

WILLIAM

EDWARD WEBB

BUFFALO LAND

William Edward Webb

Buffalo Land

«Public Domain»

Webb W.

Buffalo Land / W. Webb — «Public Domain»,

© Webb W.

© Public Domain

Содержание

PREFACE	7
CHAPTER I	9
CHAPTER II	14
CHAPTER III	21
CHAPTER IV	24
CHAPTER V	28
CHAPTER VI	32
CHAPTER VII	38
CHAPTER VIII	43
CHAPTER IX	47
CHAPTER X	53
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	58

W. E. Webb
Buffalo Land / Authentic Account of the
Discoveries, Adventures, and Mishaps of a
Scientific and Sporting Party in the Wild West

BY OUR TAMMANY SACHEM

There's a wonderful land far out in the West,
Well worthy a visit, my friend;
There, Puritans thought, as the sun went to rest,
Creation itself had an end.
'T is a wild, weird spot on the continent's face,
A wound which is ghastly and red,
Where the savages write the deeds of their race
In blood that they constantly shed.
The graves of the dead the fair prairies deface,
And stamp it the kingdom of dread.

The emigrant trail is a skeleton path;
You measure its miles by the bones;
There savages struck, in their merciless wrath,
And now, after sunset, the moans,
When tempests are out, fill the shuddering air,
And ghosts flit the wagons beside,
And point to the skulls lying grinning and bare
And beg of the teamsters a ride;
Sometimes 't is a father with snow on his hair,
Again, 't is a youth and his bride.

What visions of horror each valley could tell,
If Providence gave it a tongue!
How often its Eden was changed to a hell,
In which a whole train had been flung;
How death cry and battle-shout frightened the birds,
And prayers were as thick as the leaves,
And no one to catch the poor dying one's words
But Death, as he gathered his sheaves:
You see the bones bleaching among the wild herds,
In shrouds that the field spider weaves.

That era is passing—another one comes,
The era of steam and the plow,
With clangor of commerce and factory hums,
Where only the wigwam is now.

Like mist of the morning before the bright sun,
The cloud from the land disappears;
The Spirit of Murder his circle has run
And fled from the march of the years;
The click of machine drowns the click of the gun,
And day hides the night time of tears.

PREFACE

The purpose of this work is to make the reader better acquainted with that wild land which he has known from childhood, as the home of the Indian and the buffalo. The Rocky Mountain chain, distorted and rugged, has been aptly called the colossal vertebræ of our continent's broad back, and from thence, as a line, the plains, weird and wonderful, stretch eastward through Colorado, and embrace the entire western half of Kansas.

Fortune, not long since, threw in my way an invitation, which I gladly accepted, to join a semi-scientific party, since somewhat known to fame through various articles in the newspaper press, in a sojourn of several months on the great plains. At a meeting held with due solemnity on the eve of starting, the Professor (to whom the reader will be introduced in the proper connection) was chosen leader of the expedition, while to my lot fell the office of editor of the future record, or rather Grand Scribe of what we were pleased to call our "Log Book." The latter now lies before me, in all its glory of shabby covers and dirty pages. Its soiled face is as honorable as that of the laborer who comes from his task in a well harvested field. Out of the sheaves gathered during our journey, I shall try and take such portions as may best supply the mental cravings of the countless thousands who hunger for the life and the lore of the far West.

I have given the mistakes as well as triumphs of our expedition, and the members of the party will readily recognize their familiar camp names. The disguise will probably be pleasant, as few like to see their failures on public parade, preferring rather to leave these in barracks, and let their successes only appear at review.

The plains have a face, a people, and a brute creation, peculiarly their own, and to these our party devoted earnest study. The expedition presented a rare opportunity of becoming acquainted with the game of the country; and, in writing the present volume, my aim has been to make it so far a text-book for amateur hunters that they may become at once conversant with the habits of the game, and the best manner of killing it. The time is not far distant, when the plains and the Rocky Mountains will be sought by thousands annually, as a favorite field for sport and recreation.

Another and still larger class, it is hoped, will find much of interest and value in the following pages. From every state in the Union, people are constantly passing westward. We found emigrant wagons on spots from which the Indians had just removed their wigwams. Multitudes more are now on the way, with the earnest purpose of founding homes and, if possible, of finding fortunes. In order to aid this class, as well as the sportsman, I have gathered in an appendix such additional information as may be useful to both.

The scientific details of our trip will probably be published in proper form and time, by the savans interested. In regard to these, my object has been simply to chronicle such matters as made an impression upon my own mind, being content with what cream might be gathered by an amateur's skimming, while the more bulky milk should be saved in capacious scientific buckets.

Professor Cope, the well known naturalist, of the Academy of Sciences, Philadelphia, received for examination and classification the most valuable fossils we obtained, and to him I am indebted for a large amount of most interesting and valuable scientific matter, which will be found embodied in chapters twenty-third and twenty-fourth.

The illustrations of men and brutes in this work are studies from life. Whenever it was possible, we had photographs taken.

The plains, it must be said, are a tract with which Romance has had much more to do than History. Red men, brave and chivalrous, and unnatural buffalo, with the habits of lions, exist only in imagination. In these pages, my earnest endeavor, when dealing with actualities, has been to "hold the mirror up to Nature," and to describe men, manners, and things as they are in real life upon the frontiers, and beyond, to-day.

W. E. W.

Topeka, Kansas, *May*, 1872.

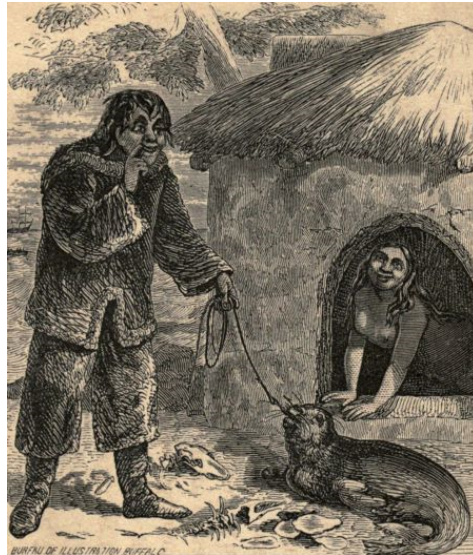
CHAPTER I

THE OBJECT OF OUR EXPEDITION—A GLIMPSE OF ALASKA THROUGH CAPTAIN WALRUS' GLASS—WE ARE TEMPTED BY OUR RECENT PURCHASE—ALASKAN GAME OF "OLD SLEDGE"—THE EARLY STRUGGLES OF KANSAS—THE SMOKY HILL TRAIL—INDIAN HIGH ART—THE "BORDER-RUFFIAN," PAST AND PRESENT—TOPEKA—HOW IT RECEIVED ITS NAME—WAUKARUSA AND ITS LEGEND.

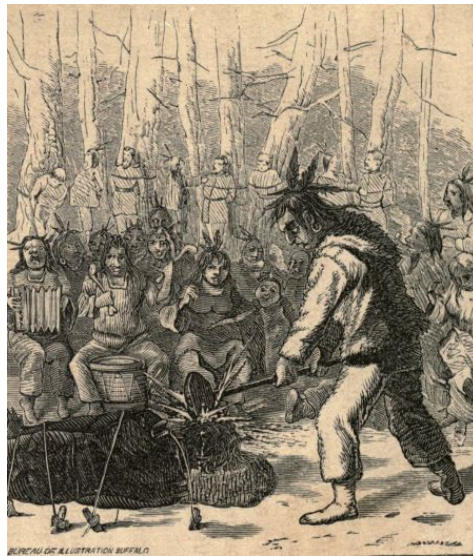
The great plains—the region of country in which our expedition sojourned for so many months—is wilder, and by far more interesting, than those solitudes over which the Egyptian Sphinx looks out. The latter are barren and desolate, while the former teem with their savage races and scarcely more savage beasts. The very soil which these tread is written all over with a history of the past, even its surface giving to science wonderful and countless fossils of those ages when the world was young and man not yet born.

At first, it was rather unsettled which way the steps of our party would turn; between unexplored territory and that newly acquired, there were several fields open which promised much of interest. Originally, our company numbered a dozen; but Alaska tempted a portion of our savans, and to the fishy and frigid maiden they yielded, drawn by a strange predilection for train-oil and seal meat toward the land of furs. For the remainder of our party, however, life under the Alaskan's tent-pole had no charms. Our decision may have been influenced somewhat by the seafaring man with whom our friends were to sail. The real name of this son of Neptune was Samuels, but our party called him, as it savored more of salt water, Captain Walrus, of the bark Harpoon. This worthy, according to his own statement, had been born on a whaler, weaned among the Esquimeaux, and, moreover, had frozen off eight toes "trying to winter it at our recent purchase." He evidently disliked to have scientific men aboard, intent on studying eclipses and seals. "A heathenish and strange people are the Alaskans," Walrus was wont to say. "What is not Indian is Russian, and a compound of the latter and aboriginal is a mixture most villainous. One portion of the partnership anatomy takes to brandy, while the other absorbs train-oil, and so a half-breed Alaskan heathen is always prepared for spontaneous combustion, and if rubbed the wrong way, flames up instantly. He is always hot for murder, and if you throw cold water on his designs, his oily nature sheds it."

And many a yarn did the captain spin concerning their strange customs. Sealing a marriage contract consisted in the warrior leaving a fat seal at the hole of the hut, where his intended crawled in to her home privileges of smoke and fish. Their favorite game was "old sledge," played with prisoners to shorten their captivity.



ALASKAN LOVERS—SEALING THE CONTRACT.



ALASKAN GAME OF OLD SLEDGE.

All this, and much more, probably equally true, we had picked up of Alaskan history, and at one time our chests had been packed for a voyage on the Harpoon; but at the final council the west carried it against the north, and our steps were directed toward the setting sun, instead of the polar star.

The expedition afforded unexcelled facilities for seeing Buffalo Land. It was composed of good material, and pursued its chosen path successfully, though under difficulties which would have turned back a less determined party.

None of our company, I trust, will consider it an unwarrantable license which recounts to others the personal peculiarities and mistakes about which we joked so freely while in camp. It was generally understood, before we parted, that the adventures should be common stock for our children and children's children. Why should not the great public share in it also?

Let the reader place before him a checker-board, and allow it to represent Kansas, whose shape and outline it much resembles; the half nearest him will stand for the eastern or settled portion of the State, of which the other half is embraced in Buffalo Land proper. It is with the latter that we have first to do, as with it we first became acquainted.

Our party entered the State at Kansas City, and took the cars for Topeka, its capital. During our morning ride through the valley of the Kaw, memory went backward to the years when "Bleeding Kansas" was the signal-cry of emancipation. When gray old Time, a decade and a half ago, was writing the history of those bright children of Freedom, the united sisterhood, a virgin arm reached over his shoulder, and a fair young hand, stained with its own life-blood, wrote on the page toward which all the world was gazing, "I am Kansas, latest-born of America. I would be free, yet they would make me a slave. Save me, my sisters!" The great heart of our nation was sorely distressed. Conscience pointed to one path—Policy, that rank hypocrite, to another.

And so it was that the young queen, with her grand domain in the West, struggled forward to lay her fealty at the feet of our great mother, Liberty. She made a body-guard of her own sons, and their number was quickly swelled by brave hearts from the north, east, and west. The new territory, begging admission as a State, became a battle-ground. Slavery had reached forth its hand to grasp the new State and fresh soil, but the mutilated member was drawn back with wounds which soon reached, corrupted and destroyed the body. In this land of the Far West a nation of young giants had been suddenly developed, and Kansas was forever won for freedom.

But there was yet another enemy and another danger. Westward, toward Colorado, the savage's tomahawk and knife glittered, and struck among the affrighted settlements. *Ad Astra per Aspera*, "to the stars through difficulties," the State exclaims on the seal, and to the stars, through blood, its course has been.

Those old pages of history are too bloody to be brought to light in the bright present, and we purpose turning them only enough to gather what will be now of practical use. Kansas suffered cruelly, and brooded over her wrongs, but she has long since struck hands with her bitterer foe. Most of the "Border Ruffians" ripened on gallows trees, or fell by the sword, years ago. A few, however, are yet spared, to cheer their old age by riding around in desolate woods at midnight, wrapped in damp nightgowns, and masked in grinning death-heads. Although the mists of shadow-land are chilling their hearts, yet those organs, at the cry of blood, beat quick again, like regimental drums, for action.

The Kaw or the Kansas River, the valley of which we were traversing, is the principal stream of the State—in length to the mouth of the Republican one hundred and fifty miles, and above that, under the name of Smoky Hill, three hundred miles more.

The "Smoky Hill trail" is a familiar name in many an American home. It was the great California path, and many a time the demons of the plain gloated over fair hair, yet fresh from a mother's touch and blessing. And many a faint and thirsty traveler has flung himself with a burst of gratitude on the sandy bed of the desolate river, and thanked the Great Giver of all good for the concealed life found under the sand, and with the strength thus sucked from the bosom of our much-abused mother, he has pushed onward until at length the grand mountains and great parks of Colorado burst upon his delighted vision.

About noon we arrived at Topeka, the capital, well situated on the south bank of the river, having a comfortable, well-to-do air, which suggests the quiet satisfaction of an honest burgher after a morning of toil. The slavery billow of agitation rolled even thus far from beyond the border of the state. Armed men rode over the beautiful prairies, some east, some west—one band to transplant slavery from the tainted soil of Missouri, another to pluck it up.

A small party of Free State men settled upon this beautiful prairie. South flowed the Waukarusa, south and east the Shunganunga, and west and north the Kaw or Kansas. Here thrived a bulbous root, much loved by the red man, and here lazy Pottawatomies gathered in the fall to dig it. In size and somewhat in shape, it resembled a goose egg, and had a hard, reddish brown shell, and an interior like damaged dough. The Indian gourmands ate it greedily and called it "Topeka." From the two or three families of refugee Free State men the town grew up, and from the Indian root it took its name. Its christening took place in the first cabin erected, and it is reported that a now prominent banker of the town stood sponsor, with his back against the door, refusing any egress until the name of his

choice was accepted. It is even affirmed that one opposing city founder was pulled back by his coat-tail from an attempted escape up the wide chimney.



"WAUKARUSA."



"TOASTS HIS MOCCASINED FEET BY THE FIRE."

The old Indian love of commemorating events by significant names is well illustrated in Kansas. One example may be given here. Waukarusa once opposed its swollen tide to an exploring band of red men. Now, from time beyond ken, the noble savage has been illustrious for the ingenuity with which he lays all disagreeable duties upon the shoulders of the patient squaw. He may ride to their death, in free wild sport, the bison multitudes; but their skins must be converted into marketable robes, and the flesh into jerked meat, by the ugly and over-worked partner of his bosom. While she pins the raw hide to earth, and bends patiently over, fleshing it with horn hatchet for weary hours, the stronger vessel, his abdominal recesses wadded with buffalo meat, toasts his moccasined feet by the fire, fills his lungs with smoke from villainous killikinick, and muses soothingly of white scalps and happy hunting grounds.

Ox-like maiden, happy "big injun!" you both belong to an age and a history well nigh past, and let us rejoice that it is so.

But to return to the band long since gathered into aboriginal dust whom we left pausing on the banks of the Waukarusa. "Deep water, bad bottom!" grunted the braves, and, nothing doubting it, one loving warrior pushed his wife and her pony over the bank to test the matter. From the middle of the tide the squaw called back, "Waukarusa" (thigh deep), and soon had gained the opposite bank in safety. Then and there the creek received its name, "Waukarusa."

We procured a remarkable sketch, in the well known Indian style of high art, commemorative of this event. It has always struck us that the savage order of drawing resembles very much that of the ancient Egyptian—except in the matter of drawing at sight, with bow or rifle, on the white man.

CHAPTER II

A CHAPTER OF INTRODUCTIONS—PROFESSOR PALEOZOIC—
TAMMANY SACHEM—DOCTOR PYTHAGORAS—GENUINE MUGGS—
COLON AND SEMI-COLON—SHAMUS DOBEEN—TENACIOUS GRIPE—
BUGS AND PHILOSOPHY—HOW GRIPE BECAME A REPUBLICAN.

When permission was given me to draw upon the journal of our trip for such material as I might desire, it was stipulated that the camp-names should be adhered to. A company on the plains is no respecter of persons, and titles which might have caused offense before starting were received in good part, and worn gracefully thenceforward.

