From the [illegible] Weekly News Letter.

ADVENTURES

AT THE HEAD WATERS OF THE MISSOURI.

By Edmund Flagg.

The perils and hardships braved by the early adventurers to the head waters of the western rivers, is a matter but little understood except by individuals by whom they have been, to some extent, experienced. Even at the present day, notwithstanding the numerous explorations of that distant region, and the modern improvements in instruments of defence, and the comparative pacification of the wandering Indian tribes, an expedition to the Rocky Mountains is by no means unattended with danger. But if the hunter is now exposed to the depredations and cruelties of the savage—to the fierce assault of that terrible monster peculiar to the region—the Grizley bear,—and to the untold horrors of famine, and drought, and destitution, thousands of miles from the borders of civilized life, what must have been these hardships and dangers twenty years ago, when but few, if any of his present facilities were afforded the adventurer, and this vast wilderness had never been trod, save by the wild beast, and the savage scarce less wild!

The narrative of the almost incredible sufferings endured by the daring adventurer, who is the subject of this paper, may be relied on as strictly true. The facts are furnished us by the rough notes of a very intelligent man, who was himself an adventurer in the same expedition; and as he could have no object in an untrue recital, we can have no reason to doubt his assertions.

In the month of March, 1822, a Fur Company, under the firm of Henry & Ashley, for the purpose of trapping on either side of the Rocky Mountains, and trading with the Indians, left St. Louis, and commenced ascending the Missouri. The party consisted of one hundred and sixty men, with two large keel boats laden with provisions and stores, necessary for the expedition contemplated.

After various adventures the party reached the mouth of the Yellow Stone, a stream equal to the Ohio in volume and extent—and, in the August of the following year, a portion of it under the command of Major Henry, ascended the Chian river with three loaded horses. The expedition was a small one, and, as the roving tribes of the vicinity were by no means friendly, strict orders were issued that the party should move on compactly and in order, and that none of the hunters should on any account separate from the main body. But the commands of the leader of an expedition to the Rocky Mountains are not observed with quite the punctiliousness of a military corps, and, accordingly, notwithstanding the strict injunction to the contrary, two men, one of them named Hugh Glass, and the other George Harris, strolled off from the company unnoticed, in search of wild fruit, which in that region at this season is said to be most delicious. The party soon after crossed to the other bank of the Chian, without observing a dimunition in its number; but it had hardly landed, when a fearful shriek was heard from the shore just left. The first and most natural impression of the hunters was, that a band of hostile Indians were about to make an attack on them, and, leaving their horses, they all immediately seized their weapons, and hastened down the river a short distance to an open grove of heavy timber, in order to dispute with the savages the passage of the stream. But no savages appearing, and the shrieks for help still continuing, and with increased vehemence, the party were making preparations for re-crossing the Chian, when Harris suddenly rushed out of the woods on the opposite side, and plunged into the water

—a Grizley bear pursuing close in his rear. Perceiving help at hand, he turned and discharged his rifle at the dreadful monster, when the whole of the party immediately levelled, and it was brought down by their balls. The bear was a young female, with a cub, a circumstance which accounted for its more than ordinary ferocity. Meanwhile the screaming in the forest continued without intermission. The party immediately crossed the river, and Hugh Glass, the companion of Harris, was shortly discovered, lying at the foot of a tree, most terribly torn and mangled by the bear. He had not less than fifteen wounds, any one of which under ordinary circumstances would have been mortal. He was conveyed carefully in the arms of his companions across the Chian, and his wounds were bound up, though it was thought by all he could not possibly survive. A litter was constructed from the boughs of trees, and during that day and the succeeding one he was borne onwards, as a corpse upon a bier. On the third day the party arrived at a fine grove some distance from the route of any of the wandering tribes, in the middle of which was a large spring supplying a creek. Here a consultation was holden, and it was resolved that Glass should be left with two of his companions, Fitzpatrick and Bridges, until he recovered sufficiently to follow the expedition, or, as was hourly apprehended, should expire of his wounds. A purse of $300 was made up by the rest of the party for the men who agreed to remain, and having left with the sufferer every comfort and convenience in their power, they moved on, and the same night arrived at the mouth of the Yellow Stone. This arrangement was undoubtedly, under the circumstances of the case, the most merciful and considerate that could have been adopted. But what a situation! A man languishing from wounds thousands of miles from all surgical succor—surrounded by roving savages—almost destitute of the necessaries of subsistence—and in the care of two lawless men, whose interest it was that their patient should, as soon as possible, cease to live, and who, even with the most kindly intentions, were unskilled to afford the aid and attendance so imperiously demanded!

The company continued upon its route.

The company continued upon its route, and in about a fortnight, the men to whom had been committed Glass, came up, reporting him to have expired on the 6th day after its departure, and bringing with them his rifle. The weapon was disposed of to the highest bidder, and Fitzgerald, one of the men who had been left behind, expressing a wish to return to St. Louis, a draft on Gen. Ashley, for his share of the $300 engaged, was given him, and he departed.

