

THE LEGEND OF MARCUS WHITMAN

FAMILIAR as the student of history is with the growth of legend, it is frequently assumed that these products of fancy develop only in the absence of documents and contemporary records; or that, if they do invade the field of authenticated history, it is only to clothe the bare limbs of fact with the foliage of picturesque incident or winged words: Columbus stands the egg on its end, or Galileo mutters "*e pur si muove.*" History is full of such touches, which if not true are not essential distortions of the train of events. For examples of the complete legendary reconstruction of history we naturally turn to the Middle Ages or earlier periods, and call to mind the Donation of Constantine or the story of William Tell. That such a reconstruction of history should take place in the latter half of the nineteenth century in the United States and should involve an event of such immense importance and world-wide publicity as the acquisition of Oregon will seem little short of incredible. To trace the steps by which the imaginative reconstruction of this transaction, strangely distorting the relative significance of men and events, has slowly but steadily pushed aside the truth, until it has invaded not only the text-books but the works of historians whose reputation gives their utterances a certain authority, would give every one a new idea of the pervasive and subtle power of the legendary faculty of the human mind and of the need of unceasing critical vigilance.¹

¹ Its first appearance in a formal history was in W. H. Gray's *History of Oregon, 1792-1849, Drawn from Personal Observation and Authentic Information*, Portland, Oregon, 1870. Von Holst mentions it in 1881 (*Const. Hist. of the U. S.*, III, 51, 52), with some hesitation. It is taken from Von Holst by Lyon G. Tyler, *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, Richmond, Va., 1885, II, 439, and presented with some corrective comments. The period of its widest diffusion and general acceptance, however, begins in 1883 with the publication of Barrows's *Oregon*. Thence it has passed into magazine and newspaper articles and text-books. See McMaster's *With the Fathers*, N. Y., 1896, the chapter entitled "The Struggle for Territory," pp. 307-310; McMaster's *School History of the U. S.*, 1897, pp. 32-34; J. W. Foster's *Century of American Diplomacy*, 1900, p. 305; J. W. Burgess's *The Middle Period*, 1897, pp. 314-316; the school histories of Scudder, Thomas, Montgomery, and Gordy, also the *Encycl. Brit.* as well as the American Supplement and *The International Cycl.*, arts. Oregon.

In O. W. Nixon's *How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon*, Chicago, 1895, all the legendary elements are combined with some genuine material, but the author is either ignorant of or suppresses essential facts. Eva Emery Dye's *McLoughlin and Old Oregon*, Chicago, 1900, adds new fictitious materials. This book is hardly more than an

To enable the reader to follow a critical investigation of how Marcus Whitman saved Oregon to the United States, a brief outline of the story must be given.

About the first of October 1842, while Dr. Whitman was dining at a trading-post of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Walla Walla the news comes of the arrival of a colony of Canadians from the Red River country. The assembled company is jubilant and a young priest cries out "Hurrah for Oregon! America is too late, and we have got the country." Whitman realizes that if Canadian immigration has really begun the authorities at Washington ought to know it, and a counter American immigration ought to be promoted, so that when the joint occupation of Oregon is terminated, the presence of a majority of American settlers may turn the balance in favor of the United States by right of possession. The government must be informed as to the value of Oregon and its accessibility by overland emigration. In spite of the protests of his fellow missionaries, he immediately starts for Washington, where he arrives March 2, 1843, most opportunely to secure the postponement of negotiations looking to the surrender of Oregon by pledging himself to demonstrate the accessibility of the country by conducting thither a thousand immigrants, which he does during the ensuing summer.¹

The essential points in this statement are the cause and purpose of Dr. Whitman's journey to the East in 1842, his influence on the Oregon policy of the government and his organization of the great immigration of 1843. Incidental or collateral assumptions usually accompany this statement to the effect that great ignorance and indifference in regard to Oregon prevailed in Washington and generally throughout the United States, and that Dr. Whitman was able to dispel the ignorance and to transform the indifference into a deep and widespread interest. In both the essentials and the explanatory details the story of how Marcus Whitman saved Oregon is fictitious. It is not only without trustworthy contemporary evidence, but is irreconcilable with well established facts. No traces of knowledge

historical romance. It is a most curious fact that although Bancroft's *Oregon*, which was published in 1885, contains a well digested and true account of the causes of Whitman's journey and his connection with the emigration of 1843, all carefully authenticated from contemporary sources, it has been entirely neglected by the authors of the books above mentioned.

My eyes were first opened to the intricacies and curious origin of the legend by a very careful investigation conducted under my supervision by one of my students, Mr. Arthur Howard Hutchinson. His study of the question convinced him that there was a larger amount of collusion and purpose in developing and disseminating the story than I have thought it best to try to prove in this article.

¹ Cf. Barrows's *Oregon*, p. 160 ff.; McMaster, *With the Fathers*, pp. 307-310.

of it have ever been found in the contemporary discussion of the Oregon question. The story first emerges over twenty years after the events and seventeen years after Whitman's death and its conception of the Oregon policy of the government is that handed down by tradition in an isolated and remote community. Criticism of a simple type has winnowed out some of the crudest misconceptions, unconscious that more is needed to substantiate a narrative than to sift out its impossibilities.¹

The real cause of Dr. Whitman's journey to the East was the decision of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to discontinue the southern branch of the mission, and his purpose was to secure a reversal of that order, and reinforcements from the Board, and to bring back, if possible, a few Christian families. The rapidly increasing immigration into Oregon made an increase of Protestant missions essential if Oregon was to be saved from becoming Catholic.

Owing to difficulties of the work among the small and widely scattered groups of Indians and to dissensions among the missionaries of the Oregon missions the Prudential Committee of the American Board passed the following resolution, February 23, 1842: "That the Rev. Henry H. Spalding be recalled, with instructions to return by the first direct and suitable opportunity; that Mr. William H. Gray be advised to return home, and also the Rev. Asa B. Smith, on account of the illness of his wife; that Dr. Marcus Whitman and Mr. Cornelius Rogers be designated to the northern branch of the mission; and that the two last named be authorized to dispose of the mission property in the southern branch of the mission."²

This action of the Prudential Committee was discussed at the meeting of the Oregon Mission, September 26, 1842. Mr. Gray requested that he might be released to establish a boarding-school under the auspices of the Hudson's Bay Company's officials, which was refused. On the 28th it was

"*Resolved*: That if arrangements can be made to continue the operations of this station, that Dr. Marcus Whitman be at liberty and advised to visit the United States as soon as practicable to confer with

¹ Cf. Burgess, *The Middle Period*, pp. 315-316, and Eells, *History of Indian Missions*, Philadelphia, 1882. On pp. 43-46, Mr. Eells tells the true history of Whitman's journey East and then on pp. 162-176 the full legendary account, omitting only such details as are obviously irreconcilable with the records of the Board!

² Records of the Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, at the Congregational House, Boston. Cf. *The Missionary Herald*, Jan. 1843, p. 14, and the *Report* of the A. B. C. F. M. for 1842, p. 194.

the committee of the A.B.C.F.M. in regard to the interests of this mission."¹

E. WALKER, moder.
CUSHING EELLS, Scribe,
H. H. SPALDING."

On October 3, 1842, Mr. Walker wrote to the Board a long letter regarding the work in Oregon, urging them to keep up the missions for the benefit of the incoming white settlers as well as for the Indians for whom they had been established. "With this view of the case," he writes :

"You will see why we were unwilling to abandon the South branch, for as it seemed to us, by giving that up we were giving up the whole mission. Notwithstanding we thought that the object of your letter had been accomplished by the reconciliation which had taken place, still we felt ourselves placed in a trying situation, we hardly knew what course to pursue, but concluded to wait until we could receive an answer to the committee [communication?]² of the mission stating that the difficulties of the mission were settled. We found too that there was a difficulty in sustaining the mission as so many had withdrawn and as the reinforcements had stopped at the Islands [Hawaiian Islands]. After considerable consultation without coming to any definite conclusion and as we were about starting for our place, a proposition was made by Dr. Whitman for him to return to the States this winter to confer with the Prudential Committee and conduct a reinforcement out next summer if it was thought best to continue the mission. At least something definite could be decided upon. The proposition being presented just as we were on the eve of leaving we felt at first that we could not then give a decided answer to it. We wanted him to think and pray over it and proposed we return and send in writing our conclusion. But we were told that there was no time to be lost, that we must decide it now, or it would be too late. After some more consultation, we stated that if the station could be put in a situation which would render it safe to be left and after proper arrangements could be made, we would consent to Dr. Whitman's going to the States. We do not approve of the hasty manner in which this question was decided. Nothing it seemed to us but stern necessity induced us to decide on the manner we did. It seemed death to put the proposition in force and worse than death to remain as we were. I have

¹ From letter-book "Oregon Indians" in the records of the Board. The letter is dated: "Waiilatpu, Oct. 3rd, 1842," and endorsed "Rec'd. 30 Mar. 1843." For the action of the mission see *Miss. Herald*, Sept. 1843, p. 356, also *Report* of the A.B.C.F.M., 1843, p. 169.

