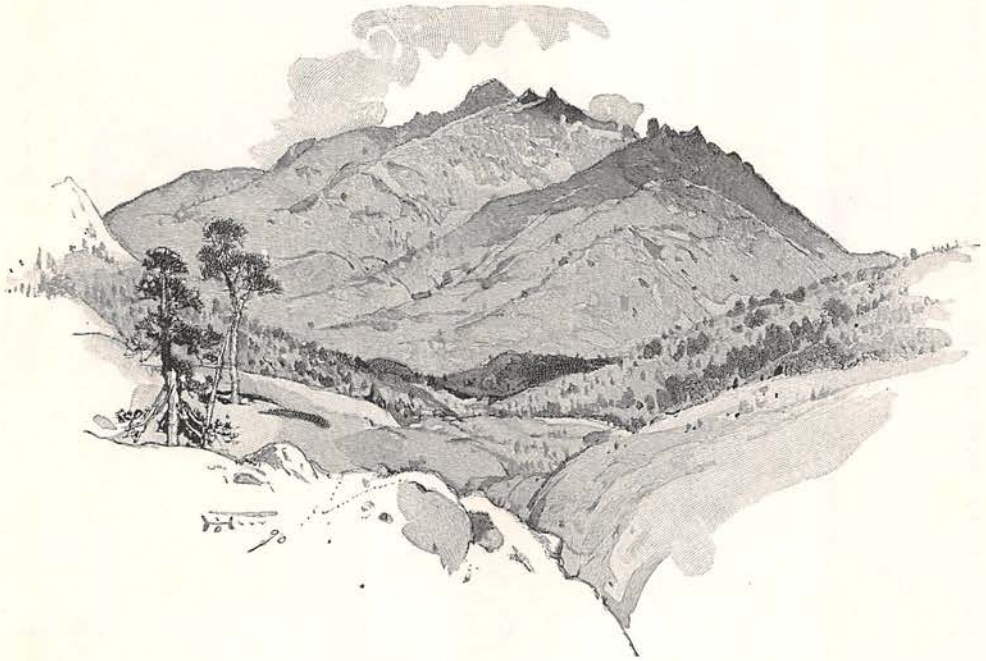


Geo. A. P. Rowland.

FREMONT'S ADDRESS TO THE INDIANS AT FORT LARAMIE.

ican governor to retire to Oregon. After serious conflicts with the Klamath Indians he returned to take part in the Bear Flag insurrection, which was the occasion of the conquest of the territory. [See this magazine for September, 1890, p. 792, and February, 1891, p. 518, for details, and also "Californiana" in the present number.] A difference as to precedence arose between Commodore Stockton of the naval and General Kearney of the land forces. Frémont chose to serve under Stockton, as it was from him in the first instance, before Kearney arrived, that he had received his orders. He was court-martialed for mutiny and disobedi-

Rocky Mountain system. They had for guide a well-known mountaineer, Bill Williams, but he proved a blind leader of the blind. Instead of finding a pass, he led the party over the top of the highest mountains, where there was no pasturage and where they were exposed to intense suffering and toil and terrible loss of life: every mule and horse, and one-third of the men, perished from starvation or freezing. A full account is given in this number of *THE CENTURY* from the diary of one of the members of the party, the late William McGehee of Mississippi. In one instance the men in their extremity fed on the dead bodies



LARAMIE PEAK, FROM ONE OF THE OLD MOUNTAIN TRAILS.

ence to his superior officer, and was found guilty, but was pardoned in consideration of his distinguished services to his country. Feeling that the verdict was unjust, he threw up his commission, and so ended the last Government expedition.

The fourth expedition was a private venture made at Frémont's own risk and that of Senator Benton. The party followed for some distance the route along the Kansas, turning southward at the junction of the two forks, and striking across to the Arkansas, and so on as far as Bent's Fort. On November 25, 1848, the party, thirty-two in number, left the upper pueblo of the Arkansas with one hundred good mules and ample provision for crossing the St. John's Mountains, part of the

of their companions. The rescued remnant of the party moved southward to Taos, and so by a more southerly route to California. The addition made to geographical knowledge by this disastrous expedition was not great. Frémont believed that if they had not been misled by their guide he would have discovered the best route to California.

