

the building rock is quarried. It is soft limestone, easily cut into with a pick, and can be split into any shape; we noticed the same horizontal strata cropping out at all elevated points in the prairie. Crossing the Pawnee or Republican fork by the Government bridge, we had a good view of the fine country between the two rivers, which rises gracefully backward in high, swelling prairies. Here there is a saw mill just started. We strolled up the Republican, gathered some black raspberries, and crossed a spring branch, then mounted a high bluff, whence we could see the beautiful Republican Valley a long way up. It is nearly three miles wide, high, dry, and level, with a loose, black, rich soil. The river flows in a serpentine course through the prairie bottoms, at some bends making nearly a circuit of six or eight miles, and coming back to within a mile of itself again—the banks generally having a light fringe of timber, with occasional groves near the water's edge, in the ravines, and on the bluffs. This is truly a delightful valley—the most inviting for settlement we ever saw.

The 'Excel' made a short trip up Smokyhill, Lieut. Sargent, from the Fort, accompanied us. We had an exciting time. The constant announcement from the man who heaved the lead, was, 'No bottom.' The river was full, and the current strong, but we had great difficulty in getting round the short bends;—it keeps on the course of the main Kansas, coming a little more from the south-west. There is more timber on this river than on the Kansas above Pattawatomie, and the soil is better. We observed a deep marl deposit on the bluffs, beneath black soil, and the bottoms inclined up prettily from the river. A little way up, we saw a band of Fox Indians crossing over, going north on a buffalo-hunt; and their motley procession stretched along over the prairies for miles. Here and there in the party was carried a pole, with a swan's neck or eagle's head and tail, &c., stuck upon it for a flag. They had with them about five hundred horses, all of which looked well. Great was the surprise manifested on seeing the 'Excel' puffing along up these unknown waters; but, poor fellows! the startling scream of the shrill steam whistle, and the impetuous snorting of the iron-horse, will soon scare off the buffalo and other game from your hunting-grounds, to return no more—you too must follow in their trail, or succumb to the irresistible influence of civilization.

Some forty miles up Smokyhill, an extensive bed of gypsum has been found, specimens of which have been tested and proved to be of superior quality; we brought a small specimen home