The statement in Mr. Walker's diary, under date of September 28, is: "At breakfast the Dr. let out what was his plan in view of the state of things. We persuaded them to get together and talk matters over. I think they felt some better afterwards. Then the question was submitted to us of the Dr.'s going home which we felt that it was one of too much importance to be decided in a moment, but finally came to the conclusion if he could put things at that station in such a state we could consent to his going and with that left them and made a start for home." From the MS. in the possession of the Oregon State Historical Society.

² The word is "committee" in my transcript, but it may be an error in copying.

no doubt if his plan succeeds it will be of great good to the mission and the country."¹

This letter was endorsed by Cushing Eells: "I am happy to say that the subjects of this letter have been frequently discussed of late by Mr. Walker and myself. I do not now recollect that there has been any important difference in the conclusions arrived at." Mr. Spalding wrote from Clearwater, October 15, a letter of twenty quarto pages in answer to the letter of the Board of February 26, 1842.² It is a reply to the charges preferred against him and contains not a word about Whitman's journey. Mr. W. H. Gray wrote from Waiilatpu, October 3, 1842, to the Board to announce his appointment as "Secular Agent and General Superintendent of the Oregon Institute" and his release by the mission. He adds: "Dr. Whitman will be able to give you the particulars respecting the affairs of the mission and the results of the last meeting," etc., etc.³

Mrs. Whitman wrote to her absent husband from Waskopum, March 4, 1843: "I have never felt to regret in the least that you have gone—for I fully believe the hand of the Lord was in it—and that he has yet blessings in store for Oregon. Yes, for these poor degraded Indians." Again, from Waiilatpu, May 18, 1843, "wishing you, my dear husband . . . as speedy a return to the bosom of your family as the business of the Lord upon which you have gone will admit of."⁴

In none of these letters nor in any received from the members of the Oregon mission is there even a hint that Dr. Whitman had another purpose in going East than to save and reinforce the mission. Nor do these contemporary letters support in the slightest degree the picturesque narrative of the scene at the dinner at Walla Walla, with the rejoicing over the emigrants from the Red River, for the very good reason that this Hudson's Bay Company emigration arrived the year before!⁵ All this part of the Whitman story is ab-

¹ Letter-book as before. Cf. the "Remarks" in the *Miss. Herald*, Sept. 1843, p. 356.

² Letter-book, "Oregon Indians."

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Letter-book, "Oregon Indians."

⁵ Sir George Simpson, *An Overland Journey Round the World*, Philadelphia, 1847, I. 62 and 94. There were twenty-three families in the party. "Chaque année il vient du Canada un certain nombre de familles qui ne sont point engagées. A la fin de 1841, il en est arrivé trente de la colonie de la Rivière Rouge; près de la moitié s'est établi au Ouallamet." Du Flot de Mofras, *Explorations du Territoire de l'Oregon*, etc., pendant les Années 1840, 1841 et 1842, Paris, 1844, II. 209. Cf. Bancroft's *Oregon*, I. 252; also Myron Eells, *History of Indian Missions on the Pacific Coast*, Philadelphia, 1882, p. 166.

The mistake of dating this Red River emigration in 1842 apparently originated with Gustavus Hines in his *Oregon: Its History, Condition and Prospects*, etc., Buffalo, 1851, p. 387. This book was written while Hines was in the East (cf. Bancroft, *Oregon*, I. 225, note) and the mistake was a not unnatural slip of the memory. It had a curious result, however, of supplying the mythical occasion of Whitman's journey.

solutely destitute of contemporary evidence, is irreconcilable with established facts, and is, in fact, purely fictitious.

As most of the rest of it is equally imaginary it may be well at this point to examine into its origin and the trustworthiness of its author before pursuing the detailed criticism of the narrative.

The fictitious account of Whitman's journey, its causes, purpose and achievements, originated with his colleague in the Oregon mission, the Rev. H. H. Spalding.¹ It subsequently received apparent confirmation by the testimony of others connected with the mission, as W. H. Gray, Cushing Eells, and Dr. Whitman's nephew, Perrin B. Whitman. All this testimony is later than Spalding's original statement and gives the clearest internal evidence of having been either derived from him or colored by his narrative. At the time of the Whitman massacre Spalding underwent a terrible nervous and physical strain and apparently never recovered from his sufferings.² He believed the massacre had been instigated by the Catholic missionaries and this belief made him almost if not quite a monomaniac

¹ "Mr. Spalding, his first and most zealous associate, attempted to bring these facts before the world, but the caution of those who would whitewash his (Dr. Whitman's) sepulchre induced Mr. Spalding to give up in despair." Gray's *Oregon*, 482. The reader will find reason to question the truthfulness of the concluding words. "Rev. H. H. Spalding was about the first person to make known the fact of Dr. Whitman's going East on a political errand. Dr. G. H. Atkinson learned of it, and believed that this work ought to be set to the credit of missions. He said so publicly. In his journey East in 1865 he told the secretaries of the American Board that while they had been accustomed to look upon their Oregon mission as a failure it was a grand success. They were very skeptical and thought that many extravagant assertions had been made about Whitman's achievement. Dr. Atkinson replied: 'Write to Dr. Eells, as you know him to be careful in his statements and are accustomed to rely on what he says.'" Myron Eells, *Father Eells, or the Results of Fifty-five Years of Missionary Labors in Washington and Oregon; A Biography of Cushing Eells, D.D.*, Boston, 1894, p. 106. Secretary Treat wrote to Dr. Eells and from Dr. Eells's reply which was published in the *Missionary Herald*, Dec., 1866, pp. 370-72, and from the statements Dr. Atkinson had made he prepared an address on "Early Indian Missions," which he delivered at the meeting of the American Board in Pittsfield, Sept. 27, 1866. The report of this address in the *Congregationalist*, Oct. 5, 1866, is the earliest printed version of the Whitman story that I have found. It does not contain the Fort Walla Walla incident. As Mr. Treat was the Secretary of the Board in 1843, and at all times had access to the records I have quoted, one must regret that his desire to believe the Spalding story and to have it believed deterred him from making any serious attempt to verify it. That he was conscious of the inconsistency with the records is evident in his comment on Dr. Eells's letter, *Miss. Herald*, 1866, p. 374.

² "A poor broken-down wreck, caused by the frightful ending of his fellow associates, and of his own missionary labors." Gray's *Oregon*, p. 482. "His nervous system remained a wreck ever afterward." Mrs. F. F. Victor, *River of the West*, Hartford, 1870, p. 409. "There can be no doubt that Spalding's mind was injured by this shock. All his subsequent writings show a want of balance, which inclines me to regard with lenity certain erroneous statements in his publications. I find in the *Oregon Statesman* of August 11, 1855, this line: 'H. H. Spalding, a lunatic upon the subject of Catholicism and not over and above sane upon any subject.'" H. H. Bancroft, *Oregon*, I., 665, note.

on the subject of Catholicism. His repeated charges brought forth an answer from Brouillet the Vicar-General of Walla Walla,¹ and nine years later Brouillet's pamphlet was included by J. Ross Browne in an official report which he made on the causes of the Indian War in Oregon and Washington.²

Brouillet's reply is temperate in tone but makes assertions about the attitude of the Indians toward the Protestant missionaries and the causes of it, which the missionaries regarded as slanders. But to have this Catholic pamphlet distributed as a public document by the government incensed Spalding beyond endurance and roused him to ceaseless efforts to overwhelm the Catholics with obloquy.³ By lecturing on the Protestant missions, the work of Whitman and the massacre, and by getting various religious bodies and groups of prominent men to pass resolutions drafted by himself he accumulated a mass of material which he got published under the title: *Early Labors of the Missionaries of the American Board, etc., in Oregon, etc.*, as Executive Document 37 (Senate), 41st Congress, 3rd session. It was as an element in this extraordinary campaign of vindication that the legendary story of Whitman was developed.⁴ Nothing could more effectively catch the public ear and prepare the public mind for resentment against the Catholics than to show that Whitman saved Oregon to the United States and then lost his life a sacrifice to the malignant disappointment of the "Jesuits" and the Hudson's Bay Company. This conjecture is very strongly supported by Spalding's allegation in his memorial "American Congress vs. Protestantism in Oregon." "That there is abundant proof to show that the said Whitman massacre and the long and expensive wars that followed were commenced by the above said British

¹ *Protestantism in Oregon: Account of the Murder of Dr. Whitman and the Ungrateful Calumnies of H. H. Spalding, Protestant Missionary*, by the Rev. J. B. A. Brouillet, N. Y., 1853. Brouillet had saved Spalding's life.