Our leader, Professor Paleozoic, ordinarily existed in a sort of transition state between the primary and tertiary formations. He could tell cheese from chalk under the microscope, and show that one was full of the fossil and the other of the living evidences of animal life. A worthy man, vastly more troubled with rocks on the brain than "rocks" in the pocket.

Learning had once come near making him mad, but from this sad fate he was happily saved by a somewhat Pickwickian blunder. While in Kansas, some years since, he penetrated a remote portion of the wilderness, where, as he was happy in believing, none but the native savage, or, possibly, the primeval man, could ever have tarried long enough to leave any sign behind. Imagine his astonishment and delight, therefore, when from the tangled grass he drew an upright stone, with lines chiseled on three sides and on the fourth a rude figure resembling more than any thing else one of those odd fictions which geologists call restored specimens. On a ledge near were huge depressions like foot-prints. They were foot-prints of birds, no doubt, and quite as perfect as those found in more favored localities, and from which whole skeletons had been constructed by learned men.

Both specimens were forwarded to, and at the expense of, noted savans of the East. Our professor called the pillar from the tangled grass an altar raised by early races to the winds. The short lines, he suggested, designated the different points of the compass, while the rude figure was intended for Boreas. Our scientists toward the rising sun met the boxes at the depot, paid charges, and careful draymen bore them to the expectant museum.

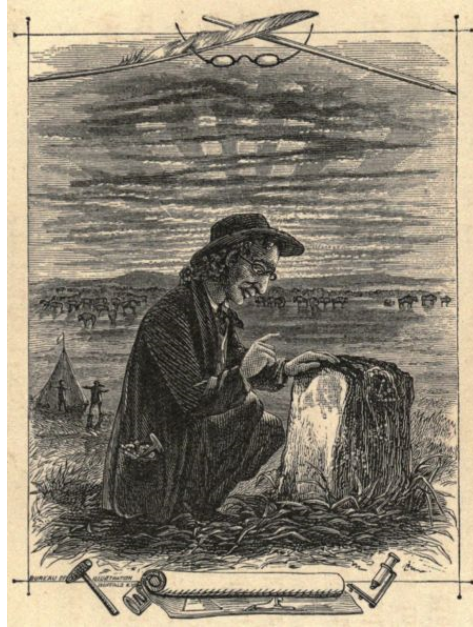
One hour after, seven wise men might have been seen wending their way sorrowfully homeward, with hands crossed meditatively under their coat-tails, and pocket vacuums where lately were modern coins. Government clearly had a case against our professor. Science decided that he had removed a stone telling in surveyors' signs just what section and township it was on. The figure which he had imagined a heathen idea of Boreas was the fancy of some surveyor's idle moment—a shocking sketch of an impossible buffalo. Whether the bird-tracks had a common origin, or were hewn by the hatchets of the red man, is a point still under discussion.

A worthy man, as before remarked, was the professor, full of knowledge, genial in camp, and, having rubbed his eye-tooth on a section stone, geological authority of the highest order. When the professor said a particular rock belonged to the cretaceous formation, one might safely conclude that no modern influences had been at work either on that rock or in that vicinity. That question was settled.

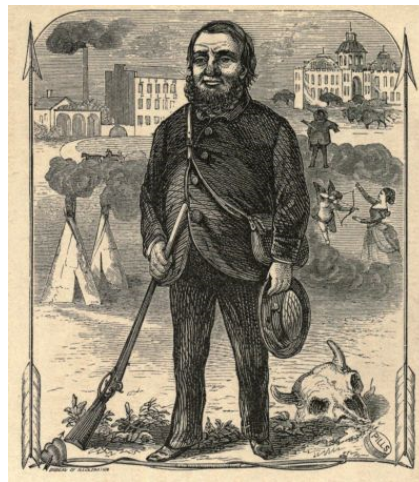
Next came Tammany Sachem, our heavy weight and our mystery. Before joining our party, he had been a New York alderman, noted for prowess in annual aldermanic clam-bakes at Coney Island. He was wont to exhibit a medal, the prize of such a tournament, on which several immense clams were racing to the griddle, for the honor of being devoured by the city fathers.

A green-ribbed hunting coat traversed his rotundity, which had the generous swell of a puncheon. His face was reddish, and his nose like a beacon-light against a sunset sky. When you thought him awake, he was half asleep; when you thought him asleep, he was wide awake. A look

of extreme happiness always beamed on his face when misfortunes impended. Per contra, successes made him suspicious and morose. New York aldermen have always been a puzzle to the nation at large. Perhaps our friend's facial contradictions, put on originally as one of the tricks of the trade, had become chronic from long usage. We have since learned that the sachems of Tammany laugh the loudest and joke the most freely when under affliction.



THE PROFESSOR—A REMARKABLE STONE.



TAMMANY SACHEM—PROSPECTIVE AND RETROSPECTIVE.

When I was appointed editor, the Sachem volunteered as local reporter. Many of the items he gathered are entered in our log-book in rhyme, and to these pages some of them are transferred verbatim. In wooing the muses, our alderman certainly acted out of character. The ideal poet is thin instead of obese, and he is a reckless innovator who lays claim to any measure of the divine afflatus without possessing either a pale face, thin form, or a garret.

As to what drove a New York alderman to the society of buffaloes, we had but one explanation, and that was Sachem's own. We knew that he disliked women in every form, Sorosis and Anti-Sorosis, bitter and sweet alike. According to his statement, made to us in good faith, and which I chronicle in the same, Cupid had once essayed to drive a dart into Sachem's heart, but, in doing so, the barb also

struck and wounded his liver. As his love increased, his health failed. His liver became affected in the same ratio as his heart. This was touching our alderman in a tender spot. Imagine a New York city father without digestion; what a subject of scorn he would become to his constituency! Our alderman fled from Cupid, clams, and his beloved Gotham, and sought health and buffalo on the plains of Kansas. As he remarked to us pathetically: "A good liver makes a good husband. Indigestion frightens connubial bliss out of the window. Pills, my boy, pills is the quietus of love. If you wish Cupid to leave, give him a dose of 'em. The liver, instead of the heart, is at the bottom of half the suicides."

Doctor Pythagoras in years was fifty, and in stature short. His favorite theory was "development," and this he carried to depths which would have astonished Darwin himself. How humble he used to make us feel by digging at the roots of the family tree until its uttermost fiber lay between an oyster and a sponge! (Rumor charged him with waiting so long for diseases to develop, that his patients developed into spirits.) While he indorsed Darwin, however, he also admired Pythagoras. The latter's doctrine of metempsychosis he Darwinized. In their transmigration from one body to another, souls developed, taking a higher order of being with each change, until finally fitted to enter the land of spirits. The soul of a jack-of-all-trades was one which developed slowly, and picked up a new craft with each new body. Like Pythagoras, he remembered several previous bodies which his soul had animated, among others that of the original Rarey, who existed in Egypt some centuries before the modern usurper was born. If souls proved entirely unworthy during the probationary or human period, they were cast back into the brute creation to try it over again. To this class belonged prize-fighters, Congressmen, and the like. With them the past was a blank—an unsuccessful problem washed from the slate. The doctor had a hobby that a vicious horse was only a vicious man entered into a lower order of being. To demonstrate this he had traveled, and still persisted in traveling, on eccentric horses, for the purpose of reasoning with them. But his Egyptian lore had been lost in transmission, and his falls, kicks, and bites became as many as the moons which had passed over his head.



COLON AND SEMI-COLON.



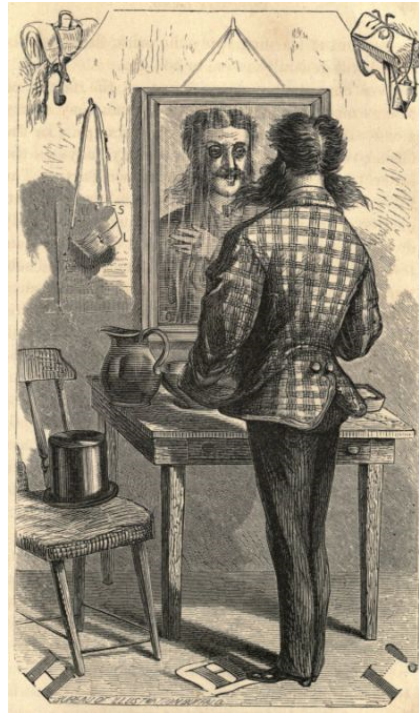
DAVID PYTHAGORAS, M. D.

Genuine Muggs was an Englishman. The antipodes of Tammany Sachem, who would not believe any thing, Muggs swallowed every thing. He had already absorbed so much in this way that he knew all about the United States before visiting it. Given half a chance, he would undoubtedly have told the savage more about the latter's habits than the aborigine himself knew. It was positively impossible for him to learn any thing. His round British body was so full of indisputable facts that another one would have burst it. In the Presidential alphabet, from Alpha Washington to Omega Grant, he knew all of our rulers' tricks and trades, and understood better the crooked ways of the White House than our own talented Jenkins.

British phlegm incased his soul, and British leather his feet. From heel to crown he was completely a Briton. His mutton-chop whiskers came just so far, and the h's dropped in and out of his utterings in a perfectly natural way. In the Briton's alphabet, Sachem used to remark, the *I* is so big that it is no wonder the *H* is often crowded out.

Muggs was a fair representative of the average Englishman who has traveled somewhat. The eye-teeth of these persons are generally cut with a slash, and they are forever after sore-mouthed. For a maiden effort they never suck knowledge gently in, but attempt a gulp which strangles. The consequence of this hasty acquiring is a bloated condition. The partly-traveled Briton seems, at first acquaintance, full and swollen with knowledge; but should the student of learning apply the prick, the result obtained will generally prove to be—gas.

Over our great country, some of the family of Muggs meet one at every turn. Often they scurry along solitarily, but occasionally in groups. In the former case they are unsocial to every body—in the latter to every body except their own party. The bliss which comes from ignorance must be of a thoroughly enjoyable nature, for the Muggses certainly do enjoy themselves. They will pass through a country, remaining completely uncommunicative and self-wrapped, and know less of it after six months' traveling than an American in two. The professor says he has met them in the lonely parks of the Rocky Mountains and in the fishing and hunting solitudes of the Canadas. If they have been an unusually long time without seeing a human being, they may possibly catch at an eye-glass and fling themselves abruptly into a few remarks. But it is in a tone which says, plainer than words, "No use in your going any further, man; I have absorbed all the beauties and knowledge of this locality."



ONE OF THE MUGGSES.

It is a rare treat to see a coach delivered of Muggs at a country inn. "Hi, porter, look hout for my luggage, you know. Tell the publican some chops, rare, and lively now, and a mug of hale, and, if I can 'ave it, a room to myself." If the latter request is granted, and you are inquisitive enough to take a peep, you may see Muggs sturdily surveying himself in the glass, and giving certain satisfied pats to his cravat and waistcoat, as if to satisfy them that they covered a Briton. Could the mirror which reflects his face also reflect his thoughts, they would read about as follows: "Muggs, you are a Briton, and this hotel must be made aware of the fact. Whatever you do, be guilty of no un-English act while in this outlandish land. Your skin is now full of knowledge, and let not other travelers, like so many mosquitoes, suck it from you. Your forefathers blessed their eyes and dropped their h's, and so must you." And perhaps by this time, if the chops have arrived, he dines in seclusion and, by so doing, loses a fund of information which his fellow-travelers have obtained by common exchange.

Again on the way, Muggs nestles in a corner of the coach and acts strictly on the defensive, indignantly withdrawing his square-toed, thick-soled English shoes, should neighboring feet attempt to hobnob with them. On a trip through Buffalo Land, however, it is difficult for one of her Britannic Majesty's subjects to maintain the national dignity. But this fact Genuine Muggs—our Muggs—evidently did not know. Had he known it, he would never have gone with us in the world.

Another of our party rejoiced in the appellation of "Colon." He obtained this title because his eccentric specialities of character several times came very near putting if not a full stop, at least the next thing to it, upon the particular page of history which our party was making. Longitudinally, Mr. Colon was all of five feet eleven; in circumference, perhaps a score or so of inches. He possessed a fair share of oddities, and what is better an equally fair one of dollars. The hemispheres of his philanthropic brain seemed equally pre-empted by philosophy and bugs. Engaging in some immense work for the amelioration of mankind, he would pursue it with ardor, dwell upon it with unction, and then suddenly leave it, half finished, to capture a rare spider. Philosophy and Entomology had constant combat for Colon, and victory tarried with neither long enough for the seat of war to be cultivated and blossom with any luxuriance. At the time he joined our party one of his grandest charitable projects had lately died in a very early period of infancy, entirely supplanted in his affections for the time being by the prospect of a chase after Brazilian insects. During our journey it was no uncommon thing for

us to see his thin form all covered with bugs and reptiles, which had crawled out of the collecting boxes carried in his pockets. If this meets our friend's eye, let him bear no malice, but reflect, in the language of his own invariable answer to our remonstrances, "It can't be helped." Should the public parade of his faults be disagreeable, he can suffer no more from them now than we did in the past, and may perhaps call them into closer quarters for the future.

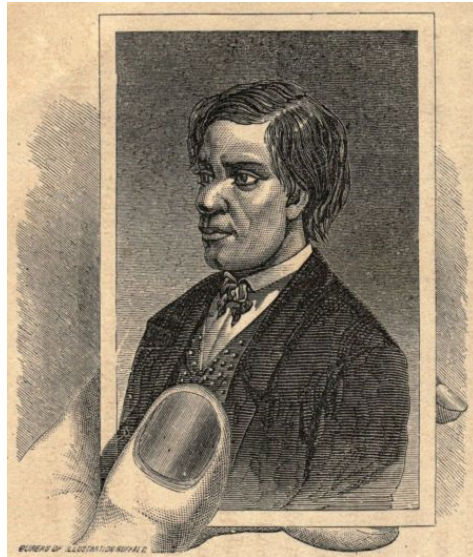
Mr. Colon's son, of two years less than a score, we dubbed Semi-colon, as being a smaller edition, or to be exact, precisely one-half of what the senior Colon was. So perfect was the concord of the two that the junior had fallen into a chronic and to us amusing habit of answering "Ditto" to the senior's expressions of opinion. Divide the father's conversation by two, add an assent to every thing, and the result, socially considered, would be the son. It may readily be seen, therefore, why the professor for short should call him, as he nearly always did, "Semi."

Shamus Dobeen, our cook and body-servant, according to his own account, was the child of an impoverished but noble Irish family. Indeed, we doubt if any Irishman was ever promoted from shovel laborer to body-servant without suddenly remembering that he was "descended" from a line of kings. At the time Shamus was added to the population of Ireland, the patrimonial estate had dwindled down to a peat bog. As this soon "petered out," Shamus went from the exhausted moor into the cold world. He had been by turns expelled patriot, dirt disturber on new railroads, gunner on a Confederate cruiser, and high private in a Union regiment. The position of gunner he lost by touching off a piece before the muzzle had been run out, in consequence of which part of the vessel's side went off suddenly with the gun. Captured, he readily became a Union soldier, and could, without doubt, have transformed himself into a Cheyenne, or a Patagonian, had occasion for either ever required.

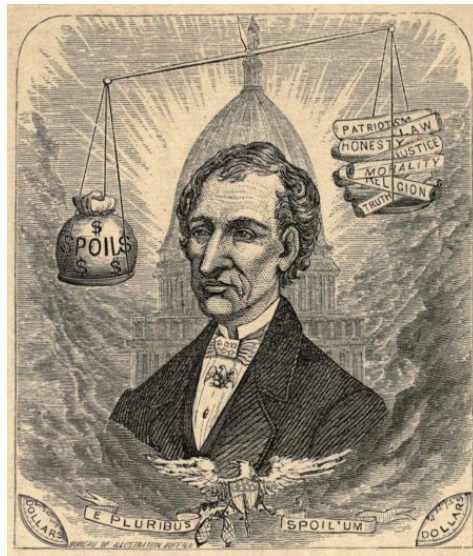
While in Topeka, our party made the acquaintance of Tenacious Gripe, a well-known Kansas politician, and who attached himself to us for the trip. Every person in the State knew him, had known him in territorial times, and would know him until either the State or he ceased to be.

