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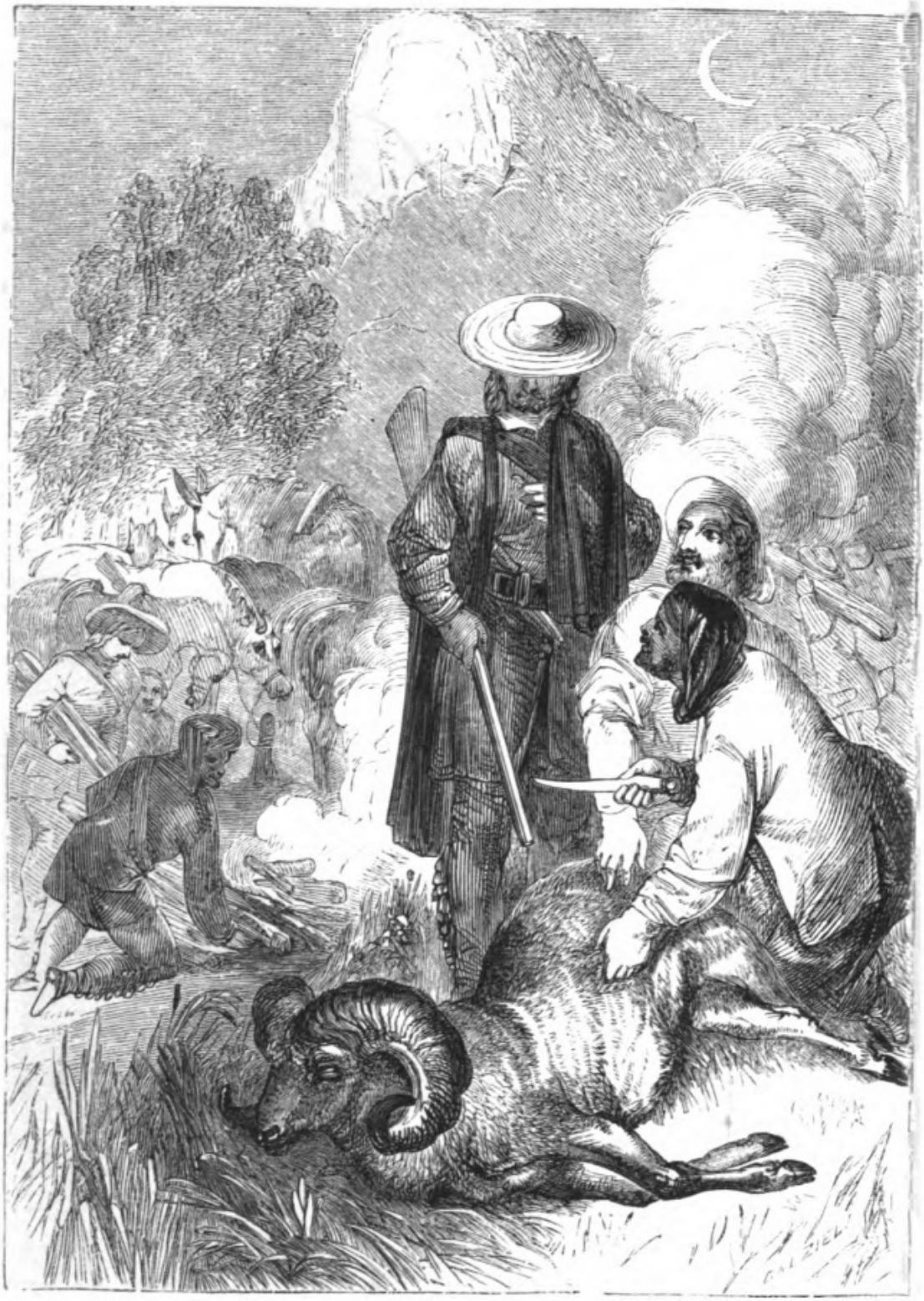

Lincoln with the Bighorn. P. 21.

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CHAPTER I.

THE GREAT AMERICAN DESERT.

THERE is a great desert in the interior of North America. It is almost as large as the famous Saära of Africa. It is fifteen hundred miles long, and a thousand wide. Now, if it were of a regular shape —that is to say, a parallelogram—you could at once compute its area, by multiplying the length upon the breadth; and you would obtain one million and a half for the result—one million and a half of square miles. But its outlines are as yet very imperfectly known; and although it is fully fifteen hundred miles long, and in some places a thousand in breadth, its surface-extent is probably not over one million of square miles, or twenty-five times the size of England. Fancy a desert twenty-five times as big as all England! Do you not think

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that it has received a most appropriate name when it is called the *Great American Desert?*

Now, my young friend, what do you understand by a desert? I think I can guess. When you read or hear of a desert, you think of a vast level plain, covered with sand, and without trees, or grass, or any kind of vegetation. You think, also, of this sand being blown about in thick yellow clouds, and no water to be seen in any direction. This is your idea of a desert, is it not? Well, it is not altogether the correct one. It is true that in almost every desert there are these sandy plains, yet are there other parts of its surface of a far different character, equally deserving the name of *desert*. Although the interior of the great Saära has not been fully explored, enough is known of it to prove that it contains large tracts of mountainous and hilly country, with rocks and valleys, lakes, rivers, and springs. There are, also, fertile spots, at wide distances from each other, covered with trees, and shrubs, and beautiful vegetation. Some of these spots are small, while others are of large extent, and inhabited by independent tribes, and even whole kingdoms of people. A fertile tract of this kind is called an oäsis; and, by looking

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at your map, you will perceive that there are many oäses in the Saära of Africa.

Of a similar character is the Great American Desert; but its surface is still more varied with what may be termed "geographical features." There are plains—some of them more than a hundred miles wide—where you can see nothing but white sand, often drifting about on the wind, and here and there thrown into long ridges such as those made by a snow-storm. There are other plains, equally large, where no sand appears, but brown barren earth utterly destitute of vegetation. There are others, again, on which grows a stunted shrub with leaves of a pale silvery colour. In some places it grows so thickly, interlocking its twisted and knotty branches, that a horseman can hardly ride through among them. This shrub is the *artemisia*—a species of wild sage or wormwood,—and the plains upon which it grows are called by the hunters, who cross them, the *sage prairies*. Other plains are met with that present a black aspect to the traveller. These are covered with lava, that at some distant period of time has been vomited forth from volcanic mountains, and now lies frozen up, and broken into small fragments like the stones upon a new-made road. Still other plains

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present themselves in the American Desert. Some are white, as if snow had fallen freshly upon them, and yet it is not snow, but salt! Yes; pure white salt—covering the ground six inches deep, and for fifty miles in every direction! Others, again, have a similar appearance; but instead of salt, you find the substance which covers them to be soda—a beautiful efflorescence of soda!

There are mountains, too—indeed, one-half of the Desert is very mountainous; and the great chain of the Rocky Mountains—of which you have no doubt heard—runs sheer through it from north to south, and divides it into two nearly equal parts. But there are other mountains besides these; mountains of every height, and sometimes in their shape and colour presenting very striking and singular appearances. Some of them run for miles in horizontal ridges like the roofs of houses, and seemingly so narrow at their tops that one might sit astride of them. Others, again, of a conical form, stand out in the plain apart from the rest, and look like tea-cups turned upon their mouths in the middle of a table. Then there are sharp peaks that shoot upward like needles, and others shaped like the dome of some great cathedral—like the dome of St.

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Paul's. These mountains are of many colours. Some are dark, or dark green, or blue when seen from a distance. They are of this colour when covered by forests of pine or cedar, both of which trees are found in great plenty among the mountains of the Desert.

There are many mountains, where no trees are seen, nor any signs of vegetation along their sides. Huge naked rocks of granite appear piled upon each other, or jutting out over dark and frowning chasms. There are peaks perfectly white, because they are covered with a thick mantle of snow. These can always be seen from the greatest distance, as the snow lying upon them all the year without melting proves them to be of vast elevation above the level of the sea. There are other peaks almost as white, and yet it is not with snow. They are of a milky hue, and stunted cedar-trees may be seen clinging in seams and crevices along their sides. These are mountains of pure limestone, or the white quartz rock. There are mountains, again, upon which neither tree nor leaf is to be seen; but, in their stead, the most vivid colours of red and green and yellow and white, running in stripes along their sides, as though they had been freshly painted.

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These stripes mark the strata of different coloured rocks, of which the mountains are composed. And there are still other mountains in the Great American Desert, to startle the traveller with their strange appearance. They are those that glitter with the mica and selenite. These, when seen from a distance flashing under the sun, look as though they were mountains of silver and gold!

The rivers, too. Strange rivers are they. Some run over broad shallow beds of bright sand. Large rivers—hundreds of yards in width, with sparkling waters. Follow them down their course. What do you find? Instead of growing larger, like the rivers of your own land, they become less and less, until at length their waters sink into the sands, and you see nothing but the dry channel for miles upon miles! Go still farther, and again the water appears, and onward increases in volume, until—thousands of miles from the sea—large ships can float upon their bosom. Such are the Arkansas and the Platte.

There are other rivers that run between bleak, rocky banks—banks a thousand feet high, whose bald, naked "bluffs" frown at each other across the deep chasm, in the bottom of which roars the troubled water. Often these banks extend for hun-

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dreds of miles, so steep at all points that one cannot go down to the bed of their stream; and often—often—the traveller has perished with thirst, while the roar of their water was sounding in his ears! Such are the Colorado and the Snake.

Still others go sweeping through the broad plains, tearing up the clay with their mighty floods, and year after year changing their channels, until they are sometimes an hundred miles from their ancient beds. Here they are found gurgling for many leagues under ground—under vast rafts formed by the trees which they have borne downward in their current. There you find them winding by a thousand loops like the sinuosities of a great serpent, rolling sluggishly along, with waters red and turbid as though they were rivers of blood! Such are the Brazos and the Red.

Strange rivers are they that struggle through the mountains, and valleys, and plateau-lands of the Great American Desert.

Not less strange are its lakes. Some lie in the deep recesses of hills that dip down so steeply you cannot reach their shores; while the mountains around them are so bleak and naked, that not even a bird ever wings its flight across their silent waters.

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Other lakes are seen in broad, barren plains; and yet, a few years after, the traveller finds them not—they have dried up and disappeared. Some are fresh, with waters like crystal—others brackish and muddy—while many of them are more salt than the ocean itself.

In this Desert there are springs—springs of soda and sulphur, and salt waters; and others so hot that they boil up as in a great caldron, and you could not dip your finger into them without scalding it.

There are vast caves piercing the sides of the mountains, and deep chasms opening into the plains—some of them so deep, that you might fancy mountains had been scooped out to form them. They are called "barrancas." There are precipices rising straight up from the plains—thousands of feet in height—and steep as a wall; and through the mountains themselves you may see great clefts cut by the rivers, as though they had been tunnelled and their tops had fallen in. They are called "cañons." All these singular formations mark the wild region of the Great American Desert.

It has its denizens. There are oäses in it; some of them large, and settled by civilized men. One of these is the country of New Mexico, containing

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many towns, and 30,000 inhabitants. These are of the Spanish and mixed Indian races. Another oäsis is the country around the Great Salt and Utah Lakes. Here is also a settlement, established in 1846. Its people are Americans and Englishmen. They are the Mormons; and, although they dwell hundreds of miles from any sea, they will in time become a large and powerful nation of themselves.

Besides these two great oäses, there are thousands of others of all sizes—from fifty miles in breadth, to the little spot of a few acres, formed by the fertilizing waters of some gurgling spring. Many of these are without inhabitants. In others, again, dwell tribes of Indians—some of them numerous and powerful, possessing horses and cattle; while others are found in small groups of three or four families each, subsisting miserably upon roots, seeds, grass, reptiles, and insects. In addition to the two great settlements we have mentioned, and the Indians, there is another class of men scattered over this region. These are white men—hunters and trappers. They subsist by trapping the beaver, and hunting the buffalo and other animals. Their life is one continued scene of peril, both from the wild animals which they encounter in their lonely excursions, and

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the hostile Indians with whom they come in contact. These men procure the furs of the beaver, the otter, the musk-rat, the marten, the ermine, the lynx, the fox, and the skins of many other animals. This is their business, and by this they live. There are forts, or trading posts—established by adventurous merchants—at long distances from each other; and at these forts the trappers exchange their furs for the necessary implements of their perilous calling.

There is another class of men who traverse the Great Desert. For many years there has been a commerce carried on between the oäsis of New Mexico and the United States. This commerce employs a considerable amount of capital, and a great number of men—principally Americans. The goods transported in large wagons drawn by mules or oxen; and a train of these wagons is called a "caravan." Other caravans—Spanish ones—cross the western wing of the Desert, from Sonora to California, and thence to New Mexico. Thus, you see, the American Desert has its caravans as well as the Saära.

These caravans travel for hundreds of miles through countries in which there are no inhabitants, except the scattered and roving bands of

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Indians; and there are many parts so sterile, that not even these can exist in them.

The caravans, however, usually follow a track which is known, and where grass and water may be found at certain seasons of the year. There are several of these tracks, or, as they are called, "trails," that cross from the frontier settlements of the United States to those of New Mexico. Between one and another of them, however, stretch vast regions of desert country—entirely unexplored and unknown—and many fertile spots exist, that have never been trodden by the foot of man.

Such, then, my young friend, is a rough sketch of some of the more prominent features of the Great American Desert.

Let me conduct you into it, and show you—from a nearer view—some of its wild but interesting aspects. I shall not show you the wildest of them, lest they might terrify you. Fear not—I shall not lead you into danger. Follow me.

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CHAPTER II.

THE WHITE PEAK.

SOME years ago, I was one of a party of "prairie merchants," who crossed with a caravan from St. Louis on the Mississippi, to Santa Fé in New Mexico. We followed the usual "Santa Fé trail." Not disposing of all our goods in New Mexico, we kept on to the great town of Chihuahua, which lies farther to the south. There we settled our business, and were about to return to the United States the way we had come, when it was proposed (as we had now nothing to encumber us but our bags of money), that we should explore a new "trail" across the prairies. We all wished to find a better route than the Santa Fé road; and we expected that such an one lay between the town of El Paso—on the Del Norté River—and some point on the frontiers of Arkansas.

On arriving at El Paso, we sold our wagons, and

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purchased Mexican pack-mules—engaging, at the same time, a number of "arrieros," or muleteers to manage them. We also purchased saddle-horses—the small tight horses of New Mexico, which are excellent for journeying in the Desert. We provided ourselves, moreover, with such articles of clothing and provisions as we might require upon our unknown route. Having got everything ready for the journey, we bade adieu to El Paso, and turned our faces eastward. There were in all twelve of us—traders, and a number of hunters, who had agreed to accompany us across the plains. There was a miner, too, who belonged to a copper mine near El Paso. There were also four Mexicans—the "arrieros" who had charge of our little train of pack-mules. Of course, we were all well armed, and mounted upon the best horses we could procure for money.

We had first to cross over the Rocky Mountains, which run north and south through all the country. That chain of them which lies eastward of El Paso is called the Sierra de Organos, or "Organ mountains." They are so called from the fancied resemblance which is seen in one of their cliffs to the tubes of an organ. These cliffs are of trap-rock, which, as you are aware, often presents very fantastic and singular formations,

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by means of its peculiar stratification. But there is a still more curious feature about these Organ mountains. On the top of one of them is a lake, which has its tides that ebb and flow like the tides of the ocean! No one has yet accounted for this remarkable phenomenon, and it remains a puzzle to the geological inquirer. This lake is a favourite resort for the wild animals of the country, and deer and elk are found in great numbers around its shores. They are not even molested by the Mexican hunters of these parts, who seem to have a superstitious fear of the spirits of the Organ mountains, and rarely climb up their steep sides.

Our party found an easy pass through the range, which brought us out into an open country on the other side. After travelling several days through the eastern spurs of the Rocky Mountains, we struck upon a small stream, which we followed downward. It brought us at length to a large river running north and south, which we knew to be the celebrated Pecos, or, as it is sometimes called, the Puerco. These, you will perceive, are all Spanish names, for the country through which we were travelling, although uninhabited and even unexplored by the Mexican Spaniards, was yet part of their territory;

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and such objects as were known to them, through hunters or others, had received names in their language.

We crossed the Pecos, and travelled for some days up its left bank, in hopes of reaching some other stream that might run into it from the east, which we could follow. No such stream appeared; and we were forced at times to leave the Pecos itself, and take out into the open country for a distance of miles, before we could get back to its waters. This was on account of the deep channel which the river—working for long ages—had cut through hills that opposed its course, leaving on both sides vast precipices for its banks.

Having now got farther to the north than we wished, our party at length determined to attempt the passage of the arid plain which stretched away eastward as far as the eye could reach. It was a perilous enterprise to leave the river, without some knowledge that there was water ahead of us. Travellers, under such circumstances, usually keep close to a stream—wherever it runs in the direction in which they wish to go; but we had grown impatient on not finding any one flowing into the Pecos from the east; and, having filled our gourd can-

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teens, and given our animals as much water as they could drink, we turned their heads towards the open plain.

After riding for several hours, we found ourselves in the midst of a wide desert, with neither hill, mountain, nor any other landmark in view. Scarcely a trace of vegetation appeared around us. Here and there were patches of stunted sage-bushes and clumps of thorny cactus; but not a blade of grass to gladden the eyes of our animals. Not a drop of water was met with, nor any indication that rain had ever fallen upon that parched plain. The soil was as dry as powder, and the dust, kicked up by the hoofs of our mules and horses, hung around us in a cloud as we marched. In addition to this, the heat was excessive; and this, with the dust and fatigue of travel, brought on an unquenchable thirst, that soon caused us to drink up the contents of our water-gourds. Long before night they were all empty, and every one of our party was crying out from thirst. Our animals suffered worse; for we, at least, had food, while they, poor brutes, were without a bite to sustain them.

We could not well turn back. We thought we should surely come to water, sooner than we could

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get back to the river; and with this hope we struggled on. Late in the afternoon, our eyes were greeted by a glad sight, that caused us to start up in our saddles with a feeling of joy. You may think that it was water—but it was not. It was a white object that appeared against the sky at a great distance. It was of a triangular shape, and seemed to be suspended in the air like the upper half of a huge kite. All of us knew at a glance what it was. We knew that it was the white cap of a snowy mountain.

You will wonder why this sight should have given us such feelings of pleasure, as, in your opinion, there is nothing very hospitable in the appearance of a snow-capped mountain. That is because you do not understand the peculiarities of the Desert. I shall explain. We knew, from the appearance of the mountain, that it was one of those where the snow lies for ever, and which throughout Mexico are termed "Nevada," or snowy. We knew, moreover, that wherever these are met with, streams of water will be found running down their sides, almost at all seasons, but certainly in hot or summer weather, in consequence of the melting of the snow. It was this knowledge, then, that cheered us; and although the mountain seemed at a great distance, we pushed

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forward with renewed energy and hope. Our animals, too, as if they also understood the matter, neighed and brayed loudly, and stepped out with a more springy and elastic tread.

The white triangle grew bigger as we advanced. At sunset we could distinguish the brown seams in the lower part of the mountain; and the yellow rays dancing upon the snowy crystals of the cone caused it to glitter like a coronet of gold. The sight cheered us on.

The sun set, and the moon took his place in the heavens. Under her pale light we travelled on—the peak of the mountain still glistening coldly before us. We travelled all night—and why not? There was nothing to halt for. We could not have halted, except to die.