² *Executive Docs. (House of Rep.)*, 35th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 38. Spalding's charges are quoted on pages 49-51.

³ Spalding did not become aware of the republication of Brouillet's pamphlet for some years (*Senate Ex. Doc. 37*, 41st Cong., 3rd Sess., p. 5).

⁴ The date cannot be fixed with precision. Dr. Atkinson brought the story to Boston in 1865. Secretary Treat wrote Dr. Eells in consequence, Feb. 22, 1866. Bancroft says, I. 657, note: "In 1866-67 Spalding revived the memories of twenty years before, and delivered a course of lectures on the subject of the Wailatpu mission which were published in the *Albany (Or.) States Rights Democrat* extending over a period from November 1866 to February 1867." But the lectures apparently began at least one year earlier, for in one of them printed in the *Early Labors* he says it is eighteen years since the massacre, which occurred in November, 1847. *Exec. Doc. 37*, p. 26.

Extracts from Spalding's lecture and from his memorial entitled "American Congress vs. Protestantism in Oregon" are given in the appendix to this article as "The Primary Source of the Whitman Legend." The date of the publication of *Doc. 37* was 1871.

monopoly for the purpose of breaking up the American settlements and of regaining the territory, and that they were especially chagrined against the said Whitman as being the principal agent in dis-appointing this scheme."¹

The constant reiteration of the Whitman story in Spalding's collection of materials in *Doc.* 37 still further illustrates the reliance that was placed upon it.²

Having shown the circumstances under which the Whitman story was first brought to light it is now time for us to examine into Spalding's veracity or trustworthiness as a source. The earliest testimony we have on this point is Gray's letter to the American Board from Waiilatpu, October 14, 1840. "*Duplicity* is a trait in his character that never in all probability will change."³ The most conclusive proof of Spalding's untrustworthiness if not dishonesty in matters relating to this missionary history can be given. While Dr. Whitman was absent from his mission on his journey east in 1842-1843 his mill was burned by the Indians. Elijah White, the United States sub-Indian-agent, made a special investigation of the circumstances and reported in his letter of April 1, 1843, to Commissioner Crawford at Washington that the chief Feathercat "acknowledged his opinion that the mill was burnt purposely by some disaffected persons towards Dr. Whitman." Extracts from this letter were quoted by Spalding in his *Early Labors*, but following the word "Whitman" he inserted this additional sentence: "The mill, lumber and a great quantity of grain was burned by Catholic Indians, instigated by Romanists, to break up the Protestant mission, and prevent supplies to the on-coming emigration by Dr. Whitman."⁴

This interpolation was made deliberately in an official document for the purpose of manufacturing evidence of previous Catholic malignity which would render plausible Spalding's accusation in regard to the massacre. Again, where Dr. White quotes an old chief as saying in regard to the conference he was holding: "Clark pointed to this day, to you, and this occasion; we have long waited

¹ *Exec. Doc.* 37, p. 42. In the report of Dr. G. H. Atkinson's address before the American Board at Norwich in 1868 it is said: "He told most effectively the story of the manner in which the heroic missionary Dr. Whitman, who was subsequently murdered for the deed, made the journey from Oregon to Washington in 1842," etc. The *Congregationalist*, Oct. 15, 1868. Presumably this address is the same one that Dr. Atkinson later made before the New York Chamber of Commerce, Dec. 3, 1868 (N. Y., John W. Amerman), which contained the legendary interviews with Webster and Tyler, etc.

² Cf. for example, pp. 20-23, 25, 42, 75-76, and 78; cf. *Exec. Doc.* 37. 41st Cong., 3rd Sess.

³ Letter-book, "Oregon Indians."

⁴ Cf. the text of White's letter in *Ten Years in Oregon: Travels and Adventures of Doctor E. White and Lady*, etc., Ithaca, N. Y., 1850, and in Gray's *Oregon*, p. 229, with *Exec. Doc.* 37, p. 13.

in expectation ; sent three of our sons to Red River School to prepare for it," Spalding changed the last clause to "sent three of our sons to the rising sun to obtain the book from Heaven," thus manufacturing first-hand confirmation of the somewhat doubtful story of the Indians who came to St. Louis for the Bible.¹

Inasmuch as Gray is commonly considered an independent contemporary witness for the Whitman story it is necessary to examine his trustworthiness.² Gray was at Waiilatpu when the missionaries discussed the recall of Spalding and the discontinuance of the Southern mission. Yet in letters in the *Daily and Weekly Astorian*, reprinted in circular No. 8³ of the Pioneer and Historical Society of Oregon, he said: "The order to abandon the mission I confess is new to me;" and in reply to Mrs. F. F. Victor's assertion that Dr. Whitman went East to secure a reversal of the order he denied that a meeting of the mission was held in September 1842⁴ which authorized Whitman's journey. He thus deliberately denies something that he must have known perfectly well if he remembered anything at all about the transaction, and professes ignorance of another fact of which he could not have been ignorant. Gray shared Spalding's intense prejudices and vindictiveness toward the Hudson's Bay Company and the Catholic missionaries. His *History of Oregon* is utterly untrustworthy as a source of Oregon history.⁵

Although many others have testified in recent years to the truth of the Spalding narrative, not a particle of contemporary evidence has ever been advanced in its support ; later testimony has all been colored by the public discussions and men have remembered what Spalding said, not what happened. A convincing example of this fact is furnished by the letter of Cushing Eells of May 28, 1866. He was present at Waiilatpu and was the secretary of the mission meeting, yet he writes in reply to an inquiry

¹ Cf. *Ten Years in Oregon*, p. 185, and Gray's *Oregon*, p. 225, with *Exec. Doc.* 37, p. 13.

² He affirms that his account of the Fort Walla Walla incident is based on "his own knowledge!" *Hist. of Oregon*, p. 289.

³ *Circular 8*, pp. 5-6.

⁴ He wrote the Board from Waiilatpu Oct. 3, 1842. "Dr. Whitman will be able to give you all the particulars respecting the affairs of the mission and the results of the last meeting." Letter-book, "Oregon Indians."

⁵ "It would require a book as large as Gray's to correct Gray's mistakes." Bancroft's *History of the Northwest Coast*, II. 536. "It has, however, three faults—lack of arrangement, acrimonious partisanship, and disregard for truth." Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, I. 302. "His book, in my best judgment, is a bitter, prejudiced, sectarian, controversial work in the form of a history." Peter H. Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, N. Y., 1880, p. 222. These last two judgments I regard as absolutely just.

It will not escape notice that both Spalding and Gray suppress all reference to the missionary troubles in 1842 and to the action of the Board.

that "the single object of Dr. Whitman, . . . was to make a desperate effort to save the country to the United States."¹ Then follows a paragraph on Whitman's experience in Washington and the Oregon situation, which was derived from Spalding and can not have been Dr. Eells's recollection of Whitman's report, because, as will be shown presently, it cannot have been true. If in Dr. Eells's mind Spalding's inventions had displaced his own recollections, how much weight is to be attached to the testimony of Perrin B. Whitman, Dr. Whitman's nephew, who was only thirteen years of age in 1843?²

The foregoing discussion of the account given by Spalding and Gray of the occasion of Whitman's journey East³ does not aim to disprove that he intended to go to Washington, and to do what he could for the advantage of Oregon. Owing to the infrequency of communication with people from the Pacific coast and the wide public interest in the Oregon territory he could feel assured, of being welcomed and of conveying useful information. The only evidences of such intentions that I have found, that are uncontaminated by Spalding's fictions, are a reference in Dr. White's letter of April 1, 1843,⁴ to the Indian Commissioner at Washington, and A. L. Lovejoy's recollections as given in his letter to Dr. Atkinson in 1876. Lovejoy came to Oregon in the emigration of 1842 and was induced to return with Whitman. He writes :

"The day after our arrival Dr. Whitman called at our camp and asked me to accompany him to his house, as he wished me to draw up a memorial to Congress to prohibit the sale of ardent spirits in this country. The Doctor was alive to the interests of this coast, and manifested a very

¹ *Missionary Herald*, 1866, top p. 371.