Flung headlong from somewhere into Kansas during the "border ruffian" period, he would probably have passed as rapidly out of it had he been allowed to do so peaceably. But as the slavery party endeavored to push him, he concluded to stick. At that particular time, he was a moderate Democrat or conservative Republican, and consequently had no particular principles. But the slavery party supposed he had, and to them accordingly he became an object of suspicion. They assumed the aggressive, and he at once resolved into a staunch Republican. Had the latter first struck him, he would have been as staunch a Democrat. And Gripe has never known how near he came to being the latter. The Republicans had just decided to order him out of the state as a border ruffian spy, when the Democrats took action and did so for his not being one. Those were troublous times. He went to the front at once in the antislavery ranks, and has stayed there ever since. Sore-headed men are apt to become famous. There were those in our late war who were kicked by adversity into the very arms of Fame.

Our friend had been in both the upper and lower houses of the State Legislature, and had rolled Congressional logs, moreover, until he was hardly happy without having his hands on one.



SHAMUS DOBEEN—HIS CARD.



HON. T. GRIPE (BEATIFIED).

CHAPTER III

THE TOPEKA AUCTIONEER—MUGGS GETS A BARGAIN— CYNOCEPHALUS—INDIAN SUMMER IN KANSAS—HUNTING PRAIRIE CHICKENS—OUR FIRST DAY'S SPORT.

We had three or four days to spend in Topeka, as it was there that we were to purchase our outfit for the buffalo region. With the latter purpose in view, we were wandering along Kansas Avenue the next morning, when a horseman came furiously down the street, shouting, at the top of his lungs, "Sell um as he wars har!" Semi hastily retreated behind Mr. Colon, thinking it might be a Jayhawker, while the professor adjusted his glasses.

Muggs said the individual reminded him of the famous charge at Balaklava. Muggs had never seen Balaklava, but other Englishmen had, which answered the same purpose.

The equestrian proved to be a well-known auctioneer of Topeka, who may be discovered at almost any time tearing through the streets on some spavined or bow-legged old cob, auctioneering it off as he goes. His favorite expression is, "I'll sell um as he wars har." What particular selling charm lies concealed in this announcement even Gripe could not tell. Sachem thought that possibly he had been brought up at some exposed frontier post, where, on account of Indian prejudices, wearing hair is a rare luxury. To say there that a man was still able to comb his own scalp-lock denoted an extraordinary state of physical perfection. Expressions of praise for humans are often applied to horses, and so, perhaps, the one in question. "I have heard," quoth our alderman, in support of this assertion, "Fitz say of a belle, at a charity ball, what a 'bootiful cweature;' and I have heard him, the day after, in his stable, say the same thing of his horse."

That horse-auction was a sight worth seeing. The crowd collected most thickly on the corner of Kansas Avenue and Sixth Street, and before it the cob came to a stand. And it was a stand—as stiff and painful as that of a retired veteran put on dress parade. The limbs would have had full duty to perform in supporting the carcass alone, which had evidently been in light marching order for years past. The additional weight of the auctioneer must certainly have proved altogether too much, had not the horse heard, for the first time, of the wonderful qualities with which he was still endowed.

Seeing a whole corner, with gaping mouths, swallowing the statement that he was only six years old, reduced by hard work, and could, after three months grass, pull a ton of coal, he would have been a thankless horse indeed, which could not strain a point, or all his points, for such a rider.



"SPERIT, GENTLEMEN!"

And so, when the spurs suddenly rattled against his ribs, the old skin full of bones gave a snort of pain, which the auctioneer called "Sperit, gentlemen!" and away up the broad avenue he rolled, at a speed which threatened to break the rider's neck, and his own legs as well. His tail having been cut short in youth, and retrimmed in old age, the outfit made but a sorry figure going up the street. The Professor said it suggested the idea of some fossil vertebra, with a paint brush attached to its end, running away with a geological student.

After the return and cries for more bids, Muggs must have winked at the auctioneer—possibly, to slyly telegraph him the fact that in "Hengland" they were up to such games. At least the auctioneer so declared, and advancing the price one dollar in accordance therewith, finally knocked the brute down to him. Then the British wrath bubbled and boiled. The auctioneer was inexorable. Muggs *had* winked, and that was an advanced bid, according to commercial custom the land over. Articles were often sold simply by the vibration of an eyelash, and not a word uttered.

The Professor remarked that in law winks would doubtless be accepted as evidence. It was a recognized principle of the statutes that he who winked at a matter acquiesced in it, and indeed such signals were often more expressive than words. Sachem sustained this point, and added further that he had known many a man's head broken on account of an injudicious wink.

The crowd, with almost unanimous voice, pronounced the auctioneer right and Muggs wrong.

"Me take the brute!" exclaimed the indignant Briton; "why he can 'ardly stand up long enough to be knocked down. Except in France, he could be put to no earthly use whatever. 'Is knees knock together in an ague quartette, and 'is tail—look at it! It's hincapable of knocking a fly off; looks more like flying off hitself!" Muggs further declared the sale was an attempt on the owner's part to evade the health officer, who would have been around, in a couple of days, to have the carcass removed.

The auctioneer waxed belligerent, the crowd noisy, and Muggs, like a true Englishman, secured peace at the price of British gold. The horse was on his hands, having barely escaped being on the town, and an enthusiastic crowd of urchins escorted the purchase to a livery stable. Muggs christened the animal *Cynocephalus*, and soon afterward sold him to Mr. Colon, who was of an economical turn, for the use of his son Semi.

"I have heard," said the thoughtful father, "that the buffalo grass of the plains is very nourishing. All that the poor steed needs is care and fat pastures. Semi can give him the former, and over the latter our future journey lies. I have also learned that what is especially needed in a hunting horse is steadiness, and this quality the animal certainly possesses."

From some months' acquaintance with the purchase, we can say that *Cynocephalus* was steady to a remarkable degree. We are firmly persuaded that a heavy battery might have fired a salute over his back without moving him, unless, possibly, the concussion knocked him down.

Our first hunting morning, the second day preceding our hegira westward, came to us with a clear sky, the sun shedding a mellow warmth, and the air full of those exhilarating qualities which our lungs afterward drank in so freely on the plains. Indian summer, delightful anywhere, is especially so in Kansas.

From the advance guard of the winter king not a single chilling zephyr steals forward among the tarrying ones of summer. Soothing and gentle as when laden with spicy fragrance south, they here shower the whole land with sunbeams. Earth no longer seems a heavy, inert mass, but floats in that smoky, fleecy atmosphere with which artists delight so much to wrap their angels. It is as if the warmer, lighter clouds of sunny weather were nestling close to earth, frightened from the skies, like a flock of white swans, at the October howls of winter. But I never could agree with those writers who call this season dreamy. If such it be, it is surely a dream of motion. All nature appears quickened. The inhabitants of the air have commenced their southern pilgrimage, and the oldest and leading ganders may be heard croaking, day-time and night-time, to their wedge-shaped flocks their narrative of summer experiences at the Arctic circle, and their commands for the present journey.

Sachem, I find, has recorded as a discovery in natural history that geese form their flocks in wedge shape that they may easier "make a split" for the south when Nature, with her north pole, stirs up their feeding and breeding-grounds in November gales, and changes their fields of operation into fields of ice. Sachem was sadly addicted to slang phrases.

All game, I may remark, is wilder at this season of the year than earlier. If the earth is dreaming, its wild inhabitants certainly are not. Men, too, have thrown off the summer lethargy, and shave their neighbors as closely as ever. If any one thinks it a dreamy season of the year, let him test the matter practically by being a day or two behindhand with a payment.

In reply to a question, the professor told us that the smoky condition of the atmosphere was probably caused by the exhalation of phosphorus from decaying vegetation. Sachem remarked that out of twenty different objects which he had submitted for examination, and as many questions that he had asked, nine-tenths of the results contained phosphorus in some shape. It was becoming monotonous and dangerous.

While the party thus mused and speculated, we had come out into the open country, southwest of town, and were now approaching Webster's Mound, a cone-shaped hill from which we afterward obtained some excellent views. For the trip we had been supplied with two dogs, one a setter, belonging to the private secretary of the Governor, and the other a pointer, the property of a real estate dealer. The former was an ancient and venerable animal. The rheumatism was seized of his backbone and held high revel upon the juices which should have lubricated the joints. Even his tail wagged with a jerk, inclining the body to whichever side it had last swung. He was so full of rheumatism that whenever he scented a chicken the pain evoked by the excitement caused him to howl with anguish. The pointer, per contra, was hale and swift, but had lost one eye; and a shot from the same charge which destroyed that organ, rattled also on his left ear-drum, and that membrane no longer responded to the shouts of the hunter. On one side he could see, and not hear—on the other, hear, but not see. Nevertheless, with gestures for the left view, and shouts on the right, fair work might still be obtained. Both dogs rejoiced in the uncommon name of Rover, and both possessed that most excellent of all points in such animals, a steady point.

If any of my readers are fond of field-sports, and have not yet shot prairie-chickens over a dog, let them take their guns and hie to the West, and taste for themselves of this rare sport. With the wide prairie around him, keeping the bird in full view during its passage through the air, one can choose his distance for firing and witness the full effect of his shot. I think the brief instant when the flight of the bird is checked and it drops head-foremost to earth, is the sweetest moment of all to the hunter.

CHAPTER IV

CHICKEN-SHOOTING CONTINUED—A SCIENTIFIC PARTY TAKE THE BIRDS ON THE WING—EVILS OF FAST FIRING—AN OLD-FASHIONED "SLOW SHOT"—THE HABITS OF THE PRAIRIE-CHICKEN—ITS PROSPECTIVE EXTINCTION—MODE OF HUNTING IT—THE GOPHER SCALP LAW.

We had left the road and were now driving over the fine prairie skirting Webster's Mound, the grass being about a foot high and affording excellent cover. Taking advantage of its being matted so closely from the early frosts, the old cocks hid under the thick tufts and called for close work on the part of our dogs.

Back and forth across our path these intelligent animals ranged, the one fifty yards or so to our right, the other as many to our left, crossing and re-crossing, with open mouths drinking in eagerly the tainted breeze. This latter was in our favor, and both dogs suddenly joined company and worked up into it, with outstretched noses pointing to game that was evidently close ahead.

The pointer crawled cautiously, like a tiger, his spotted belly sweeping the earth, and his tail, which had been lashing rapidly an instant before, gradually stiffening. He would open his mouth suddenly, drink in a quick, deep draught of air, and, closing the jaws again, hold it until obliged to take another respiration. He seemed as loath to let the scent of the chicken pass from his nostrils as a hungry newsboy is to quit the savory precincts of Delmonico's kitchen window. The setter's old bones appeared to renew their youth under the excitement, and he was as active as a retired war-horse suddenly plunged into battle.

Both dogs came simultaneously to a point—tails curved up and rigid, each body motionless as if cut in marble and one forepaw lifted. No wonder so many men are wild with a passion for hunting. Kind Providence smiles upon the legitimate sport from conception to close, and gives us a *posé* to start with fascinating to any lover of the beautiful, whether hunter or not. But one must not pause to moralize while dogs are on the point, or he will have more philosophy than chickens.

All the party had got safely to ground and were behind the dogs, with guns ready and eyes eagerly fastened on the thick grass which concealed its treasure as completely as if it had been a thousand miles below its roots, or on the opposite side of this mundane sphere in China. Not a thing was visible within fifty yards of our noses save two dogs standing motionless, with stiffened tails and eyes fixed on, and nozzles pointed toward, a spot in the sea of brown, withered grass, not ten feet away.

The Professor took out his lens, Mr. Colon let down the hammers of his gun and cocked them again, to be sure all was right, while Sachem wore a puzzled expression as if undecided whether the attitude of the dogs indicated any thing particular or not. The grass nodded and rustled in the light wind, but not a blade moved to indicate the presence of any living thing beneath it, while the dogs remained as if petrified.

The Professor said it was very remarkable, and wondered what had better be done next. Mr. Colon thought that the dogs were tired, and we might as well get into the wagon. Another suggested at random that we should set the dogs on, and Muggs, who had probably heard the expression somewhere, cried, "Hi, boys, on bloods!" At the words the dogs made a few quick steps forward, and on the instant the grass seemed alive with feathered forms, popping into air like bobs in shuttlecock. Such a fluttering and flying I have never seen since, when a boy, I ventured into a dove cote, and was knocked over by the rush of the alarmed inmates. From under our very feet, almost brushing our faces, the beautiful pinnated grouse of the prairies left their cover, and us also.

Every gun had gone off on the instant, and we doubt if one was raised an inch higher than it happened to be when the covey started. The Professor afterward extracted some stray shot from the

legs of his boots, and the setter, which was next to Muggs, gave a cry of pain for which there was evidently other cause than rheumatism, as was demonstrated by his retirement to the rear, from which he refused to budge until we all got into the wagon, and to which he invariably retreated whenever we got out.



OUR FIRST BIRD-SHOOTING.

From the midst of the birds which were soaring away, one was seen to rise suddenly a few feet above his comrades, and then fall straight as a plummet, and head first, to earth. It had caught some stray shot from the bombardment—Muggs claimed from his gun, but this statement the setter, could he have spoken, would certainly have disputed.

Semi-Colon brought in the game, which proved to be a fine male, with whiskers and full plumage, which must have made sad havoc among the hearts of the hens, when the old fellow was on annual dress parade in the spring. At that season of the year the cocks seek some knoll of the prairie, where the grass has been burnt or cut off, and strut up and down with ruffled feathers, uttering meanwhile a booming sound, which can be heard in a clear morning for miles. The flabby pink skin that at other seasons hangs in loose folds on his neck is then distended like a bagpipe, and he is a very different bird from the same individual in his Quaker gray and respectable summer and fall habits.

Ensconced again in the wagon, our party moved forward, the dogs, as before, examining the prairie. The professor was comparing the birds of the present and the past ages, when Muggs suddenly blasted his eyes and declared the beasts were at it again. And so they were, the setter making a good stand at some game in the grass, and the other dog, a short distance off, pointing his companion. During the remainder of the day we found many large flocks of birds, and fired away until two or three swelled noses testified how dirty our guns were.

"Fast shooting," said the professor, as we were on our way home, "is as bad as that too slow. Although I am no sportsman from practice, I love and have studied the principles of it. In my father's day the rule was, when a bird rose, for a hunter to take out his snuff-box, take snuff, replace the box, aim, and fire. You may find the advice yet in some works. The shot then has distance in which to spread. With close shooting they are all together, and you might as well fire a bullet. When you have given the bird time, act quickly. The first sight is the best. Again, the first moment of flight, with most birds, is very irregular, as it is upward, instead of from you."

Dobeen begged leave to inform our "honors" that in Ireland, after a bird rose, the rule was, instead of taking snuff, to take off the boots before firing. The professor thought that such a habit related to outrunning the gamekeeper, and was intended to procure distance for the poacher rather than the bird.

Sachem stated that he had known a slow hunter once. He was a revolutionary veteran, used a revolutionary musket, and believed in revolutionary powder. He refused to do any thing different

from what his fathers did, and abhorred double-barreled shotguns and percussion-caps as inventions of the devil. It was constantly, "General Washington did this," and "Our army did that," and his old head shook sadly at the innovations Young America was making. His ghost, with the revolutionary musket on its shoulder, had since been known to chase hunters, with breech-loaders, who were caught on his favorite ground after dark. "Old 1776" was great on wing-shooting, and could be seen at almost any time hobbling over the moor, firing away at snipe and water-fowl. He was one of those slow, deliberate cases, always taking snuff after the bird rose. There would be a glitter of fluttering wings as the game shot into air. Down would come the long musket, out would come the snuff-box, and the old soldier would go through the present, make ready, take snuff, take aim, and fire, all as coolly as if on parade. The old musket often hung fire from five to ten seconds, and the premonitory flash could be seen as the shaky flint clattered down on the pan. The veteran always patiently covered the bird until the charge got out. The recoil was tremendous, and the old man often went down before the bird; but such positions, he asserted, were taken voluntarily, as ones of rest. Some said that the gun had been known to kick him again after he was down.

Sachem's narration was here cut short by the dogs again pointing. This was followed by the usual bombardment, which over, the bag showed the magnificent aggregate of two chickens for the entire day's sport.

The prairie-chicken is now extinct in many of the Western States where it was once well known. Usually, during the first few years of settlement, it increases rapidly, and is often a nuisance to pioneer farmers. Perhaps, when the latter first settle in a country, a few covies may be seen; under the favorable influences of wheat and corn-fields, the dozens increase to thousands and cover the land. But with denser settlement come more guns, and, what is a far more destructive agent, trained dogs also. Under the first order of things, the farmer, with his musket, might kill enough for the home table. With double-barreled gun and keen-scented pointer, the sportsman and pot-hunter think nothing of fifty or sixty birds for a day's work. It seems almost impossible, under such a combination, for a covey to escape total annihilation.

