

Pearce, William Edmund

Letter to William Baker Pearce
(in handwriting of author's sister)

(1851)

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These weather shades in opposition, some times fine weather
and saddling and harnessing in the Camp every night after supper
the state of things only lasted about 10 days - when another changed wind
fell - we were out about 200 miles from the settlements and the corn and
that we had taken in our waggon before the animals began to fail - that
the grass in many places had disappeared - the Indians through here
were broke and thirsty were missing an opportunity of
shooting a good horse or mule - the weather had now turned very
wet and cold, very few of us as far as I could judge seemed to
advise much shooting - when it came to their turn, I saw
highly that I more than once decided that shooting would pay for
the troupe - and night dark and rainy cold, seeming good eyes
to be certain that some old black stump of a deer was one of our
Indian watching to shoot you - or snatched by the bow of the
jumper Wolf. Within 10 feet of your head that I was of spending a
night after a long days journey was and quite as pleasant as sleeping
in a house with on a feather bed. We soon struck the
California road from all people this road was crowded with waggon
to the 5th river, and great good success than ever until the 15th they
went to the Snake River, here the food was good and
and our animals began to do well better, and we had better times
along them - Buffalo began to give us some spoil and fresh meat too.
And they are hard to kill their hide is so thick. I have seen them
shot and heard a dozen times, and then and brought down, you will
glance from the head all day long unless you hid the eye, when their
hoop is gone, evidently the meat is much so good as beef, but it is nothing
to turn up your nose at on the plain, we arrived at the Snake River
June 12th - 700 miles of our journey and many a wagon I have seen
turning back home disheartened with the trip but before we got here
at this place we brought a few provisions and again pushed ahead
for we were anxious to keep the advantage we had gained by an early
start, and to keep clear of the wash behind us, we sometimes heard
of the sufferings of those behind us - how their animals died
for want of food, and how leaving their waggon they had to go
about their time we were going freely well up to the Snake
River and we began to see the elephants and jack
Here food was scarce and water poisonous, the road is

Nebraska California

May 12 - 1851

My dear Father

That season I write to you from the far off
golden California - the land that has taken so many thousands
from friends and home. I would have written long before this
had I had leisure because I hoped to be able to tell you how
I had made a fortune, but it appears that my
is not some great, how soon said business had it been
my hopes, and being hard, and then some time I am happy to
say however I have been in the enjoyment of the best of health
ever since I left the States. I have been back of
for the last week with a sprained ankle, but it is getting
better. I was walking under a high bank, and
coming down some stones I stepped. I nearly buried me
and crushed my foot badly, and I was gone for days before I
left the States over a year ago, and I thought you would
be so far from me by this time. I know I shall be
happy to hear from you - write for as long as I can. I had a letter that
I had made you some good body in England.
I would like to tell you something about our trip across the plains.
I started from Oregon with a party of men. We had 13 wagons
with horses and men. We were in fact loaded down with
kinds, and were with horses to ride when we were and moving
the team. Our starting point was Independence in Missouri
River and the Indian country - camping here and there
about 2 weeks for the grass to grow, we finally left on the 27th of April
for the civilized world for a trip of 21 hundred miles overland.
The first part of our trip was splendid, the very quality of the thing was
the first of it. I imagine 75 or a 100 young sheep grass from 10 to 25
years of age with fine fresh horns standing out a country very
much like the horns of old cows, and dressed in heavy
kind of skin, and every one of them owned by the
White hundred of Indians riding with them right down