² P. B. Whitman in a letter "To the Public," Oct. 11, 1880, said that Whitman's journey was for the double purpose of bringing out an immigration and to prevent the trading off of the Northwest coast. *Circular 8* of the Oregon Pioneer and Historical Society, p. 12. His age is derived from Dr. Whitman's letter to the Board, May 30, 1843. Letter-book, "Oregon Indians."

³ That he went East on the business of the mission was a matter of common knowledge at the time. "In 1842 Dr. Whitman visited the United States to obtain further assistance, in order to strengthen the efforts that had already been made. . . . In 1843 Dr. Whitman returned again to Oregon and resumed his labors." *Ten Years in Oregon*, by D. Lee and J. H. Frost, N. Y., 1844. According to Nixon, Mrs. Whitman's diary reveals nothing as to a political object. He explains this silence on the ground that absolute secrecy was necessary. *How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon*, Chicago, 1895, p. 107. Yet according to Gray, Whitman defiantly announced his purpose at the Fort Walla Walla dinner. *Gray's Oregon*, p. 288. Spalding in his contemporary letter to Dr. White the sub-Indian-agent mentions Whitman's visit to the States but gives no reason. White's *Ten Years in Oregon*, 202. *Gray's Oregon*, p. 235.

⁴ He writes that the country of the Cayuse Indians "is well-watered, gently undulating, extremely healthy, and admirably adapted to grazing, as Dr. Whitman may have informed you, who resides in their midst." White's *Ten Years in Oregon*, p. 174; also in Gray, p. 219.

warm desire to have it properly represented at Washington ; and after numerous conversations with the Doctor touching the future prosperity of Oregon, he asked me one day in a very anxious manner, if I thought it would be possible for him to cross the mountains at that time of the year. I told him I thought he could. He next asked : ' Will you accompany me ?' After a little reflexion, I told him I would."¹

Of Whitman's presence in Washington I have been able so far to find not a trace of local contemporary evidence. There is nothing in the *Globe* or the *National Intelligencer* among Washington papers, or in *Niles's Register*, although its pages for 1843 contain many insignificant items of Oregon news, or in the Washington correspondence of the *Tribune* or the *Journal of Commerce*. Curtis's *Webster* and Webster's *Private Correspondence* are alike silent. Interested as John Quincy Adams was in all diplomatic matters, Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Relations, watchful and suspicious of the administration, his voluminous *Diary* knows nothing of Marcus Whitman. Equally devoid of light are Benton's *Thirty Years' View*, although Benton was a champion of Oregon, and Greenhow's *History of Oregon*, although Greenhow was a translator in the State Department and an indefatigable collector of information about Oregon.² The *Life and Speeches* of Senator Linn, of Missouri, who was the most advanced leader of the Oregon party, make no reference to Whitman. Tyler's *Tyler* lacks any contemporary reference to Whitman's presence in Washington, and if the author had found any he would have given it because he makes some conjectures as to the origin of the notion that Whitman exerted any influence on the diplomacy of that year.³

The only contemporary evidence of Whitman's activity in Washington which has ever been advanced is in a letter which he wrote to the Secretary of War after his return to Oregon. The letter ac-

¹ Nixon, *How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon*, p. 306. Lovejoy's letter occupies pp. 305-312. Lovejoy's letter to Gray of Nov. 6, 1869, is similar in tenor as a whole but does not mention all the facts quoted above. Gray, pp. 324-327.

² Greenhow's preface is dated February 1844. He devotes twenty-five pages to the Oregon Question in 1843 and half a page to the Emigration of that year, p. 391.

³ Tyler's *Letters and Times of the Tylers*, II. 439. In the appendix is a letter from Dr. Silas Reed under date of April 8, 1885, which twice makes mention of Whitman's visit to Washington but says nothing further than that he "furnished valuable data about Oregon and the practicability of a wagon route thereto across the mountains," p. 697. Too much stress cannot be laid on this, as Dr. Reed was an old man and his memory might easily have been colored by Barrows's *Oregon* then recently published. In at least one very important point in this letter he seems to have remembered more than occurred. See p. 699. In the *Atlantic Monthly* for Oct., 1880, in an art. entitled "Reminiscences of Washington" there is what appears to be an independent recollection of Whitman's visit to Washington, but it bears the familiar marks of Spalding's invention. It was written by Ben. Perley Poore. All that needs to be said is that Poore spent the years 1841-1848 in Europe and the East!

companies the draft of a bill to promote safe intercourse with Oregon and begins: "In compliance with the request you did me the honor to make last winter while in Washington I herewith transmit," etc.¹ In addition to this there is Lovejoy's recollection of what Whitman told him during their return. Lovejoy writes:

"The Doctor often expressed himself to me about the remainder of his journey, and the manner in which he was received at Washington and by the Board of Missions at Boston. The Doctor had several interviews with President Tyler, Secretary Webster and many members of Congress, touching the interests of Oregon. He urged the immediate termination of the treaty with Great Britain relative to this country, and the extension of the laws of the United States, and to provide liberal inducements to emigrants to come to this coast."²

All this is probable, but there was nothing novel in it, because the Linn Bill which had passed the Senate the month before had all these objects in view. Lovejoy's recollection shows not a trace of the Spalding legend of Whitman's having arrived in the nick of time to save Oregon from being "traded off for a cod fishery." Every account that has been published of Whitman's interviews with Tyler and Webster except this of Lovejoy is entirely fictitious, and not only fictitious but impossible, and could have originated only with a man ignorant of diplomacy in general and of the Oregon diplomacy in particular.

In the first place, Oregon was in no danger of being lost to the United States. The real danger was that the government would be pushed by the Oregon advocates in the West into an aggressive policy which might result in war with England.³ When the Linn Bill passed the Senate February 3, by a vote of 24 to 22, providing for the extension of the laws of the United States over the whole of the Oregon territory, the erection of courts and the granting of lands to settlers,⁴ there was not the slightest danger of the Senate ratifying a treaty to alienate the territory. The appearance of a solitary missionary in Washington advocating what a majority of the Senate had already voted, and what state legislatures were demanding in resolutions⁵ was veritably a drop in

¹ See Nixon, p. 315.

² Gray's *Oregon*, p. 326. I use the earlier letter this time, the only essential difference between the two being a parenthetical statement that Congress was in session when Whitman arrived, which is a mistake and may be an explanatory afterthought of Lovejoy's.

³ Lord Palmerston said in the House of Commons, March 21, "if that bill passed into a law, an event which he conceived to be impossible, it would amount to a declaration of war." *London Times*, March 22, 1843, p. 3, col. 4.

⁴ The bill and the debates are conveniently summarized by Greenhow, pp. 377-388.

⁵ "There were militant resolutions of the Legislatures of Illinois and of Missouri, relating to the Territory of Oregon." J. Q. Adams's memorandum of a meeting of the

the bucket, and of equal significance. That Whitman influenced American diplomacy in any way at Washington is not only destitute of all evidence but is intrinsically improbable. The belief that he did so originated with Spalding, and the ever-present stamp of his invention in all the varying narratives is the reference to "trading off Oregon for a cod-fishery."¹

The fisheries were not a subject of negotiation in 1842, nor were they proposed for the expected negotiation of 1843.² Consequently

Committee of Foreign Affairs, Feb. 25, 1843. *Diary*, XI. 327. Feb. 9, Representative Reynolds, chairman of a select committee on Oregon, reported a bill for the immediate occupation of the territory. *Niles's Register*, XLIII. 397; *Adams's Diary*, XI. 314.