We may suppose a couple of fair shots hunting over a dog in August, when the chickens lie close, and the year's broods are in their most delicate condition for the table. The pointer makes a stand before a fine covey hidden in the thick grass before him. The ready guns ask no delay, and, at the word, he flushes the chickens immediately under his nose. Each hunter takes those which rise before him, or on his side, and if four or less left cover at the first alarm, that number of gray-speckled forms the next moment are down in the grass, not to leave it again. If more rose, they are "marked," which means that their place of alighting is carefully noted, and, as the chicken has but a short flight, this task is easy. Meanwhile, the guns have been reloaded, the dog flushes others of the hiding birds, and so the sport goes on. The birds that get away are "marked down," and again found and flushed by the dog. Without this useful animal the chickens would multiply, despite any number of hunters. I have often seen covies go down in the grass but a few hundred yards away, yet have tramped through the spot dozens of times without raising a single bird. In twenty years this delicious game will probably be as much a thing of the past as is the Dodo of the Isle de France. At the period of our visit they were already gathering into their fall flocks, which sometimes number a hundred or more. In these they remain until St. Valentine recommends a separation. During the colder weather of winter they seek the protection of the timber, and may be seen of mornings on the trees and fences. They never roost there, however, but pass the night hidden in the adjacent grass.

The prairie-chicken's admirers are numerous, other animals beside man being willing to dine on its plump breast. We had an illustration of this in our first day's shooting. Sometimes when we fired, the report would attract to our vicinity wandering hawks, and we found that either instinct or previous experience teaches these fierce hunters of the air that in the vicinity of their fellow-hunter, man, wounded birds may be found. One wounded chicken, which fell near us, was seized by a hawk immediately.

As we passed one or two fields, indications of gophers appeared, their small mounds of earth covering the ground. In some counties these animals formerly destroyed crops to such an extent that the celebrated "Gopher Act" was passed. This gave a bounty of two dollars for each scalp, and under it many farms yielded more to the acre than ever before or since. One of these animals which we secured resembled in size and shape the Norway rat, and, in the softness and color of its coat, was not unlike a mole. The oddest thing was its earth-pouches—two open sacks, one on either side of its head, and capable of containing each a tablespoonful or more. These the gopher employs, in his subterranean researches, for the same purpose that his enemy, man, does a wheelbarrow. Packing them with dirt, the little fellow trudges gayly to the surface, and there cleverly dumps his load.

We reached town again, well pleased with our day's ride, and over our evening pipes discussed the results. Muggs thought our shot were too small. Sachem thought the birds were.

Colon was delighted with the new State, but believed that wing-shooting was not his *forte*. He would be more apt to hit a bird on the wing if he could only catch it roosting somewhere.

Gripe, at the other end of the room, was piling Republican doctrines upon a bearded Democratic heathen from the Western border.

CHAPTER V

A TRIAL BY JUDGE LYNCH—HUNG FOR CONTEMPT OF COURT
—QUAIL SHOOTING—HABITS OF THE BIRDS, AND MODE OF KILLING
THEM—A RING OF QUAILS—THE EFFECTS OF A SEVERE WINTER—
THE SNOW GOOSE.

A short time after supper, Tenacious Gripe appeared with the mayor of the city, who wished to make the acquaintance of the Professor. The two august personages bowed to each other. It was the happiest moment in their respective lives, they declared. An invitation was extended us to delay our departure another day and try quail shooting. The citizens said the birds were unusually abundant, the previous winter having been mild and the summer long enough for two separate broods to be hatched, and the brush and river banks were swarming with them. As we were about to abandon the birds of the West and seek an acquaintance with its beasts, we decided, after a brief consultation, to accept the invitation and remain another day.

Among the persons present in the crowded office of the hotel, was a man from the southwestern part of the state who had lately been interested in a trial before the celebrated Judge Lynch. Sachem interviewed him, and reports his statement of the occurrence in the log book, as follows:

A stranger played me fur a fool,
An' threw the high, low, jack,
An' sold me the wuss piece of mule
That ever humped a back.

But that wer fair; I don't complain,
That I got beat in trade;
I don't sour on a fellow's gain,
When sich is honest made.

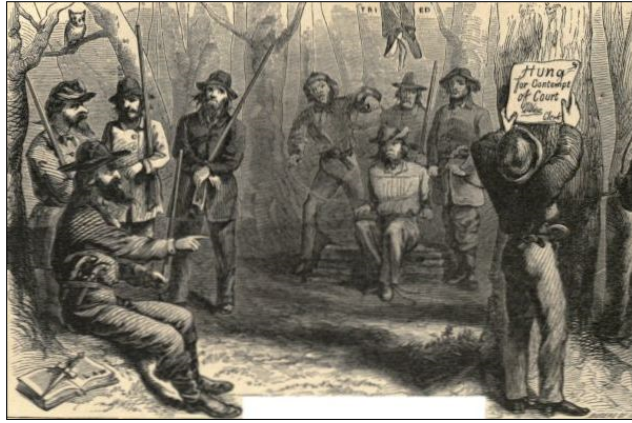
But wust wer this, he stole the mule,
An' I were bilked complete;
Such thieves, we hossmen makes a rule
To lift 'em from their feet.

We started arter that 'ere pup,
An' took the judge along,
For fear, with all our dander up,
We might do somethin' wrong.

We caught him under twenty miles,
An' tried him under trees;
The judge he passed around the "smiles,"
As sort o' jury fees.

"Pris'ner," says judge, "now say your say,
An' make it short an' sweet,
An', while yer at it, kneel and pray,
For Death yer can not cheat.

No man shall hang, by this 'ere court,
Exceptin' on the square;
There's time fur speech, if so it's short,
But none to chew or swear."



JUDGE LYNCH—HIS COURT.

JUDGE AND JURY. SHERIFF. ATTORNEY. LOAFER. CLERK. DEPUTY SHERIFF.

An' then the thievin' rascal cursed,
An' threw his life away,
He said, "Just pony out your worst,
Your best would be foul play."

Then judge he frowned an awful frown,
An' snapped this sentence short,
"Jones, twitch the rope, an' write this down,
Hung for contempt of court!"

Sharp 8 next morning saw us on the road leading east of town, the two dogs with us, and a young one additional, the property of a resident sportsman. Our last acquisition joined us on the run, and kept on it all day, going over the ground with the speed of a greyhound, his fine nose, however, giving him better success than his reckless pace would have indicated.

Three miles from town, or half way between it and Tecumseh, our party left the wagon, with direction for it to follow the road, while we scouted along on a parallel, following the river bank.

The Kaw stretched eastward, broad and shallow, with numerous sand bars, and along its edges grew the scarlet sumach and some stunted bushes, and between these and the corn a high, coarse bottom grass, with intervals at every hundred yards or so apart of a shorter variety, like that on a poor prairie. Among the bushes, there was no grass whatever, and yet the birds seemed indifferently to frequent one spot equally with another.

In less than ten minutes after leaving the wagon, all the dogs were pointing on a barren looking spot, thinly sprinkled with scrubby bushes not larger than jimson-weeds. They were several yards apart, so that each animal was clearly acting on his own responsibility.

If it puzzled us the day before to discover any signs of game under their noses, it certainly did so now. There was apparently no place of concealment for any object larger than a field-mouse. The bushes were wide apart, and the soil between was a loose sand. Around the roots of the scrubs, it is

true, a few thin, wiry spears of grass struggled into existence, but these covered a space not larger than a man's hand, and it seemed preposterous to imagine that they could be capable of affording cover. That three dogs were pointing straight at three bushes was apparent, but we could see nothing in or about the latter calling for such attention.

Shamus, who had accompanied us, wished to know if the twigs were witch hazels, because, if so, three invisible old beldames might be taking a nap under them, after a midnight ride. "But, then," said Dobeen, "the dog's hairs don't stand on end as they always do in Ireland when they see ghosts and witches." We believe that our worthy cook was really disappointed in not discovering any stray broomsticks lying around. These, he afterward informed us, could not be made invisible, though their owners should take on airy shapes unrecognizable by mortal eyes.

Muggs had suggested urging the dogs in, but the party, wiser from yesterday's experience, desired a ground shot, if it could be secured. The Professor adjusted his lens, and decided to make a personal inspection around the roots of the bush immediately in front of him.

Carefully the sage bent over the suspicious spot, and almost fell backward as, with a whiz and a dart, half a dozen quails flew out, brushing his very nose. Instantly every bush sent forth its fugitives. A flash of feathered balls, and they were all gone. Such whizzing and whirring! it was as if those scraggy bushes were *mitrailleuses*, in quick succession discharging their loads.

Only one gun had gone off, but that so loudly that our ears rung for several seconds. Mr. Colon had accidentally rammed at least two, perhaps half a dozen, loads into one barrel, and the gun discharged with an aim of its own, the butt very low down. Two birds fell dead. But alas for our Nimrod! Colon stood with one hand on his stomach undecided whether that organ remained or not. On this point, however, he was fully re-assured at the supper-table that night, and in all our after experience, we never knew that gun to have the least opportunity for going off, except when at its owner's shoulder, and he perfectly ready for it.

The two birds were now submitted to the party for inspection. They were fine specimens of the American quail, more properly called by those versed in quailology, the Bob White. This bird is very plentiful throughout Kansas, and just before the shooting season commences, in September, will even frequent the gardens and alight on the houses of Topeka. They "lay close" before a dog, take flight into air with a quick, whirring dart, and their shooting deservedly ranks high. They are very rapid in their movements upon the ground, often running fifty or seventy-five yards before hiding. When this takes place, so closely do they huddle that it is seldom more than the upper bird that can be seen. "Green hunters" sometimes pause, trying to discover the rest of the covey before firing, and experience a great and sudden disgust when the single bird which they have disdained suddenly develops into a dozen flying ones.

We had an eventful days' sport, expending more ammunition than when among the chickens, and with more satisfactory results, as we brought in over two dozen birds. More than half of these were taken by Sachem at one lucky discharge. He saw a covey in the grass, huddled together as they generally are when not running. At these times they form a circle about as large in diameter as the hoop of a nail keg, with tails to the center and heads toward the outside. Fifteen quails would thus be a circle of fifteen heads, and a pail, could it be dropped over the covey, would cover them all. Not only is this an economy of warmth, there being no outsiders half of whose bodies must get chilled, but there is no blind side on which they can be approached, every portion of the circle having its full quota of eyes. Let skunk or fox, or other roamer through the grass, creep ever so stealthily, he will be seen and avoided by flight. Sachem aiming at the midst of such a ring, broke it up as effectually as Boutwell's discharge of bullion did that on Wall Street.

We have since found the frozen bodies of whole covies, which had gone to roost in a circle and been buried under such a heavy fall of snow that the birds could not force their way upward. Their habit is to remain in imprisonment, apparently waiting for the snow to melt before even making an

effort for deliverance. Oftentimes it is then too late, a crust having formed above. A severe winter will sometimes completely exterminate the birds in certain localities.

During this first day of quail-shooting, we also saw for the first time flocks of the snow-goose. The Professor counted fifty birds on one sand bar. This variety, in its flight across the continent, apparently passes through but a narrow belt of country, being found, to the best of my knowledge, in but few of the states outside of Kansas.

Our return to the hotel was without accident, and our supper such as hungry hunters might well enjoy. After it was disposed of, we gathered around the ample stove in the hotel office, and lived over again the events of the day.

CHAPTER VI

OFF FOR BUFFALO LAND—THE NAVIGATION OF THE KAW
—FORT RILEY—THE CENTER-POST OF THE UNITED STATES—OUR
PURCHASE OF HORSES—"LO" AS A SAVAGE AND AS A CITIZEN—
GRIPE UNFOLDS THE INDIAN QUESTION—A BALLAD BY SACHEM,
PRESENTING ANOTHER VIEW.

Next morning we said good-by to hospitable Topeka, and took up our westward way over the Pacific Railroad. An ever-repeated succession of valley and prairie stretched away on either hand. To the left the Kaw came down with far swifter current than it has in its course below, from its far-away source in Colorado. It might properly be called one of the eaves or water-spouts of the great Rocky Mountain water-shed. With a pitch of over five feet to the mile, its pace is here necessarily a rapid one, and when at freshet height the stream is like a mill-race for foam and fury.

At the junction of the Big Blue we found the old yet pretty town of Manhattan. To this point, in early times, water transit was once attempted. A boat of exceedingly light draught, one of those built to run on a heavy dew, being procured, freight was advertised for, and the navigation of the Kaw commenced. The one hundred miles or more to Manhattan was accomplished principally by means of the capstan, the boat being "warped" over the numberless shallows. This proved easier, of course—a trifle easier—than if she had made the trip on macadamized roads. If her stern had a comfortable depth of water it was seldom indeed, except when her bow was in the air in the process of pulling the boat over a sand bar. The scared catfish were obliged to retreat up stream, or hug close under the banks, to avoid obstructing navigation, and it is even hinted that more than one patriarch of the finny tribe had to be pried out of the way to make room for his new rival to pass.

Once at Manhattan, the steamboat line was suspended for the season, its captain and crew deciding they would rather walk back to the Missouri River than drag the vessel there. Soon afterward, the steamer was burned at her landing, and the Kaw has remained closed to commerce ever since.

About the same time, an enterprising Yankee advocated in the papers the straightening of the river, and providing it with a series of locks, making it a canal. As he had no money of his own with which to develop his ideas into results, and could command nobody's else for that purpose, the project failed in its very inception.

Fort Riley, four miles below Junction City, is claimed as the geographical center of the United States, the exact spot being marked by a post. What a rallying point that stick of wood will be for future generations! When the corner-stone of the National Capitol shall there be laid, the orator of the day can mount that post and exclaim, with eloquent significance, elsewhere impossible, "No north, no south, no east, no west!" and enthusiastic multitudes, there gathered from the four quarters of the continent, will hail the words as the key-note of the republic.

That spot of ground and that post are valuable. I hope a national subscription will be started to buy it. It is the only place on our continent which can ever be entirely free from local jealousies. There would be no possible argument for ever removing the capital. The Kaw could be converted into a magnificent canal, winding among picturesque hills past the base of the Capitol; and then, in case of war, should any hostile fleet ever ascend the rapid Missouri, it would be but necessary for our legislators to grasp the canal locks, and let the water out, to insure their perfect safety. Imagine the humiliation of a foreign naval hero arriving with his iron-clads opposite a muddy ditch, and finding it the only means of access to our capital!

A painful rumor has of late obtained circulation that a band of St. Louis ku-klux, yclept capital movers, intend stealing the pole and obliterating the hole. Let us hope, however, that it is without foundation.

Before leaving Topeka, the party had purchased horses for the trip, and consigned the precious load to a car, sending a note to General Anderson, superintendent, asking that they might be promptly and carefully forwarded to Hays City, our present objective point upon the plains.

The professor, bringing previous experience into requisition, selected a stout mustang—probably as tractable as those brutes ever become. He was warranted by the seller never to tire, and he never did, keeping the philosopher constantly on the alert to save neck and knees. It is the simple truth that, in all our acquaintance with him, that mustang never appeared in the least fatigued. After backing and shying all day, he would spend the night in kicking and stealing from the other horses.

Mr. Colon, by rare good fortune, obtained a beautiful animal, formerly known in Leavenworth as Iron Billy—a dark bay, with head and hair fine as a pointer's, limbs cut sharp, and joints of elastic. After carrying Mr. C. bravely for months, never tripping or failing, he was sold on our return to the then Secretary of State, who still owns him. More than once did Billy make his rider's arm ache from pulling at the curb, when the other horses were all knocked up by the rough day's riding. It was interesting to see him in pursuit of buffalo. He would often smell them when they were hidden in ravines, and we wholly unaware of their vicinity. Head and ears were erect in an instant, and, with nostrils expanded, forward he went, keeping eagerly in front at a peculiar prancing step which we called tiptoeing. Once in sight of the game, and the rider became a person of quite secondary importance. Billy said, as plainly as a horse could say any thing, "*I am going to manage this thing; you stick on.*" And manage it he did. Not many moments, at the most, before he was at the quarters of the fleeing monsters, and nipping them mischievously with his teeth. I could always imagine him giving a downright horse-laugh, his big bright eyes sparkled so when the frightened bison, at the touch, gave a switch of his tail and a swerve of alarm, and plunged more wildly forward. If the rider wished to shoot, he could do so; if not, content himself, as Mr. Colon usually did, with clinging to the saddle, and uttering numberless expostulatory but fruitless "whoa's."