The morning broke upon us as we dragged wearily along. We could not have ridden less than an hundred miles since we left the Pecos river; and yet, to our dismay, the mountain was still at a good distance before us. As the day brightened, we could trace the configuration of its base; and we observed that upon its southern face a deep ravine indented the mountain nearly to its top. On its western side—the one nearest us—there was no such feature; and

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we conjectured that the most likely place for water would be in the ravine on the south, where a stream might be formed by the aggregation of the melted snow-water.

We directed our course toward the point, where the ravine appeared to have its debouchment on the plain. We had calculated rightly; as we approached it, winding round the foot of the mountain, we saw a line of a bright green colour, running out into the brown desert. It looked like a low hedge, with here and there tall trees growing up above the rest. We knew well what it was: it was a grove of willows, with trees of cotton-wood interspersed. We knew them to be the sure signs of water, and we hailed their appearance with delight. The men huzza'd hoarsely—the horses neighed—the mules hinnied—and, in a few moments more, men, mules, and horses, were kneeling by a crystal runlet, and drinking deeply of its waters.

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CHAPTER III.

THE VALLEY OÄSIS.

After so long and terrible a journey, of course, we all stood in need of rest and refreshment. We made up our minds to stay by the stream all night, and perhaps for a day or two. The fringe of willows extended on both sides of it for a distance of fifty yards into the plain; and among these, growing under their shade, there were patches of grass—that species known in Mexico as the *gramma* grass. It is a rich, nutritious herbage; and horses and cattle—as well as the buffaloes and other wild animals—are very fond of it. Our mules and horses gave proof of this; for, as soon as they had satisfied themselves with the water, they attacked it with open mouths, and eyes sparkling with delight. We relieved them of their packs and saddles; and then, having picketed them, left them to eat to their hearts' content.

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We now set about looking after something for our own suppers. We had not yet suffered much from hunger, as we had occasionally chewed pieces of our dried meat while crossing the plain. But we had eaten it quite raw; and *tasajo*—for that is its name—is no great eating, either raw or roasted. We had been living upon it for more than a week, and we longed for something fresh. During all the route from El Paso we had fallen in with no game, except some half-dozen lean antelopes, only one of which we had succeeded in shooting.

While we were picketing our animals, and getting ready to cook our suppers of coffee and tasajo, one of the hunters—a tireless fellow named Lincoln—had stolen off up the ravine. Presently we heard the sharp crack of his rifle ringing through the defile; and, looking up, we saw a flock of "bighorns"—so the wild sheep of the Rocky Mountains are called—leaping from rock to rock, and almost flying like birds up the face of the cliffs. It was not long before Lincoln made his appearance at the mouth of the defile, carrying a large body upon his shoulders—which we knew, by the huge crescent-shaped horns, had been a member of the flock we had seen escaping. It proved to be as fat as a buck; and the knives of

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the skilful hunters were not long in skinning and dissecting it. Meanwhile, a couple of axes had been grappled by stout hands; a cotton-wood came crashing down after a few sharp blows; and, having been cut into "logs," was soon crackling under the red blaze. Over this, the ribs and steaks of the bighorn soon sputtered, and the coffee-kettle steamed, simmered, and bubbled, with its brown and aromatic contents. Our supper over, one and all of us rolled ourselves in our blankets, and were soon forgetful of the perils through which we had passed.

Next morning we arose refreshed, and after breakfast a consultation was held as to what course we should now take. We would have followed the stream, but it appeared to run in a southerly direction, and that would not do for us. We wanted to go eastward. While we were deliberating upon this, an exclamation from the hunter Lincoln drew our attention. He was standing in the open ground, at some distance out from the willows, and pointing southward. We all looked in that direction, and, to our great surprise, beheld a pillar of blue smoke curling up into the sky, and seeming to rise out of the plain!

"It must be Indians!" cried one.

"I noticed an odd-looking hole in the prairie

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down there," said Lincoln; "I noticed it last night, when I was up after the bighorn. The smoke we see comes out of it; but there must be a fire where there's smoke, they say; and there's somebody about that fire, be they Injuns or whites."

"Indians, of course," rejoined several; "who else would be found within hundreds of miles of such a place as this? Indians, they must be."

A brief consultation was held among us, as to what was best to be done. Our fire was at once "choked out," and our mules and horses brought into the cover of the willow thicket. Some proposed that a small party of us should go down the stream and reconnoitre; while others advised that we should climb the mountain, from which we might get a view of the strange place whence the smoke seemed to proceed. This was plainly the best course to adopt—as, in case it should fail to satisfy us, we could still follow the other plan. Half-a-dozen of us, therefore, leaving the others to guard the camp, immediately set out to ascend the mountain.

We climbed up the ravine, occasionally stopping to look out over the plain. We climbed until we had reached a considerable elevation. At length we caught a glimpse of what appeared to be a deep

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barranca—into which ran the stream—but we could distinguish nothing within it at so great a distance. We could see the plain stretching away beyond, naked and sterile. On one side only, and that towards the east, there was a belt of verdure, with here and there a solitary tree, or at most two or three growing together, stunted-like and shrubby. Running in the centre of this belt, we could distinguish a line or crack in the plain. This was, no doubt, a channel by which the stream escaped from the barranca. As nothing farther could be gained by remaining upon the mountain, we descended, and joined our companions at the camp.

It was now agreed that a select party should follow the stream, until we had approached the edge of this strange valley, and reconnoitred it with caution. Six of us again started, leaving our horses as before. We stole silently along, keeping among the willows, and as near as possible to the banks of the rivulet. In this way we travelled about a mile and a half. We saw then that we were near to the end of the barranca. We could hear a noise like the sound of a waterfall. We guessed that it must be a cataract formed by the stream, where it leaped into the strange ravine that already began to expand before

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our faces. We were right in our conjectures, for the next moment we crept out upon the edge of a fearful cliff, where the water of the rivulet swept over, and fell through a height of several hundred feet.

It was a beautiful sight to look upon, as the long jet, curving like the tail of a horse, plunged into the foaming pool below; and then rising with its millions of globules of snowy spray, glittered under the sunbeam with all the colours of the rainbow. It was, indeed, a beautiful sight; but our eyes did not dwell long upon it, for other objects were before them that filled us with wonder. Away below—far below where we were—lay a lovely valley, smiling in all the luxuriance of bright vegetation. It was of nearly an oval shape, bounded upon all sides by a frowning precipice, that rose around it like a wall. Its length could not have been less than ten miles, and its greatest breadth about half of its length. We were at its upper end, and of course viewed it lengthwise. Along the face of the precipice there were trees hanging out horizontally, and some of them even growing with their tops downward. These trees were cedars and pines; and we could perceive also the knotted limbs of huge cacti protruding from the crevices of the rocks.

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We could see the wild mezcal, or maguey plant, growing against the cliff—its scarlet leaves contrasting finely with the dark foliage of the cedars and cacti. Some of these plants stood out on the very brow of the overhanging precipice, and their long curving blades gave a singular character to the landscape. Along the face of the dark cliffs all was rough, and gloomy, and picturesque. How different was the scene below! Here everything looked soft, and smiling, and beautiful. There were broad stretches of woodland, where the thick foliage of the trees met and clustered together, so that it looked like the surface of the earth itself; but we knew it was only the green leaves, for here and there were spots of brighter green, that we saw were glades covered with grassy turf. The leaves of the trees were of different colours, for it was now late in the autumn. Some were yellow, and some of a deep claret colour. Some were bright red, and some of a beautiful maroon; and there were green, and brighter green, and others of a silvery, whitish hue. All these colours were mingled together, and blended into each other, like the flowers upon a rich carpet.

Near the centre of the valley was a large shining object, which we knew to be water. It was evidently

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a lake of crystal purity, and smooth as a mirror. The sun was now up to meridian height, and his yellow beams falling upon its surface caused it to gleam like a sheet of gold. We could not trace the outlines of the water—for the trees partially hid it from our view—but we saw that the smoke that had at first attracted us rose up somewhere from the western shore of the lake.

We returned to the camp, where we had left our companions. It was now agreed that we should all ride down the side of the barranca together, until we could find a place to descend into it. It was evident some such place existed, else, how could they have got in who had kindled the fire there?

We left the Mexicans in camp with our mules, and all the rest of us having mounted our horses, rode off together. We went by the eastern side, keeping well back upon the plain, so that we might not be seen until we discovered what sort of people were in the valley. When we had got opposite to where the smoke was still curling up, we stopped; and two of us, dismounting, crawled forward to the very edge of the precipice. We took care to keep some bushes, that grew along the brink, between ourselves and the lake. At length we were able to

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get a good view of everything below; and a very strange sight that was,—at least it was very strange in such a place, where it was so little expected. There was a large lake, as I have already stated; and on its opposite side, not over a hundred yards from its edge, was a fine-looking log-house, with other smaller ones standing in the rear. There were rail-fences all around them, and a cleared space divided into fields, some of which appeared to be under cultivation, while others were green and filled with flocks of animals. The whole picture was exactly like a snug farm-house, with its stables and other outhouses, with its garden and fields, and horses and cattle! The distance was too great for us to distinguish what sort of cattle they were, but there appeared to be many kinds, both red, and black, and speckled. We could see several figures of men and boys—four of them in all—moving about the enclosures, and there was a woman near the door of the house. It was impossible in the distance to tell whether they were white people, but we never imagined for a moment they could be Indians. No Indian could have built such a house as that. It seemed to us as though we were dreaming, to find such a picture in so unexpected a place; and it was a beautiful picture

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to our eyes, coming fresh as we were from looking upon the barren desert. The lake was smooth as a mirror; the sun was shining upon it, and we could see upon its farther shore several large animals standing up to their knees in the water.

There were many other striking objects which met our eyes, but we had no time to dwell upon them, and we crawled back again to our companions.

It was at once agreed that we should go still farther down, and endeavour to find a road leading into this most singular oäsis. We thought we could distinguish a sort of depression in the plain near the lower end of the valley, and for this point we directed our course. After riding a few miles farther we reached the place where the stream issued out in an easterly direction. There sure enough, was the very road we were in search of, winding down along the bank of the stream, and as if carved out from the face of the precipice. It was not much wider than the track of a wagon, but was of very easy descent. We did not hesitate a moment, but commenced riding downward.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE STRANGE SETTLEMENT.

We were soon in the bottom of the valley, where we followed a plain track that led along the banks of the rivulet. We knew that that would direct us up to the lake, where we should get a view of the house. We were astonished at the great variety of trees which we saw in the woods; but there appeared to be almost as great a variety of beautiful birds, that fluttered among the leaves as we rode forward.

We came at length within sight of the opening in which the house and lake were situated. It was prudent to make another reconnoissance before we advanced farther; and two of us, again dismounting, stole cautiously forward through a thicket of leafy shrubs. The house and all its grounds lay before us. It was a log-house—such as are met with in the western states of America—and well constructed.

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There was a garden at one end, and fields on all sides. These fields were, as we had supposed, some of them under cultivation. We noticed one of them with a crop of Indian corn, and another of wheat. But what most astonished us was the kind of animals we saw in the enclosures. One would have thought at first sight that they were the animals usually seen around an English or American farm-house,—that is to say, horses, cattle, sheep, goats, hogs, and poultry. You may fancy, then, our surprise, when, on looking narrowly at them, we could not make out a single animal exactly resembling any one of the above, with the exception of horses; and even these were unlike the common kind, for they were smaller, and spotted all over like hounds! We knew that they were *mustangs*—the wild horses of the Desert.

We glanced at the animals we had taken for black cattle. What were they but buffaloes! Buffaloes penned up in fields, and not heeding the human beings that passed shouting among them! More than all, we now saw that two animals yoked to the plough were of the same species,—a pair of huge buffalo bulls; and they were working with all the quietness and regularity of oxen!

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Another kind of large animals drew our attention, still taller than the buffaloes. We saw several of them standing quietly in the water of the lake, in which their huge bodies and branching horns were shadowed as in a mirror. These we knew to be elk—the great American elk. We saw several kinds of deer, and antelopes with their short pronged horns, and animals that resembled these last in size—but with immense curving horns like those of the ram—and other animals like goats or sheep. We saw some without tails, having the appearance of pigs, and others resembling foxes and dogs. We could see fowls of different kinds moving about the doors, and among others we distinguished the tall, upright form of the wild turkey. The whole picture looked like the collection of some zoological garden or menagerie.

Two men were seen,—one a tall, white man, with a somewhat florid complexion. The other was a short and very thick-set negro. The latter was by the plough. There were two younger men, or lads nearly grown. A woman sat by the door engaged in some occupation, and near her were two little girls, no doubt her daughters.

But the sight which was strangest of all, both to

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my companion and myself, was what appeared in front of the house, and around the little porch where the woman was sitting. It was a fearful sight to look upon. First there were two large black bears, perfectly loose, and playing with each other! then there were several smaller animals, that we had at first taken for dogs, but that we now recognised, by their bushy tails, sharp snouts, and short erect ears, to have at least as much of the wolf as dog in them. They were of that kind often met with among the Indians, and might more properly be called dog-wolves than wolf-dogs. There were at least half-a-dozen of them sauntering about. But the most fearful-looking of all were two animals of a tawny red colour, that lay in crouching attitudes within the porch, almost at the feet of the woman. Their round, cat-like heads and ears, their short black muzzles, their white throats, and pale reddish breasts, told us what they were at a glance.

"Panthers!" ejaculated my companion, drawing a long breath, and looking at me with a puzzled air. Yes; they were panthers—so called by the hunters, but more properly cougars—the *felis concolor* of the naturalists—the lion of America.

In the midst of all these fierce creatures, the two

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young girls were moving about, apparently unconcerned at their presence, while the animals appeared equally unconcerned about them! The whole scene reminded us of the fanciful pictures, we had seen, of that time promised in the Sacred Book, when "all the earth shall be at peace, and the lion shall lie down with the lamb."

We did not stop to see more. We were satisfied, and went back for our companions. In five minutes after, the whole of us entered the clearing, and rode up to the house. Our sudden appearance produced consternation on all sides. The men shouted to each other—the horses neighed—the dogs howled and barked hoarsely—and the fowls mingled their voices in the clamour. We were taken, no doubt, for a party of Indians; but we were not long in making it understood who and what we were. As soon as our explanations were given, the white man invited us, in the politest manner, to alight, and partake of his hospitality. At the same time he gave orders for our dinners to be prepared; and, desiring us to lead our horses into one of the enclosures, he commenced throwing corn into a large wooden trough. In this he was assisted by the negro, who was his servant, and the two young lads, who appeared to be his sons.

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As yet we had not ceased to wonder. Everything around us was strange and inexplicable. The animals, which none of us had ever seen, except in their wild state, were as tame and gentle as farm cattle; and we noticed some new species at every turn. There were strange plants too, growing in the fields and garden, and vines trained upon espaliers, and corn-cribs filled with yellow corn, and dove-cotes, and martin-boxes, with swallows twittering around them. All formed a curious but pleasing picture.

We had sauntered about for an hour, when we were summoned to dinner.

"Follow me, gentlemen," said our host, as he led the way to the house. We entered, and seated ourselves around a good-sized table, upon which smoked several savoury and inviting dishes. Some of these we recognised as old acquaintances, while others were new to us. We found venison-steaks, with buffalo tongues and hump-ribs,—the daintiest portions of that animal. There were fresh-cooked fowls, and eggs of the wild turkey boiled and dressed in omelettes. There were bread and butter, and milk and rich cheese, all set out to tempt our appetites, that, to say the truth, just at that time did not require much coaxing to do justice to the

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viands before us. We were all quite hungry, for we had eaten nothing since morning. A large kettle simmered by the fire. What could it contain? thought we; surely, not tea or coffee. In a short time we were satisfied on this head. Bowls were placed before us; and into these the hot liquid was poured, which we found to be a very palatable as well as wholesome beverage — the tea of the sassafras root. It was sweetened by maple sugar; and each helped himself to cream to his own liking. We had all tasted such tea before, and many of our party liked it as well as the tea of China.

While we continued to eat, we could not help noticing the strangeness of everything around us. All the articles of furniture were of unique and rude description; and it was plain that most of them had been manufactured upon the spot. The vessels were of several sorts and of different materials. There were cups and dishes, and bowls cut out of shells of the gourd or calabash; and there were spoons and ladles of the same material. There were wooden platters and trays carved and scooped out of the solid tree. And more numerous were the vessels of red pottery, of different shapes and for different uses. Of these there were large pots for cooking, and jars for holding water, and jugs of various dimensions.

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The chairs, too, were all of rude construction; but admirably adapted to their purpose. Most of them were covered with raw hide seats, which stretched up the back in a slanting line, and thus rendered them firm and commodious. A few lighter ones—evidently intended as the furniture of the inner rooms—(there were but two in the house), had bottoms woven out of the leaves of the palmetto.

There was very little attempt at ornament upon the walls—if we except some curiosities that were placed there, all of which were evidently the productions of the valley itself. There were stuffed birds of rare and bright plumage, and huge horns of animals, with two or three shells of the land tortoise carefully polished. There were no mirrors nor pictures, and not a book to be seen, except *one*; that was a medium-sized volume, placed on a small table by itself, and evidently preserved with great care as it had been neatly and elaborately bound in the skin of a young antelope. I had the curiosity to open this book, shortly after entering. I read upon the title-page the words "Holy Bible." This circumstance increased the interest I already felt in our host and his family; and I sat down with feelings of confidence, for I knew that even in this

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remote place we were enjoying the hospitality of a Christian.

During the meal our host with his family were present. We had seen them all on our arrival, for they had run forward to greet and welcome us; but we became puzzled as we listened to the conversation of the children. We heard with surprise that we were the first white men they had seen for a period of nearly ten years! They were all beautiful children —robust, and full of life and animation. There were two boys—Frank and Harry,—so their mother called them—and two girls. Of the girls one was of a very dark complexion—in fact, quite a brunette, and with a Spanish expression of face. The other was as fair as her sister was dark. The fair one was a beautiful little creature with flowing yellow hair and deep blue eyes, with long, dark lashes. Her name was Mary. That of the sister was Luisa. They were both very pretty, but very unlike each other; and, what was odd to me, they appeared to be about the same age and size. The boys were also of like size, though both much older than their sisters. They appeared to be seventeen or more, but I could not have guessed which was the elder. Harry, with his fair curling hair, and red manly face, bore a strong resemblance to

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his father; while the other was darker, and altogether more like the mother. She herself did not appear to be much over thirty-five years of age, and was still a beautiful and evidently a light-hearted woman.

Our host was a man of about forty—a tall, well-formed man, with light ruddy complexion, and hair that had been fair and curling, but was now somewhat grey. He had neither beard nor whiskers; but, on the contrary, his chin bore evidence that he had freshly shaved himself that very day; and his whole appearance was that of a man who regularly attended to the duties of the toilet. There was also about him a gentlemanlike bearing; and his address and conversation soon convinced all of us that we were in the company of an educated man.

The dress of the whole family was peculiar. The man himself wore a hunting-shirt and leggings of tanned deer-skin, and not unlike that of our own hunters. The boys were similarly attired, but we could see that they had a sort of homespun linen garment underneath. The female part of the family were dressed in clothes, part of which were of the same homespun, and part of a fine skin, that of the fawn, dressed to the softness of a glove. Several hats were lying about; and we noticed that they were curiously fabricated from the leaves of the palmetto.

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While we were eating, the negro appeared at the door, and, looking in, eyed us with glances of extreme curiosity. He was a short, stout man, black as jet, and apparently about forty years old. His head was covered with a thick crop of small curls, that appeared to form an even surface, making the outline of the skull as round as a ball. His teeth were very large and white, and anything but fierce—as he showed them only when he smiled, and that he did almost continually. There was something very pleasing in the expression of his rich black eyes, which were never at rest, but kept always rolling on both sides of his flat and expanded nose.