¹For the recurrence of this note, see Spalding, *Exec. Doc. 37*, pp. 22, 75; Eells in *Miss. Herald*, 1866, p. 371; Atkinson, *ibid.*, 1869, p. 79; Gray, *Oregon*, p. 316; Victor, *Overland Monthly*, Aug. 1869, p. 155; Poore in *Atlantic Monthly*, Oct. 1880, p. 534; Eells, *History of Indian Missions*, p. 174; Nixon, *How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon*, p. 128-9. Barrows in his *Oregon*, pp. 224-238, shows that the interviews are unhistorical by a process which completely undermines the rest of his narrative. Leaving the question of candor or honesty aside, what can be said of the truthworthiness of a writer who says, p. 233, that there is no evidence that Sir George Simpson was in Washington in 1842-1843 and yet incorporates the myth in his narrative on pp. 153, 158, 202, 203, 204, going so far on p. 203 as to reconstruct a conversation with Webster out of Sir George's *Overland Journey Round the World*? Barrows puts into Webster's mouth a remark about Whitman which was made by an anonymous friend of Webster's to an anonymous writer! Cf. Barrows, p. 225, with *Exec. Doc. 37*, p. 24, or Nixon, p. 133. Spalding does the same thing in his headline. The article is cited by Spalding from the *Independent*, Jan., 1870, but it is not there and has not been found, although a careful search has been made for it. Again, although Barrows lived near Boston, there is no evidence that he ever looked at the *Missionary Herald* for 1842-1843 or the *Reports* of the Board for those years. Barrows's method is unscientific and bewildering to the last degree. He goes over the same ground repeatedly and presents different and inconsistent accounts of the same transactions.

It is but justice to say that Mrs. Victor enjoys the lonely distinction of being the only writer, so far as I know, who, having once published the legend, upon a more careful study of the evidence has had the open-mindedness to see and declare its legendary character. As the avowed author of Bancroft's *Oregon*, working under his editorial supervision, every student of Oregon history is under obligations to her for her scholarly and honest presentation of the facts derived from the unparalleled collection of materials gathered by Mr. Bancroft. While I have been greatly assisted in this study by the bibliographical notes and in a less degree by the text in the Bancroft *History*, every important assertion in this article is my own matured conviction. It is a rare experience in a critical examination of sources to find in any general history so faithful and trustworthy a presentation of the contents of those sources as in the parts of the first volume of Bancroft's *Oregon* that I have subjected to this test. The aspersions cast upon Mrs. Victor and the Bancroft *History* by writers too lazy to find out the facts or too blinded by prejudice to see them or too dishonest to report them may have goaded her into counter-assertions and judgments not so carefully weighed as the text of the *History*, but such criticisms and charges as Nixon brought against the *History* and her work entitle him to rank with Gray in candor and trustworthiness, than which no more can be said. Cf. the *San Francisco Call*, Sept. 1, 1895, and *How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon*, pp. 205-216

²"The only question of magnitude about which I did not negotiate with Lord Ashburton is the question respecting the fisheries." Webster to Mrs. Paige, Aug. 23, 1842, *Private Corresp.*, II. 146. That the fisheries were not to be considered in 1843 is shown by Webster's letter to Minister Everett, Nov. 28, 1842, *ibid.*, 153-4.

Webster could not have told Whitman what Spalding attributes to him. It is in the highest degree improbable that either Tyler or Webster told Whitman anything about their plans, for the President refused to give the Senate that information in December 1842,¹ and it was only with the greatest difficulty that John Quincy Adams wormed it out of Webster on March 25, in the course of a three-hour interview.² Equally fictitious is the story of Sir George Simpson's presence in Washington to negotiate or to influence negotiations in regard to Oregon and the fisheries.³

That Whitman's visit East dispelled ignorance about Oregon or inspired enthusiasm are equally without foundation. No doubt he could contribute some facts of interest, but the widely circulated *Travels* of Farnham were in the field;⁴ Greenhow's exhaustive history was being distributed as a public document; Fremont was under commission to explore the Rockies; the Wilkes Exploring Expedition had explored the Columbia River and Puget Sound Regions two years earlier, and Sub-Indian-Agent White was writing frequent reports to his superiors at Washington. The ignorance and indifference of the government and the public are fictions of a later day.

In such investigation of the newspapers as I have been able to make I have found just one news item about Whitman's journey East, outside of the missionary intelligence of two or three religious papers which refer to his visit to Boston. Whitman called on Horace Greeley in the last part of March and gave him some account of the conditions in Oregon and of his journey. There is not a word in the interview that indicates that he had a political errand

¹ See Pres. Tyler's special message Dec. 23, in reply to the Senate Resolution of Dec. 22, 1842. *Statesman's Year Book*, II. 1315, or *Niles's Register*, LXIII. 286.

² Adams's *Diary*, XI. 344-347. The real Oregon policy of the administration was something very different from Spalding's invention. It was to yield to England the territory north of the Columbia if England would acquiesce in or promote our acquisition of California from San Francisco harbor northward and the annexation of Texas to the United States. English influence was strong in Mexico and it was believed that if England urged these concessions on Mexico she would grant them for a reasonable consideration. See Adams's *Diary*, XI. 340, 347, 351, and 355; Tyler's *Tyler*, II. 692 and 698. That Webster revealed this project to Adams March 25 and about the same time or even later approached General Almonte the Mexican minister on the subject shows that Whitman's interviews, if he had them, had not had the slightest effect. See Adams's *Diary*, XI. 347 and 355, entries of Mar. 25 and April 7. The legendary date of Whitman's arrival in Washington was March 2 or 3. He arrived later than that, but probably not so late as the 25th.

³ I have nowhere found a reference to his presence in Washington outside of the Spalding narrative and its derivatives, nor is there any evidence that he ever had any communications with the Washington authorities on the Oregon question.

⁴ *Travels in the Great Western Prairies, the Anahuac and Rocky Mountains and in the Oregon Territory*, by T. J. Farnham, New York, 1843.

or wished to stir up public sentiment on Oregon.¹ Here was a unique opportunity to reach the public, for Greeley was much interested in Oregon and printed all the news relative to it that he could gather, and had published a cheap edition of Farnham's *Travels* which had an immense sale.²

Turning now to Boston we find in the records of his conferences with the Board the real history of his journey and its purpose. His own statement is summarized in the record as follows :

“ Left the Oregon country 3rd. October, 1842, and arrived at Westport, Mo., 15 February³ and in Boston 30 March 1843. Left unexpectedly and brought few letters. Letters of March 1842 had been received and acted on. The difficulties between Mr. Spalding and others were apparently healed, and Mr. S. promises to pursue a different course. The mission wish to make another trial with Mr. Smith and Mr. Gray out of the mission. Mr. Gray requests a dismissal and has left the mission and gone to the Methodist settlement. Mr. Rogers also.⁴ . . . There is, however, an influx of Papists and many emigrants from the U. S. are expected. The religious influence needs to be strengthened. The mission therefore propose and request that :

1. One preacher be sent to join them to labor at Waiilatpu—and that
2. A company of some five or ten men may be found [formed?] of piety and intelligence, not to be appointed by the Board or to be immediately connected with it, who will go to the Oregon country as Christian men, and who, on some terms to be agreed upon, shall take most of the land which the mission have under cultivation with the mills and shops at the several stations, with the most of the stock and utensils, paying the mission in produce from year to year, in seed to the Indians, and assistance rendered to them—or in some similar manner, the particulars to be decided upon in consultation with the men. The result of this would be :

1. Introducing a band of religious men into the country to exert a good religious influence on the Indians and the White population which may come in especially near the mission stations.
2. Counteracting papal efforts and influences.
3. Releasing the missionaries from the great amount of manual labor, which is now necessary for them for their subsistence, and permitting

¹ This interesting description of Whitman's appearance and travels is too long to quote in full. He impressed Greeley as a “ noble pioneer, . . . a man fitted to be a chief in rearing a moral Empire among the wild men of the wilderness. . . . He brings information that the settlers in the Willamette are doing well, that the Americans are building a town at the falls of the Willamette.” Then follows an item in regard to members of Farnham's party and Whitman's itinerary. “ We give the hardy and self-denying pioneer a hearty welcome to his native land.” *N. Y. Weekly Tribune*, Mar. 30, 1843. This item was copied into the *Cleveland Herald* of April 6. In the same issue appeared three columns of extracts from the *N. Y. Tribune's* cheap edition of Farnham's *Travels*. Any one can draw correct conclusions as to the relative strength of these two influences.

² *Weekly Tribune*, May 25.

³ If Whitman did not arrive at Westport till Feb. 15, it is clear that he could not have reached Washington Mar. 2 or 3, as is alleged in the legendary account. It was a physical impossibility in 1843. Westport is about 323 miles from St. Louis.