Once on our trip Billy was loaned for the day to a gentleman who wished to examine a prospective coal mine. When barely out of sight of camp, Billy discovered a herd of buffalo, and, despite the vehement remonstrances of his rider, straightway charged it. The mine-seeker was no hunter, but a wise and thoroughly timid devotee of science in search of coal measures. A few moments, and the poor, frightened gentleman found himself in the midst of a surging mass of buffalo, his knees brushing their hairy sides, and their black horns glittering close around him, like an array of serried spears. He drew his knees into the saddle, and there, clinging like a monkey, lost his hat, his map of the mine, and his spectacles. He returned Billy as soon as he could get him back to camp, with expressions of gratitude that he had been allowed to escape with life, and never manifested the least desire to mount him again.

Sachem's purchase was a horse which had run unaccountably to legs. He was sixteen hands high, a trifle knock-kneed, and with a way of flinging the limbs out when put to his speed which, though it seemed awkward enough, yet got over the ground remarkably well. With the shambling gait of a camel, he had also the good qualities of one, and did his owner honest service.

Muggs bought a mule, partly because advised to do so by a plainsman, and partly because the rest of us took horses. With true British obstinacy he paid no attention to our expostulations, and the creature he obtained was as obstinate as himself. Poor Muggs! A mule may be good property in the hands of a plainsman, but was never intended to carry a Briton.

Semi-Colon had the auction purchase, and Dobeen selected a Mexican donkey, one of the toughest little animals that ever pulled a bit. He could excel a trained mule in the feat of dislodging his rider, and had a remarkable penchant for running over persons who by chance might be looking the other way. It seemed to be his constant study to take unexpected positions, or, as Sachem phrased it, to "strike an attitude."

My mount was a stout-built old mare, recommended to me as a solid beast, on the strength of which, and wishing to avoid experiments, I made purchase at once. I found her solid indeed. When

on the gallop her feet came down with a shock which made my head vibrate, as if I had accidentally taken two steps instead of one, in descending a staircase.

Could the good people of Topeka have gotten us to ride out of their town upon our several animals, it would have given them a fair idea of a *mardi gras* cavalcade in New Orleans.

And so, our camp equipage and live stock following by freight, the express rolled us forward toward the great plains. So far along our route we had seen but few Indians, and those civilized specimens, such as straggle occasionally through the streets of Topeka. The Indian reservations in Kansas are at some distance apart, and their inhabitants frequently exchange visits. The few whom we had seen consisted of Osages, Kaws, Pottawatomies, and Sioux, all equally dirty, but the last affecting clothes more than the others, and eschewing paint. The members of this tribe, generally speaking, have good farms and are worth a handsome average per head. At the time of our visit they were expecting a half million dollars or so from Washington, and were soon to become American citizens. One privilege of this citizenship struck us as very peculiar. By the State law, as long as an Indian is simply an Indian, he can buy no whisky, and is thus cruelly debarred from the privilege of getting drunk, but once a voter, he can luxuriate in corn-juice and the calaboose, as well as his white brother. What a travesty upon American civilization and politics!

Muggs was prejudiced against the Osages, having been induced by one of them to invest in a bow and arrows, "for the Hinglish Museum, you know." On pulling for a trial shot, one end of the bow went further than the arrow, and the cord, warranted to be buffalo sinew, proved to be an oiled string.

Sachem declared that he had found Muggs returning the wreck to the Indian with the following speech: "O-sage, little was your wisdom to court thus the wrath of a Briton. Take with the two pieces this piece of my mind. That your noble form may be removed soon to the 'appy 'unting ground, where bow trades are not allowed, is the prayer of your patron, Muggs."



UNNATURALIZED.



NATURALIZED.

Mr. Colon asked Tenacious Gripe to explain the condition of the Native Americans in Kansas. The orator kindly consented and thereupon discoursed as follows:

"The Indians of Kansas are divided into the wild and the tame. Both alike cover their nakedness with bright handkerchiefs, old shirts, military coats, and many-hued ribbons. The principal difference in point of dress is in the method of procuring it. Among those tribes which are at peace with the government, the white man robs the Indian; among the wild tribes the conditions are reversed—the Indian robs the white man. In the one case the contractors and agents carry off their half million dollars or thereabouts; in the other the savage bears away a quantity of old clothes and fresh scalps. As he finds it difficult to procure sufficient of the white man's justice to satisfy the cravings of his nature, he feeds it with what he can and whenever he can of revenge. Wise men tell us, gentlemen, that revenge is sweet and justice a dry morsel. All Indians beg when they get an opportunity. The tame ones, if they find it fruitless, divert themselves by selling worthless pieces of wood with strings attached, as bows. The wild ones, in a like predicament, relieve their tedium by whacking away at our ribs with bows that amount to something. The principles actuating both classes are alike. It is simply the application which causes difficulty—in the one case an appeal with bow and arrows to our pockets, in the other to our bodies.

"All our wars with these people, gentlemen, are a result of their political economy. They believe that the Great Spirit provided buffalo and other game for his red children. When the white man drives these away, they understand that he takes their place as a means of sustenance, and as they have lived upon the one, so they intend to do upon the other. If the buffalo attempts to evade his duty in the premises, they kill him and take his meat; if the white man, they kill him and take his hair."

Sachem produced a roll of dirty brown paper and said that he had studied the Indian question and found two sides to it. One he could give us in a nutshell, believing that the meat of the nut had often excited the spirit of war.

Where waters sung above the sand,
And torrent forced its way,
Stretched out, disgusted with the land,
A bearded miner lay,
Prepared to strike, with willing hand,
Whatever lead would pay.

Echo of hoof on beaten ground
Rung on the desert air,

Ringin a tune of gladsome sound
To miner, watching there;
A paying lead, at last, he'd found—
The vein a "man of hair."

An instant more, and at the ford
A savage chief appeared;
The miner saw his goodly hoard,
And tore his own good beard.
(You'll always find an ox is gored
When sheep are to be sheared.)



Dog Town—The Happy Family at Home.



"You've riled that Brook"—An old Fable modernized.

And these the words the miner said:
"You've spoilt my drink, old fellow;
You've riled the brook, my brother red,
And, by your cheek so yellow,

To-night above your sandy bed
The prairie gale shall bellow.

"No relatives of mine are dead,
At least by Injun cunnin',
But many other hearts have bled,
And many eyes are runnin';
For blood and tears alike are shed,
When *you* go out a gunnin'.

"Some slumbrin' peaceful, first they knew,
They heard your horrid din—
Women as well as men you slew,
You bloody son of sin;
I mourn 'em all, revenge 'em too,
Through Adam they were kin."

This having said, the miner smart,
Drew bead upon the red man:
They're fond of beads—it touched his heart,
And Lo, behold, a dead man;
Upon Life's stage he'd played his part,
A gory sort of head man!

Two packs of goods lay on the ground;
Quoth miner, "Lawful spoil!
My lucky star at last has found
As good as gold and oil;
I kinder felt that fate was bound
To bless my honest toil.

"Such heathen have no lawful heirs—
I'll be the Probate Judge,
For though they kinder go in pairs,
Their love is all a fudge;
I'll 'ministrate on what he wears,
And leave his squaw my grudge."

CHAPTER VII

GRIBE'S VIEWS OF INDIAN CHARACTER—THE DELAWARES' THE ISHMAELITES OF THE PLAINS—THE TERRITORY OF THE "LONG HORNS"—TEXANS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS—MUSHROOM ROCK—A VALUABLE DISCOVERY—FOOTPRINTS IN THE ROCK—THE PRIMEVAL PAUL AND VIRGINIA.

We noticed many fine rivers rolling from the northward into the Kaw, which stream we found was known by that name only after receiving the Republican, at Junction City. Above that point, under the name of the Smoky Hill, it stretches far out across the plains, and into the eastern portion of Colorado. Along its desolate banks we afterward saw the sun rise and set upon many a weary and many a gorgeous day.

All the large tributaries of the Kansas river, consisting of the Big Blue, Republican, Solomon, and Saline, came in on our right. Upon our left, toward the South, only small creeks joined waters with the Kaw, the pitch of the great "divides" there being towards the Arkansas and its feeders, the Cottonwood and Neosho.

We had now fairly entered on the great Smoky Hill trail. Here Fremont marked out his path towards the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific, and on many of the high *buttes* we discovered the pillars of stone which he had set up as guides for emigrant trains, looking wonderfully like sentinels standing guard over the valleys beneath. Indeed we did at first take them for solitary herders, watching their cattle in some choice pasture out of sight.

Most of our party had expected to find Indians in promiscuous abundance over the entire State, and we were therefore surprised to see the country, after passing St. Mary's Mission, entirely free of them. Muggs asked Gripe if the American Indian was hostile to all nationalities alike, or simply to those who robbed him of his hunting-grounds. The orator replied as follows:

"Sir, the aborigine of the western plains cares not what color or flavor the fruit possesses which hangs from his roof tree. The cue of the Chinaman is equally as acceptable as hairs from the mane of the English lion. A red lock is as welcome as a black one, and disputes as to ownership usually result in a dead-lock. His abhorrence is a wig, which he considers a contrivance of the devil to cheat honest Indian industry. I would advise geologists on the plains to carry, along with their picks for breaking stones, a bottle of patent hair restorative. It is handy to have in one's pocket when his scalp is far on its way towards some Cheyenne war-pole. The scalping process, gentlemen, is the way in which savages levy and collect their poll-tax. Any person in search of romantic wigwams can have his wig warmed very thoroughly on the Arkansas or Texas borders. On the plains along the western border of Kansas, however, geologists can find a rich and comparatively safe field for exploration. It is doubtful if the savages ever wander there again.

"Of the Indian warrior on the plains we may well say, *requiescat in pace*, and may his pace be rapid towards either civilization or the happy hunting ground. History shows that his reaching the first has generally given him quick transit to the second. The white man's country has proved a spirit-land to Lo, whose noble soul seems to sink when the scalping-knife gathers any other rust than that of blood, and whose prophetic spirit takes flight at the prospect of exchanging boiled puppies and dirt for the white brother's pork and beans. Very often, however, it must be said, Lo's soul is gathered to his fathers by reason of its tabernacle being smitten too sorely by corn lightning."

As Gripe paused, the Professor took up the subject in a somewhat different strain:

"We have here in this State," remarked he, "a tribe which may well be called the Indian Ishmael. Its hand is and ever has been, since history took record of it, against its brethren, and its brethren's against it. I refer to the pitiful remnant of the once great Delawares. From the shores of the Atlantic

they have steadily retreated before civilization, marking their path westward by constant conflicts with other races of red men. The nation in its eastern forests once numbered thousands of warriors. Now, three hundred miserable survivors are hastening to extinction by way of their Kansas reservation.

"A number of their best warriors have been employed as scouts by the government, when administering well merited chastisement to other murdering bands. The Delawares, I have often thought, are like blood-hounds on the track of the savages of the plains. They take fierce delight in scanning the ground for trails and the lines of the streams for camps. There is something strangely unnatural in the wild eyes of these Ishmaelites, as they lead the destroyers against their race, and assist in blotting it from the face of the continent. Themselves so nearly joined to the nations known only in history, it is like a plague-stricken man pressing eagerly forward to carry the curse, before he dies, to the remainder of his people."

The valleys of the Saline, Solomon, and Smoky Hill, as we passed them in rapid succession, seemed very rich and were already thickly dotted with houses. This is one of the best cattle regions of the state, and vast herds of the long-horned Texan breed covered the prairies. We were informed that they often graze throughout the entire winter. As early in the spring as the grass starts sufficiently along the trail from Texas to Kansas, the stock dealers of the former State commence moving their immense herds over it. The cattle are driven slowly forward, feeding as they come, and reach the vicinity of the Kansas railroads when the grass is in good condition for their summer fattening. As many as five hundred thousand head of these long horns have been brought into the State in a single season. Some are sold on arrival and others kept until fall, when the choicest beeves are shipped East for packing purposes, or into Illinois for corn feeding. The latter is the case when they are destined eventually for consumption in Eastern markets, grass-fed beef lacking the solid fatness of the corn-fed, and suffering more by long transportation.

This very important trade in cattle, when fully developed, will probably be about equally divided between southern and central Kansas, each of which possesses its peculiar advantages for the business. While the valley of the Arkansas has longer grass, and more of it, the dealers in the Kaw region claim that their "feed" is the most nutritious. My own opinion, carefully formed, is that both sections are about equally good, and that the whole of western Kansas, with Colorado, will yet become the greatest stock-raising region of the world. The climate is peculiarly favorable. Two seasons out of three, on an average, cattle and sheep can graze during the winter, without any other cover than that of the ravines and the timber along the creeks.

The herders who manage these large bodies of cattle are a distinctive and peculiar class. We saw numbers of them scurrying along over the country on their wild, lean mustangs, in appearance a species of centaur, half horse, half man, with immense rattling spurs, tanned skin, and dare-devil, almost ferocious faces. After an extensive acquaintance with the genus Texan, and with all due allowance for the better portion of it, I must say, as my deliberate judgment, that it embraces a larger number of murderers and desperadoes than can be found elsewhere in any civilized nation. A majority of these herders would think no more of snuffing out a life than of snuffing out a candle. Texas, in her rude solitude, formerly stretched protecting arms to the evil doers from other states, and to her these classes flocked. She offered them not a city but a whole empire of refuge.

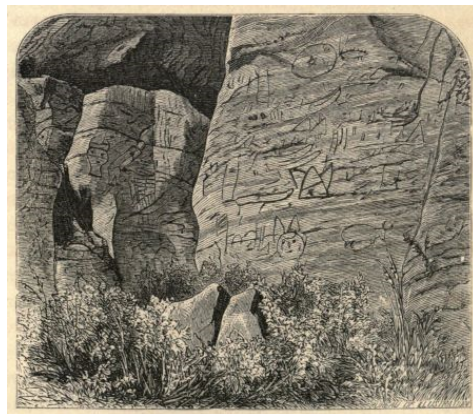
Just beyond Brookville, two hundred miles from the eastern border of Kansas, our road commenced ascending the Harker Bluffs, a series of sandstone ridges bordering on the plains.

On our left, Mushroom Rock was pointed out to us, a huge table of stone poised on a solitary pillar, and strangely resembling the plant from which it is named. As the professor informed us, we were on the eastern shore of a once vast inland ocean, the bed of which now forms the plains. Sachem thought the rock might be a petrified toad-stool, on a scale with the gigantic toads which hopped around in the mud of that age of monsters. The professor thought it was fashioned by the waters, in their eddyings and washings.

Subsequent examinations showed this entire region to be one of remarkable interest to the geologist. A few miles east of Mushroom Rock, near Bavaria, as we learned from the conductor, human foot-prints had been discovered in the sandstone. The professor, who had long ascribed to man an earlier existence upon earth than that given him by geology, was greatly excited, and at his earnest request, when the down train was met, we returned upon it to Bavaria.



MUSHROOM ROCK,
On Alum Creek, near Kansas Pacific R. R.—From a Photograph.



INDIAN ROCK, on Smoky Hill River, Kansas—From a Photograph.

That place we found to consist of two buildings, each serving the double purpose of house and store, the track running between them. Two sandstone blocks, each weighing several hundred pounds, lay in front of one of the stores, and there, sure enough, impressed clearly and deeply upon their surface were the tracks of human feet. They had been discovered by a Mr. J. B. Hamilton on the adjacent bluffs.

There was something weird and startling in this voice from those long-forgotten ages—ages no less remote than when the ridge we were standing upon was a portion of a lake shore. The man who trod those sands, the professor informed us, perished from the face of the earth countless ages before the oldest mummy was laid away in the caves of Egypt; and yet people looked at the shriveled Egyptian, and thought that they were holding converse with one who lived close upon the time of the oldest inhabitant. They wrested secrets from his tomb, and called them very ancient. And now this dweller beside the great lakes had lifted his feet out of the sand to kick the mummy from his pedestal of honor in the museum, as but a being of yesterday, in comparison with himself.

