

On the 10th we camped on Jefferson river. The bottom is rich in lovely pasture lands and wooded with trees of thin growth. We went down it, making twelve to fifteen miles a day, and on the 21st of the same month we came to the junction of the three forks of the Missouri, where that river first takes this name; we camped on the middle branch (Madison Fork). In this great and beautiful plain were buffalo in numberless herds. From Green river to this place, our Indians had made their food of roots and the flesh of such animals as the red and black-tailed deer, elk, gazelle, bighorn or mountain sheep, grizzly and black bear, badger, rabbit, and panther, killing also occasionally such feathered game as grouse, prairie-chickens (a kind of pheasant), swans, geese, cranes and ducks. Fish abounded besides in the rivers, particularly salmon trout. But ~~now~~ meat is the favorite dish of all hunters, and as long as they can find it they never kill any other animals. Finding themselves therefore in the midst of abundance, the Flatheads prepared to lay in their winter supply; they raised willow scaffolds about their lodges for drying meat, and every one made ready his fire-arm, his bow and his arrows. Four hundred horsemen, old and young, mounted on their best horses, started early in the morning for their great hunt. I chose to accompany them in order to watch this striking spectacle from near at hand. At a given signal they rode at full gallop among the herds; soon everything appeared confusion and flight all over the plain; the hunters pursued the fattest cows, discharged their guns and let fly their arrows, and in three hours they killed more than 500. Then the women, the old men and the children came up, and with the aid of horses carried off the hides and meat, and soon all the scaffolds were full and gave the camp the aspect of a vast butcher-shop. The buffalo are hard to kill; they must be wounded in the vital parts. A ball that strikes a bull's forehead produces no other effect than a movement of the head and a greater exasperation; on the other hand, one that strikes the forehead of a cow penetrates. Several bulls, mortally wounded in this hunt, defended themselves furiously.