⁴ The omitted passage reports the condition of the Indians and the friendliness of the traders at Fort Walla Walla.

them to devote themselves to appropriate missionary work among the Indians, whose language they now speak.

4. Doing more for the civilisation and social improvement of the Indians than the mission can do unaided.

5. It would afford facilities for religious families to go into the country and make immediately a comfortable settlement, with the enjoyment of Christian privileges,—both those who might be introduced upon the lands now occupied by the mission and others who might be induced to go, and settle in the vicinity of the stations.

6. It would save the mission from the necessity of trading with immigrants. Those now enter the country (*sic*) expect to purchase or beg their supplies from the mission for a year or two, and it would be thought cruel to refuse provide (*sic*) such supplies.¹

Then follow a few facts about Oregon but not a word on the political question or Whitman's trip to Washington. According to Lovejoy's recollection² Whitman felt that the Board disapproved of his action in coming East. Of this there is no record. Yet the self-defensive tone of his later letters reflects the same impression. In such a conjuncture what more effective defense could he have made than to show the urgency of the political crisis in Oregon and in Washington?

Whitman's journey in fact was measurably successful, and the requests of the mission were granted. The minute in regard to his project for an emigration was: "A plan which he proposed for taking with him, on his return to the mission, a small company of intelligent and pious laymen, to settle at or near the mission station, but without expense to the Board or any connection with it, was so far approved that he was authorized to take such men, if those of a suitable character and with whom satisfactory arrangements could be made, can be found."³

Such was Whitman's plan of emigration,⁴ and how different from the legendary proposal to Tyler and Webster to take out a thousand emigrants! The fact that Whitman returned in company with the emigration of 1843 has been transformed by legend into the accomplishment of a previously announced purpose to organize and conduct such a body of emigrants. Whitman, however, did not organ-

¹ Submitted to the Prudential Committee April 4, 1843, Doct. Marcus Whitman. Abenakis and Oregon Indians, Letter-book, 248.

² Gray's *Oregon*, p. 326; Nixon, p. 311.

³ Records of the Prudential Committee. Cf. *Report of the A. B. C. F. M.*, for 1843, pp. 169-173; *Missionary Herald*, Sept., 1843, p. 356.

⁴ He seems to have made it public in a measure before leaving Oregon. At any rate Hines refers to "the departure of Dr. Whitman to the United States with the avowed intention of bringing back with him as many as he could enlist for Oregon" as having alarmed the Indians. It was also rumored that the Nez Percés had dispatched one of their chiefs to incite the Indians of the buffalo country to cut off Whitman's party on his return. Hines's *Oregon*, Auburn and Buffalo, 1851, p. 143. Hines's narrative is based on his diary at the time.

ize the emigration of 1843, but joined it and rendered valuable services *en route*. As the facts about the emigration of 1843 are perfectly accessible in Bancroft,¹ I shall merely quote from Whitman's letters such extracts as will illustrate his purposes and his own view of what he had accomplished by coming East.

On May 12, 1843, Whitman writes from St. Louis, "I have made up my mind that it would not be expedient to try and take any families across this year except such as can go at this time. For that reason I have found it my duty to go on with the party myself." Calling attention to the Catholic missionary efforts, for which he refers the committee to De Smedt's *Indian Sketches*, he continues, "I think by a careful consideration of this together with these facts and movements you will realize our feelings that we must look with interest upon this the only spot on the Pacific Coast left where protestants have a present hope of a foothold. It is requisite that some good pious men and ministers go to Oregon without delay as citizens or our hope there is greatly clouded, if not destroyed."

On May 30, he writes again from Shawnee :

"I can not give you much of an account of the emigrants until we get on the road. It is said that there are over two hundred men besides women and children. They look like a fair representation of a country population. . . We do not ask you to become the patrons of emigration to Oregon, but we desire you to use your influence that in connexion with all the influx into this country there may be a good proportion of good men from our own denomination who shall avail themselves of the advantages of the country in common with others. . . . We cannot feel it at all just that we are doing nothing while worldly men and papists are doing so much. De Smedt's business in Europe can be seen, I think, at the top of the 23d page of his *Indian Sketches*, etc. You will see by his book I think that the papal effort is designed to convey over the country to the English. . . . I think our greatest hope for having Oregon at least part protestant now lies in encouraging a proper attention of good men to go there while the country is open. I want to call your attention to the operation of Farnham of Salem and the Bensons of N. York in Oregon. I am told credibly that secretly government aids them with the Secret service fund.² Capt. Howard of Maine, is also in expectation of being employed by government to take out emigrants should the Oregon bill pass."

¹ Cf. Bancroft, *Oregon*, I. 390 ff. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that Whitman never pretended that he organized the emigration. In his letter to the Secretary of War, received June 22, 1844, he wrote: "The Government will now doubtless for the first time be apprised through you, or by means of this communication, of the immense immigration of families to Oregon which has taken place this year. I have, since our interview, been instrumental in piloting . . . no less than three hundred families," etc. Nixon, p. 316. He would not have expressed himself in this way if his achievement had been the fulfillment of his pledge to Tyler to organize and conduct such a company.

² Cf. Parrish's statement in Bancroft, I. 177.

On November 1 he wrote from the Fort Walla Walla: "my journey across the mountains was very much prolonged by the necessity for me to pilot the emigrants. I tried to leave the party, at different points, and push forward alone, but I found that I could not do so without subjecting the emigrants to considerable risk." Then follows a plea for more help from the mission board:

"We very much need good men to locate themselves two, three or four in a place and secure a good influence for the Indians, and form a nucleus for religious institutions, and keep back Romanism. This country must be occupied by Americans or foreigners: if it is by the latter, they will be mostly papists. . . . I regret very much that I was obliged to return so soon to this country, but nothing was more evidently my duty. . . . Yet I do not regret having visited the States, for I feel that either this country must be American or else foreign and mostly papal. If I never do more than to have been one of the first to take white women across the mountains and prevent the disorder and inaction which would have occurred by the breaking up of the present emigration and establishing the first wagon road across to the border of the Columbia river, I am satisfied. I do not feel that we can look on and see foreign and papal influence making its greatest efforts and we hold ourselves as expatriated and neutral, I am determined to exert myself for my country and to procure such regulations and laws as will best secure both the Indians and white men in their transit and settlement intercourse."

In the following summer, on July 22, Whitman wrote in regard to the emigration of 1843, "The lateness of the spring prevented them from setting out so soon by a month as in ordinary seasons. No one but myself was present to give them the assurance of getting through,¹ which was necessary to keep up their spirits, and to counteract reports which were destined to meet and dishearten them at every stage of the journey."²

From these contemporary letters it is clear that Whitman made no claim to have organized the emigration of 1843 or to have rendered them services, beyond encouragement and advice and guidance. These services were amply recognized by the leaders of the emigration.

In Jesse Applegate's most interesting narrative, "A Day with the Cow Column," and in Peter H. Burnett's *Recollections* there are warm tributes to Whitman's disinterested and untiring efforts for the welfare of the emigration; but neither of these leaders of the movement intimates that the organization of the expedition was owing in any way to Whitman.³ In none of the strictly contemporary sources

¹ In Hastings's *Emigrant Guide to Oregon and California*, etc., Cincinnati, 1845, emigrants are cautioned not to leave Independence later than May 1. I. 147.

² All these letters are in the letter-book, "Oregon Indians." I may hereby express my appreciation of the courtesy with which the officials of the Board gave me access to their records.

³ Applegate's article was originally published in the *Overland Monthly*, Aug. 1868
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is Whitman credited with having organized the emigration and in many of them he is not even mentioned.¹

The real force behind the emigration of 1843 was the provisions for granting lands to settlers in Linn's bill which it was expected would pass Congress in 1843.² That a large emigration was in preparation for 1843 Whitman knew in 1842, five months before he left Oregon. May 12, 1842, Gray wrote from Waiilatpu: "There will probably be a large party of immigrants coming to this country in the spring of 1843. Some young men are now returning with the expectation of bringing out a party next Spring."³ That Whitman may have urged individuals to join the emigration is likely enough, and is affirmed by Lovejoy, but he had no time to do more, and they would not have had time to get ready unless they had begun before his arrival. The legendary account of Whitman's relation to the emigration of 1843 has been supported by a letter published by Spalding from John Zachrey, one of the emigrants of 1843, who wrote in 1868 that his father was influenced to go to Oregon by "a publication by Dr. Whitman, or from his representations."⁴ But no copy of this pamphlet has ever been found and it is difficult to find time for Whitman, who reached Westport

I. 127-133. It is reprinted in Nixon's *How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon*, p. 146-163. Applegate says, "Whitman's great experience and indomitable energy were of priceless value to the emigrating column. . . . To no other individual are the emigrants of 1843 so much indebted for the successful conclusion of their journey as to Marcus Whitman," p. 131-132. Cf. Burnett's *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, N. Y., 1880, "Dr. Whitman, who had performed much hard labor for us and was deserving of our warmest gratitude," p. 126.