This discovery was soon afterward extensively noticed in the newspapers, and the specimens are now in the collection made by our party at Topeka. It is but fair to say that a difference of opinion exists in regard to these imprints. Many scientific men, among whom is Professor Cope, affirm that they must be the work of Indians long ago, as the age of the rock puts it beyond the era of man, while others attribute them to some lower order of animal, with a foot resembling the human one. For my own part, after careful examination, I accept our professor's theory, that the imprints are those of human feet. The surface of the stone has been decided by experts to be bent down, not chiseled out. Science not long ago ridiculed the primitive man, which it now accepts. It is not strange, therefore, that science should protest against its oldest inhabitant stepping out from ages in which it had hitherto forbidden him existence.

We also found on the rocks fine impressions of leaves, resembling those of the magnolia, and gathered a bushel of petrified walnuts and butternuts. There were no other indications whatever of trees, the whole country, as far as we could see, being a desolate prairie.

"Gentlemen," said the professor, "as surely as you stand on the shore of a great lake, which passed away in comparatively modern times, science stands on the brink of important revelations. We have here the evidence of the rocks that man existed on this earth when the vast level upon which you are about to enter was covered by its mass of water. The waves lapped against the Rocky Mountains on the west, and against the ridges on which you are standing, upon the east. From previous explorations, I can assure you that the buffalo now feed over a surface strewn with the remains of those monsters which inhabited the waters of the primitive world, and the grasses suck nutriment from the shells of centuries. Geology has held that man did not exist during the time of the great lakes. I assert that he did, gentlemen, and now an inhabitant of that period steps forward to confirm my position. This man walked barefooted, and yet the contour of one of the feet, so different in shape from that of any wild people's of the present day, shows that it had been confined by some stiff material, like our leather shoes. The appearance of the big toe is especially confirmatory of this. I would call your attention, gentlemen, to the block which contains companion impressions of the right and left foot. The latter is deep, and well defined, every toe being separate and perfect. The former is shallow, and spread out, with bulged-up ridges of stone between each toe. These are exactly the impressions your own feet would make, on such a shore to-day, were the sand under the right one to be of such a yielding nature that in moving you withdrew it quickly, and rested more heavily on the other, the material under which was firmer. Your right track would spread, the mud bulging up between the toes, and forcing them out of position, and the material nearly regaining its level, with a misshapen impression upon its surface.

"You will also perceive that the sand was already hardening into rock when our ancient friends walked over it. I use the plural because, if I may venture an opinion from this hasty examination, I should say the two tracks were those of a female, the single one that of a man. From the position of the blocks they were probably walking near each other at that precise time when the new rock was soft enough to receive an impression and hard enough to retain it. You will perceive that the surface of the stone is bent down into the cavities, as that of a loaf of half-raised bread would be should you press your hand into it."

Sachem thought that the couple might have been an ancient Paul and Virginia telling their love on the shores of the old-time lake.

The Professor continued: "You notice close beside the two imprints an oval, rather deep hole in the rock, precisely like that a boy often makes by whirling on one heel in the sand."

Sachem again interrupted: "Perhaps the maiden went through the fascinating evolution of revolving her body while her mind revolved the 'yes' or 'no' to her swain's question. It might be a refined way of telling her lover that she was well 'heeled,' and asking if he was."

The Professor very gravely replied: "In those days the world had not run to slang. If one of Noah's children had dared to address him with the modern salutation of 'governor,' the venerable

patriarch would have flung his child overboard from the ark. Taking your view of the case, Mr. Sachem, the whirl in the sand, which gave the lover his answer, is telling us to-day that same old story. And the coquette of that remote period caused the tell-tale walk upon the sand, which has proved the greatest geological discovery of modern times. I believe that it will be followed up and sustained by others equally as important, all tending to date man's birth thousands of years anterior to the time geology has hitherto assigned him an existence upon earth."

We spent many hours of the night in getting the rocks to the depot for shipment to Topeka, the few inhabitants of Bavaria assisting us. Soon after a westward train came along, and we were again in motion toward the home of the buffalo.

Before we slept the Professor gave us the following information: The vast plateau lying east of the Rocky Mountains, and which we were now approaching, was once covered by a series of great fresh-water lakes. At an early period these must have been connected with the sea, their waters then being quite salty, as is abundantly demonstrated by the remains of marine shells. During the time of the continental elevation these lakes were raised above the sea level, and their size very much diminished. Over the new land thus created, and surrounding these beautiful sheets of water, spread a vegetation at once so beautiful and so rich in growth that earth has now absolutely nothing with which to compare it. Amid these lovely pastures roved large herds of elephants, with the mastodon, rhinoceros, horse, and elk, while the streams and lakes abounded with fish. But the drainage toward the distant ocean continued, the water area diminished, the hot winds of the dry land drank up what remained of the lakes, and, in process of time, lo! the great grass-covered plains that we wander over delightedly to-day. What folly to suppose that such a land, so peculiarly fitted for man's enjoyment, should remain, through a long period of time, tenanted simply by brutes, and be given up to the human race only after its delightful characteristics had been entirely removed.

CHAPTER VIII

THE "GREAT AMERICAN DESERT"—ITS FOSSIL WEALTH—
AN ILLUSION DISPELLED—FIRES ACCORDING TO NOVELS AND
ACCORDING TO FACT—SENSATIONAL HEROES AND HEROINES—
PRAIRIE DOGS AND THEIR HABITS—HAWK AND DOG AND HAWK
AND CAT.

Next morning, as the first gray darts of dawn fell against our windows, Mr. Colon lifted up a sleepy head and gazed out. Then came that quick jerk into an upright position which one assumes when startled suddenly from a drowsy state to one of intense interest. The motion caused a similar one on the part of each of us, as if a sort of jumping-jack set of string nerves ran up our backs, and a man under the cars had pulled them all simultaneously.

We were on the great earth-ocean; upon either side, until striking against the shores of the horizon, the billows of buffalo-grass rolled away. It seemed as if the Mighty Ruler had looked upon these waters when the world was young, and said to them, "Ye waves, teeming with life, be ye earth, and remain in form as now, until the planet which bears you dissolves!" And so, frozen into stillness at the instant, what were then billows of water now stretch away billows of land into what seems to the traveler infinite distance, with the same long roll lapping against and upon distant *buttes* that the Atlantic has to-day in lashing its rock-ribbed coasts; and whenever man's busy industry cleaves asunder the surface, the depths, like those of ocean, give back their monsters and rare shells. Huge saurians, locked for a thousand centuries in their vice-like prison, rise up, not as of old to bask lazily in the sun, but to gape with huge jaws at the demons of lightning and steam rushing past, and to crack the stiff backs of savans with their forty feet of tail.

To the south of us, and distant several miles, was the line, scarcely visible, of the Smoky Hill, treeless and desolate; on the north, the upper Saline, equally barren. As difficult to distinguish as two brown threads dividing a brown carpet, they might have been easily overlooked, had we not known the streams were there, and, with the aid of our glasses, sought for their ill-defined banks.

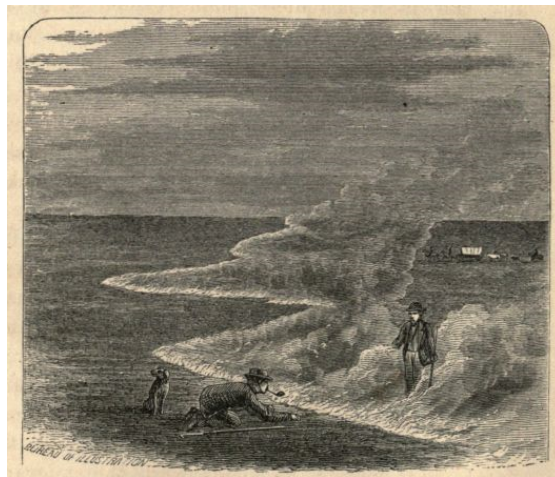
A curve in the road brought us suddenly and sharply face to face with the sun, just rising in the far-away east, and flashing its ruddy light over the vast plain around us. Its bright red rim first appeared, followed almost immediately by its round face, for all the world like a jolly old jack tar, with his broad brim coming above deck. It reminded me on the instant of our brackish friend, Captain Walrus; and in imagination I dreamily pictured, as coming after him, with the broadening daylight, a troop of Alaskans, their sleds laden with blubber.

The air was singularly clear and bracing, producing an effect upon a pair of healthy lungs like that felt on first reaching the sea-beach from a residence inland. An illusion which had followed many of us from boyhood was utterly dissipated by the early dawn in this strange land. This was not the fact that the "great American desert" of our school-days is not a desert at all, for this we had known for years; it related to those floods of flame and stifling smoke with which sensational writers of western novels are wont to sweep, as with a besom of destruction, the whole of prairie-land once at least in every story. Young America, wasting uncounted gallons of midnight oil in the perusal of peppery tales of border life, little suspects how slight the foundation upon which his favorite author has reared the whole vast superstructure of thrilling adventure.

The scene of these heart-rending narratives is usually laid in a boundless plain covered with tall grass, and the *dramatis personæ* are an indefinite number of buffalo and Indians, a painfully definite one of emigrants, two persons unhappy enough to possess a beautiful daughter, and a lover still more unhappy in endeavoring to acquire title, a rascally half-breed burning to prevent the latter feat, and a rare old plainsman specially brought into existence to "sarcumvent" him.



FIRE ON THE PLAINS, ACCORDING TO NOVELS.



FIRE ON THE PLAINS, AS IT IS.

At the most critical juncture the "waving sea of grass" usually takes fire, in an unaccountable manner—perhaps from the hot condition of the combatants, or the quantities of burning love and revenge which are recklessly scattered about. Multitudes of frightened buffalo and gay gazelles make the ground shake in getting out of the way, and the flames go to licking the clouds, while the emigrants go to licking the Indians. Although the fire can not be put out, one or the other, or possibly both, of the combatants are "put out" in short order.

Should the miserable parents succeed in getting their daughter safely through this peril, it is only because she is reserved for a further laceration of our feelings. The half-breed soon gets her, and the lover and rare old plainsman get on his track immediately afterward. And so on *ad libitum*.

We beg pardon for condensing into our sunrise reflections the material for a novel, such as has often run well through three hundred pages, and furnished with competencies half as many bill-posters. It is unpleasant to have one's traditionary heroes and heroines all knocked into pi before breakfast. It makes one crusty. Possibly, it may be their proper desert, but, if so, could be better digested after dinner.

The whole story would fail if the fire did, as novelists never like to have their heroines left out in the cold. But it is as impossible for flames as it is for human beings to exist on air alone. It is scarcely less so for them to feed, as they are supposed to do, on such scanty grass. The truth is, that

what the bison, with his close-cropping teeth, is enabled to grow fat on, makes but poor material for a first-class conflagration.

The grass which covers the great plains of the Far West is more like brown moss than what its name implies. Perhaps as good an idea of it as is possible to any one who has never seen it, may be obtained by imagining a great buffalo robe covering the ground. The hair would be about the color and nearly the length of the grass, at the season in question. In the spring the plains are fresh and green, but the grass cures rapidly on the stalk, and before the end of July is brown and ripe. It will then burn readily, but the fire is like that eating along a carpet, and by no means terrifying to either man or brute. The only occasion when it could possibly prove dangerous is when it reaches, as it sometimes does, some of the narrow valleys where the tall grass of the bottom grows; but even then, a run of a hundred yards will take one to buffalo grass and safety. This latter fact we learned from actual experience, later on our trip.

What a wild land we were in! A few puffs of a locomotive had transferred us from civilization to solitude itself. This was the "great American desert" which so caught our boyish eyes, in the days of our school geography and the long ago. A mysterious land with its wonderful record of savages and scouts, battles and hunts. We had a vague idea then that a sphynx and half a score of pyramids were located somewhere upon it, the sand covering its whole surface, when not engaged in some sort of simoon performance above. No trains of camels, with wonderful patience and marvelous internal reservoirs of water, dragged their weary way along, it was true; yet that animal's first cousin, the American mule, was there in numbers, as hardy and as useful as the other. Many an eastern mother, in the days of the gold fever, took down her boys discarded atlas, and finding the space on the continent marked "Great American Desert," followed with tearful eyes the course of the emigrant trains, and tried to fix the spot where the dear bones of her first-born lay bleaching.

As a people, we are better acquainted with the wastes of Egypt than with some parts of our own land. The plains have been considered the abode of hunger, thirst, and violence, and most of our party expected to meet these geniuses on the threshold of their domain, and, while Shamus should fight the first two with his skillet and camp-kettles to war against the third with rifle and hunting-knife.

But in the scene around us there was nothing terrifying in the least degree. The sun had risen with a clear highway before him, and no clouds to entangle his chariot wheels. He was mellow at this early hour, and scattered down his light and warmth liberally. Wherever the soil was turned up by the track, we discovered it to be strong and deep, and capable of producing abundant crops of resin weeds and sunflowers, which with farmers is a written certificate, in the "language of flowers," of good character.

We thundered through many thriving cities of prairie dogs, the inhabitants of which seemed all out of doors, and engaged in tail-bearing from house to house. The principal occupations of this animal appears to be two; first, barking like a squirrel, and second, jerking the caudal appendage, which operations synchronize with remarkable exactitude. One single cord seems to operate both extremities of the little body at once. It could no more open its mouth without twitching its tail, than a single-thread Jack could bow its head without lifting its legs. Those nearest would look pertly at us for a moment, and then dive head foremost into their holes. The tail would hardly disappear before the head would take its place and, peering out, scrutinize us with twinkling eyes, and chatter away in concert with its neighbors, with an effect which reminded me of a forest of monkeys suddenly disturbed.

Sachem declared that they must all be females, for no sooner had one been frightened into the house than it poked its head out again to see what was the matter. "That sex would risk life at any time to know what was up."

The professor, with a more practical turn, told us some of the quaint little animal's habits. "Why it is called a dog," said he, "I do not know. Neither in bark, form, or life, is there any resemblance. It is carnivorous, herbivorous, and abstemious from water, requiring no other fluids than those obtained

by eating roots. Its villages are often far removed from water, and when tamed it never seems to desire the latter, though it may acquire a taste for milk. It partakes of meats and vegetables with apparently equal relish. It is easily captured by pouring two or three buckets of water down the hole, when it emerges looking somewhat like a half-drowned rat. The prairie dog is the head of the original 'happy family.' It was formerly affirmed, even in works of natural history, that a miniature evidence of the millennium existed in the home of this little animal. There the rattlesnake, the owl, and the dog were supposed to lie down together, and such is still the general belief. It was known that the bird and the reptile lived in these villages with the dog, and science set them down as honored guests, instead of robbers and murderers, as they really are."

On our trip we frequently killed snakes in these villages which were distended with dogs recently swallowed. The owls feed on the younger members of the household, and the old dogs, except when lingering for love of their young, are not long in abandoning a habitation when snakes and owls take possession of it. The latter having two votes, and the owner but one (female suffrage not being acknowledged among the brutes), it is a "happy family," on democratic principles of the strictest sort.

We have also repeatedly noticed the dogs busily engaged in filling up a hole quite to the mouth with dirt, and have been led to believe that in this manner they occasionally revenge themselves upon their enemies, perhaps when the latter are gorged with tender puppies, by burying them alive. An old scout once told us that this filling up process occurred whenever one of their community was dead in his house, but as the statement was only conjectural, we prefer the other theory.

While we were this day steaming through one village an incident occurred showing that these animals have yet another active enemy. Startled by the cars, the dogs were scampering in all directions, when a powerful chicken-hawk shot down among them with such wonderful rapidity of flight that his shadow, which fell like that from a flying fragment of cloud, scarcely seemed to reach the earth before him. Some hundreds of the little brown fellows were running for dear life, and plunging wildly into their holes without any manifestations of their usual curiosity. The hawk's shadow fell on one fat, burgher-like dog, perhaps the mayor of the town, and in an instant the robber of the air was over him and the talons fastened in his back. Then the bird of prey beat heavily with its pinions, rising a few feet, but, finding the prize too heavy, came down. He was evidently frightened at the noise of the cars and we hoped the prisoner would escape. But the bird, clutching firmly for an instant the animal in its talons, drew back his head to give force to the blow, and down clashed the hooked beak into one of the victim's eyes. A sharp pull, and the eyeball was plucked out. Back went the beak a second time, and the remaining eye was torn from its socket, and the sightless body was then left squirming on the ground, while the hawk flew hastily away a short distance, evidently to return when we had passed on. It was pitiful to see the dog raise up on its haunches and for an instant sit facing us with its empty sockets, then make two or three short runs to find a path, in its sudden darkness, to some hole of refuge, but fruitlessly, of course.

