

glad to seek for higher ground to encamp on, for the purpose of escaping them.

The Willamette river is generally about one-fourth of a mile wide. For the distance of four miles from its entrance into the Columbia its banks are low, and during the rise of the latter are overflowed, its waters being backed into the Willamette. There is little current to contend with in this river during this season. After passing this low ground, the banks become high and precipitous, and are in only a few places susceptible of cultivation.

We encamped on the island occupied by the young Americans, of whom I spoke in the preceding chapter, and close to the place where they were building their vessel. The group of which it is one, is called the Oak Islands.

On landing, we were introduced to them all. They had reached the Oregon country by crossing the Rocky Mountains, a year before, and worked on the Willamette, where they first proposed to settle themselves; but they found that that was out of the question, as there was little or no prospect of their being contented, and they were now bent upon leaving the country at all hazards. Every one with whom I spoke gave them a good character, except one, and I found that, shortly after my visit, he had been turned out of the partnership.

The vessel they were building was a small schooner. One of their number having served a short time in a ship-yard in the United States, the rest were employed as his assistants, cutting timber and preparing the plank, which they procured from the cedar on the banks of the river.

I explained to them the cause of Dr. M'Laughlin's refusal to assist them, which they denied most positively. I then told them it was proper for them to deny having authorized any trick or deception, on doing which I was sure they would receive any assistance that lay in the power of Dr. M'Laughlin. This they subsequently did, and I was informed that they then received all the aid he had it in his power to give.

I tried to dissuade these young men from making their voyage; for I found, on conversing with them, that not one of them knew any thing about the sailing of a vessel or navigation. I therefore knew how great dangers they would experience on the voyage even to California, whither they intended to go, with the intention of taking sea-otter by the way on the coast of Oregon. After their arrival at San Francisco it was their plan to sell their vessel and cargo, if they were fortunate enough to obtain any, or if not, to go down the coast further,