¹The emigration of 1843 attracted much attention in the newspapers, but Whitman's name is nowhere mentioned as a leader with those of the Applegates, Burnett and the others. See Burnett's *Recollections*, pp. 97-98. After Burnett decided to go, he "set to work to organize a wagon company. I visited the surrounding counties wherever I could find a sufficient audience and succeeded even beyond my own expectations." Cf. this extract from a letter from Iowa Territory dated Mar. 4, 1843. "Just now Oregon is the pioneer's land of promise. Hundreds are already prepared to start thither with the spring, while hundreds of others are anxiously awaiting the action of Congress in reference to that country, as the signal of their departure. Some have already been to view the country and have returned with a flattering tale of the inducements it holds out. They have painted it to their neighbors in the highest colors. These have told it to others. The Oregon fever has broken out and is now raging like any other contagion." *N. Y. Weekly Tribune*, April 1, 1843. As this letter is dated Mar. 4, and Whitman arrived at the present site of Kansas City, Feb. 15, and went straight to St. Louis, it is obvious he had no connection with this excitement. Several of the writers realizing this have attributed to Lovejoy the work of getting up the emigration; but he was at Bent's fort in Colorado while Whitman was in the East.

²The proofs of this are numerous. Dr. Whitman himself in a letter to the Secretary of War received June 24, 1844, says of the emigration: "The majority of them are farmers, lured by the prospect of bounty in lands, by the reported fertility of the soil," etc. Nixon, p. 316.

³Letter-book, "Oregon Indians."

⁴*Exec. Doc.* 37, p. 26.

February 15, and Boston March 30, and was back again in St. Louis May 12, to write a pamphlet which could be circulated in Texas, where Zachrey lived, early enough for his father to start from Independence, May 22, for Oregon.¹ We have seen how Spalding interpolated Dr. White's letter, and Zachrey's letter contains things that Whitman could not honestly have put in a pamphlet.²

As the years passed Dr. Whitman attached so much importance to his services to the emigration that he evidently came to regard such a service as the purpose of his journey to the East. If it had been among his purposes it was to such a degree incidental and minor that he apparently never mentioned it to the Committee of the American Board, nor did his fellow missionary, Mr. Walker, refer to it.

In 1847, in defending his return East in 1842, Whitman declared that the American interest in Oregon hinged on the success of the immigration of 1843. Had that been disastrous it may be easily seen what would have become of American interests. The disaster last year to those "who left the track I made for them in 1843 . . . demonstrates what I did in making my way to the States in the winter of 1842-3, after the third of October. It was to open a practical route and safe passage and secure a favorable report of the journey from emigrants, which in connection with other objects caused me to leave my family and brave the toils and dangers of the journey." He reiterates this same idea October 18.³

It may be questioned if the emigration of 1843 would have met with disaster if Whitman had not been with them, or, if it had,

¹ Burnett, *Recollections*, p. 99.

² For example "that he himself (that is Whitman) and mission party had taken their families, cattle and wagons through to the Columbia six years before." *Exec. Doc. 37*, p. 26. This was not true. Whitman changed his wagon into a two-wheeled cart at Fort Hall and left the two-wheeled cart at Fort Boisé. Bancroft, I. 133. Farnham saw it there in 1839. *Travels*, p. 77. In *Exec. Doc. 37*, pp. 74-78, is a series of resolutions adopted by the officials of a Baptist Church in Brownsville, Oregon, Oct. 22, 1869, which were evidently drafted by Spalding. In resolution 6, in a report of Whitman's interview with President Tyler, is this sentence: "By his personal representations to President Tyler of this country, of its vast importance, and his assurance of a wagon route, as he assured him we had taken cattle, a wagon, and his missionary families through six years before." Now the "we" may be an inadvertent survival of Spalding's language or a misprint for "he." The interesting thing is that the Zachrey letter supplies the materials for this report of Whitman's conversation with Tyler. As the statement was not true in either case, the most natural conclusion is that Spalding invented it and inserted it in the text of the Zachrey letter. The rest of the Zachrey letter probably represents the coalescence after twenty-three years in Zachrey's memory of what Whitman did on the way for the emigrants with the indistinct recollection of the inducements to start. It is probable that reports of some of Dr. White's speeches to promote emigration in 1842 (*cf.* White's *Ten Years in Oregon*, pp. 142-143) reached the elder Zachrey, and the boy (he was seventeen years old) later attributed the efforts of White to Whitman.

³ These letters were printed in the *Oregon Native Son*, Feb. 1900, pp. 471-472.

whether that would have really made any difference in the history of the Oregon question. The sufferings of the emigration of 1846 did not prevent the southern road from being attempted again in 1847¹ and with success. The value of Whitman's services in 1843 was very great and need not be questioned. That they were indispensable is far from certain.

That the generally accepted story of Marcus Whitman is entirely unhistorical has been demonstrated. That this fictitious narrative should have been so widely diffused and accepted when the true story of Marcus Whitman was perfectly accessible in the Reports of the American Board and the volumes of the *Missionary Herald* is surprising. That this should have largely taken place since the publication of Bancroft's *History of Oregon* in 1885, which gives a clear and accurate account of what Whitman actually attempted and what he achieved, is almost incredible.

The results of this investigation will come to many as a shock. Extraordinary efforts have been made in good faith to disseminate the story of Marcus Whitman in order to raise money for a suitable memorial and especially for Whitman College, and to many interested in these enterprises this criticism of the Whitman legend will doubtless seem most unfortunate. Yet it is the true Marcus Whitman whom they wish to honor, the devoted and heroic missionary who braved every hardship and imperilled his life for the cause of Christian missions and Christian civilization in the far Northwest and finally died at his post, a sacrifice to the cause, and not a political *deus ex machina*, a figment of H. H. Spalding's invention. The sturdy manliness and Christian devotion of Marcus Whitman, the unceasing labors of his life and his death in the service of Christian missions in Oregon, fully deserve every honorable memorial. The perversion of history cannot honor such a man.

EDWARD GAYLORD BOURNE.

APPENDIX

THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF THE WHITMAN LEGEND

I.

Extracts from the Lecture of H. H. Spalding, as given in Senate Exec. Doc. 37, 41st Congress, third session, pp. 18-22.

IN 1841 no missionaries crossed, but several emigrant families, bringing wagons, which, on reaching Fort Hall, suffered the same fate with those of 1840. In 1842 considerable emigration moved forward with ox teams and wagons, but on reaching Fort Hall the same story was told them,

¹ See Bancroft, I. 543-572.

and the teams were sacrificed, and the emigrant families reached Dr. Whitman's station late in the fall, in very destitute circumstances. About this time, as events proved, that shrewd English diplomatist, Governor Simpson, long a resident on the Northwest coast, reached Washington, [p. 19] after having arranged that an English colony of some 150 souls should leave the Selkirk Settlement on the Red River of the lakes in the Spring of 1842, and cross the Rocky Mountains by the Saskatchewan Pass.

DR. WHITMAN'S WINTER JOURNEY, 1843.

The peculiar event that aroused Dr. Whitman and sent him through the mountains of New Mexico, during that terrible winter of 1843, to Washington, just in time to save this now so valuable country from being traded off by Webster to the shrewd Englishman for a "cod fishery" down east, was as follows: In October of 1842 our mission was called together, on business, at Waiilatpu—Dr. Whitman's station—and while in session, Dr. W. was called to Fort Walla-Walla to visit a sick man. While there the "brigade" for New Caledonia, fifteen bateaux, arrived at that point on their way up the Columbia, with Indian goods for the New Caledonia or Frazer River country. They were accompanied by some twenty chief factors, traders, and clerks of the Hudson's Bay Company, and Bishop Demois, who had crossed the mountains from Canada, in 1839—the first Catholic priest on this coast; Bishop Blanchett came at the same time.