A few days afterward, at Hays City, we witnessed an affair in which the air-pirate got worsted. While sitting before the office of the village doctor, a powerful hawk pounced upon his favorite kitten, which lay asleep on the grass, and started off with it. The two had reached an elevation of fifty feet, when puss recovered from her surprise and went to work for liberty. She had always been especially addicted to dining on birds, and the sensation of being carried off by one excited the feline mind to astonishment and wrath. Twisting herself like a weasel her claws came uppermost, and to our straining gaze there was a sight presented very much as if a feather-bed had been ripped open. The surprised hawk had evidently received new light on the subject; it let go on the instant, and went off with the appearance of a badly plucked goose, while the cat came safely to earth and sought the nearest way home.

CHAPTER IX

WE SEE BUFFALO—ARRIVAL AT HAYS—GENERAL SHERIDAN
AT THE FORT—INDIAN MURDERS—BLOOD-CHRISTENING OF THE
PACIFIC RAILROAD—SURPRISED BY A BUFFALO HERD—A BUFFALO
BULL IN A QUANDARY—GENTLE ZEPHYRS—HOW A CIRCUS WENT
OFF—BOLOGNA TO LEAN ON—A CALL UPON SHERIDAN.

As we passed out of the dog village, the engine gave several short, sharp whistles, and numberless heads were at once thrust out to ascertain the cause. "Buffalo!" was the cry, and with this there was a rush to the windows for a view of the noblest of American game. Even sleepy elderly gentlemen jostled rudely, and Sachem forgot his liver so far as to crowd into a favorable position beside a young woman.

"There they go!" "Oh, my, what monsters!" "What beards!" "What horns!" "Beats a steeplechase!" "Uncanny beasts, lookin' and gangin' like Nick!" "Sure, they're going home from a devil's wake!" and similar ejaculations filled the car, as they do a race-stand when the horses are off. Two huge bulls had crossed just ahead of the engine, and one of them, apparently deeming escape impossible, was standing at bay close to the track, head down for a charge. He was furious with terror, the hissing steam and cow-catcher having been close at his heels for a hundred yards. As we flew past he was immediately under our windows, and we were obliged to look down to get a view of his immense body, with the back curving up gradually from the tail into an uncouth hump over the fore shoulders.

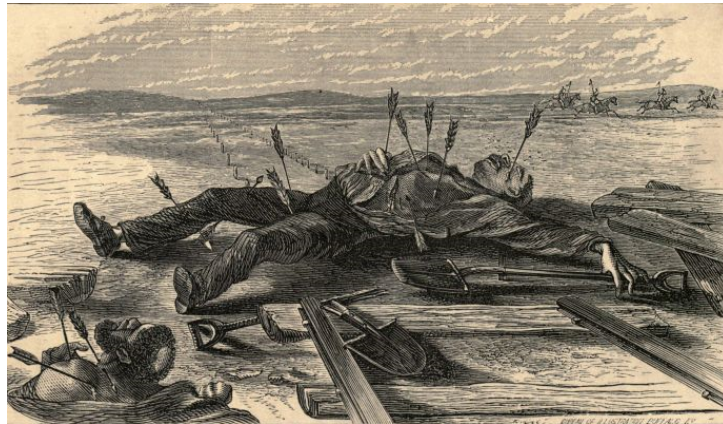
These two solitary old fellows were the only buffalo we saw from the train, the herds at large having not yet commenced their southern journey. At certain seasons, however, they cover the plains on each side of the road for fifty or sixty miles in countless multitudes. These wild cattle of Uncle Samuel's, if called upon, could supply the whole Yankee nation with meat for an indefinite period.

About noon we arrived at Hays City, two hundred and eighty miles from the eastern border of the State, and eighty miles out upon the plains. A stream tolerably well timbered, known as Big Creek, runs along the southern edge of the town, and just across it lies Fort Hays, town and fort being less than a mile apart.

The post possessed considerable military importance, being the base of operations for the Indian country. We found Sheridan there, an officer who won his fame gallantly and on the gallop. During the summer our red brethren had been gathering a harvest of scalps, and, in return, our army was now preparing to gather in the gentle savage.

We had read accounts in the newspapers, some time before, of the capture of Fort Wallace and of attacks on military posts. Such stories were not only untrue, but exceedingly ridiculous as well. Lo is not sound on the assault question. His chivalrous soul warms, however, when some forlorn Fenian, with spade on shoulder and thoughts far off with Biddy in Erin's Isle, crosses his vision. Being satisfied that Patrick has no arms, his only defense being utter harmlessness, and well knowing that the sight of a painted skin, rendered sleek by boiled dog's meat, will make him frantic with terror, the soul of the noble savage expands. No more shall the spade, held so jauntily, throw Kansas soil on the bed of the Pacific Railroad; and the scalp, yet tingling with the boiling of incipient Fenian revolutions underneath, on the pole of a distant wigwam will soon gladden the eyes of the traditionally beautiful Indian bride, as with dirty hands she throws tender puppies into the pot for her warrior's feast. The savage hand, crimson since childhood, descends with defiant ring upon the tawny breast, and, with a cry of, "Me big Indian, ha, whoop!" down sweeps Lo upon the defenseless Hibernian. A startled stare, a shriek of wild agony, a hurried prayer to "our Mary mother," and Erin's son christens those far-off points of the Pacific Railroad with his blood. A rapid circle of hunting-knife and the scalp

is lifted, a few twangs of the bow fills the body with arrows, there is a rapid vault into the saddle, and a mutilated corpse, with feathered tips, like pins in a cushion, dotting its surface, alone remains to tell the tale of horror.



"And Erin's son christens those far-off points of the Pacific Railroad with his blood."

Blood had been every-where on the railroad, which reached across the plains like a steel serpent spotted with red. There was now a cessation of hostilities, and Indian agents were reported to be on the way from Washington to pacify the tribes. As they had been a long time in coming, the inference was irresistible that the popping of champagne corks was a much more pleasant experience than that of Indian guns would have been. The harvest of scalps had reached high noon some time before. Far off, south of the Arkansas, the savages had their home, and from thence, like baleful will-o'-the-wisps, they would suddenly flash out, and then flash back when pursued, and be lost in those remote regions. Lately, United States troops have been so placed that the Indian villages may be struck, if necessary, and retaliation had; and this, together with the pacificatory efforts of the Quaker agents, is doing much to bring about a condition of things which promises permanent peace.

Here our party was at Hays, the objective point of our journey, and our base of operations against the treasures of the past and present, which alike covered the country around. This little town is in the midst of the great buffalo range. Away upon every side of it stretch those vast plains where the short, crisp grass curls to the ridges, like an African's kinky hair to his skull. Bison and wild horse, antelope and wolf, for weeks were now to be our neighbors, appearing and vanishing over the great expanse like large and small piratical crafts on an ocean. We were kindly received at the Big Creek Land Company's office, on the outskirts of the town, and there deposited our guns and baggage. Our horses were expected on the morrow.

Twilight found us, after a busy afternoon, sitting around the office door, with that tired feeling which a traveler has when mind and body are equally exhausted. Our very tongues were silent, those useful members having wagged until even they were grateful for the rest. The hour of dusk, of all others, is the time for musing, and almost involuntarily our minds wandered back a twelve-month, when the plains were a solitude. No railroad, no houses, no tokens of civilization save only a few solitary posts, garrisoned with corporal's guards, and surrounded by red fiends thirsty for blood. Such was the picture then; now, the clangor of a city echoed through Big Creek Valley.

While wondering at the change, away on the hills to our right there rose a thundering tread, like the marching of a mighty multitude. Shamus, who sat directly facing the hill, saw something which chilled the Dobeen blood, and caused that noble Irishman to plunge behind us. Mr. Colon, who had given a startled turn of the head over his right shoulder, exclaimed, "Bless me, what's that?" The glance of Muggs froze that Briton so completely that he failed to tell us of ever having seen a more

"hextraordinary thing in Hingland." I am in doubt whether even our grave professor did not imagine for the moment that the mammalian age was taking a tilt at us.

Gathering twilight had magnified what in broad day would have been an apparition sufficiently startling to any new arrival in Buffalo Land. A long line of black, shaggy forms was standing on the crest and looking down upon us. It had come forward like the rush of a hungry wave, and now remained as one uplifted, dark and motionless. In bold relief against the horizon stood an array of colossal figures, all bristling with sharp points, which at first sight seemed lances, but at the second resolved into horns. Then it dawned upon our minds that a herd of the great American bison stood before us. What a grateful reduction of lumps in more than one throat, and how the air ran riot in lately congealed lungs!

Dobeen declared he thought the professor's "ghosts of the centuries" had been looking down upon us.

One old fellow, evidently a leader in Buffalo Land, with long patriarchial beard and shaggy forehead, remained in front, his head upraised. His whole attitude bespoke intense astonishment. For years this had been their favorite path between Arkansas and the Platte. Big Creek's green valley had given succulent grasses to old and young of the bison tribe from time immemorial. Every hollow had its traditions of fierce wolf fights and Indian ambushades, and many a stout bull could remember the exact spot where his charge had rescued a mother and her young from the hungry teeth of starving timber wolves. Every wallow, tree, and sheltering ravine were sacred in the traditions of Buffalo Land. The petrified bones of ancestors who fell to sleep there a thousand years before testified to purity of bison blood and pedigree.

Now all this was changed. Rushing toward their loved valley, they found themselves in the suburbs of a town. Yells of red man and wolf were never so horrible as that of the demon flashing along the valley's bed. A great iron path lay at their feet, barring them back into the wilderness. Slowly the shaggy monarch shook his head, as if in doubt whether this were a vision or not; then whirling suddenly, perhaps indignantly, he turned away and disappeared behind the ridge, and the bison multitude followed.

Our horses arrived the next morning all safe, excepting a few skin bruises, the steed *Cynocephalus*, however, being a trifle stiffer than usual, from the motion of the cars. When they were trotted out for inspection, by some hostlers whom we had hired that morning for our trip, the inhabitants must have considered the sight the next best thing to a circus.

Apropos of circuses, we learned that one had exhibited for the first and only time on the plains a few months before. In that country, dear reader, *Æolus* has a habit of loafing around with some of his sacks in which young whirlwinds are put up ready for use. One of these is liable to be shaken out at any moment, and the first intimation afforded you that the spirit which feeds on trees and fences is loose, is when it snatches your hat, and begins flinging dust and pebbles in your eyes. But to return to our circus performance. For awhile all passed off admirably. The big tent swallowed the multitude, and it in turn swallowed the jokes of the clown, older, of course, than himself. In the customary little tent the living skeleton embodied Sidney Smith's wish and sat cooling in his bones, while the learned pig and monkey danced to the melodious accompaniment of the hand-organ.



GENTLE ZEPHYRS—"GOING OFF WITHOUT A DRAWBACK.

Suddenly there was a clatter of poles, and two canvass clouds flew out of sight like balloons. The living skeleton found himself on a distant ridge, with the wind whistling among his ribs, while the monkey performed somersaults which would have astonished the original Cynocephalus. The pig meanwhile found refuge behind the organ, which the hurricane, with a better ear for music than man, refused to turn.

"Mademoiselle Zavenowski, the beautiful leading equestrienne of the world," just preparing to jump through a hoop, went through her own with a whirl, and stood upon the plains feeding the hungry storm with her charms. The graceful young rider, lately perforating hearts with the kisses she flung at them, in a trice had become a maiden of fifty, noticeably the worse for wear.

An eye-witness, in describing the scene to us, said the circus went off without a single drawback. It was as if a ton of gunpowder had been fired under the ring. Just as the clown was rubbing his leg, as the result of calling the sensitive ring-master a fool (a sham suffering, though for truth's sake), there was a sharp crack, and the establishment dissolved. High in air went hats and bonnets, like fragments shot out of a volcano. The spirits of zephyr-land carried off uncounted hundreds of tiles, both military and civil, and we desire to place it upon record that should a future missionary, in some remote northern tribe, find traditions of a time when the sky rained hats, they may all be accounted for on purely scientific grounds.

Much property was lost, but no lives. The immediate results were a bankrupt showman and a run on liniments and sticking-plaster.

Our first hunt was to be on the Saline, which comes down from the west about fifteen miles north of Hays City.

Before starting, we carefully overhauled our entire outfit. For a long, busy day nothing was thought of save the cleaning of guns, the oiling of straps, and the examination of saddles, with sundry additions to wardrobe and larder. Shamus became a mighty man among grocery-keepers, and could scarcely have been more popular had he been an Indian supply agent. The inventory which he gave us of his purchases comprised twelve cans of condensed milk, with coffee, tea, and sugar, in proportion; several pounds each of butter, bacon, and crackers; a few loaves of bread, two sacks of flour, some pickles, and a sufficient number of tin-plates, cups, and spoons. To these he subsequently added a half-dozen hams and something like fifty yards of Bologna sausage, which he told us were for use when we should tire of fresh meat. Sachem entered protest, declaring that sausage and ham, in a country full of game, reflected upon us.



"LOOKED LIKE THE END OF A TAIL."



THE RARE OLD PLAINSMAN OF THE NOVELS.

Of course, we found use for every item of the above, and especially for the Bologna. If one can feel satisfied in his own mind as to what portion of the brute creation is entering into him, a half-yard of Bologna, tied to the saddle, stays the stomach wonderfully on an all day's ride. It is so handy to reach it, while trotting along, and with one's hunting-knife cut off a few inches for immediate consumption. Semi-Colon, however, who was a youth of delicate stomach, sickened on his ration one day, because he found something in it which, he said, looked like the end of a tail. It is a debatable question, to my mind, whether Satan, among his many ways of entering into man, does not occasionally do so in the folds of Bologna sausage. Certain it is that, after such repast, one often feels like Old Nick, and woe be to the man at any time who is at all dyspeptic. All the forces of one's gastric juices may then prove insufficient to wage successful battle with the evil genius which rends him.

Our outfit, as regards transportation, consisted of the animals heretofore mentioned, and two teams which we hired at Hays, for the baggage and commissary supplies.

The evening before our departure we rode over to the fort and called upon General Sheridan. "Little Phil" had pitched his camp on the bank of Big Creek, a short distance below the fort, preferring a soldier's life in the tent to the more comfortable officer's quarters. This we thought eminently characteristic of the man. He is an accumulation of tremendous energy in small compass, a sort of embodied nitro-glycerine, but dangerous only to his enemies. Famous principally as a cavalry leader, because Providence flung him into the saddle and started him off at a gallop, had his destiny been infantry, he would have led it to victory on the run. And now, officer after officer having got sadly

tangled in the Indian web, which was weaving its strong threads over so fair a portion of our land, Sheridan was sent forward to cut his way through it.

The camp was a pretty picture with its line of white tents, the timber along the creek for a background, and the solemn, apparently illimitable plains stretching away to the horizon in front. Taken altogether, it looked more like the comfortable nooning spot of a cavalry scout than the quarters of a famous General. Our chieftain stood in front of the center tent, with a few staff-officers lounging near by, his short, thick-set figure and firm head giving us somehow the idea of a small, sinewy lion.

We found the General thoroughly conversant with the difficult task to which he had been called. "Place the Indians on reservations," he said, "under their own chiefs, with an honest white superintendency. Let the civil law reign on the reservation, military law away from it, every Indian found by the troops off from his proper limits to be treated as an outlaw." It seemed to me that in a few brief sentences this mapped out a successful Indian policy, part of which indeed has since been adopted, and the remainder may yet be.

When speaking of late savageries on the plains the eyes of "Little Phil" glittered wickedly. In one case, on Spillman's Creek, a band of Cheyennes had thrust a rusty sword into the body of a woman with child, piercing alike mother and offspring, and, giving it a fiendish twist, left the weapon in her body, the poor woman being found by our soldiers yet living.

"I believe it possible," said Sheridan, "at once and forever to stop these terrible crimes." As he spoke, however, we saw what he apparently did not, a long string of red tape, of which one end was pinned to his official coat-tail, while the other remained in the hands of the Department at Washington. Soon after, as Sheridan pushed forward, the Washington end twitched vigorously. He managed, however, with his right arm, Custer, to deal a sledge-hammer blow, which broke to fragments the Cheyenne Black-kettle and his band. Whether or not that band had been guilty of the recent murders, the property of the slain was found in their possession, and the terrible punishment caused the residue of the tribe to sue for peace. It was the first time for years that the war spirit had placed any horrors at their doors, and that one terrible lesson prepared the savage mind for the advent of peace commissioners.