The summer and autumn passed on, and the party, at Christmas, were again at the Fort between the Missouri and the Yellow Stone rivers, with the intention of passing there the winter months. The festivities of the season were going on with great animation—for, even by the hunters of the Rocky Mountains these holidays are punctiliously observed—when, early one fine frosty morning, to the utter astonishment of the whole company, who should appear at the Fort, but the identical individual, who four months before, had been left on the banks of the Chiaan River, as a dead man! The more superstitious of the hunters gazed upon his ghastly features, and skeleton and way-worn form, with dread—almost with apprehension; while Bridges, one of the men to whose care he had been committed, could with difficulty be persuaded to enter his presence. The story given by him of his adventures, was briefly as follows:—

Awaking one evening about sun-set from deep and protracted slumber, he missed both his companions from his side; and finding himself intolerably thirsty, he called loudly and repeatedly for drink. No answer was

returned to his call, and, at length, goaded on by the tortures of thirst, he resolved to crawl to the spring, which was at some distance from the spot. With great exertion and difficulty he reached it, and, somewhat refreshed, again crawled back to his rude couch, and fell asleep. On the following morning, he found himself still alone, and the horrible conviction then for the first time flashed across his mind, that his comrades had left him to perish in the wilderness! On looking around him, he discovered a small brass kettle and his shot pouch, in which happened to be an old razor. He also found a fragment of dried buffalo-beef, sufficient to satisfy his necessities for several days. His wounds, however, were in a most fearful situation,—some of them being filled with insects, and others so situated upon his person, as to leave it utterly out of his power to dress them. So long as his provisions held out, he remained near the spring; and when that was exhausted, he crawled upon his hands and knees to the creek, where he procured wild fruit from the overhanging bushes, which for some days longer supported nature.

On the sixth day after his desertion he was lying near the creek, when he was roused by a rustling in the bushes, and, on looking around, he saw a small buffalo-calf approaching at full speed with several wolves in chace. Rising suddenly from his resting place, the calf was driven back upon its pursuers and was immediately slain. He then advanced towards the wolves, but, finding that he could in no way intimidate them to give up their prize, he produced his razor, and by the aid of a flint and a few dry leaves, set fire to the grass. This manœuvre was successful—the wolves were put to flight, and nearly the whole of the calf fell into his hands. This supply of food lasted him until his wounds had healed and he could stir from the spot.—As his strength increased, he began to consider upon his future movements. At the least calculation he was three hundred miles from the nearest Fort, and for all the purposes of defence and subsistance through this

savage wilderness, he had no weapon more effective than the old and rusted blade of a razor. But he did not despair. He commenced his journey at the rate of five miles a day, and, on the fifth, fell into the hands of a band of Sioux Indians. Compassionating his defenceless and miserable condition, the savages received him kindly, and afforded him safe conduct to the French Trading Post, *Lascau*, high up the Missouri, which was reached in about one month. Here he was treated kindly—his wounds were dressed and completely healed, and, in a few weeks, party of seven traders being about to start for the Mandan Villages in a *pirogue*, he was received by them, and was once more *en route*.

The expedition went on safely and pleasantly until it had arrived within ten miles of the Mandans, when Glass left the *pirogue* in in order to cut off a deep bend in the stream, and to hunt upon the intervening prarie. He had proceeded but a few miles, when he came upon a roving band of the Erickeraw Indians, who chanced to have there an encampment, and a party of them, as soon as he was perceived, gave chace, evidently with hostile designs. The savages gained upon the hunter rapidly, and he would undoubtedly have been seized and butchered, had not an Indian of the Mandan tribe, who was hovering on a fleet horse around the encampment, perceived his danger, and, at great hazard galloping up to him across the prarie, succeeded in taking him off from his pursuers.—On arriving at the Mandan villages Glass learned to his horror, that his seven companions in the *pirogue* had been seized by the Erickoraws, and every soul of them murdered!

Glass remained a few days with the Mandans, and then resolved on attempting to join the party of hunters by whom he had been deserted. But what an undertaking! At the most favorable estimate, he was distant nearly one thousand miles from the nearest Post—he was without a solitary companion for this long and perilous journey—his sole conveyance was his feet, and his sole defence against savages and wild beasts his rifle—besides the weather had become severely cold, and snow lay upon the frozen soil for the most part of his route a foot in depth! And yet, this enterprising man started off undaunted on his dangerous enterprise; and, strange to tell! arrived in safety, as we have stated, near the close of December at the post of the Yellowstone! How this vast undertaking was ever accomplished, we are not informed as to the particulars, nor is it an easy matter to conceive.

At the time of the arrival of Glass at the Fort, some individuals were sought for in the party by Major Henry, to take an express of great importance to Gen. Ashley, then at the Post of Council Bluffs, several hundred miles down the Missouri. Although a great reward had been offered, none of the company had expressed willingness to undertake a passage through a region infested by wandering hostile Indians at such an inclement season: but, no sooner was the enterprise proposed to Glass, than he, at once, acceded to the terms, and, after recruiting his exhausted energies for about ten days, he started on the journey with four others, who volunteered to accompany him, by the way of Big Platte river.