"Cudjo! drive out these animals," said the woman—or rather lady, we should call her—for she was evidently entitled to be so styled. Her command, or more properly request—for she had made it in that tone—was obeyed with alacrity. Cudjo leaped into the floor, and, after a short while, succeeded in turning out the wolf-dogs, and panthers, and other strange animals, that up to this time had been snarling at each other, among our feet, to the no small terror of several of our party.

All these things were so strange, that we watched them with interest and curiosity. At length our meal was ended; and as we were most anxious to

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have everything explained to us, we signified this desire to our host.

"Wait until night," said he. "Around the cheerful log-fire I will tell you my story. Meanwhile you all need other refreshment than eating. Come to the lake then, and take a bath. The sun is high and warm. A bath will refresh you after your dusty travel."

So saying, he stepped out of the cottage, and proceeded towards the lake, followed by all of our party. A few minutes after, we were refreshing ourselves in the crystal water.

During the remainder of the day, we occupied ourselves at different employments. Some went back to the mountain foot for the mules and Mexicans; while the rest of us strolled about the house and grounds—every now and then stumbling upon some new object of wonder.

We were impatient for the coming of night, for we were wound up to a pitch of extreme curiosity, and longed for an explanation of what we saw around us.

Night came at length; and after an excellent supper, we all sat around the cheerful fire, to listen to the strange history of Robert Rolfe—for that was the name of our host.

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CHAPTER V.

ROLFE'S EARLY HISTORY.

"BROTHERS," began he, "I am of your own race, although I am not an American. I am an Englishman. I was born in the south of that country something more than forty years ago. My father was a yeoman—an independent, or, as he was sometimes styled, a gentleman-farmer. Unfortunately, he was a man of too much ambition for his class. He was determined that I, his only son, should be a gentleman in the ordinary sense of the word; that is, that I should be educated in all those expensive habits and accomplishments, which are sure to lead men of moderate fortune along the direct road to ruin. This was not wise of my father; but it would not be graceful in me to reflect upon a fault, that consisted in his too great fondness for myself. I believe it was the only fault which my good, kind father, was

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ever charged with. Beyond this somewhat foolish ambition, his character was without reproach among men.

"I was sent to those schools where I should meet the scions of the aristocracy. I was taught to dance, to ride, and to play. I was allowed spending money at will, and could call for champagne, and drink it, with any of my companions. At the end of my college life, I was sent upon my travels. I made the tour of the Rhine, of France, and Italy; and after some years spent in this way, I returned to England—sent for, to be present at the death of my father.

"I was now sole heir to his property, which was by no means inconsiderable for a man of his class. I soon reduced it in bulk. I must needs live in London, where I could enjoy the company of many of my old school and college companions. I was welcome amongst them while my purse held out—for many of them were needy men—lawyers without briefs, and officers with nothing to live upon but their pay. Of course, such men are fond of play. They have nothing to lose, and all to win; and it was but a short year or two, until they had won from me the best part of my patrimonial property. I

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was on the eve of becoming a bankrupt. But one thing saved me—*she* saved me!"

Here our host pointed to his wife, who sat surrounded by her family at one side of the great fireplace. The lady held down her eyes and smiled; while the children, who had been listening attentively, all turned towards her with looks of interest.

"Yes," continued he, "Mary saved me. We had been playmates together in earlier life; and at this time we again met. We felt an affection for each other. It ended in our getting married.

"Fortunately, my dissipated life had not destroyed, as it often does with men, all my virtuous principles. Many of these, that had been early instilled into my mind by the teachings of a good mother, still remained fixed and true.

"As soon as we were married, I resolved to change altogether my mode of life. But this is not so easily done as men imagine. Once you are surrounded by associates, such as mine were — once you are plunged into debts and obligations — it requires both courage and virtuous determination to meet and discharge them. It requires a terrible effort to free one's self from evil companions, whose interest it is, that you should still remain as profli-

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gate as themselves. But I was resolved; and, thanks to the counsels of my Mary, I succeeded in carrying out my resolve.

"To pay my debts, I was compelled to sell the property left me by my father. This done, and every bill discharged, I found myself worth only five hundred pounds.

"My little wife, there, had brought me the sum of twenty-five hundred; and this still left us three thousand pounds with which to begin the world. Three thousand pounds is not much to live upon in England—that is, among the class of people with whom I had hitherto associated; and after spending several years in trying to increase it, I found that it was every day growing less. I found, after three years engaged in farming, that my three thousand pounds was only worth two. I was told that this sum would go much farther in America—that it would purchase me a fine home—and, with thoughts of providing well for my family, I embarked with my wife and children for New York.

"There I found the very man whom I wanted—that was, some one to advise me how to begin life in the New World. My predilections were in favour of agriculture; and these were encouraged by the

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advice of him whom I had met. He told me that it would be unwise for me to lay out my money upon new or uncleared land; as, with my want of experience as a farmer, I would have to pay more for clearing it of its timber than the land would be worth. 'It would be better for you,' continued my new acquaintance, 'to buy a tract already cleared and fenced, with a good house upon it, where you will be at home at once.'

"I admitted the truth of all this reasoning; but would my money be sufficient for this? 'Oh, yes,' answered he; and then he told me that he 'knew of a farm in the State of Virginia,'—a plantation, as he called it, that would suit me exactly. It could be purchased for five hundred pounds. With the remainder of my money I should be able to stock it handsomely.

"After some farther conversation, I found that the plantation belonged to himself. So much the better, thought I; and in the end I bought it from him, and set out immediately after for my new home.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE VIRGINIA PLANTATION.

"I FOUND the farm everything he had described it—a large plantation with a good wooden house, and well-enclosed fields. I immediately set about 'stocking' it with my remaining cash. What was my surprise to find that I must spend the greater part of this in *buying men!* Yes—there was no alternative. There were no labourers to be had in the place—except such as were slaves—and these I must either buy for myself, or hire from their masters, which, in point of morality, amounted to the same thing.

"Thinking that I might treat them with at least as much humanity, as they appeared to receive from others, I chose the former course; and purchasing a number of blacks, both men and women, I began life as a planter. After such a bargain as that, I did not

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deserve to prosper; and I did not prosper, as you shall see.

"My first crop failed; in fact, it scarce returned me the seed. The second was still worse; and to my mortification I now ascertained the cause of the failure. I had come into possession of a 'worn-out' farm. The land looked well, and on sight you would have called it a fertile tract. When I first saw it myself, I was delighted with my purchase—which seemed indeed a great bargain for the small sum of money I had paid. But appearances are often deceptive; and never was there a greater deception than my beautiful plantation in Virginia. It was utterly worthless. It had been cropped for many years with maize, and cotton, and tobacco. These had been regularly carried off the land, and not a stalk or blade suffered to return to the soil. As a natural fact, known to almost every one, the vegetable or organic matter will thus in time become exhausted, and nothing will remain but inorganic or purely mineral substances, which of themselves cannot nourish vegetation, and of course can give no crop. This is the reason why manure is spread upon land—the manure consisting of substances that are for the most part organic, and contain the principles of

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life and vegetation. Of course, gentlemen, these things are known to you; but you will pardon my digression, as my children are listening to me, and I never lose an opportunity of instructing them in facts that may hereafter be useful to them.

"Well, as I have said, I had no crops, or rather very bad ones, for the first and second years. On the third it was, if possible, still worse; and on the fourth and fifth no better than ever. I need hardly add that by this time I was ruined, or very nearly so The expense of feeding and clothing my poor negroes had brought me in debt to a considerable amount. I could not have lived longer on my worthless plantation, even had I desired it. I was compelled, in order to pay my debts, to sell out everything—farm, cattle, and negroes. No, I did not sell all. There was one honest fellow to whom both Mary and I had become attached. I was resolved not to sell him into slavery. He had served us faithfully. It was he who first told me how I had been tricked; and, sympathising in my misfortune, he endeavoured—both by industry on his own part, and by encouraging his fellow-labourers—to make the ungrateful soil yield me a return. His efforts had been vain, but I determined to repay him for his rude but honest friendship.

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I gave him his liberty. He would not accept it. He would not part from us. He is there!"

As the narrator said this, he pointed to Cudjo, who stood hanging by the door-post; and, delighted at these compliments which were being paid him, was showing his white teeth in a broad and affectionate smile.

Rolfe continued:—

"When the sale was completed, and the account settled, I found that I had just five hundred pounds left. I had now some experience in farming; and I resolved to move out to the West—into the great valley of the Mississippi. I knew that there my five hundred pounds would still set me up again in a farm as big as I wanted, where the timber was still growing upon it.

"Just at this time my eye fell upon some flaming advertisements in the newspapers, about a new city which was then being built at the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. It was called 'Cairo,' and as it was situated on the fork between two of the largest and most navigable rivers in the world, it could not fail in a few years to become one of the largest cities in the world. So said the advertisement. There were maps of the new city everywhere,

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and on these were represented theatres, and banks, and court-houses, and churches of different religious denominations. There were lots offered for sale, and, along with these, small tracts of land adjoining the town—so that the inhabitants might combine the occupations of merchant and agriculturist. These lots were offered very cheap, thought I; and I did not rest, night nor day, until I had purchased one of them, and also a small farm in the adjacent country.

"Almost as soon as I had made the purchase, I set out to take possession. Of course, I took with me my wife and children. I had now three—the two eldest being twins and about nine years old. I did not intend to return to Virginia any more. Our faithful Cudjo accompanied us to our far Western home.

"It was a severe journey, but not so severe as the trial that awaited us on our arrival at 'Cairo.' As soon as I came within sight of the place, I saw, to use an expressive phrase, that I had been 'sold' again. There was but one house, and that stood upon the only ground that was not a swamp. Nearly the whole site of the proposed city was under water, and the part not wholly inundated consisted of a dark morass, covered with trees and tall reeds!

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There were no theatres, no churches, no court-house, no banks, nor any likelihood there ever would be any, except such as might be built to keep back the water from the only house in the place—a sort of rough hotel, filled with swearing boatmen.

"I had landed, of course; and, after putting up at the hotel, proceeded in search of my 'property.' I found my town-lot in a marsh, which took me over the ankles in mud. As for my farm, I was compelled to get a boat to visit it; and after sailing all over it without being able to touch bottom, I returned to the hotel, heartless and disgusted.

"By the next steamboat that came along, I embarked for St. Louis—where I sold both lot and farm for a mere trifle.

"I need not say that I was mortified at all this. I was almost heart-broken when I reflected on my repeated failures, and thought of my young wife and children. I could have bitterly cursed both America and the Americans, had that been of any use; and yet such a thing would have been as unjust as immoral. It is true I had been twice outrageously swindled; but the same thing had happened to me in my own country, and I had suffered in the same way by those who professed to be my friends. There are

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bad men in every country—men willing to take advantage of generosity and inexperience. It does not follow that all are so; and we hope far less than the half—for it must be remembered that the bad points of one country are more certain to be heard of in another than its good ones. When I look to the schemes and speculations which have been got up in England, and which have enriched a few accomplished rogues, by the ruin of thousands of honest men, I cannot, as an Englishman, accuse our American cousins of being greater swindlers than ourselves. It is true I have been deceived by them, but it was from the want of proper judgment in myself, arising from a foolish and ill-directed education. I should have been equally ill-treated in the purchase of a horse at Tattersall's, or a pound of tea in Piccadilly, had I been equally unacquainted with the value of the articles. We both, as nations, have erred. Neither of us can, with grace, cast a stone at the other; and as for myself, why, look there!" said Rolfe, smiling and pointing to his family, "two of my children only are Englishmen; the others are little Yankees. Almost every Englishman can say something similar. Why, then, should we sow jealousy between them?"

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CHAPTER VII.

THE CARAVAN AND ITS FATE.

OUR host continued:—

"Well, my friends, I was in St. Louis. I had now left out of my three thousand pounds not quite an hundred; and this would soon melt away should I remain idle. What was I to do?

"There happened to be a young Scotchman at the hotel where I had put up. He was, like myself, a stranger in St. Louis; and being from the 'old country,' we soon became acquainted, and, very naturally under the circumstances, shared each other's confidence. I told him of my blunders in Virginia and Cairo, and I believe that he really felt sympathy for me. In return, he detailed to me part of his past history, and also his plans for the future. He had been for several years employed in a copper mine, away near the centre of the Great American

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Desert, in the mountains called Los Mimbres, that lie west of the Del Norté river.

"They are a wonderful people these same Scotch. They are but a small nation, yet their influence is felt everywhere upon the globe. Go where you will, you will find them in positions of trust and importance—always prospering, yet, in the midst of prosperity, still remembering, with strong feelings of attachment, the land of their birth. They manage the marts of London—the commerce of India—the fur trade of America—and the mines of Mexico. Over all the American wilderness you will meet them, side by side with the backwoods-pioneer himself, and even pushing him from his own ground. From the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Sea, they have impressed with their Gaelic names rock, river, and mountain; and many an Indian tribe owns a Scotchman for its chief. I say, again, they are a wonderful people.

"Well; my St. Louis Scotchman had come from his mine upon a visit of business to the United States, and was now on his return by St. Louis and Santa Fé. His wife was along with him—a fine-looking, young Mexican woman, with only one child. He was waiting for a small caravan of Spanish people, who

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were about to start for New Mexico. With these he intended to travel, so as to be in safety from the Indians along the route.

"As soon as he understood my situation, he advised me to accompany him — offering me a lucrative situation in the mine, of which he was the sole manager.

"Disgusted as I then was with the treatment I had received in the United States, I embraced his proposal with alacrity; and, under his superintendence, I set about making preparations for the long journey that lay before us. The money, I had left, enabled me to equip myself in a tolerable manner. I bought a wagon and two pair of stout oxen. This was to carry my wife and children, with such furniture and provisions as would be necessary on the journey. I had no need to hire a teamster, as our faithful Cudjo was to accompany us, and I knew there was no better hand to manage a team of oxen than Cudjo. For myself I purchased a horse, a rifle, with all the paraphernalia that are required by those who cross the great prairies. My boys, Harry and Frank, had also a small rifle each, which we had brought with us from Virginia: and Harry was very proud of the manner in which he could handle his.

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"Everything being prepared, we bade adieu to St. Louis, and set forth upon the wild prairies.

"Ours was but a small caravan, as the large one which crosses annually to Santa Fé had taken its departure some weeks before. There were about twenty men of us, and less than half that number of wagons. The men were nearly all Mexicans, who had been to the United States to procure some pieces of cannon, for which they had been sent by the governor of Santa Fé. They had the cannon along with them—two brass howitzers, with their carriages and caissons.

"My friends, I need not tell you the various incidents that befell us, in crossing the great plains and rivers that lie between St. Louis and Santa Fé. Upon the plains we fell in with the Pawnees; and near the crossing of the Arkansas, we encountered a small tribe of Cheyennes; but neither of these bands offered us any molestation. When we were nearly two months on our journey, the party left the usual trail taken by the traders, and struck across to one of the head tributaries of the Canadian river. This they did to avoid meeting the Arapahoes, who were hostile to the Mexican people. We kept down the banks of this stream as far as the Canadian

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itself; and, then turning westward, travelled up the latter. We travelled upon the right or southern bank, for we had forded the Canadian on reaching it.

"It soon became apparent that we had got into a very rough and difficult country. It was the morning of the second day, after we had turned westward up the Canadian river. We were making but slow progress, as the trail we had to follow was intersected at frequent intervals with buffalo roads running into the river from the south. Many of these were deep ditches, although quite dry; and every now and then we were compelled to stop the whole train until we levelled in the banks, and made, a road for the wagons to pass.

"In crossing one of these ruts, the tongue of my wagon was broken; and Cudjo and I, having loosed out the oxen, set about splicing it the best way we could. The rest of the train was ahead of us, and kept moving on. My friend, the young Scotchman, seeing that we had stopped, came galloping back, and offered to remain and assist us. I declined his offer, telling him to move on with the rest, as I would easily overtake them; at all events, I would get up, whenever they halted for their night

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camp. It was not unfrequent for a single wagon, with its attendants, thus to stay behind the rest, to make some repairs. When it did not come up to the night encampment, a party would go back early the next morning to ascertain the cause of the delay. For several years, before the time I am telling you about, there had been no trouble with the Indians in crossing the prairies; and consequently the people of the caravans had grown less cautious. Besides, we were then in a part of the country where Indians had been seldom seen—as it was an extremely desert place, without grass or game of any description. On this account—and knowing that Cudjo was an excellent carpenter—I had no fears but that I could be up with the others before night. So, by my persuasion, the young Scotchman left me, and rode on to look after his own wagons.

"After about an hour's hammering and splicing, Cudjo and I got the tongue all right again; and 'hitching up' the oxen, we drove on after our companions. We had not gone a mile, when the shoeing of one of the wheels—that had shrunk from the extreme dryness of the atmosphere—rolled off; and the felloes came very near flying asunder. We were luckily able to prevent this, by suddenly stop-

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ping, and setting a prop under the body of the wagon. This, as you may perceive, was a much more serious accident than the breaking of the tongue; and at first I thought of galloping forward, and asking some of our companions to come back to my assistance. But in consequence of my inexperience upon the prairies, I knew that I had given them considerable trouble along the route, at which some of them had murmured — being Mexicans — and in one or two instances had refused to assist me. I might bring back the young Scotchman, it was true, but— 'Come!' cried I, 'it is not yet as bad as Cairo. Come, Cudjo! we shall do it ourselves, and be indebted to no one.'

"'Dat's right, Massa Roff!' replied Cudjo; 'ebery man put him own shoulder to him own wheel, else de wheel no run good.'

"And so the brave fellow and I stripped off our coats, and set to work in earnest. My dear Mary here, who had been brought up a delicate lady, but could suit herself gracefully to every situation, helped us all she could, cheering us every now and then with an allusion to Cairo, and our farm under the water. It has always a comforting effect, to persons in situations of difficulty, to reflect that they

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might still be worse off, and such reflections will often prop up the drooping spirits, and lead to success in conquering the difficulty. 'Never give up' is a good old motto, and God will help them who show perseverance and energy.

"So did it happen with us. By dint of wedging and hammering we succeeded in binding the wheel as fast as ever; but it was near night before we had finished the job. When we had got it upon the axle again, and were ready for the road, we saw, with some apprehension, that the sun was setting. We knew we could not travel by night, not knowing what road to take; and, as we were close to water, we resolved to stay where we were until morning.

"We were up before day, and, having cooked and eaten our breakfasts, moved forward upon the track made by the caravan. We wondered that none of our companions had come back during the night —as this is usual in such cases,—but we expected every moment to meet some of them returning to look after us. We travelled on, however, until noon, and still none of them appeared. We could see before us a rough tract of country with rocky hills, and some trees growing in the valleys; and the trail we were following evidently led among these.

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"As we pushed forward, we heard among the hills a loud crashing report like the bursting of a bombshell. What could it mean? We knew there were some shells along with the howitzers. Were our comrades attacked by Indians, and was it one of the cannon they had fired upon them? No; that could not be. There was but one report, and I knew that the discharge of a shell from a howitzer must give two,—that which accompanies the discharge, and then the bursting of the bomb itself. Could one of the shells have burst by accident? That was more likely; and we halted, and listened for further sounds. We stopped for nearly half an hour, but could hear nothing, and we then moved on again. We were filled with apprehension—less from the report we had heard, than from the fact that none of the men had come back to see what delayed us. We still followed the track of the wagons. We saw that they must have made a long march on the preceding day, for it was near sunset when we entered among the hills, and as yet we had not reached their camp of the night before. At length we came in sight of it, —and oh! horror! what a sight! My blood runs cold when I recall it to my memory. There were the wagons — most of them with their tilts torn

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off, and part of their contents scattered over the ground. There were the cannons too, with fires smouldering near them, but not a human being was in sight! Yes, there were human beings—dead men lying over the ground! and living things—wolves they were—growling, and quarrelling, and tearing the flesh from their bodies! Some of the animals that had belonged to the caravan were also prostrate—dead horses, mules, and oxen. The others were not to be seen.