In March, 1852, an appropriation was made by the Government for further surveys of the great western routes. A highway and railroad were growing more and more necessary since the acquisition of California. Frémont, on the strength of this, determined to prove his belief about the central route which he had so disastrously failed to find on his fourth expedition. In August, 1853, he set out on his last expedi-



A BRUSH WITH THE REDSKINS. (ADAPTED FROM A PICTURE OWNED BY GENERAL E. F. BEALE.)

tion. The names of this party are not given in full. The artist was S. N. Carvalho, the topographer Mr. Eglostein, and Oliver Fuller of St. Louis accompanied the party. From what is said in the account of the expedition, it seems there were also ten white men and ten Delaware Indians. After two weeks' detention in consequence of Frémont's illness, the party was again set in motion. It crossed the Rockies at Cochetopa Pass, not far above the scene of the terrible suffering in the preceding exploration. For a time it seemed as though the experiences of the fourth expedition were going to be repeated. Provisions became very scarce, and at last failed entirely, and then the explorers began to kill and devour their horses. Colonel Frémont called his men together and made them take a solemn oath never to resort to cannibalism, no matter what extremities they might reach. Times grew worse; they were reduced to living upon the hides, entrails, and burned bones of their horses. By these and by a certain variety of cactus which they occasionally were able to get from under the snow, life was sustained. In this way the party of twenty-two lived for fifty days, tramping through the snow with Frémont at their head treading out a pathway for his men. At last the entire party became barefoot. On February 1 Mr. Fuller gave out. The snow was very deep; his feet were severely frozen, and he found it impossible to advance. He was put upon one of the remaining horses and the men divided their miserable pittances

of rations to increase his. Almost in sight of succor he died,—in Frémont's words,—“like a man, on horseback in his saddle, and we buried him like a soldier on the spot where he fell.” Frémont, in the words of Benton, “went straight to the spot where the guide had gone astray, followed the course described by the mountain men, and found safe and easy passes all the way to California through a good country and



COMDR. J. B. MONTGOMERY, LATER REAR-ADMIRAL.
(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTHONY.) [SEE PAGE 780.]

upon the straight line of 38° and 39° ." It probably did not seem such a "safe and easy" thing to the starving and half-frozen men during those fifty days of anguish. At last, after they had

lie in large measure through the country explored by Frémont, sometimes in the very lines he followed; and this is equally true of the highways



INDEPENDENCE ROCK, SWEETWATER RIVER.

been forty-eight hours without a morsel of food, relief came to the party.

Something of the practical value of these explorations may be inferred from the fact that the great railroads connecting East and West

The winter of this last exploration was exceptionally severe; and since the point Frémont wished to demonstrate was the practicability of this route in winter, the season was peculiarly favorable.

M. N. O.

THE ORIGIN OF THE FRÉMONT EXPLORATIONS.

LONG before the words carried their meaning I was familiar with "Oregon occupation" and the "India trade." They connected themselves with big English law-books in my father's library, whose Hogarth-like pictures were a delight to my childhood when there were no picture-books made for children. Many a pleased hour I puzzled over these in that sunny library where I was free to come on condition that I would be "as quiet as a mouse." One of these illustrations, together with my father's many and patient explanations tempered to a child's mind, gave me some ideas which have never faded, but, emerging from childish imaginings and confusings, became strangely interwoven into the very substance of my real life. This favorite picture was that scene of which Macaulay has made so vivid a word-painting, the "Impeachment of Warren Hastings." It became an endless theme between my father and myself, and through it from him

came my earliest impressions of India and Oriental life, and of England's power — her love of justice as well as her love of gain; her daring conquests, and her crushing mastery of a race that were to me then the people of the Arabian Nights, only more warlike, and more splendid. The peacock throne of gold and gems seemed as real to me as the living peacocks that at sunset spread their feathers and screamed on the lawn at my grandfather's house in Virginia. And on the long gallery of our own home in St. Louis, where in the pleasant way of the old French town much life went on in the open air, again England was a household theme. For the British Fur Company, its enmity to the American Fur Company, its harassing opposition to Americans settling in Oregon, were matters of personal interest and necessary consideration to those meeting there.

Chief of the unusual figures frequenting that tree-shaded gallery was the stately and venerable General William Clark, who was ending his