

gaining of information through letters was slow and unsatisfactory, the mails being in those days tardy, unreliable and expensive, while many of those who possessed the rarest of the treasures sought were not adepts with the pen. There were no railroads then, and the eager collector of facts traveled on his great errand for many years, far and wide, by foot, by horseback, by stage, by lumber wagon and by steamboat, his constant companion being a knapsack well-laden with note books.

In these journeys of discovery, largely through dense wildernesses, Draper traveled, in all, over sixty thousand miles, meeting with hundreds of curious incidents and hairbreadth escapes, by means of runaway horses, frightful storms, swollen streams, tipped-over stages, snagged steamboats, extremities of hunger, and the like, yet never once injured nor allowing any untoward circumstance to thwart the particular mission at the time in view. Many of those he sought, especially before 1850, were far removed from taverns and other conveniences of civilization; but pioneer hospitality was general and generous, and a stranger at the hearth a most welcome diversion to the dull routine of a frontiersman's household. The guest of the interviewed, the inquisitive stranger often stopped weeks together at those crude homes in the New York, Ohio, Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee backwoods—long enough to extract, with the acquired skill of a cross-examiner, every morsel of historical information, every item of valuable reminiscence stored in the mind of his host; while old diaries, or other family documents which might cast sidelights on the stirring and romantic story of western settlement, were deemed objects worth obtaining by means of the most astute diplomacy.

It would be wearisome to give a list of those whom Draper visited in the course of these remarkable wanderings which he made his chief occupation, with but few lapses, through nearly a quarter of a century, and continued at intervals for many years after. Only a few of the most notable can be mentioned. Perhaps the most important interview he ever had was with Major Bland Ballard,