"We were all horror-struck at the sight. We saw at once that our companions had been attacked and slaughtered by some band of savage Indians. We would have retreated, but it was now too late, for we were close in to the camp, before we had seen it. Had the savages still been upon the ground, retreat would be of no avail. But I knew that they must have gone some time, from the havoc the wolves had made in their absence.

"I left my wife by our wagon, where Harry and Frank remained with their little rifles ready to guard her, and along with Cudjo I went forward to view the bloody scene. We chased the wolves from their repast. There was a pack of more than fifty of these hideous animals, and they only ran a short distance

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from us. On reaching the ground we saw that the bodies were those of our late comrades, but they were all so mutilated that we could not distinguish a single one of them. They had every one been scalped by the Indians; and it was fearful to look upon them as they lay. I saw the fragments of one of the shells that had burst in the middle of the camp, and had torn two or three of the wagons to pieces. There had not been many articles of merchandise in the wagons, as it was not a traders' caravan; but such things as they carried, that could be of any value to the Indians, had been taken away. The other articles, most of them heavy and cumbersome things, were lying over the ground, some of them broken. It was evident the savages had gone off in a hurry. Perhaps they had been frightened by the bursting of the shell, not knowing what it was, and from its terrible effects—which they no doubt witnessed and felt—believing it to be the doing of the Great Spirit.

"I looked on all sides for my friend, the young Scotchman, but I could not distinguish his body from the rest. I looked around, too, for his wife—who was the only woman besides Mary that accompanied the caravan. Her body was not to be seen. 'No doubt,' said I to Cudjo, 'the savages have

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Dogs defending a Child from Wolves. P. 65

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carried her off alive.' At this moment we heard the howls and hoarse worrying of dogs, with the fiercer snarling of wolves, as though the dogs were battling with these animals. The noises came from a thicket near the camp. We knew that the miner had brought with him two large dogs from St. Louis. It must be they. We ran in the direction of the thicket, and dashed in among the bushes. Guided by the noises, we kept on, and soon came in sight of the objects that had attracted us. Two large dogs, foaming and torn and covered with blood, were battling against several wolves, and keeping them off from some dark object that lay among the leaves. We saw that the dark object was a woman, and clinging around her neck, and screaming with terror, was a beautiful child! At a glance we saw that the woman was dead, and——"

Here the narrative of our host was suddenly interrupted. M'Knight, the miner, who was one of our party, and who had appeared labouring under some excitement during the whole of the recital, suddenly sprang to his feet, exclaiming,—

"O God! my wife—my poor wife! Oh! Rolfe—Rolfe—do you not know me?"

"M'Knight!" cried Rolfe, springing up with

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an air of astonishment, "M'Knight! it is he indeed!"

"My wife!—my poor wife!" continued the miner, in accents of sorrow. "I knew they had killed her. I saw her remains afterwards—but my child! Oh, Rolfe! what of my child?"

"She is *there!*" said our host, pointing to the darkest of the two girls, and the next moment the miner had lifted the little Luisa in his arms, and was covering her with his kisses. He was her father!

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE MINER'S STORY.

It would be very difficult, my young readers, to describe to you the scene which followed this unexpected recognition. The family had all risen to their feet, and with cries and tears in their eyes clung around the little Luisa as though they were about to lose her for ever. And, indeed, it is likely that an indistinct thought of this kind had flitted across their minds, when they saw that she was no longer their sister—for they had almost forgotten that she was not so, and they loved her as well as if she was. Up to this time none of them had thought of her in any other way than as a sister; and Harry, with whom she was a great favourite, used to call her his "dark sister," while the younger, Mary, was known as the "fair" one.

In the midst of the group stood the little brunette,

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like the rest, overwhelmed with singular emotions, but calmer, and apparently more mistress of her feelings, than any of them.

The traders and hunters were all upon their feet congratulating M'Knight on the happy event; while each of them shook hands with our host and his wife, whom they now remembered having heard of, as well as the story of the massacre. Old Cudjo leaped over the floor, whipping the panthers and wolf-dogs, and cutting various capers, while the very animals themselves howled with a sort of fierce joy. Our host went into an inner apartment of the cabin, and presently returned with a large jar of brown earthenware. Cups cut out of the calabash were set upon the table; and into these a red liquid was poured from the jar, and we were all invited to drink. What was our surprise on tasting the beverage to find that it was wine—wine in the middle of the desert! But it was so — excellent wine — home-made, as our host informed us—pressed from the wild muscadine grapes that grew in plenty through the valley.

As soon as we had all passed the čups of wine, and had got fairly seated again, M'Knight, at the request of Rolfe, took up the thread of the story, in

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order to detail how he had escaped from the Indians on that fearful night. His story was a short one, and ran as follows :—

"After I left you," said he, addressing Rolfe, "where you had broken your wagon, I rode on, and overtook the caravan. The road, as you may remember, became smooth and level; and as there appeared to be no good camping-ground nearer than the hills, we kept on for them without stopping. It was near sundown, when we reached the little stream where you saw the wagons. There, of course, we halted, and formed our camp. I did not expect you to come in for an hour or so later, as I calculated that it would take you about that length of time to mend the tongue. We kindled fires, and, having cooked our suppers and eaten them, were sitting around the logs chatting, smoking, and some of the Mexicans, as is their custom, playing at *monté*. We had put out no guard, as we had no expectation that there were Indians in that quarter. Some of the men said they had travelled the trail before; and had never met an Indian within fifty miles of the place. At length it became dark, and I began to grow uneasy about you, fearing you might not be able to make out our trail in the night.

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Leaving my wife and child by one of the fires, I climbed a hill that looked in the direction you should have come; but I could see nothing for the darkness. I stood for some time listening, thinking I might hear the rattle of your wheels, or some one of you talking. All at once a yell broke upon my ears, that caused me to turn toward the camp with a feeling of consternation. I well knew the meaning of that yell. I knew it was the war-cry of the Arapahoes. I saw savage figures dashing about in the red glare of the fires. I heard shots and shouts, and screams and groans; and, among the rest, I recognised the voice of my wife calling me by name!

"I did not hesitate a moment, but ran down the hill, and flung myself into the thick of the fight, which was now raging fiercely. I had nothing in my hands but a large knife, with which I struck on all sides, prostrating several of the savages. Here I fought for a moment, and there I ran, calling for my wife. I passed through among the wagons, and on all sides of the camp crying, 'Luisa!' There was no answer; she was nowhere to be seen. Again I was face to face with painted savages, and battling with desperation. Most of my comrades were soon killed, and I was forced out among the bushes,

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and into the darkness, by one of the Indians, who pressed upon me with his spear. I felt the weapon pass through my thigh, and I fell impaled upon the shaft. The Indian fell upon top of me; but, before he could struggle up again, I had thrust him with my knife, and he lay senseless.

"I rose to my feet, and succeeded in drawing out the spear. I saw that the struggle had ceased around the fires; and, believing that my comrades, as well as my wife and child, were all dead, I turned my back upon the fires, and stole off into the thicket, determined to get as far as possible from the camp. I had not gone more than three hundred yards when I fell, exhausted with the loss of blood and the pain of my wound. I had fallen near some rocks at the bottom of a precipice, where I saw there was a small crevice or cave. I had still strength enough left to enable me to reach this cave, and crawl into it; but I fainted as soon as the effort was over.

"I must have lain insensible for many hours. When I came to consciousness again, I saw that daylight was shining into the cave. I felt that I was very weak, and could scarce move myself. My wound stared me in the face,—still undressed, but the blood had ceased flowing of its own accord. I tore up my

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shirt, and dressed it as well as I was able ; and then, getting nearer to the mouth of the cave, I lay and listened. I could hear the voices of the Indians, though very indistinctly, in the direction of the camp. This continued for an hour or more ; and then the rocks rang with a terrible explosion, which I knew to be the bursting of a shell. After that I could hear loud shouts, and soon after, the hurried trampling of many horses ; and then all was silence. I thought at the time that the Indians had taken their departure ; but I knew not what had caused them to go off in such a hurry. I found out afterwards. Your conjecture was right. They had thrown one of the bombs into the fire, and the fuse catching, had caused it to explode, killing several of their number. As they believed it to be the hand of the Great Spirit, they had hastily gathered up such plunder as was most desirable to them, and ridden away from the spot. I did not know this at the time, and I lay still in my cave. For several hours all was silence ; but, as night drew near, I fancied I again heard noises about the camp, and I thought the Indians might not yet be gone.

"When darkness came, I would have crawled toward the camp, but I could not; and I lay all

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night in the cave, chafing with the pain of my wound, and listening to the howling of the wolves. That was a terrible night.

"Morning dawned again, and I could hear no sounds. I was now suffering dreadfully, both from hunger and thirst. I saw a well-known tree growing in front of the cave. I knew it, because the same tree is found upon the mountains of the Mimbres, near our mine. It was a species of pine, called by the Mexicans 'piñon,' whose cones afford food to thousands of the miserable savages who roam over the great western desert from the Rocky Mountains to California. If I could only reach this tree, I might find some of its nuts upon the ground; and, with this hope, I dragged myself painfully out of the cave. It was not twenty paces from the rocks where the tree grew; yet, with my weakness and the pain of my wound, I was nearly half an hour in reaching it. To my joy, I found the ground under it covered with cones. I was not long in stripping off the rinds of many of them, and getting the seeds, which I ate greedily, until I had satisfied my hunger.

"But another appetite far more terrible was craving me—I was tortured with thirst. Could I crawl as far as the camp? I knew that there I should find

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water in the stream; and, from the position of the cave, I knew I could not find it nearer. I must either reach it or die; and, with this thought to spur me on, I commenced the short journey of three hundred yards, although I was not certain I might live to see the end of it. I had not crawled six paces through the underwood, when a bunch of small white flowers attracted my attention. They were the flowers of the sorrel-tree — the beautiful lyonia — the very sight of which sent a thrill of gladness through my heart. I was soon under the tree, and, clutching one of its lowermost branches, I stripped it of its smooth, serrated leaves, and eagerly chewed them. Another and another branch were successively divested of their foliage, until the little tree looked as if a flock of goats had been breakfasting upon it. I lay for nearly an hour masticating the soft leaves, and swallowing their delicious and acid juice. At length my thirst was alleviated, and I fell asleep under the cool shadow of the lyonia.

"When I awoke again, I felt much stronger, and with new appetite to eat. The fever which had begun to threaten me was much allayed; and I knew this was to be attributed to the virtue of the leaves I had eaten—for besides giving relief to thirst, the sap of

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the sorrel-tree is a most potent febrifuge. Gathering a fresh quantity of the leaves, and tying them together, I again set out for the piñon-tree. I took the leaves with me, so that I should not have to make the return trip to the sorrel that night again. In a few minutes I had reached the end of my journey, and was busy among the cones. You laugh at my calling it a journey; but I assure you it was a most painful one to me, although it was not ten paces from one tree to the other. The slightest motion agonized me.

"That night I passed under the piñon, and in the morning, having made my breakfast of the seeds, I collected my pockets full, and set out again for the sorrel-tree. Here I spent the day; and with a fresh cargo of leaves returned at night to the piñon, where I again slept.

"Thus, for four successive days and nights, I passed between these two brave trees, living upon the sustenance they afforded. The fever was luckily warded off by the leaves of the friendly lyonia. My wound began to heal, and the pain left it. The wolves came at intervals; but, seeing my long knife, and that I still lived, they kept at a wary distance.

"Although the leaves of the sorrel assuaged my

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thirst, they did not satisfy it. I longed for a good draught of water; and, on the fourth day, I set out for the stream. I was now able to creep upon my hands and one knee, dragging the wounded limb after. When I had got about half-way through the underwood, I came upon an object that almost congealed the blood in my veins. It was a human skeleton. I knew it was not that of a man — I knew it was ——"

Here the voice of the miner became choked with sobs, and he was unable to finish the sentence. Nearly all in the room — even the rude hunters — wept as they beheld his emotion. After an effort he continued:—

"I saw that she had been buried; and I wondered at this, for I knew the Indians had not done it. I was never certain until this hour who had performed for her that sacred rite. I thought, however, it must have been you; for after I had recovered I went back upon the trail; and, not finding your wagon anywhere, I knew you must have come on to the camp, and gone away again. I looked in every direction to find which way you had gone; but, as you will remember, there was a heavy fall of rain shortly after, and that had obliterated every track. All this happened after I was able to get upon my

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feet, which was not for a month after the night of the massacre. But let me go back in my narrative to where I had found the remains of my poor wife.

"The wolves had torn the body from its grave. I looked for some vestige of my child. With my hands I dug down into the loose mould and leaves, which you had thrown over her body; but no infant was there. I crawled on to the camp. I found that, just as you have described it—except that the bodies were now bleaching skeletons, and the wolves had taken their departure. I searched around, on all sides, thinking I might find some traces of my little Luisa; but in vain. 'The Indians have either carried the child away,' thought I, 'or the fierce wolves have devoured it altogether.'

"In one of the wagons I found an old mess chest lying hid under some rubbish. It had escaped the hurried plunder of the savages. On opening it, I saw that it contained, among other things, some coffee and several pounds of jerked meat. This was a fortunate event, for the meat and coffee nourished me, until I was able to gather a sufficient quantity of the piñons.

"In this way I spent a whole month, sleeping in one of the wagons at night, and crawling off to col-

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lect piñons during the day. I had but little fear that the Indians would return; for I knew that that part of the country was not inhabited by any tribe; and we must have fallen in with a party of the Arapahoes, wandering out of their usual range. As soon as I grew strong enough, I dug a grave, where I interred the remains of my poor wife; and now I began to think of taking my leave of that melancholy scene.

"I knew that I was not much more than a hundred miles distant from the eastern settlements of New Mexico; but a hundred miles of uninhabited wilderness, and on foot, was a barrier that seemed almost as impassable as the ocean itself. I was determined, however, to make the attempt; and I set about sewing a bag in which I should carry my roasted piñons — the only provision I could get to sustain me through the journey.

"While engaged in this operation, with my eyes fixed upon the work, I heard footsteps near me. I raised my head suddenly, and in alarm. What was my joy, when I saw that the object which had startled me was neither more nor less than a mule, that was slowly coming towards the camp! I recognised it as one of the mules that had belonged to our caravan.

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"The animal had not yet observed me; and I thought it might shy away, if I showed myself too suddenly. I resolved, therefore, to capture it by stratagem. I crept into the wagon, where I knew there was a lazo; and having got hold of this, I placed myself in ambush, where I saw the mule would most likely pass. I had scarcely got the noose ready, when, to my extreme satisfaction, the mule came directly to where I lay expecting it. The next moment its neck was firmly grasped in the loop of the lazo, and the animal itself stood tied to the tongue of one of the wagons. It was one of our mules that had escaped from the Indians, and after wandering over the country for weeks had now found the track, and would, no doubt, had I not caught it, have found its way back to St. Louis; for this is by no means an unfrequent occurrence with animals that stray off from the caravans. It soon became tame with me, and in a few days more I had manufactured a bridle and saddle; and, mounting with my bag of roasted piñons, I rode off on the trail for Santa Fé. In about a week I reached that place in safety, and continued on southward to the mine.

"My history since that time can have but little interest for any of you. It is that of a man sor

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rowing for the loss of all he loved on earth. But you, Rolfe, you have given me new life in restoring to me my child, my Luisa; and every chapter of your history, woven as it is with hers, will be to me, at least, of the deepest interest. Go on then, —go on!"

With this the miner concluded; and our host, after inviting each of us to re-fill our cups with wine, and our pipes with tobacco, resumed his narrative where he had left it off, in consequence of the happy, but unexpected episode, to which it had led.

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CHAPTER IX.

LOST IN THE DESERT.

"WELL, my friends," proceeded our host, "it was a terrible sight to look upon—those fierce, gaunt wolves —the mad and foaming mastiffs—the dead mother, and the terrified and screaming child. Of course, the wolves fled at the approach of myself and Cudjo, and the dogs whimpered with delight. Well they might, poor brutes! for had we not come to their aid, they could not have held out much longer against such fearful odds. Although the battle had not been a long one, and commenced most likely after we had driven the wolves from the camp, yet the poor mastiffs were torn and bleeding in many places. As I stooped down to take up the little Luisa, she still clung close around the neck of her mother, crying for her 'mamma' to awake. I saw that her mamma would never wake again. She was lifeless and cold.

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There was an arrow in her breast. It was plain, that after receiving this wound she had fled into the thicket—no doubt followed by the faithful dogs—and, favoured by the darkness, had kept on, until she had fallen and died. The position of her arms showed that she had breathed her last clasping her child to her bosom.

"Leaving Cudjo to guard the body, I carried the child back to my own wagon. Although so lately terrified with the battle of the wolves and dogs, the little creature cried at being separated from its mother, and struggled in my arms to be taken back."

Here Rolfe's narrative was again interrupted by the sobs of M'Knight, who—although a firm, lion-hearted man—could not restrain himself on listening to these painfully affecting details. The children of Rolfe, too, repeatedly wept aloud. The "dark sister" herself seemed least affected of all. Perhaps that terrible scene, occurring at such an early period of her life, had impressed her character with the firmness and composure which afterwards marked it. Every now and then she bent towards the "fair one," throwing her arms around the neck of the latter, and endeavouring to restrain her tears.

"I gave the child to my wife," continued Rolfe,

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after a pause, "and in the company of little Mary, then about her own age, she soon ceased crying, and fell asleep in my wife's bosom. I took a spade which I had in my wagon, and going back I dug a grave; and, with the help of Cudjo, hastily interred the body. I say *hastily*, for we did not know the moment we might stand in need of some one to do as much for ourselves. It seems that our labour was in vain; yet even at the time, had we known this was to be the case, we should not the less have acted as we did. There was some satisfaction in performing this last sacred and Christian ceremony for our murdered friend; and both Cudjo and I felt it to be nothing more than our duty.

"We did not remain any longer near the spot, but hastening back to our wagon, I led the oxen in among some trees, where they might be hidden from view. Commending my wife and little ones to God, I shouldered my rifle, and set out—for the purpose of discovering whether the savages had left the place, and in what direction they had gone. It was my intention, should I be able to satisfy myself about the road they had taken, to go by some other course, yet by one that would bring me back into the trail, so that I could go on to the country of New

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Mexico. I knew very well that at that late season, and with oxen worn out, as ours were, I could never get back to St. Louis — which was nearly eight hundred miles distant.

" After proceeding a mile or two—creeping through bushes, and skulking behind rocks—I saw the trail of the Indians striking out into an open plain, in a due westerly direction. They must have formed a large band, and all mounted, as the tracks of their horses testified. Seeing that they had moved off westward, I formed the resolution of making two or three days' journey to the south, and afterwards turning in a westerly direction. This would most likely secure me from meeting them again, and would bring me, as I guessed, to the eastern ranges of the Rocky Mountains through which I might pass into the valley of New Mexico. I had heard my companions speak of a more southern pass through these mountains, than that which lies near Santa Fé; and I hoped to be able to reach it, although I believed it to be two hundred miles distant. With these plans in my mind, I returned to where I had left my little party.