They had not proceeded far when a thaw came on—the ice of the stream broke up, and the adventurers were compelled as their only resource, to construct a skiff of Buffalo skins in order to continue on their route. In this fashion they proceeded several days, when they found themselves approaching a collection of Indian lodges standing upon the river bank, which they at once decided to be those of a friendly tribe of the Pawnees.—Paddling to the shore and landing, they they left their rifles in their boat in charge of one of the company, and immediately advanced to the lodges in quest of provisions. They had hardly entered, when Glass discovered the savages to be of the nation of

covered the savages to be of the nation of Erickeraws, and commenced with his companions a precipitate retreat. On reaching their skiff they found their rifles gone, and their comrade weltering in his gore. The fugitives instantly entered their boat and pushed from the shore, but before reaching the middle of the river, a tremendous shout was heard behind, and about one hundred of the savages rushing out from a neighboring clump of woods, poured upon the devoted men a shower of arrows, spears, and missiles of every species. Two of the hunters were instantly killed—the third was so severely wounded that he died upon reaching the opposite shore—the skin skiff was torn into shreds, yet—wonderful to relate! Glass escaped untouched! A party of the savages crossed the river in pursuit, but the hunter concealed himself in the forest, and during the ensuing night effected his escape.

A distance of six hundred miles now lay before him, and he was cut off from all subsistence by hunting by the loss of his rifle. Fortunately, upon the second day after his escape, he fell in with the carcase of a dead Buffalo, which supplied him with sufficient food to sustain nature, by the aid of bark of trees and roots, until he arrived within three hundred miles of his place of destination.—Here he was found by a party of hunters in a state of wretched emaciation and destitution. Indeed, he was comparatively exhausted—unable to travel, and could not have possibly survived two or three hours without refreshment.—The express to Gen. Ashley, which had been committed to his charge, he still bore, having preserved it safe through all

his hardships; it was now forwarded to Council Bluffs, and Glass was conveyed to the Keewaws Post on the Missouri, where he had remained until he had recovered his strength.

One would suppose, that the hardships undergone by Glass would have effectually taken from him all desire, ever again to try his fortunes in the wilderness. But it was not so. No sooner had he regained his ordinary health and energy, than with them returned his wild--almost insane attachment to savage life. A trading party was formed to go to Santa Fe, and with it went Glass.—On arriving there, he joined a trapping expedition to the river Hole, a small stream said to enter into the Gulf of California; but he was not yet completely in his element, and he soon engaged a Frenchman of the party, named, Du Breuil, to accompany him some distance into the interior to trade with the Indian tribes.—For several days after starting, although constantly meeting with the savages they were unable to obtain an interview for traffic. At length, early one morning, as they were ascending the river, they perceived a squaw upon the eastern bank digging for roots. They immediately ran their pirogue silently along beneath the shore until they arrived opposite the woman, when they landed and advanced towards her, holding out a beaver which they had caught the night previous, as a peace-offering. The instant that she saw them, she raised a frightful yell, and from the neighboring bushes rushed out a powerful Indian with bow and arrows in his hands. It was in vain that the hunters signified to him their peaceful purposes. He placed an arrow on his bow-string

and raised it to his eye to launch the shaft, when Glass and his companion turned and ran with all speed for their rifles, which they had left in their skiff. Before reaching it, two or three arrows from the savage had wounded Glass in the back, and just as Du Breuil was raising his rifle to fire, an arrow passed through his throat and he fell dead at the same moment with the Indian! Their aim had been simultaneous and deadly!

Glass now started to return to Santa Fe, a distance of some hundred miles. The poisoned arrow-heads meanwhile remained festering in the wounds they had made, and, though they were not fatal, yet, from their situation on his person, he was unable to dress them, so that when he reached his place of destination they were in a most deplorable situation.

Sooner than could have been expected, however, he recovered from his injuries, and the next we hear of him he is hunting and trapping, with one companion as usual, at the head waters of the Missouri, and at length starts off in a pirogue for a more distant expedition to the sources of the Yellowstone.—Nothing was now heard of Glass for several months. At length a party of four Erickeraw Indians came to the encampment of a company of hunters on the banks of the Powco river, and on one of these was seen several articles of clothing, which, from their peculiar character, were known to have belonged to Glass. The savages were immediately seized and on declaring entire ignor-

ately seized, and on declaring entire ignorance of the fate of the hunter, one of the party were released with the assurance, that unless he returned within twenty-four hours with Glass in safety, his three companions who remained as hostages should be burned at the stake. The prescribed period passed away without the messenger's appearance, and, being now sure that the unfortunate hunter had been murdered by the savages then in their hands, the order was given by the leader of the party named Gardiner, to burn them alive! To the disgrace of civilization and humanity this command was obeyed! Not long afterwards Gardiner himself fell into the hands of the Erickeraws, who inflicted upon him the same dreadful death.

As to Hugh Glass he was never again heard of, and doubtless fell a victim at last, after a hundred escapes and warnings, to his own wild temerity.—Such are a few of the incidents in the life of a Rocky Mountain hunter, and the leading features of his story are no doubt common to all.

Louisville, Sept. 1839.