While this great company were at dinner, an express arrived from Fort Colville, announcing the (to them) glad news that the colony from Red River had passed the Rocky Mountains and were near Colville. An exclamation of joy burst from the whole table, at first unaccountable to Doctor Whitman, till a young priest, perhaps not so discreet as the older, and not thinking that there was an American at the table, sprang o his feet, and swinging his hand, exclaimed: "Hurrah for Columbia! (Oregon.) America is too late; we have got the country." In an instant, as by instinct, Dr. Whitman saw through the whole plan, clear to Washington, Fort Hall, and all. He immediately rose from the table and asked to be excused, sprang upon his horse, and in a very short time stood with his noble "Cayuse," white with foam, before his door; and without stopping to dismount, he replied to our anxious inquiries with great decision and earnestness: "I am going to cross the Rocky Mountains and reach Washington this Winter, God carrying me through, and bring out an emigration over the mountains next season, or this country is lost." The events soon developed that if that whole-souled American missionary was not the "son of a prophet," he guessed right when he said a "deep-laid scheme was about culminating which would deprive the United States of this Oregon, and it must be broken at once, or the country is lost." We united our remonstrances with those of sister Whitman, who was in deep agony at the idea of her husband perishing in the snows of the Rocky Mountains. We told him it would be a

miracle if he escaped death either from starving or freezing, or the savages, or the perishing of his horses, during the five months that would be required to make the only possible circuitous route, via Fort Hall, Taos, Santa Fé, and Bent Fort. His reply was that of my angel wife six years before: "I am ready, not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem or in the snows of the Rocky Mountains for the [p. 20] name of the Lord Jesus or my country. I am a missionary, it is true, but my country needs me now." And taking leave of his missionary associates, his comfortable home, and his weeping companion, with little hope of seeing them again in this world, he entered upon his fearful journey the 2d of October 1842, and reached the City of Washington the 2d of March 1843, with his face, nose, ears, hands, feet, and legs badly frozen. It is well that the good man did not live to see himself and his faithful associates robbed and their character slandered by that very Government he was ready to lay down his life for. It would have been to him, as it is to me, the most mournful event of my life. . . .

DR. WHITMAN'S SUCCESSFUL MISSION AT WASHINGTON.

On reaching the settlements, Dr. Whitman found that many of the now old Oregonians—Waldo, Applegate, Hamtree, Keyser, and others—who had once made calculations to come to Oregon, had abandoned the idea because of the representations from Washington that every attempt to take wagons and ox teams through the Rocky Mountains and Blue Mountains to the Columbia had failed. Dr. Whitman saw at once what the stopping of wagons at Fort Hall every year meant. The representations purported to come from Secretary Webster but really from Governor Simpson, who, magnifying the statements of his chief trader, Grant, at Fort Hall, declared the Americans must be going mad, from their repeated fruitless attempts to take wagons and teams through the impassable regions of the Columbia, and that the women and children of those wild fanatics had been saved from a terrible death only by the repeated and philanthropic labors of Mr. Grant, at Fort Hall, in furnishing them with horses. The doctor told these men as he met them that his only object in crossing the mountains in the dead of the winter, at the risk of his life, and through untold sufferings, was to take back an American emigration that summer through the mountains to the Columbia with their wagons and teams. The route was practicable. We had taken our cattle and our families through several years before. They had nothing to fear; but to be ready on his return. The stopping of wagons at Fort Hall was a Hudson Bay Company scheme to prevent the settling of the country by Americans, till they could settle it [p. 21] with their own subjects from the Selkirk settlement. This news spread like fire through Missouri, as will be seen from Zacrey's statement. The doctor pushed on to Washington and immediately sought an interview with Secretary Webster—both being from the same State—and stated to him the object of his crossing the mountains, and laid before him the great importance of

Oregon to the United States. But Mr. Webster lay too near Cape Cod to see things in the same light with his fellow-statesman who had transferred his worldly interests to the Pacific coast. He awarded sincerity to the missionary, but could not admit for a moment that the short residence of six years could give the Doctor the knowledge of the country possessed by Governor Simpson, who had almost grown up in the country, and had traveled every part of it, and represents it as an unbroken waste of sand deserts and impassable mountains, fit only for the beaver, the gray bear and the savage. Besides, he had about traded it off with Governor Simpson, to go into the Ashburton treaty, for a cod-fishery on Newfoundland.

The doctor next sought, through Senator Linn, an interview with President Tyler, who at once appreciated his solicitude and his timely representations of Oregon, and especially his disinterested though hazardous undertaking to cross the Rocky Mountains in the winter to take back a caravan of wagons. He said that, although the doctor's representations of the character of the country, and the possibility of reaching it by wagon route, were in direct contradiction of those of Governor Simpson, his frozen limbs were sufficient proof of his sincerity, and his missionary character was sufficient guarantee for his honesty, and he would, therefore, as President, rest upon these and act accordingly; would detail Frémont with a military force to escort the doctor's caravan through the mountains; and no more action should be had toward trading off Oregon till he could hear the result of the expedition. If the doctor could establish a wagon route through the mountains to the Columbia River, pronounced impossible by Governor Simpson and Ashburton, he would use his influence to hold on to Oregon. The great desire of the doctor's American soul, Christian withal, that is, the pledge of the President that the swapping of Oregon with England for a cod-fishery should stop for the present, was attained, although at the risk of his life, and through great sufferings, and unsolicited, and without the promise or expectation of a dollar's reward from any source. And now God giving him life and strength, he would do the rest, that is, connect the Missouri and Columbia rivers with a wagon track so deep and plain that neither national envy nor sectional fanaticism would ever blot it out. And when the 4th of September, 1843, saw the rear of the doctor's caravan of nearly two hundred wagons with which he started from Missouri last of April emerge from the western shades of the Blue Mountains upon the plains of the Columbia, the greatest work was finished ever accomplished by one man for Oregon on this coast. And through that great emigration, during the whole summer, the doctor was their everywhere-present angel of mercy, ministering to the sick, helping the weary, encouraging the wavering, cheering the mothers, mending wagons, setting broken bones, hunting stray oxen; climbing precipices, now in the rear, now in the center, now at the front; in the rivers looking out fords through the quicksands, in the deserts looking out for water; in the dark mountains looking out passes; at noontide or midnight, as though those

thousands were his own children, and those wagons and those flocks were his own property. Although he asked not and expected not a dollar as a reward from any source, he felt himself abundantly rewarded when he saw the desire of his heart accomplished, the great wagon route over the mountains established, and Oregon in a fair way to be occupied with American settlements and American commerce. And especially he felt himself doubly paid, when, at the end of his successful expedition, and standing alive at home again on the banks of the Walla-Walla, these thousands of his fellow summer pilgrims, wayworn and sunbrowned, took him by the hand and thanked him with tears for what he had done.

II.

Extract from the Memorial of H. H. Spalding to Congress entitled: American Congress vs. Protestantism in Oregon, Exec. Doc. 37, 41st Cong., third sess., p. 42.

And that said Whitman, by his sleepless vigilance became convinced that a deep-laid plan was about culminating to secure this rich country of Oregon Territory to Great Britain, from misrepresentation on the part of Great Britain and for want of information as to the character and value of the country on the part of the Government of the United States.

And that to prevent the sale and transfer of said Territory, and the consequent loss to the United States of this great Northwest and its valuable sea board, and the great commercial considerations therewith, said Whitman did, in the dead of winter, at his own expense, and without asking or expecting a dollar from any source, cross the continent, amid the snows of the Rocky Mountains and the bleakness of the intervening plains, inhabited by hostile savages, suffering severe hardships and perils from being compelled to swim broad, rapid, and ice-floating rivers, and to wander lost in the terrific snow-storms, subsisting on mule and dog meat, and reached the City of Washington not an hour too soon, confronting the British agents Ashburton, Fox, and Simpson, who, there is evidence to show, in a short time would have consummated their plans, and secured a part, if not all, of our territory west of the mountains to Great Britain, and by his own personal knowledge disproving their allegations, and by communicating to President Tyler important information concerning the country, and the fact that he had taken his wagons and mission families through years before, and that he proposed taking back a wagon-train of emigrants that season, did thereby prevent the sale and loss of this our rich Pacific domain to the people of the United States.

And that said Whitman did then return to Oregon Territory and conduct the first wagon-train of 1,000 souls to the Columbia River, thereby greatly increasing American influence, and completely breaking the influence of the British monopoly and adding immensely to the courage and wealth of the little American settlement.



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