" It was night when I got back to the wagon, and I found Mary and the children in great distress

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at my delay; but I had brought them good news—that the Indians were gone away.

"I had thought of remaining all night where we were; but, not being yet fully satisfied that the Indians were gone, I changed my intention. Seeing that we were to have a moon, and that a smooth plain stretched away towards the south, I concluded that it would be better to make a night journey of it, and put twenty miles, if possible, between us and the camp. All agreed with this proposal. In fact, we were all equally anxious to get away from that fearful spot; and had we stayed by it, not one of us could have slept a wink. The apprehension that the savages might return, and the excited state of our feelings—to say nothing of the terrible howling of the wolves—would have kept us awake; so, resolving to take our departure, we waited for the rising of the moon.

"We did not waste time, my friends. You all know that water is the great want in these deserts, both for man and beast. We knew not where or when we might next find it; so we took the precaution to fill our vessels at the stream. We filled all we had that would hold water. Alas! these were not enough, as you shall hear.

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"The moon rose at length. She seemed to smile upon the horrid picture that lay below at the deserted camp; but we stayed no longer to contemplate it. Leading our oxen out of their *caché*, we struck out into the open plain, in a direction as nearly south as I could guide myself. I looked northward for the star in the tail of the Little Bear—the polar star—which I soon found by the pointers of the Ursa Major; and keeping this directly on our backs, we proceeded on. Whenever the inequalities of the ground forced us out of our track, I would again turn to this little star, and consult its unfailing index. There it twinkled in the blue heavens like the eye of a friend. It was the finger of God pointing us onward.

"And onward we went—here creeping around some gaping fissure, that opened across our track—there wading over a sandy swell—and anon rolling briskly along the smooth, herbless plain; for the country we were passing through was a parched and treeless desert.

"We made a good night's journey of it, cheered by the prospect of escaping from the savages. When day broke, we were twenty miles from the camp. The rough hills that surrounded it were completely lost to

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our view, and we knew from this that we had travelled a long way; for some of these hills were of great height. We knew that we must have passed over a considerable arc of the earth's surface before their tops could have sunk below the horizon. Of course, some intervening ridges, such as the sandy swells I have mentioned, helped to hide them from our view; but, at all events, we had the satisfaction of knowing that the savages, even had they returned to the camp, could not now see us from that point. We only feared the chances of their discovering our tracks, and following us. Urged by this apprehension, we did not halt when the day broke, but kept on until near noontide. Then we drew up—for our oxen, as well as the horse, were completely tired down, and could go no farther without rest.

"It was but a poor rest for them—with neither grass nor water—not a blade of anything green except the *artemisia* plant, the wild wormwood—which, of course, neither horse nor oxen would touch. This grew all around us in low thickets. Its gnarled and twisted bushes, with their white silvery leaves, so far from gladdening the eye, only served to render the scene more dreary and desolate—for we knew that this plant denoted the extreme barrenness

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of the soil. We knew that, wherever it grew, the desert was around it.

"It was, indeed, but a poor rest for our animals—for the hot sun glanced down upon them during the noon hours, making them still more thirsty. We could not afford them a drop of the precious water; for we ourselves were oppressed with extreme thirst, and our stock was hourly diminishing. It was as much as we could to spare a small quantity to the dogs, Castor and Pollux.

"Long before night, we once more yoked to the oxen, and continued our journey, in the hope of reaching some stream or spring. By sunset we had made ten miles farther to the south, but no landmark as yet appeared in sight—nothing to indicate the presence of water. We could see nothing around us but the sterile plain stretching on all sides to the horizon—not even a bush, or rock, or the form of a wild animal, relieved the monotonous expanse. We were as much alone, as if we had been in an open boat in the middle of the ocean!

"We began to grow alarmed, and to hesitate. Should we go back? No, that would never do. Even had the prospect at the end of a backward journey been

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more cheering, we felt uncertain whether we might be able to reach the stream we had just left. We should surely reach water as soon by keeping forward; and with this thought we travelled on through all the livelong night.

"When morning came, I again surveyed the horizon, but could see no object along its level line. I was riding gloomily alongside the poor oxen, watching their laborious efforts, when a voice sounded in my ears. It was that of Frank, who was standing in the fore part of the wagon, looking out from under the tilt.

"'Papa! papa!' cried he, 'look at the pretty white cloud!'

"I looked up at the boy, to see what he meant. I saw that he was pointing to the south-east, and I turned my eyes in that direction. I uttered an exclamation of joy, which startled my companions; for I saw that what Frank had taken for a white cloud was the snowy cap of a mountain! I might have seen it before, had my eyes been searching in that quarter; but they were not, as I was examining the sky towards the south and west.

"Guided by no very extraordinary experience, I knew that where there was snow there must be

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water; and, without another word, I directed Cudjo to head his oxen for the mountain. It was out of the way we wanted to go; but we thought not of that, for the saving of our lives had now grown to be the only question with us.

"The mountain was still twenty miles distant. We could have seen it much farther off, but we had been travelling through the night. The question was, would our oxen be able to reach it? They were already tottering in their tracks. If they should break down, could *we* reach it? Our water was all gone, and we were suffering from thirst as the sun rose. A river, thought I, must run from the mountain, fed by the melting of its snows. Perhaps we might come to this river before arriving at the mountain foot. But, no;—the plain evidently sloped down from us to the mountain. Whatever stream ran from it must go the other way. We should find no water before reaching the mountain—perhaps, not then; and, tortured with these doubts, we pushed gloomily forward.

"By noon the oxen began to give out. One of them fell dead, and we left him. The other three could not go much farther. Every article that was of no present use was thrown from the wagon to

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lighten it, and left lying on the plain; but still the poor brutes were scarce able to drag it along. We went at a snail's pace.

"A short rest might recruit the animals, but I could not bring myself to halt again, as my heart was agonized by the cries of my suffering children. Mary bore up nobly; so, too, did the boys. For myself, I could not offer a word of consolation, for I knew that we were still ten miles from the foot of the mountain. I thought of the possibility of riding on ahead, and bringing back some water in the vessels; but I saw that my horse could never stand it. He was even now unable to carry me, and I was afoot, leading him. Cudjo also walked by the side of the oxen. Another of these now gave up, and only two remained to drag the vehicle.

"At this terrible moment several objects appeared before us on the plain, that caused me to cry out with delight. They were dark-green masses, of different sizes—the largest of them about the size of a bee-cap. They looked like a number of huge hedgehogs rolled up, and presenting on all sides their thorny spikes. On seeing them, I dropped my horse; and, drawing my knife, ran eagerly forward. My companions thought I had gone mad, not under-

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standing why I should have drawn my knife on such harmless-looking objects, and not knowing what they were. But I knew well what they were: I knew they were the *globe cacti*.

"In a moment's time I had peeled the spikelets from several of them; and as the wondering party came up, and saw the dark-green succulent vegetables, with the crystal water oozing out of their pores, they were satisfied that I had not gone mad.

"In a short while, we had cut the huge spheroids into slices, which we chewed with avidity. We set some of them also before the horse and oxen, both of which devoured them greedily, sap, fibres, and all; while the dogs lapped the cool liquid wherever they were cut.

"It is true, that this did not quench thirst, in the same way that a drink of water would have done; but it greatly relieved us, and would, perhaps, enable us to reach the mountain. We resolved to halt for a short while, in order to rest the oxen. Unfortunately, the relief had come too late for one of them. It had been his last stretch; and when we were about to start again, we found that he had lain down and was unable to rise. We saw that we must leave him; and, taking such harness as we could find, we

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put the horse in his place, and moved onward. We were in hopes of finding another little garden of cactus plants; but none appeared, and we toiled on, suffering as before.

"When we had got within about five miles of the mountain-foot, the other ox broke down, and fell—as we supposed—dead. We could take the wagon no farther; but it was no time either to hesitate or halt: we must try it afoot, or perish where we were.

"I loosed out the horse, and left him to his will—I saw he was no longer able to carry any of us. I took an axe from the wagon—also a tin pot, and a piece of dry beef that still remained to us. Cudjo shouldered the axe and little Mary; I carried the beef, the pot, Luisa, and my rifle; while my wife, Frank, and Harry, each held something in their hands. Thus burdened, we bade adieu to the wagon, and struck off toward the mountain. The dogs followed; and the poor horse, not willing to be left behind, came tottering after.

"There is not much more of that journey to be detailed. We toiled through those five miles the best way we could. As we drew nearer to the mountain, we could see deep dark ravines running down its sides, and in the bottom of one we

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distinguished a silvery thread, which we knew was the foam of water as it dashed over the rocks. The sight gave us new energy, and in another hour we had reached the banks of a crystal stream, and were offering thanks for our deliverance.

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CHAPTER X.

ADVENTURE WITH AN ARMADILLO.

"WELL, my friends, we had arrived on the banks of a rivulet, and were thanking God for bringing us safely there. We soon satisfied our thirst, as you may believe, and began to look around us. The stream we had reached was not that which runs into the valley here, but altogether on the other side of the mountain. It was but a mere rill, and I saw that several similar ones issued from the ravines, and after running a short distance into the plain, fell off toward the south-east, and united with others running from that side. I found afterwards that they all joined into the same channel, forming a considerable river, which runs from this elevated plain in an easterly direction; and which I take to be a head-water of the Great Red River of Louisiana, or perhaps of the Brazos, or Colorado, of

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Texas. I have called it a considerable river. That is not quite correct; for although, where they all unite, they form a good-sized body of water, yet twenty miles farther down, for three-fourths of the year the channel is perfectly dry; and that is the case I know not how far beyond. The water, which passes from the mountain at all times, is either evaporated by the hot sun, or sinks into the sands of its own bed, during a run of twenty miles. It is only in times of great rain—a rare occurrence here—or when very hot weather melts an unusual quantity of the snow, that there is water enough to carry the stream over a flat sandy tract which stretches away to the eastward. All these things I found out afterwards, and as you, my friends, know them to be common phenomena of the Desert, I shall not now dwell upon them.

"I saw that, where we were, there was but little chance of getting anything to eat. The sides of the mountain were rugged and grim, with here and there a stunted cedar hanging from the rocks. The small patches of grass and willows that lined the banks of the little rills—although cheering to the eye, when compared with the brown barrenness of the Desert—offered but little prospect that we should

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get any thing to eat there. If the Desert stretched away to the south of the mountain, as we saw that it did to the north, east, and west, then we had only reached a temporary resting-place, and we might still perish, if not from thirst, from what was equally as bad—hunger.

"This was uppermost in our thoughts at the time, —for we had not eaten a morsel during that day; so we turned our attention to the piece of dried meat.

"'Let us cook it, and make a soup,' said Mary; 'that will be better for the children.' My poor wife! I saw that the extreme fatigue she had undergone had exhausted her strength, yet still she endeavoured to be cheerful.

"'Yes, papa, let us make soup; soup is very nice,' added Frank, trying to cheer his mother by showing that he was not dismayed.

"'Very well, then,' I replied. 'Come, Cudjo, shoulder your axe, and let us to the mountain for wood. Yonder are some pine-trees near the foot,—they will make an excellent fire.'

"So Cudjo and I started for the wood, which was growing about three hundred yards distant, and close in to the rocks where the stream came down.

"As we drew nearer to the trees, I saw that they

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were not pine-trees, but very different indeed. Both trunks and branches had long thorny spikes upon them like porcupine's quills, and the leaves were of a bright shining green, pinnate with small oval leaflets. But what was most singular was the long bean-shaped pods that hung down thickly from the branches. These were about an inch and a half in breadth, and some of them not less than twelve inches in length. They were of a reddish-brown, nearly a claret colour. Except in the colour, they looked exactly like large bean-pods filled with beans.

"I was not ignorant of what species of tree was before us. I had seen it before. I knew it was the honey-locust, or thorny acacia,—the carob-tree of the East, and the famed 'algarobo' of the Spaniards. I was not ignorant of its uses neither,—for I knew this to be the tree upon which (as many suppose) St. John the Baptist sustained himself in the Desert, where it is said, 'His meat was locusts and wild honey.' Hence it is sometimes called, 'St. John's bread.' Neither was Cudjo ignorant of its uses. The moment his eyes rested upon the long brown legumes, he cried out, with gestures of delight:—

"'Massa,—Massa Roff, lookee yonder!—beans and honey for supper!'

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"We were soon under the branches; and while I proceeded to knock down and collect a quantity of the ripe fruit, Cudjo went farther up among the rocks, to procure his firewood from the pines that grew there.

"I soon filled my handkerchief, and was waiting for Cudjo, when I heard him shout,—

"'Massa Roff! come dis away, and see de varmint—what him be.'

"I immediately ran up among the rocks. On reaching the spot where Cudjo was, I found him bending over a crevice or hole in the ground, from which protruded an object very much like the tail of a pig.

"'What is it, Cudjo?' I asked.

"'Don't know, Massa. Varmint I never seed in Vaginny—looks someting like de ole 'possum.'

"'Catch hold of the tail, and pull him out,' said I.

"'Lor! Massa Roff, I've tried ma best, but can't fotch 'im no how. Look yar!' And so saying, my companion seized the tail, and pulled—seemingly with all his might—but to no purpose.

"'Did you see the animal when it was outside?' I inquired.

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"'Yes, Massa; see 'im and chase 'im 'till I tree him yar in dis cave.'

"'What was it like?'

"'Berry like a pig—maybe more belike ole 'possum, but cubberd all ober wi' shell like a Vaginny turtle.'

"'Oh! then—it is an armadillo.'

"'An amadiller! Cudjo niver hear o' dat varmint afore.'

"I saw that the animal which had so astonished my companion was one of those curious living things—which Nature, in giving variety to her creatures, has thought proper to form—and which are known throughout Mexico and South America by the name of 'armadillos.' They are so called from the Spanish word 'armado,' which signifies armed—because that all over their body there is a hard, shell-like covering divided into bands and regular figures, exactly like the coats-of-mail worn by the warriors of ancient times. There is even a helmet covering their heads, connected with the other parts of the armour by a joint, which renders this resemblance still more complete and singular. There are many species of these animals; some of them as large as a full-sized sheep, but the generality of them are much smaller. The

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curious figuring of the shell that covers them differs in the different species. In some the segments are squares, in others hexagons, and in others, again, they are of a pentagonal shape. In all of them, however, the figures have a mathematical form and precision, that is both strange and beautiful. They look as though they were artificial, — that is, carved by the hand of man. They are harmless creatures, and most of the species feed upon herbs and grass. They do not run very nimbly, though they can go much faster than one would suppose, considering the heavy armour which they carry. This, however, is not all in one shell, but in many pieces connected together by a tough, pliable skin. Hence they can use their limbs with sufficient ease. They are not such slow travellers as the turtles and tortoises. When they are pursued and overtaken, they sometimes gather themselves into a round ball, as hedgehogs do; and if they should happen to be near the edge of a precipice they will roll themselves over to escape from their enemy. More often when pursued they betake themselves to their holes, or to any crevice among rocks that may be near; and this was evidently the case with that which Cudjo had surprised. When they can hide their heads, like the ostrich, they

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fancy themselves safe; and so, no doubt, fancied this one, until he felt the sinewy fingers of Cudjo grasping him by the tail. It was evident the animal had run into a shallow crack where he could go no farther, else we would soon have lost sight of his tail; but it was equally evident, that pulling upon that appendage was not the method to get him out. I could see that he had pushed the scaly armour outward and upward, so that it held fast against the rocks on every side. Moreover, his claws, which are remarkable both for length and tenacity, were clutched firmly against the bottom of the crevice. It would have taken a team of oxen to have pulled him out, as Cudjo remarked with a grin.

"I had heard of a plan used by the Indians who hunt the armadillo, and who are very fond of his flesh; and as I was determined to try it, I told my companion to let go the tail, and stand to one side.

"I now knelt down in front of the cave, and, taking a small branch of cedar, commenced tickling the hind-quarters of the animal with the sharp needles. In a moment I saw that his muscles began to relax, and the shell to separate from the rocks, and close in toward his body. After continuing the operation for some minutes, I observed that he had

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reduced himself to his natural size, and had no doubt forgotten to keep a look-out with his claws. Seeing this, I seized the tail firmly; and, giving it a sudden jerk, swung the armadillo out between the feet of my companion. Cudjo aimed a blow with the axe which nearly severed its head from its body, and killed the animal outright. It was about the size of a rabbit, and proved to be of the eight-banded species — reckoned more delicious eating than any other.

"We now returned to camp with our fire-wood, our locust-beans, and our armadillo—the last of which objects horrified my wife, when I told her I was going to eat it. It proved a great curiosity to the boys, however, who amused themselves by running their fingers all over its mottled armour. But I had something that amused the little Mary and Luisa still more — the delicious, honey-like pulp from the pods of the locust-tree, which they greedily ate. The seeds we extracted from the pulp, intending to roast them as soon as we had kindled our fire.

"And now, my friends," continued Rolfe, rising to his feet, "since we have got to talking about this same locust-tree, I hope you will not refuse to try a mug of my home-brewed beer, which I made out of

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its beans this very day, while you were wandering about my grounds and through the valley. It is, perhaps, not equal to Barclay and Perkins'; but I flatter myself that, under the circumstances, you will not find it unpalatable."

Saying this, our host brought forward a large flagon, and pouring into our cups a brown-coloured liquid, set them before us. We all drank of the "locust beer," which was not unlike mead or new cider, and to prove that we liked it, we drank again and again.

As soon as this ceremony was over, Rolfe went on with his narration.

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CHAPTER XI.

A VERY LEAN BUFFALO.

"We were all soon engaged in different occupations. Mary was preparing the dried meat, which she intended to boil along with the locust beans in our tin pot. Fortunately, it was a large one, and held nearly a gallon. Cudjo was busy kindling the fire, which already sent up its volumes of blue smoke. Frank, Harry, and the little ones, were sucking away at the natural preserves of the acacia, while I was dressing my armadillo for the spit. In addition to this, our horse was filling out his sides upon the rich buffalo-grass that grew along the stream; and the dogs—poor fellows! they were like to fare worst of all—stood watching my operations, and snapped eagerly at every bit that fell from my knife. In a very short while the fire was blazing up, the beef and beans were bubbling over it in the tin pot, and

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the armadillo was sputtering on the spit beside them. In another short while all things were cooked and ready to be eaten.

"We now remembered that we had neither plates, glasses, knives, forks, nor spoons—yes, Cudjo and I had our hunting-knives; and, as it was no time to be nice, with these we fished the pieces of meat and some of the beans out of the soup-pot, and placed them upon a clean, flat stone. For the soup itself, we immersed the lower part of the pot into the cool water of the stream, so that in a short time Mary and the children could apply the edge of it to their lips, and drink of it in turn.

"As for Cudjo and myself, we did not want any of the soup. We were altogether for the 'substantials.'

"I thought, at first, I should have all the armadillo to myself. Even Cudjo, who in 'ole Vaginny' had bolted 'coons, 'possums, and various other 'varmints,' for a long time hung back. Seeing, however, that I was eating with evident relish, he held out his sable paw, and desired me to help him to a small piece. Having once tasted it, the ice of his appetite seemed to be all at once broken, and he kept asking for more, and then for more, until I began to

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fear he would not leave me enough for my own supper.

"Neither Mary nor the boys, however, would consent to share with us, although I assured them, what was positively the fact, that what I was eating was equal in delicacy of flavour to the finest roast pig—a dish, by the way, to which the armadillo bears a very great resemblance.