Our brief conference ended, the General bade us good day, and wished us a pleasant experience. Scarcely had we got beyond his tents, however, when we were overtaken by a decidedly unpleasant one. On their way to water, a troop of mules stampeded, and passing us in a cloud of dust, our brutes took bits in their teeth, and joined company. Happily, the run was a short one to the creek, where those of us who had not fallen off before managed to do so then. Poor Gripe was the only person injured, suffering the fracture of a rib, which necessitated his return to Topeka, so that we did not see him again until some months afterward, when we met him on the Solomon.

CHAPTER X

HAYS CITY BY LAMP-LIGHT—THE SANTA FE TRADE—BULL-WHACKERS—MEXICANS—SABBATH ON THE PLAINS—THE DARK AGES—WILD BILL AND BUFFALO BILL—OFF FOR THE SALINE—DOBEEN'S GHOST-STORY—AN ADVENTURE WITH INDIANS—MEXICAN CANNONADE—A RUNAWAY.

Hays City by lamp-light was remarkably lively and not very moral. The streets blazed with the reflection from saloons, and a glance within showed floors crowded with dancers, the gaily dressed women striving to hide with ribbons and paint the terrible lines which that grim artist, Dissipation, loves to draw upon such faces. With a heartless humor he daubs the noses of the sterner sex a cherry red, but paints under the once bright eyes of woman a shade dark as the night in the cave of despair. To the music of violin and stamping of feet, the dance went on, and we saw in the giddy maze old men who must have been pirouetting on the very edge of their graves.

Being then the depot for the great Santa Fe trade, the town was crowded with Mexicans and speculators. Large warehouses along the track were stored with wool awaiting shipment east, and with merchandise to be taken back with the returning wagons. These latter are of immense size, and, from this circumstance, are sometimes called "prairie schooners;" and, in truth, when a train of them is winding its way over the plains, the white covers flecking its surface like sails, the sight is not unlike a fleet coming into port. Oxen and mules are both used. When the former, the drivers rejoice in the title of "bull-whackers," and the crack of their whips, as loud as the report of a rifle, is something tremendous.

On the day of our arrival at Hays City, one of these festive individuals noticed Dobeen gazing, with open mouth, and back towards him, at some object across the street, and took the opportunity to crack his lash within an inch of the Irishman's spine. The effect was ludicrous; Shamus came in on the run to have a ball extracted from his back!

These Mexicans who come through with the ox-trains are a very degraded race, dark, dirty, and dismal. In appearance, they much resemble animated bundles of rags, walking off with heads of charcoal. Personal bravery is not one of their striking characteristics; indeed, they often run away when to stand still would seem to an American the only safe course possible. We were desirous of sending back to Hays City some of the proceeds of our excursion for shipment to friends at St. Louis and Chicago, and therefore hired two of the Mexican teamsters to go as far as the Saline, and return with the fruits of our prowess. For this service, which would occupy about four days, they were to receive twenty-five dollars each.

The morrow was Sunday, and came to us, as nine-tenths of the mornings on the plains did afterward, clear and bracing. Compared with the previous evening, the little town was very quiet. There was no stir in the streets, although later in the morning a few of the last night's carousers came out of doors, rubbing their sleepy eyes, and slunk around town for the remainder of the day. All nature was calm and beautiful; it almost seemed as if we might hear the chime of Sabbath bells float to us from somewhere in the depths around.

One of our sea legends recites that ship wrecked bells, fallen from the society of men to that of mermaids, are straightway hung on coral steeples, where, when storms roar around the rocks above, they toll for the deaths of the mariners. Was it impossible, we mused, that ancient mariners, with whole cargoes of bells, went down on this inland sea centuries before Rome howled? The earth around us might be as full of musical tongues as of saurians, and only awaiting the savan's spade and sympathetic touch to give their dumb eloquence voice. If the people of those days were navigators, surely they might also have been men of metal. In the far-away past existed numerous arts which

baffle modern ingenuity. Stones were lifted at sight of which our engineers stand dismayed. Bodies were embalmed with a skill and perfection which our medical faculty admire, but have scarcely even essayed to imitate. Is it impossible that vessels plowed this ancient ocean with a speed which would have left our Cunarders out of sight? If human spirits freed from earth take cognizance of following generations, how those old captains must have laughed when Fulton boarded his wheezing experiment to paddle up the Hudson! And if our doctor's Darwinian-Pythagorean theory were correct, Fulton's spirit might have brought the crude idea from some ancient stoker.

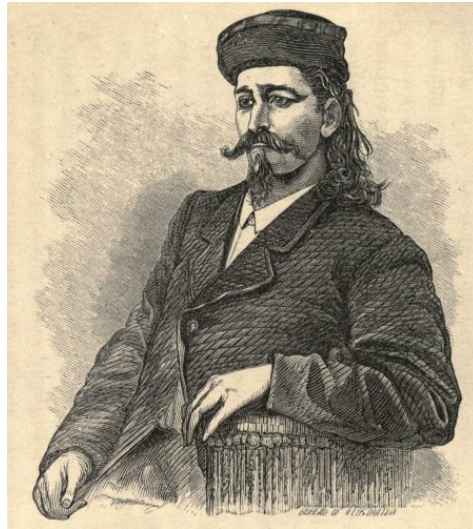
But while we were thus speculating and giving free reins to Fancy's most erratic moods, the chaplain arrived from the fort, and mounting the freight platform, read the Episcopal morning service. A crowd gathered around, and a voice from the past whispering in their ears, a few bowed their heads during prayer. A drunkard went brawling by, with a sidelong glance and the leering look of eyes whose watery lids seemed making vain efforts to quench the fiery balls. How it grated on one's feelings! In a land so eloquent with voices of the mighty past, it seemed as if even instinct would cause the knee to bow in homage before its Maker.

Monday was our day of final preparation, and we commenced it by making the acquaintance of those two celebrated characters, Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill, or, more correctly, William Hickock and William Cody. The former was acting as sheriff of the town, and the latter we engaged as our guide to the Saline.

Wild Bill made his *entree* into one court of the temple of fame some years since through Harper's Magazine. Since then his name has become a household word to residents along the Kansas frontier. We found him very quiet and gentlemanly, and not at all the reckless fellow we had supposed. His form won our admiration—the shoulders of a Hercules with the waist of a girl. Much has been written about Wild Bill that is pure fiction. I do not believe, for example, that he could hit a nickel across the street with a pistol-ball, any more than an Indian could do so with an arrow. These feats belong to romance. Bill is wonderfully handy with his pistols, however. He then carried two of them, and while we were at Hays snuffed a man's life out with one; but this was done in his capacity of officer. Two rowdies devoted their energies to brewing a riot, and defied arrest until, at Bill's first shot, one fell dead, and the other threw up his arms in token of submission. During his life time Bill has probably killed his baker's dozen of men, but he has never, I believe, been known as the aggressor. To the people of Hays he was a valuable officer, making arrests when and where none other dare attempt it. His power lies in the wonderful quickness with which he draws a pistol and takes his aim. These first shots, however, can not always last. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword;" and living as he does by the pistol, Bill will certainly die by it, unless he abandons the frontier.



BUFFALO BILL—From a Photograph.



WILD BILL—From a Photograph.

Only a short time after we left Hays two soldiers attempted his life. Attacked unexpectedly, Bill was knocked down and the muzzle of a musket placed against his forehead, but before it could be discharged the ready pistol was drawn and the two soldiers fell down, one dead, the other badly wounded. Their companions clamored for revenge, and Bill changed his base. He afterward became marshal of the town of Abilene, where he signalized himself by carrying a refractory councilman on his shoulders to the council-chamber. A few months later some drunken Texans attempted a riot, and one of them, a noted gambler, commenced firing on the marshal. The latter returned the fire, shooting not only the gambler, but one of his own friends, who, in the gloom of the evening, was hurrying to his aid. Bill paid the expenses of the latter's funeral, which on the frontier is considered the proper and delicate way of consoling the widow whenever such little accidents occur.

The Professor took occasion, before parting with Wild William, to administer some excellent advice, urging him especially, if he wished to die in his bed, to abandon the pistol and seize upon the plow-share. His reputation as Union scout, guide for the Indian country, and sheriff of frontier towns, our leader said, was a sufficient competency of fame to justify his retirement upon it. In this opinion the public will certainly coincide.

Buffalo Bill was to be our guide. He informed us that Wild Bill was his cousin. Cody is spare and wiry in figure, admirably versed in plain lore, and altogether the best guide I ever saw. The mysterious plain is a book that he knows by heart. He crossed it twice as teamster, while a mere boy, and has spent the greater part of his life on it since. He led us over its surface on starless nights, when the shadow of the blackness above hid our horses and the earth, and though many a time with no trail to follow and on the very mid-ocean of the expanse, he never made a failure. Buffalo Bill has since figured in one of Buntline's Indian romances. We award him the credit of being a good scout and most excellent guide; but the fact that he can slaughter buffalo is by no means remarkable, since the American bison is dangerous game only to amateurs.

We were off early on Tuesday morning for the Saline, our course toward which lay before us a little west of north, the citizens turning out to see us start. We had just parted from Gripe, who went East on the first train to get his ribs healed. "To think, gentlemen," said he, "that I should have escaped rebel bullets and Indian atrocities, only to have my ribs cracked at last by a stampede of mules!" Poor Gripe's farewell reminded me strongly of the old saying about the ruling passion strong in death. As he stood on the platform, with one hand against his aching side, he could not refrain from waving a courtly adieu with the other, and bowing himself from our presence, into the car, as if leaving the stage after a political speech.

We were sorry to lose our friend, and this, together with the thought of the weeks of uncertainties and anxieties which lay before us, made our exit from Hays rather a solemn affair. Even Tammany Sachem's face was ironed out so completely that not a smile wrinkled it. Dobeen had loaded one wagon with culinary weapons, and now sat among his pots and pans, evidently ill at ease and wishing himself doing any thing else rather than about to plunge further into the wilderness.

When about to mount Cynocephalus, Semi's feelings were wounded by a depraved urchin who suggested, "You'd better fust knock that fly off, Boss. Both on ye 'll be too much for the hoss!" Fortunately, perhaps, for our feelings, the remainder of the inhabitants were so civil that further criticisms on our outfit, though they may have been ripe at their tongues' end, were carefully repressed.

Moving out over the divide above town the Professor noticed the general depression of the party, and forthwith began philosophising.

"My friends," said he, "had the feelings which explorers suffer, when fairly launched, been allowed to be present during the days of preparation, science and discovery would be in their infancy. Enthusiasm bridges the first obstacles to an undertaking, but others roll on and block the explorer's path, and the spirit which has got him into the difficulty momentarily deserts him. If properly courted, however, she returns, and meanwhile the traveler is afforded the opportunity of looking, through matter-of-fact spectacles, along his future journey. What he thought pebbles reveal themselves as hills, and what he had marked on his chart as hills develop into mountains. These he must recognize and examine with all the resolution he can summon, and he will be the more able to climb them from expecting to do so. Right here is the critical point in his journey. Numerous cross-roads branch off—some right, others left, but all with a brighter prospect down them. Perhaps on one, a wife and children stand at the door of their home, beckoning him. The garden that his own hand planted blooms in a background of flowers, while the path he has now chosen sparkles with winter snow. He knows, however, that beyond these, perhaps amid sterile mountains, are the precious diamonds he seeks.

"It is wise that, where these roads branch off—some to castles of indolence, others to comfortable homes and moderate exertion—the man should be left alone for a time and allowed to survey the rough path before him, with all the blinding glamour of enthusiasm subdued by the light of truth, and with a full knowledge of all the stumbling blocks which lie before him. If he then thumbs the edge of his hunting-knife, examines his Henry rifle, and presses forward, the metal is there, and from that time onward you may at any time learn of his whereabouts by inquiring at the temple of fame."

Sachem interrupted the Professor to remonstrate at the girding of loins being left out. He had always been used to the girding in similar discourses, and considered that loins were in much more general use than Henry rifles.

And now Shamus, from his perch on the pans, suddenly broke in: "Faith, Professor, your enthusiasm once brought me sore trouble. It got me into a haunted house, when the clock was strikin' midnight, and my legs were sore put to it to get me out fast enough. Ye see, I bet a pig with my next cousin that I would stay all night in an old house full of spirits. The master and his house-keeper had been murdered in the tenantry riots, and the boys that did the business, they swung for it soon afterward. And now, there was a regular barricadin' and attackin' going on those nights ever since. While I was lookin' at the old clock, and thinkin' of the pig I'd drag home in the morning, I must have damed a little. He was as likely a pig as yez ever saw, and I was listenin' proudly to his swate cries as I carried him from the sty, and feelin' full enough of enthusiasm to stay there a hundred years. Just then there was a rustlin' in front, and I opened my eyes wide, and there stood the old house-keeper leanin' against the shaky clock, with her ear to its yellow face, and lookin' straight behind me to where I could feel the master was sittin'. There was an awful light in her eyes, and I thought I heard her say—any way, I knew she was sayin' it—'Hark, Sir Donald, they're comin', but the soldiers will be here, too, at twelve.' An' then there was a sort of shudder in the old clock and it commenced a wheezin' an' bangin' away, a tryin' to get through the strokes of twelve, as it did twenty years before. But it hadn't got out half, when I heard the crowd outside scrapin' against the window sill. An' then there come

a report, and the room was filled with smoke, an' somethin' hit the back of my head. How I got out I don't know, but when I come to myself I was running for dear life across the common. I have the scar of the ghost's bullet ever since. See here, yez can see it for yourselves." And taking off his cap, Shamus showed us a bald spot about the size of a silver dollar on the back of his cranium.

"And what became of the pig?" asked Mr. Colon quietly.

"Faith, an' my cousin carried him home next morning," replied Shamus, with a regretful sigh; "and lady Dobeen, bless her sowl, never forgot to tell me of that to her dying day. We were needin' the bacon them times."

Sachem, who delighted to spoil our cook's stories, declared that, to gain a pig, it was worth the cousin's while to fire an old musket through the window over a drunken Irishman inside. Still that did not excuse him for his carelessness; he should have seen that the wad flew higher.

What Dobeen's answer might have been will never be known; for, just at that moment, the attention of the entire party was suddenly directed to a dark mass of moving objects away off upon our right, a mile distant at least, and to our untrained eyes entirely unrecognizable. The Mexicans, however, pronounced them buffaloes. Whether thinking to vindicate his reputation for personal courage, or whether simply from love of excitement, is not exactly clear, but Dobeen eagerly requested permission to pursue them, and as he would, *ex officio*, be debarred the pleasure of future sport, consent was given. This was done the more readily, because we knew that Shamus, while as inexperienced in the chase as any of us, was also a wretched rider; for, although constantly boasting of the tournaments he had been engaged in, we all indorsed Sachem's opinion, that, if ever connected with such an affair at all, it must have been in holding a horse, not riding one.

It was worthy of note that every one of the party was as eager for the chase as Shamus, and yet that personage was allowed to ride off alone. Mr. Colon, it is true, essayed to join his company, but after going a hundred yards or so, suddenly changed his mind and came back. Our maiden efforts in buffalo hunting promised such modesty as to refuse a public appearance, unless together.

Our cook had been instructed by the guide to avail himself of the ravines, and after getting as near the herd as possible, then spur rapidly up to it. He went off at a gallop, his solid body flying clear of the saddle whenever the donkey's feet struck ground, and soon disappeared in a ravine which seemed to promise a winding way almost into the very midst of the herd. We watched intently for his reappearance. In such periods of suspense the minutes seem strangely long, creeping as slowly toward their allotted three-score as they do when one, at a sickbed vigil, listens for the funeral chimes of the clock, telling when the minutes are buried in the hours.

At length, in the far away distance, we descried Shamus, disdaining further concealment, riding gallantly out of the ravine for a charge. A few moments more and game and hunter were face to face, and we held our breath, expecting to see the dark cloud dash away with our bloodthirsty cook at its skirts. "As I am alive," suddenly ejaculated Muggs, "Dobeen's coming this way, at a bloody good run, and the buffalo after him!" We could scarcely believe our eyes, but, sure enough, it was a clear case of pursuer and pursued, with the appropriate positions entirely reversed. Shamus seemed imitating that famous hunter who brought home his bear-meat alive, preceding it by only half a coat-tail. But the game before us was changing in appearance most wonderfully. It seemed bristling with unusually long horns, and as we looked the dark cloud suddenly spread out into a fan-like shape, and we all cried, simultaneously, "Indians!"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.