"The sun was now setting, and we began to think how we were to pass the night. We had left all our blankets in the wagon, and the air was fast becoming cold, which is always the case in the neighbourhood of snowy mountains. This is easily explained. The atmosphere getting cool upon the peak, where it envelopes the snow, of course becomes heavier, and keeps constantly descending around the base of the mountain, and pushing up and out that air which is warmer and lighter. In fact, there was a sensible breeze blowing down the sides of the mountain, caused by these natural laws, and it had already made us chilly, after the burning heat through which we had been travelling. Should we sleep in this cold atmosphere—even though we kept up a fire during the whole night—I knew that we must suffer much.

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"The thought now entered into my mind, that I might go back to the wagon—which was only five miles off—and bring up our blankets. Should I go myself, or send Cudjo, or should both of us go? All at once the idea entered my head that one of us might ride there, and bring back a load of other articles, as well as the blankets. Our horse, who had been filling himself for the last hour and a half with good grass and water, now began to show symptoms of life and vigour. Animals of this kind soon recover from fatigue, when their food and drink are restored to them. I saw that he would be quite able to do the journey, so I gave Cudjo directions to catch him. There happened to be a piece of rope around his neck, and this would serve for a bridle. I hesitated for some time, whether both Cudjo and I should leave Mary and the children; but my wife urged us to go, telling us she would have no fear, as long as Harry and Frank, with their rifles, remained with her. The dogs, too, would stay. Indeed, there was not much danger of them leaving her, while she held in her arms the little Luisa, whom both these animals seemed to watch over.

"Influenced by her advice, I consented to leave her alone with the children; and giving directions

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that they should fire off one of the rifles, in case of any alarm, I set forth with Cudjo and the horse.

"We could see the white tilt of the wagon from the very start; and we had no difficulty in guiding ourselves to it.

"As we passed onward, I was reflecting whether the wolves had not already made a meal of our poor ox that we had left by the wagon. If not, it was my intention to skin him, and save the meat, lean and tough as it must be—for the animal looked more like some dry skeleton to be preserved in a museum than anything else. Still I saw before us no prospect of a better breakfast, and I began to grow very anxious as to whether we might find a bit of him left. At this moment, I was startled from my reflections by an exclamation from Cudjo, who had stopped suddenly, and was pointing to some object directly ahead of us. I looked forward; and saw in the dim light something that very much resembled a large quadruped.

"'P'raps, Massa,' whispered Cudjo, 'him be de buffler.'

"'Perhaps it is a buffalo; but what is to be done? I have left my rifle. Here! take the horse, and I

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will endeavour to get near enough to kill it with my pistols.'

"Giving Cudjo the horse, and cautioning him to be silent, I drew the largest of my pistols, and crept silently forward. I went upon my hands and knees, and very slowly, so as not to give the animal an alarm. As I got nearer, I felt sure it was a buffalo; but the moon had not yet risen, and I could see its form but very indistinctly. At length, I believed I had it within range of my pistol; at least, thought I, if I go any nearer it will make off; so I halted—still upon my knees—and made ready to fire. As I raised my weapon, the horse suddenly neighed; and, in answer to his neigh, the strange animal uttered a loud roar, which I knew to be nothing else than the bellowing of an ox! And so it proved, as it was neither more nor less than our own ox, who had left the wagon, and was slowly making his way for the mountain. The cool air had somewhat revived him, and instinct, or a knowledge of the way we had gone, was guiding him in that direction.

"I know not whether I was more pleased or disappointed at meeting our old companion. A good fat buffalo would have been more welcome at the time than a famished ox; but when I reflected that

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he might yet help us to get out of the Desert, I felt that we were fortunate in finding him still alive. The horse and he put their noses together, evidently pleased at again meeting each other; and I could not help thinking, as the ox shook his long tail, that the horse must have told him of the nice grass and water that were so near him. The ox had his reins upon him, and lest he might stray from the track, we tied him to a sage-bush, so that we might take him with us when we came back.

"We were about leaving him, when it occurred to me, that if the ox only had a little water, he might, along with the horse, enable us to bring the wagon up to the mountain. What a delightful surprise it would be to Mary, to see us return with ox, wagon, and all;—not only the blankets, but also our cups, pans, and cooking-pots, besides some coffee, and other little luxuries, that were stored away in our great chest! Ha! thought I, that would be delightful; and I immediately communicated the idea to Cudjo. My companion fully agreed with me, and believed it quite possible and practicable. We had brought along with us the tin-pot, full of cool water from the stream; but it was

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too narrow at the mouth, and the ox could not possibly drink out of it.

"'Let us gib it, Massa Roff,' advised Cudjo, 'in de ole hoss-bucket, once we gets 'im back to de wagon. Ya! ya! we gib Missa an abstonishment.' And my light-hearted companion laughed with delight, at the prospect of making his mistress happy on our return.

"Without farther parley, we unloosed the rein from the sage-bush, and led the ox back towards the wagon. Neither of us rode the horse, as we knew he would have enough to do in dragging up his share of the load.

"On reaching the wagon, we found everything as we had left it; but several large white wolves were prowling around, and, no doubt, it had been the sight of them that had roused the ox, and imparted to him the energy that had enabled him to get away from the spot.

"We soon found the bucket; and, pouring the water into it, set it before the ox, who drank every drop of it, and then licked the sides and bottom of the vessel until they were quite dry. We now 'hitched to' both animals; and, without more

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a-do, drove off towards our little camp at the mountain.

"We guided ourselves by the fire, which we could see burning brightly under the dark shadow of the cliffs. Its blaze had a cheering effect on the spirits both of my companion and myself; and even the horse and ox seemed to understand that it would be the end of their journey, and pressed forward with alacrity to reach it.

"When within about half a mile, I heard the report of a rifle ringing among the rocks. I was filled with alarm. Were Mary and the children attacked by Indians?—perhaps by some savage animal?—perhaps by the grizzly bear?

"I did not hesitate a moment, but ran forward—leaving Cudjo with the wagon. I drew my pistol, and held it in readiness as I advanced, all the while listening eagerly to catch every sound that might come from the direction of the fire. Once or twice I stopped for short intervals to breathe and listen; but there were no noises from the camp! What could be the meaning of the silence? Where were the dogs? I knew that, had they been attacked by a grizzly bear, or any other animal, I should have heard their barks and worrying. But there was not

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a sound. Had they been killed all at once by Indian arrows, so silent in their deadly effect? O God! had my wife, and children too, fallen victims?

"Filled with painful apprehensions, I ran forward with increased energy, determined to rush into the midst of the enemy—whoever they might be—and sell my life as dearly as possible.

"At length, I came within full view of the fire. What was my astonishment, as well as joy, on seeing my wife sitting by the blaze, with little Luisa upon her knee, while Mary was playing upon the ground at her feet! But where were Harry and Frank? It was quite incomprehensible. I knew that they would not have fired the rifle to alarm me unnecessarily, yet there sat Mary as though no rifle had been fired!

"'What was it, dear Mary?' I cried, running up. 'Where are the boys?—they discharged the rifle, did they not?'

"'They did,' she replied; 'Harry fired at something.'

"'At what?—at what?' I inquired.

"'At some animal, I know not what kind; but I think they must have wounded it, for they all ran

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Harry kills a prong-horned Antelope. P. 114.

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out, dogs and all, after the shot, and have not yet come back.'

"'In what direction?' I asked hurriedly.

"Mary pointed out the direction; and, without waiting further, I ran off into the darkness. When about an hundred yards from the fire, I came upon Harry, Frank, and the mastiffs, standing over some animal which I saw was quite dead. Harry was not a little proud of the shot he had made, and expected me to congratulate him, which of course I did; and laying hold of the animal by one of its hind legs —for it had no tail to lay hold of—I dragged it forward to the light of the fire. It appeared to be about the size of a sucking calf, though much more elegantly shaped, for its legs were long and slender, and its shanks not thicker than a common walking-cane. It was of a pale red colour, whitish along the breast and belly, but its large, languishing eyes and slender forking horns told me at once what sort of animal it was; it was the prong-horned antelope,—the only species of antelope found in North America.

"Mary now related the adventure. While they were sitting silently by the fire, and somewhat impatiently awaiting our return—for the wagon had delayed us considerably—they saw a pair of large eyes

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glancing in the darkness like two candles, and not many yards from where they sat. They could see nothing but the eyes; but this of itself was sufficient to alarm them, as they fancied it might be a wolf, or, perhaps still worse, a bear or panther. They did not lose presence of mind, however; and they knew that to escape by running away would be impossible; so both Frank and Harry took hold of their rifles—though Harry was foremost with his. He then aimed, as well as he could, between the two glancing eyes, and pulled trigger. Of course the smoke blinded them, and in the darkness they could not tell whether the bullet had hit the animal or not; but the dogs—who up to this time had been sleeping by the fire—sprang to their feet, and ran out in pursuit. They could hear them running for some distance, and then they heard a scramble and a struggle, and then they were silent; so they concluded—what afterwards proved to be the case—that Harry had wounded the animal, and that the dogs had caught, and were worrying it. And so they were, for as the boys got to the spot they had just killed it; and—hungry as they were—would soon have made a meal of it had Frank and Harry not got up in good time to take care of that. The antelope had been

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shot in the shoulder, and had only run for a short distance before it fell.

"Although Harry did not boast of his prowess, I saw that he had a triumphant look,—the more so as this fine piece of venison would ensure us all against hunger for three days at the least; and, considering that only an hour before we did not know where the next meal was to come from, it was certainly no small matter to be proud of. I thought just then of the surprise I had prepared for them, not only in bringing up the wagon which contained all our utensils and comforts, but in the recovery of our best ox.

"'Where is Cudjo?' asked my wife. 'Is he bringing the blankets?'

"'Yes,' said I, knowingly, 'and a good load besides.'

"At that moment was heard the creaking of wheels, and the great tilt of white canvass was seen, far out, reflecting back the blaze of the fire. Frank leaped to his feet, and, clapping his hands with delight, cried out,—

"'Mamma! mamma! it is the wagon!'

"Then was heard the loud voice of Cudjo in a joyous 'Wo-ha!' and the moment after, the horse and ox stepped up to the fire as lightly as if the pull

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had been a mere bagatelle; and they could have stood it an hundred miles farther without flinching. We were not slow in relieving both of them from their traces, and giving them a full swing at the grass and water.

"As it was now late in the night, and we were all very tired, from the fatigues we had undergone, we determined to lose no time in going to rest. Mary went to prepare a bed in the wagon,—for this was our only tent, and a very excellent tent it was, too. At the same time, Cudjo and I set about skinning the antelope, so that we might have it in fine order for our breakfast in the morning. The dogs, too, were interested in this operation,—for they, poor brutes, up to this time, had fared worse than any of us. However, the head, feet, and intestines, fell to their share; and they soon had a supper to their hearts' content. Having finished skinning the antelope, we tied a rope to its legs, and slung it up to the branch of a tree, high enough to be out of the reach of wolves, as well as our own dogs, during the night.

"Mary had by this time completed the arrangements for our sleeping; and but one thing more remained to be done before retiring to rest. That was a duty which we never neglected when circum-

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stances admitted of its being performed. Mary knew this, and had brought out of the wagon the only book which it contained—the Bible. Cudjo turned up the pine-logs upon the fire; and seating ourselves around the blaze, I read from the Sacred Book those passages which were most appropriate to our own situation,—how God had preserved Moses and the children of Israel in the Desert Wilderness.

"Then, with clasped hands and grateful hearts, we all knelt, and offered thanks for our own almost miraculous deliverance.

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CHAPTER XII.

THE BIGHORNS.

"NEXT morning we were up by the earliest break of day, and had the pleasure of witnessing a beautiful phenomenon in the sunrise. The whole country to the east, as far as we could see, was a level plain; and the horizon, of course, resembled that of the ocean when calm. As the great yellow globe of the sun appeared above it, one could have fancied that he was rising out of the earth itself, although he was more than ninety millions of miles distant from any part of it. It was a beautiful sky into which the sun was slowly climbing up. It was of a pale, blue colour, and without the smallest cloud, for on these high table-plains in the interior of America, you may often travel for days without seeing a cloud as big as a kite. We were all in better spirits, for we had rested well, and had no longer any fear of being

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followed by the savages who had massacred our companions. They would have been fools, indeed, to have made that dreadful journey for all they could have gotten from us. Moreover, the sight of our antelope, with its nice yellow fat, crisped by the cold night-air, was anything but disheartening. As Cudjo was a dexterous butcher, I allowed him to quarter it, while I shouldered the axe and marched off to the mountain foot to procure more wood for the fire. Mary was busy among her pots, pans, and platters, scouring and washing them all in the clear stream, for the dust of the barren plains had blown into the wagon as we marched, and had formed a thick coating over the vessels. Fortunately we had a good stock of these utensils — consisting of a gridiron, a large camp-kettle, a couple of mess-pans, a baking-dish, a first-rate coffee-pot and mill, half-a-dozen tin-cups and plates, with an assortment of knives, forks, and spoons. All these things we had laid in at St. Louis, by the advice of our Scotch friend, who knew very well what articles were required for a journey across the Desert.

"I was not long in getting the wood, and our fire was soon replenished and blazing brightly. Mary attended to the coffee, which she parched in one of

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the mess-pans, and then ground in the mill. I handled the gridiron and broiled the venison-steaks, while Cudjo collected a large supply of locust-beans, and roasted them. These last were to serve us for bread, as we had neither meal nor flour. The supply we had brought from St. Louis had been exhausted several days before, and we had lived altogether upon dried beef and coffee. Of this last article we were very sparing, as we had not over a pound of it left, and it was our most precious luxury. We had no sugar whatever, nor cream, but we did not mind the want of either, as those who travel in the wilderness find coffee very palatable without them—perhaps quite as much so as it is, when mixed with the whitest of sugar and the yellowest of cream, to the pampered appetites of those who live always at home. But, after all, we should not have to drink our coffee without sweetening, as I observed that Frank, while extracting the beans of the locust, was also scraping the honeyed pulp from the pods, and putting it to one side. He had already collected nearly a plate full. Well done, Frank!

"The great mess chest had been lifted out of the wagon; and the lid of this, with a cloth spread over it, served us for a table. For seats we had rolled

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several large stones around the chest, and upon these we sat drinking the delicious coffee, and eating the savoury steaks of venison.

"While we were thus pleasantly engaged, I observed Cudjo suddenly rolling the whites of his eyes upwards, at the same time exclaiming,—

"'Golly! Missa—Massa—lookee yonder!'

"The rest of us turned quickly round—for we had been sitting with our backs to the mountain—and looked in the direction indicated by Cudjo. There were high cliffs fronting us, and along the face of these, five large reddish objects were moving, so fast, that I at first thought they were birds upon the wing. After watching them a moment, however, I saw that they were quadrupeds; but so nimbly did they go, leaping from ledge to ledge, that it was impossible to see their limbs. They appeared to be animals of the deer species—somewhat larger than sheep or goats—but we could see that, in place of antlers, each of them had a pair of huge curving horns. As they leaped downward, from one platform of the cliffs to another, we fancied that they whirled about in the air, as though they were 'turning somersaults,' and seemed at times to come down heads foremost!

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"There was a spur of the cliff that sloped down to within less than a hundred yards of the place where we sat. It ended in an abrupt precipice of some sixty or seventy feet in height above the plain. The animals, on reaching the level of this spur, ran along it until they had arrived at its end. Seeing the precipice they suddenly stopped, as if to reconnoitre it; and we had now a full view of them, as they stood outlined against the sky, with their graceful limbs and great curved horns almost as large as their bodies. We thought, of course, they could get no farther for the precipice, and I was calculating whether my rifle—which I had laid hold of—would reach them at that distance. All at once, to our astonishment, the foremost sprang out from the cliff; and whirling through the air, lit upon his head on the hard plain below! We could see that he came down upon his horns, and rebounding up again to the height of several feet, he turned a second somersault, and then dropped upon his legs, and stood still! Nothing daunted the rest followed, one after the other in quick succession, like so many street-tumblers, and like them — after the feat had been performed — the animals stood for a moment, as if waiting for applause!

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"The spot where they had dropped was not more than fifty paces from our camp; but I was so astonished at the tremendous leap, that I quite forgot the rifle I held in my hands. The animals, too, seemed equally astonished upon discovering us — which they did now for the first time. The yelping of the dogs, who rushed forward at the moment, brought me to myself again, as it did the strangers to a sense of their dangerous proximity; and, wheeling suddenly, they bounded back for the mountain. I fired after them at random; but we all supposed without effect, as the whole five kept on to the foot of the mountain, followed by the dogs. Presently they commenced ascending, as though they had wings; but we noticed that one of them hung in the rear, and seemed to leap upward with difficulty. Upon this one our eyes became fixed, as we now fancied it was wounded. We were right in this. The rest soon disappeared out of sight; but that which lagged behind, on leaping for a high ledge, came short in the attempt, and rolled backward down the face of the mountain. The next moment we saw him struggling between the mastiffs.

"Cudjo, Frank, and Harry, ran together up the steep, and soon returned, bringing the animal along

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with them quite dead—as the dogs had put an end to him. It was a good load for Cudjo, and proved upon closer acquaintance to be as large as a fallow-deer. From the huge wrinkled horns, and other marks, I knew it to be the *argali*, or wild sheep, known among hunters by the name of the 'bighorn,' and sometimes spoken of in books as the 'Rocky Mountain sheep,' although in its general appearance it looked more like an immense yellow goat, or deer with a pair of rams' horns stuck upon his head. We knew, however, it was not bad to eat,—especially to people in our circumstances; and as soon as we had finished our breakfast, Cudjo and I whetted our knives, and having removed the skin, hung up the carcass alongside the remainder of the antelope. The dogs for their pains had a breakfast to their satisfaction; and the rest of us, seeing so much fresh meat hanging to the tree, with a cool stream of water running beneath it, began to fancy we were quite delivered from the Desert.

"We now sat down together to deliberate on our future proceedings. Between the argali and the antelope, we had provision enough to last us for a week at least; but when that was done, what likelihood was there of our procuring a further supply of either?

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Not much, thought we; for although there might be a few more antelopes and a few more 'bighorns' about the place, there could not be many with so little appearance of anything for them to feed on. Moreover, we might not find it so easy to kill any more of them,—for those we had already shot seemed to have fallen in our way by chance, or—as we more properly believed at the time and still believe—by the guiding of a Providential hand. But we knew it was not right or wise to rely altogether on this,—that is, we knew it was our duty, while trusting in its guidance, at the same time to make every effort which lay in our own power to save ourselves. When our present supply should be exhausted, where was the next to come from? We could not always live upon armadilloes, and argalis, and antelopes,—even supposing they were as plenty as the rocks. But the chances were ten to one we should get no more of them. Our ox in a week would have improved in condition. He would sustain us for a time; and then—our horse—and then—and then—the dogs—and then—we should starve to a certainty.

"Any of these necessities was sufficiently fearful to contemplate. Should we kill our ox, we would be unable to take the wagon along, and how could the horse

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carry us all out of the desert? If we then killed the horse, we should be still worse off, and utterly helpless on foot. No man can cross the Great Desert on foot—not even the hunters—and how could we do it? To remain where we were would be impossible. There were a few patches of vegetation on the different runlets that filtered away from the mountain foot. There were clumps of willows growing along these, but not enough of grass to support any stock of game upon which we could live, even were we certain of being able to capture it. It was evident, then, to us all, that we should have to get away from that place as speedily as possible.

"The next point to be determined was, whether the Desert extended away to the south, as we already knew that it did to the north. To ascertain this, I resolved to go around the mountain, leaving the rest at the camp until my return.

"Our horse was now rested, and well fed; and having saddled him and shouldered my rifle, I mounted and rode off. I kept around the mountain foot, going by the eastern end. I crossed several rivulets resembling the one on which we had encamped, and noticed that all these turned off toward the eastward, making their way to a main stream. In

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this direction, too, I saw a few stunted trees, with here and there an appearance of greenness on the surface. On the way I saw an antelope, and another animal resembling a deer, but differing from all the deer I had ever seen, in having a long tail like a cow. I knew not at the time what sort of an animal it was, as I had never met with any description of it in books of natural history.

"After riding about five miles, I had fairly got round to the east side of the mountain, and could view the country away to the south. As far as my sight could reach, I saw nothing but an open plain—if possible more sterile in its character than that which stretched northward. The only direction in which there were any signs of fertility was to the east, and that was but in patches of scanty vegetation.

"It was a cheerless prospect. We should now certainly have a desert to cross before we could get to any inhabited country. To strike eastwardly again, for the American frontier—circumstanced as we were without provisions and with worn-out cattle—would be madness; as the distance was at least eight hundred miles. Besides, I knew there were many hostile tribes of Indians living on that route, so that, even should the country prove fertile, we could never

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hope to get through it. To go northward or southward would be equally impossible, as there was no civilized settlement for a thousand miles in either direction. Our only hope, then, would be, to attempt crossing the Desert westwardly to the Mexican settlements on the Del Norté,—a distance of nearly two hundred miles! To do this, we should need first to rest our ill-matched team for several days. We should also require provisions enough for the route, and how were these to be obtained? Again, thought I, we must trust to Providence, who has already so manifestly extended a helping hand to us.

"I observed that the mountain on the southern face descended with an easier slope toward the plain than upon the north, where it is bold and precipitous. From this I concluded that a greater quantity of snow must be melted, and run off in that direction. Doubtless then, thought I, there will be a greater amount of fertility on that side, and I continued to ride on, until I came in sight of the grove of willows and cotton-trees, which line the stream above the valley here. I soon reached them, and saw that there was a stream with considerable pasturage near its borders—much more than where we had encamped. I tied my horse to a tree, and climbed

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some distance up the mountain in order to get a view of the country south and west. I had not got to a great height when I caught sight of the singular chasm that seemed to open up in the plain. I was attracted with this peculiarity, and determined to examine it. Descending again to where I had left my horse, I mounted, and rode straight for it. In a short time I stood upon the brink of the precipice, and looked down into this smiling valley.

"I cannot describe my sensations at that moment. Only they, whose eyes have been bent for days on the sterile wilderness, can feel the full effect produced by a scene of fertility such as there presented itself. It was late in the autumn, and the woods that lay below me—clad in all the variegated livery of that season—looked like some richly-coloured picture. The music of birds ascended from the groves below, wafted upward upon the perfumed and aromatic air; and the whole scene appeared more like a fabled Elysium than a reality of Nature. I could hardly satisfy myself that I was not dreaming, or looking upon some fantastic hallucination of the *mirage*.

"I stood for many minutes in a sort of trance, gazing down into the lovely valley. I could observe no signs of human habitation. No smoke rose over the

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trees, and no noises issued forth, except the voices of Nature, uttered in the songs of birds and the hum of falling waters. It seemed as though man had never desecrated this isolated paradise by his presence and passions.

"I say I stood for many minutes gazing and listening. I could have remained for hours; but the sinking sun admonished me to hasten away. I was nearly twenty miles from our camp, and my horse was neither strong nor fresh. Determined, therefore, to return on the morrow, bringing with me my companions and all that belonged to us, I turned my horse's head and rode back. It was late in the night —near midnight—when I reached camp. I found everything as I had left it, except that Mary was in great anxiety about what had delayed me so long. But my return, and the discovery which I communicated, soon restored her spirits; and we laid out our plans for changing our camp to the valley, determined to set forth at an early hour in the morning.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE GREAT ELK.

"We were stirring by sunrise next morning, and having breakfasted heartily, we packed our wagon and started away from our camp, which we had named 'Camp Antelope.' The stream we called 'Bighorn Creek' ever afterwards. We arrived at the upper end of the valley about an hour before sunset. Here we passed the night. Next day I started out to find some path by which we might get down into the bottom. I rode for miles along the edge of the bluff, but to my surprise I found that on both sides ran a steep precipice, and I began to fear that the tempting paradise was inaccessible, and had only been created to tantalize us. At length I reached the lower end, where, as you have noticed, the precipice is much less elevated—on account of the sloping of the upper plain. Here I came upon a path winding gradually down, upon which I saw the foot-marks of animals of various kinds. This was exactly what I wanted.

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"In this valley we could remain until our cattle were sufficiently recruited to face the Desert, while with our rifles we should be able to procure a sufficient stock of provisions for the journey.

"I started back for the wagon; but as I had consumed most of the day in my explorations, it was late when I reached it; and we remained another night at our camp on the stream, which we named the 'Willow Camp.'

"Next morning, we started early. On arriving at the point where the path led down, we halted the wagon. Mary and the children remained with it, while Cudjo and I descended into the valley to reconnoitre. The woods were quite thick, the trees apparently all bound together by huge vines, that stretched from one to the other like immense serpents. There was a thick undergrowth of cane; but we saw that a trail had been made through this by the passage of numerous animals. There were no human foot-marks to be seen, nor any signs that a human being had ever been upon the spot.

"We followed the trail that led us directly to the banks of the stream. It was then very shallow, and a great part of its shingly bed was dry. I saw that this would afford a good road for our wagon, and we

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kept on up the channel. About three miles from the lower end of the valley, we came to a place where the woods were more open, and less choked up with underwood. On the right bank of the stream there was a rising ground, forming a clear space of large extent, with only a tree growing here and there. This ground sloped gently down to the stream, and was covered with beautiful herbage—both grass and flowers. It was a lovely spot; and as we came suddenly out upon it, several animals, frightened by our approach, bounded off into the thickets beyond. We stopped for a moment to gaze upon the bright picture. Birds of brilliant wing were fluttering among the many-coloured leaves, singing or screaming, and chasing each other from tree to tree. There were parrots, and paroquets, and orioles, and blue jays, and beautiful loxias, both of the scarlet and azure-coloured species. There were butterflies, too, with broad wings mottled all over with the most vivid tints, flapping about from flower to flower. Many of these were as large as some of the birds, and far larger than others, for we saw flocks of tiny humming-birds, not bigger than bees, shooting about like sparkling gems, and balancing themselves over the cups of the open flowers.

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"It was a beautiful scene, indeed; and Cudjo and I at once agreed that that was the very place to pitch our camp. At the time, we meant it only for a *camp*—a spot where we might remain until our animals had recruited their strength, and we had collected from the forests around provision enough for the Desert journey. A temporary camp, indeed! That, gentlemen, is ten years ago, and here we are upon the same spot at this moment! Yes, my friends, this house stands in the middle of that very glade I have been describing. You will be surprised, when I tell you, there was no lake then, nor the appearance of one. That came afterwards, as you shall hear.

"What the lake now is was then part of the glade; and its surface, like the rest, was covered with beautiful vegetation, with, here and there, trees standing alone, and in small clumps, which gave it a most park-like appearance. In fact, we could not help fancying, that there was some splendid mansion in the background, to which it belonged—although we saw that the thick, dark woods surrounded it on all sides.

"We did not remain longer than was necessary to examine the ground. We knew that Mary would be anxiously looking for us, so we hastened back to our

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wagon. In less than three hours from that time, the wagon, with its snow-white tilt, stood in the centre of the glade, and the ox and horse, loosed from their labour, were eagerly browsing over the rich pasture. The children were playing on the green sward, under the shadow of a spreading magnolia, while Mary, Cudjo, the boys, and myself, were engaged in various occupations about the ground. The birds flew around us, chattering and screaming, to the great delight of our little ones. They came quite close to our encampment, perching upon the nearest trees, and wondering, no doubt, what strange creatures we were, who had thus intruded upon their hitherto untenanted domain. I was glad to see them thus curious about us, as I argued from this that the sight of man was new to them, and, therefore, we should be in no danger of meeting with any of our own kind in the valley. It is strange, that, of all others, man was the animal we most dreaded to meet! Yet, such was the case; for we knew that any human beings we might fall in with in such a place would be Indians, and, in all probability, would prove our most cruel enemies.

"It was still early in the afternoon, and we determined to do nothing for the remainder of that day

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but rest ourselves, as we had all experienced considerable fatigue in getting our wagon up the stream. Rocks had to be removed, and occasionally a way hewed through the thick branches. But the difficulty being now over, we felt as though we had reached a home, and we set about enjoying it. Cudjo built a fire, and erected a crane over it, upon which to hang our pots and kettles. The crane consisted of two forked sticks driven in to the ground, one on each side of the fire, with a long pole placed horizontally, and resting upon the forks. This is the usual manner of making the crane among backwoods' travellers, who cook their meals in the open air. The tripod crane, used by gipsies in Europe, is rarely to be seen among the wanderers of the American wilderness.

" In a short time, our camp-kettle, filled with pure water, was boiling and bubbling to receive the aromatic coffee; and the remainder of the antelope, suspended over the fire, was roasting and sputtering in the blaze. Mary had set out the great chest, covered with a clean white cloth—for she had washed it the day before; and upon this our tin plates and cups—scoured until they were shining like silver—were regularly arranged. When all these little pre-

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parations had been made, we seated ourselves around the fire, and watched the dainty venison as it became browned and crisped in the blaze. Cudjo had suspended the joint by a piece of strong cord, so that, by simply whirling it around, it would then continue for some time turning itself, as well as if it had been upon a patent jack-spit. We were congratulating ourselves on the fine supper we were likely soon to partake of, when, all at once, our attention was directed to a noise that came out of the woods, near the border of the open ground. There was a rustling of leaves, with a cracking sound as of dead sticks, broken by the hoofs of some heavy animal. All our eyes were immediately turned in that direction. Presently we saw the leaves in motion, and the next moment three large animals stepped out into the glade, apparently with the intention of crossing it.

"At first sight we thought they were deer, for each of them carried a pair of branching antlers, but their great size at once distinguished them from any of the deer species we had ever seen. Any one of them was as large as a Flemish horse, and their huge antlers rising several feet above their heads, gave them the appearance of being still much larger. On seeing the branched and towering horns, we took

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them for deer,—and in fact they were so; but far differing from either the red or fallow deer that are to be met with in parks and forests. They were elk—the great elk of the Rocky Mountains.

"On coming out of the timber, they marched forward, one after the other, with a proud step, that showed the confidence they placed in their great size and strength—as well as in the pointed weapons which they carried upon their heads, and which they can use upon an enemy with terrible effect. Their appearance was extremely majestic; and we all admired them in silence as they approached, for they came directly towards our camp.

"At length they caught sight of our wagon and fire,—neither of which objects, up to this time, they had seen. All at once they halted, tossed up their heads, snorted, and then continued for some moments to gaze at us with an expression of wonder.

"'They will be off now,' I muttered in an undertone to my wife and Cudjo. 'No doubt they will be off in a moment, and they are entirely out of reach of my rifle.'

"I had caught hold of the gun on first seeing them, and held it in readiness across my knees. Harry and Frank had also seized their small pieces.

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" ' What pity, Massa Roff,' said Cudjo, ' de big rifle no reach 'em ! Golly ! de be ebery one fat as Vaginny 'possum ! '

" I was thinking whether I might not creep a little closer to them, when, to our surprise, the animals, instead of starting off into the woods again, came several paces nearer, and again halted, tossing up their heads with a snort similar to that which they had uttered before. I say that this astonished all of us, for we had heard that the elk was an exceedingly shy animal. So, too, they are, of any danger to which they are accustomed ; but, like most of the deer and antelope tribe, their curiosity is greater than their fear, and they will approach any object which may be new to them, and examine it minutely, before running off. I saw that curiosity had brought them so much closer to us ; and, thinking they might advance still nearer, I cautioned my companions to remain silent, and without making any stir.

" The wagon, with its great white tilt, appeared to be the main attraction to our strange visitors ; and, after eyeing it a moment with looks of wonder, they again moved several paces forward, and stopped as before. A third time they advanced towards it, and again made halt

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"As the wagon was at some distance from where we were sitting by the fire, their movements towards it brought their great sides somewhat into our view. Their last advance, moreover, had brought the leader within range of my rifle. He was much the largest of the three, and I determined to wait no longer, but let him have it; so, levelling my piece at the place which I supposed lay nearest to his heart, I pulled trigger.

"'Missed him!' thought I, as the three great animals wheeled in their tracks, and went away like lightning. What was strange to us, they did not gallop, as most deer do, but went off in a sort of shambling trot, like a 'pacing' horse, and quite as fast as a horse could gallop.

"The dogs — which, up to this time, Cudjo had been holding by their necks — dashed after with yelps and barking. They were all — both elk and dogs — soon lost to our eyes; but for some time we could hear the elk breaking through the thick cane and bushes, with the dogs yelling in close pursuit.

"I thought there would be no chance of the mastiffs coming up with them, and was, therefore, not intending to follow; when, all at once, I heard the voices of the dogs change from yelping to that of a

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worrying sound, as though they were engaged in a fierce conflict with one another.

"'Perhaps I have wounded the animal, and they have overtaken it,' said I. 'Come, Cudjo! let us after and see. Boys, remain to take care of your mother.'

"I laid hold of Harry's rifle, and followed by Cudjo, ran across the glade in the track which both elk and dogs had taken. As we entered the bushes, I saw that their leaves were sprinkled with blood.

"'No doubt,' said I, 'he is wounded, and badly, too. We shall have him yet.'

"'Dat we shall, Massa!' cried Cudjo; and we ran on as fast as we could through the thick cane-brake, in the track made by the animals. I ran ahead of my companion, as Cudjo was rather slow of foot. Every here and there I saw gouts of blood on the leaves and cane, and guided by the hoarse voices of the mastiffs, I soon reached the spot where they were. Sure enough the wounded elk was there, down upon his knees, and defending himself with his antlers; while one of the dogs lay sprawling on the ground and howling with pain. The other still kept up the fight, endeavouring to seize the elk from behind; but the latter spun round, as though his

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knees were upon a pivot, and always presented his horny spikes in the direction of the attack.

"I was afraid the elk might get a blow at one of our brave dogs, and put an end to him, so I fired hastily; and, regardless of consequences, ran forward to finish him with the butt of the rifle. I struck with all my might, aiming directly for his head, but in my hurry I missed him; and, carried forward with the force which I had thrown into the blow, I fell right into the midst of his branching antlers! I dropped my rifle, and seized hold of the points, with the intention of extricating myself; but before I could do so, the elk had risen to his feet, and with a powerful jerk of his head tossed me high into the air. I came down upon a thick network of vines and branches; and, my presence of mind still remaining, I clutched them as I fell, and held on. It was well that I did so, for directly under me the infuriated animal was bounding from point to point, evidently in search of me and wondering where I had gone. Had I fallen back to the earth, instead of clinging to the branches, he would no doubt have crushed me to pieces with his fearful horns.

"For some moments I lay quite helpless where I had been flung, watching what was passing below.

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The Wounded Elk at Bay. P. 145.

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The mastiff still continued his attack, but was evidently cowed by the fate of his companion, and only snapped at the elk when he could get round to his flanks. The other dog lay among the weeds howling piteously.

"At this moment Cudjo appeared in sight, for I had headed him some distance in my haste. I could see the whites of his great eyes turned up in wonderment when he perceived the rifle lying upon the ground without seeing me. I had barely time to utter a shout of warning, when the elk spied him; and lowering his head, rushed upon him with a loud and furious snort.

"I was filled with fear for my faithful follower and friend. I saw that he carried a large Indian spear —which he had found at the camp where our companions had been massacred — but I had no hope of his being able to ward off the impetuous attack. I saw that he did not even point the weapon to receive the enraged animal, but stood like a statue. 'He is paralyzed with terror,' thought I; and I expected the next moment to see him impaled upon the sharp antlers and gored to death. But I had very much mistaken my man Cudjo. When the horns were within two feet of his breast, he stepped nimbly

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behind a tree, and the elk passed him with a rush. So quick had been the action, that for a moment I thought he had gone under, but, to my agreeable surprise, the next moment I saw him start out from the tree, and, making a lounge with the spear, bury it among the ribs of the animal! No matador in all Spain could have performed the feat more cleverly.

"I shouted with delight as I saw the huge body rolling to the earth; and, dropping down from my perch, I ran toward the spot. On reaching it, I found the elk panting in the throes of death, while Cudjo stood over his body safe and triumphant.

"'Bravo!' cried I, 'my brave Cudjo, you have ended him in earnest!'

"'Yes, Massa,' replied Cudjo, coolly, though evidently with some slight symptoms of triumph in his manner; 'yes, Massa Roff, dis black niggur hab gin de gemman a settler under de rib number five. He butt de breath out of poor Cassy no more—poor ole Cassy!' and Cudjo commenced caressing the dog Castor, which was the one that had suffered most from the horns of the elk.

"We were now joined by Harry, who, hearing the struggle, could remain no longer in the camp. Fortunately we found his rifle quite safe; and Cudjo

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drawing his knife, let the blood out of the animal in a scientific manner. From its great weight—not less than a thousand pounds—we saw that we could not take the whole carcass to camp without yoking either the horse or ox to it, so we resolved to skin and quarter it where it lay. After going back for the necessary implements, as well as to announce our success, we returned again, and soon finished the operation. Before the sun had set, nearly a thousand pounds of fresh elk-meat were dangling from the trees around our little encampment. We had purposely delayed eating until our work should be done; and while Cudjo and I were engaged in hanging up the huge quarters, Mary had been busy with the gridiron, and an elk rump-steak—quite equal to the best beef—added to the excellence of our supper.

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CHAPTER XIV.

ADVENTURE WITH THE CARCAJOU.

"We arose early next morning, and having eaten a hearty breakfast of elk-steaks and coffee, began to consider what was the next thing to be done. We had now quite enough of meat to carry us to the end of the longest journey, and it only remained to be cured, so that it would keep on the way. But how were we to cure it, when we had not a particle of salt? Here was a difficulty which for a moment looked us in the face. Only for a moment, for I soon recollected that there was a way of preserving meat without salt, which has always been much in use among Spanish people, and in countries where salt is very scarce and dear. I had heard, too, that this method was much practised among the trappers and hunters when laying up a stock of buffalo flesh, or of any other animals they might chance to kill.

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It is called 'jerking,' and the meat when thus prepared goes by the name of 'jerked meat.' By the Spaniards it is called 'tasajo.'

"I remembered having read an account of the process; and, after instructing Cudjo in it, we immediately set about 'jerking' the elk. We first built a large fire, upon which we placed a great many sticks of green wood fresh cut from the tree. This was done so that the fire might burn slowly, and throw out a great volume of smoke. We then stuck several stakes into the ground around the fire, and stretched lines from one to the other. This being done, we took down the quarters of the elk and removed the meat from the bones—cutting it off in thin strips, each of them over a yard in length. These strips we hung over the lines already prepared, so that they might be exposed to the smoke and heat of the fire, although not so much as to cause them to be broiled. The whole process was now ended—excepting that it would be necessary for us to look occasionally to the fire, as well as to see that the dogs and wolves did not leap up and snap off the meat, that hung down from the lines like so many strings of sausages. In about three days the flesh of the elk would be 'jerked,' and capable of being

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carried to any distance without the danger of spoiling.

"During these three days we all remained very much in the neighbourhood of our camp. We might have procured more game had we gone out to hunt for it, but we did not do this for three reasons:—First, because we had enough for our wants; secondly, we did not wish, under the circumstances, to waste a single charge of ammunition; and, lastly, because we had seen the tracks of bears and panthers by the stream. We did not wish to risk meeting with any of these customers in the dark and tangled woods, which we should have been likely enough to do, had we gone far out in pursuit of game. We were determined to leave them unmolested as long as they should preserve a similar line of conduct towards us; and, in order to prevent any of them from intruding into our camp while we were asleep, we kept a circle of fires burning around the wagon throughout the night.

"During these three days, however, we were not without fresh viands, and those, too, of the most luxurious and delicate kinds. I had succeeded in killing a wild turkey, which, along with several others, had entered the glade, and run close up to

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our camp before they saw us. He was a large 'gob bler '—over twenty pounds in weight—and, I need not tell you, proved far more delicious eating than his tame cousins of the farm-yard.

"At the end of the third day, the elk-meat was as dry as a chip; and taking it from the lines we packed it in small bundles, and placed it in our wagon. We now thought of waiting only until our animals should be fairly recruited; and as both horse and ox were up to their eyes, from morning till night, in rich pasturage, and began to fill out about the flanks, we were congratulating ourselves that we should not have to wait long.

"Of how little value are human calculations! Just at that moment, when we were so sanguine of being able soon to escape from our desert prison, an event occurred, which rendered that escape altogether impossible—for years at least, and it might be, for ever. But I will detail the circumstance as it happened.

"It was on the afternoon of the fourth day after we had entered the valley. We had just finished dinner, and were sitting near the fire watching the two children, Mary and Luisa, as they rolled in joyous innocence over the smooth green sward. My wife and I

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were conversing about the little Luisa—about the unfortunate end of her father and mother—both of whom, we believed, had fallen victims in the savage massacre. We were talking of how we should bring her up—whether in ignorance of the melancholy fate of her parents, and in the belief that she was one of our own children—or whether, when she had grown to a sufficient age to understand it, we should reveal to her all the story of her orphanage. Our thoughts now reverted, for the first time, to our own wretched prospects, for these, too, had been blighted by the loss of our Scotch friend. We were going to a strange land—a land where we knew no one—of whose language, even, we were ignorant—a land, too, whose inhabitants were neither prosperous of themselves, nor disposed to countenance prosperity in others—much less of the race to which we belonged. We were going, too, without an object; for that which had brought us so far was now removed by the death of our friend. We had no property—no money—not enough even to get us shelter for a single night: what would become of us? They were bitter reflections which we drew from thinking on the future; but we did not permit them to torture us long.

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"'Fear not, Robert,' said my noble wife, placing her little hand in mine, and looking cheerfully in my face; '*He* who has guarded us through the past is not likely to fail us in the future.'

"'Dear Mary,' I replied, roused to new life and energy by her consoling words, 'you are right—you are right—in Him only let us trust.'

"At that moment a strange noise sounded in our ears, coming from the direction of the forest. It seemed distant at first, but every moment drew nearer and nearer. It was like the voice of some animal 'routing' from extreme terror or pain. I looked around for the ox. The horse was in the glade, but his companion was not to be seen. Again the voice came from the woods, louder and more fearful than ever. It was plainly the bellowing of an ox; but what could it mean? Once more it rose upon the air, nearer and more distinct, and sounded as though the animal was running as it cried!

"I sprang to my rifle—Frank and Harry also seized theirs—Cudjo armed himself with the Indian spear; and the dogs, that had started to their feet, stood waiting a signal to rush forth.

"Once more broke out that terrible cry; and we could now hear the sweeping of leaves, and the

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crackling of branches, as if some huge animal was tearing its way through the bushes. The birds flew up from the thicket, terrified and screaming—the horse neighed wildly—the dogs sent forth their impatient yelps, and our children shrieked in affright! Again rose the deep and sonorous roar, filling the valley with its agonizing tones. The cane rattled as it yielded to the crushing hoof. We saw the leaves of the thick underwood shaking at a distance—then nearer—then up to the edge of the glade—and the next moment a bright red object appeared through the leaves, and dashed out into the opening. We saw at a glance it was the ox; but what could it mean? Was he pursued by some monster—some beast of prey? No! not pursued, but already overtaken. Look! see what the ox carries on his shoulders! Oh, heavens! what a sight!

"We were all for a while as if thunderstruck. Between the shoulders of the ox, and clutching him around the neck, was a large animal. It at first sight appeared to be a mass of brown shaggy hair, and part of the ox himself—so closely was it fastened upon him. As they drew nearer, however, we could distinguish the spreading claws and short muscular limbs of a fearful creature. Its head was down near

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The Ox killed by the Carcajou. P. 155.

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the throat of the ox, which we could see was torn, and dappled with crimson spots. The mouth of the strange animal was resting upon his jugular vein. It was tearing his flesh, and drinking his blood as he ran!

"The ox, as he came out of the thicket, gallopped but slowly, and routed with less energy than before. We could perceive that he tottered as he ran, still making for the camp. In a short time, he was in our midst, when, uttering a long moan, he fell to the earth with the death-rattle in his throat!

"The strange animal, roused by the shock, suddenly let go its hold, and raised itself erect over the carcass. Now, for the first time, I saw what it was. It was the fearful *carcajou!* Now, too, for the first time, it seemed to be aware of *our* presence, and suddenly placed itself in an attitude to spring. The next moment it had launched its body towards Mary and the children!

"We all three fired as it sprang forward, but our feelings had unnerved us, and the bullets whistled idly away. I drew my knife and rushed after; but Cudjo was before me, and I saw the blade of his spear glancing towards it like a flash of light, and burying itself in the long hair. With a hoarse

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growl, the monster turned, and, to my joy, I saw that it was impaled upon the spear, which had passed through the skin of its neck. Instead of yielding, however, it rushed up the shaft, until Cudjo was compelled to drop the weapon, to save himself from being torn by its long, fierce claws. Before it could clear itself from the spear, I had drawn my large pistol, and fired directly into its breast. The shot proved mortal, and the shaggy monster rolled over, and struggled for some minutes in the agonies of death. *We* were saved; but our poor ox, that was to have drawn us out of the Desert, lay upon the grass a lifeless and almost bloodless carcass!

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CHAPTER XV.

A FRUITLESS SEARCH FOR A TRAIL.

"OUR hopes of being able to get away from the oäsis valley were thus crushed in a moment. The horse could not of himself draw the wagon, and how could we travel without it? Even could we have crossed the Desert on foot, he would hardly suffice to carry our food and water. But for us to pass one of those terrible stretches of wilderness—by the Spaniards called 'jornadas'—on foot was out of the question. Even the strongest and hardiest of the trappers often perish in such attempts; and how should we succeed—one of us being a delicate female—and having two children that must be carried in our arms? The thing was plainly impossible, and as I reflected upon it, the thoughts of its impossibility filled me with despair.

"But were we never to escape from that lonely

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spot? What prospect was before us of ever being able to leave it? No human beings might come to our relief. Perhaps no human foot except our own had ever made its track in that remote valley! This was not at all improbable; and indeed a party of hunters or Indians, on their journey across the Desert, might visit the mountain without discovering the valley,— so strangely was it hollowed out of the plain.

"I had but little hope that any caravan or party of traders would pass that way. The Desert that surrounded us was a sufficient barrier against that; besides, I knew that the mountain was far to the southward of the trails usually followed by the prairie traders. There was but one hope that I could cling to with any degree of confidence: that was, that the Desert might not stretch so far to the south or west as it appeared to do; and by breaking up the wagon, and making a light cart out of it, we might still be able to cross it. I was determined, therefore, first to go alone, and explore the route in both these directions. If it should appear practicable, I could return, and put this design into execution.

"Next morning, having loaded my horse with provisions, and as much water as he could well carry, I

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took an affectionate leave of my wife and little ones; and, commending them to the protection of God, I mounted, and rode off toward the west. I headed in this direction for a day and a half, and still the waste stretched to the horizon before me. I had made but a short journey, for the path led through ridges and hillocks of moving sand, and my horse sank to the knees at every step. In the afternoon of the second day, I turned back from the attempt, fearful that I should not be able to regain the valley. But I succeeded at length,—both myself and horse almost dead with thirst on arriving there.

"I found my little party all well, as I had left them; but I had brought them no glad tidings, and I sat down in their midst with a feeling of despair.

"My next reconnoissance was to be to the south; and I only waited until my jaded horse might be sufficiently rested for the journey.

"Another day passed, and I was sitting upon a log near the fire, reflecting upon the dark future that lay before us. I was filled with despondency, and took no note of what was passing around. When I had sat in this way for some time, I felt a light hand touching me upon the shoulder; and, looking

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up, I saw that Mary had seated herself upon the log beside me, while a smile of cheerfulness and composure was playing upon her fair features.

"I saw that she had something in her mind that she was about to communicate to me.

"'What is it, Mary?' I asked.

"'Is not this a lovely spot?' said she, waving her hand so as to indicate the whole scene by which we were surrounded. My eyes, along with hers, roamed for a moment over the fair picture, and I could not do otherwise than answer in the affirmative. It was, indeed, a lovely spot. The open glade, with the golden sun streaming down upon its green herbage, and vivid flowers — the varied tints of the forest frondage, now dressed in the brilliant livery of autumn—the cliffs beyond, contrasting with it in colour from their lining of dark green cedars and pines — and, higher still, the snow-white summit, as it towered against the blue sky, sparkling under the sun, and lending a delicious coolness to the air—all these objects formed a panorama that was indeed lovely to look upon. And there were sweet sounds falling upon the ear — the murmur of distant waters — the light rustling of leaves, stirred by a soft breeze that blew past laden with the aromatic odours of buds and

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flowers—the music of birds that sang to each other in the groves, or uttered their joyous calls as they flapped their bright wings over the open glade.

"'Yes, Mary,' I replied, 'it is indeed a lovely spot.'

"'Then, Robert,' said she, with a look of strange meaning, 'why should we be so anxious to leave it?'

"'Why?' I repeated mechanically after her, wondering at the question.

"'Yes, why?' continued my wife. 'We are in search of a home—why not make *this* our home? Where can we find a better? How know we that in that land whither we were going, we may find one so good—if, indeed, they give us a home at all?'

"'But, dear Mary,' said I, 'how could you live away from the world—you who have been brought up in the midst of society and its refinements?'

"'The world!' replied she, 'what care we for the world? Have we not our children with us? They will be our world, and we can be society enough for each other. Moreover,' continued she, 'remember how little we have in that world,—remember how it has used us so far. Have we been happy in it? No,

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I have enjoyed more happiness here than I ever did in the midst of that society of which you speak. Think, Robert! reflect before we rashly leave this lovely spot—this sweet home—into which I can almost believe the hand of God has guided us.'

"'But, Mary, you have not thought of the difficulties, the hardships to which such a life may expose you.'

"'I have,' she replied. 'I have thought of all these while you were absent. I can see no difficulty in our procuring a subsistence here. The Creator has bountifully stocked this singular oäsis. We may easily obtain all the necessaries of life — for its luxuries I care but little. We can live without them.'

"Her words produced a strange effect upon me. Up to that moment the idea of *remaining* in the oäsis had never entered my mind. I had only occupied myself with speculating on the means by which we could escape from it. Now, however, a sudden change came over my thoughts; and I began to think seriously of following the counsel of my self-sacrificing companion. The harsh treatment we had received at the hands of civilized man — buffeted about by ill fortune — continually deceived, and at

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every step becoming poorer and more dependent, all had their effect in blunting that desire I should otherwise have felt to get back to the world. I was not averse then to the idea, but rather ready to fall at once into the plan.

"I remained silent for a length of time, casting over in my mind the possibility of our carrying out such a scheme—the chances of our being able to procure subsistence. It was evident there was plenty of game in the valley. We had occasionally seen deer of different species, and we had also discovered the tracks of other animals. There were pheasants and turkeys, too, in abundance. We had our rifles, and by good fortune a large stock of ammunition—for, besides my own, Harry and Frank had powder-horns containing nearly a pound each. But this in time would be expended—what then? Oh, what then? Before that I should find out some other mode of capturing our game. Besides, the valley might contain many other things intended to sustain life—roots and fruits. We had already found some indications of this; and Mary, who was an accomplished botanist, could tell the uses of them all. We should find both food and water. What more could we ask from the hand of Nature?

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"As I ran these thoughts through my mind, the project became every moment more feasible. In fact, I grew quite as enthusiastic about it as my wife.

"Cudjo, Frank, and Harry, were brought into our council, and they, too, received the idea with delight. The faithful Cudjo was contented, as he alleged, with any lot, so long as he might share it with us. As for the boys they were in raptures with the thought of such a free wild life.

"We did not fully resolve upon anything for that day. We were determined not to act rashly, but to reflect seriously upon it, and to renew our deliberations on the following morning.

"During that night, however, a circumstance occurred, which at once fixed my resolution to remain in the valley — at least until some unforeseen chance might enable us to leave it with a better prospect of safety.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE MYSTERIOUS FLOOD.

"WELL, my friends, I shall now detail to you the strange incident, which at once decided me to adopt the suggestion of my wife, and make our home in the valley. Perhaps we did not, at the time, contemplate staying here for the remainder of our lives—but only for a few years. However, we resolved to remain for the present, and give our lonely life a fair trial, leaving the future an open question.

"The reason why I had hesitated at all upon the subject was this:—I could not think of settling down with no prospect of improving our condition; for, however much we might exercise our industry, its products could not enrich us beyond the satisfying of our own wants. We should have no market, thought I, for any superfluous produce, even could we culti-

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vate the whole valley. We could, therefore, become no richer, and would never be in any fitter state to return to civilized society — for, in spite of all, a thought of this still remained in my mind.

"Mary, who was of a far more contented disposition than I, still persisted in arguing that as our happiness did not depend upon possessing riches, we would never desire to leave that lovely spot, and that, consequently, we should stand in no need of wealth.

"Perhaps hers was the true philosophy — at all events, it was the natural one. But the artificial wants of society implant within us the desire of accumulating individual property; and I could not rid myself of this provident feeling. 'If we could only find some object,' said I, 'upon which we might be exercising our industry, so that *our time should not be wasted*, and by which we might prepare ourselves for returning to society, then for a time might we live most happily here.'

"'Who knows?' said Mary, in reply to this; 'there may be objects in this valley that may occupy us, and enable us to lay up the very store you speak of, as well as if we were to continue on to New Mexico. What opportunities should we have there

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better than here? We have nothing now to begin life with anywhere. Here we have food and land, which I think we may fairly call our own; there we should have neither. Here we have a home; and how know you, Robert, that we may not yet make a fortune in the Desert?'

"We both laughed at the idea; which, of course, Mary had meant only as a jest in order to render our prospects more cheering.

"It was now near midnight, for we had sat up to that late hour deliberating on what we should do. As I have said, we agreed to leave the matter undecided until the morrow. The moon was just appearing over the eastern cliff; and we were about rising to retire to our resting-places, when our eyes fell upon an object that caused us all at the same time to cry out with astonishment.

"I have said, that when we first entered this valley there was no lake here. Where you now see one, was a green sward, with here and there a coppice of trees, forming part of the little prairie in which we were encamped. The stream ran across it, as it still does through the lake; but at this point there were scarcely any banks, as the water flowed over a wide and shallow channel. On previous

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nights, when the moon was shining into the valley, as we sat around our camp fire, we had noticed the stream winding like a silver thread through the dark green herbage. Now, to our extreme wonder, instead of the narrow line, a broad sheet of water glistened before us! It seemed to cover a space of several hundred yards in extent, reaching far up the glade towards our camp. Could it be water, or was it only the *mirage*—the *fata morgana?* No; it was not the latter. We had witnessed this before, on our passage across the great plains. We had witnessed it on several occasions, and it was nothing like what we now saw. There is a filmy, whitish appearance about the illusions of the *mirage* by which the experienced traveller can always distinguish it from the real. But there was nothing of that in the present instance. It was water that spread before us,—for the moon, that had now risen above the cliff, was plainly reflected upon its calm and glassy surface. Yes; it could be nothing but a sheet of water!

"But we were determined not to trust to our eyes alone. We all ran towards it—Cudjo, the boys, and myself,—and in a few seconds we stood upon its edge—upon the edge of what appeared to be a large lake, formed as if by some magical influence!

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"We had at first regarded the phenomenon only with feelings of wonder, but our wonder was now changed to consternation, when we perceived that the water was still rising! It ran in about our feet while we stood, rippling slowly against the gentle ascent like the influx of a tide.

"'What could it mean?' we asked of each other, with looks that betrayed our fears. Was it a flood—an inundation—a sudden swelling of the stream? This it plainly was, but what could have caused it? There had been no rain for several days before, and no great heat to have caused any unusual melting of the snow upon the mountain. What, then, could be the origin of this sudden and singular freshet? What could it mean?

"We stood for some time silent, with hearts beating audibly,—each looking at the others for an answer to this question. The solution seemed to strike us all at the same time, and a fearful one it was. Some terrible convulsion—the falling of the precipice perhaps—had dammed the cañon below; no doubt, had blocked up the great fissure by which the stream found its way from the valley. If such were the case, then, the valley would soon fill with water,

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not only to cover the ground occupied by our camp, *but the tops of the highest trees!*

"You will easily conceive the terror with which this thought was calculated to inspire us. We could think of no other cause for the strange inundation, nor, indeed, did we stay longer to consider of any, but ran back to the camp, determined to escape from the valley as soon as we could. Cudjo caught the horse, Mary awoke the children, and brought them out of the wagon, while the boys and I busied ourselves in collecting a few necessary things, that we might be enabled to carry along with us.

"Up to this time we had not thought of the difficulty—much less the *impossibility—of escaping from the valley*. To our horror, that now became clear as the sun at noon-day; for we perceived that the road by which we had entered the glade, and which lay along the stream, was completely covered, and the rising water reached far beyond it! There was no other path by which we could get out. To attempt cutting one through the thick tangled woods would be the work of days; moreover, we remembered that we had crossed the stream on the way to our camp, and that, of course, would now be swollen below, so

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that to re-cross it would be impossible. We had no doubt but that the valley, at its lower end, was by this time filled with water, and our retreat in that direction completely cut off! *We knew of no other path!*

"I cannot describe the state of mind into which we were thrown, when these facts became evident to one and all of us. We were about to start out from the camp, each of us carrying our burden; but it was plainly of no use making the attempt, and we let fall the various utensils with a feeling of despair. The water was still rising—*the lake was growing larger!*

"The wolves howled, driven from their lair by the encroaching element—birds, roused from their sleep, screamed and fluttered among the trees—our dogs barked at the strange sight—and, in the clear moonlight, we could see deer, and other wild animals, rushing, as if terrified, through the open glade. O God! were we to be engulfed, and perish in this mysterious flood?

"What was to be done? Should we climb into the trees? That would not save us. If the great channel was blocked up below, I knew that *that* would not save us; for its jaws were higher than the tops

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of the highest trees, and the rising flood would soon lick us from the branches. It might prolong our lives, and with them our despair; but what—'Ha!' The thought, heaven-directed, at this moment entered my mind.

"'*A raft! a raft! we shall yet be saved!*'

"My companions at once understood my meaning. Cudjo seized the axe, while Mary hastened to the wagon to collect such ropes and cords as were in it. I knew there would not be enough of these for our purpose; and, spreading out the great elk-skin, I proceeded to cut it into stripes.

"There were several logs lying close to our camp. They were the trunks of tall straight trees, that, from time to time, had fallen, and were now quite dead and dry. They were the trunks of the beautiful *liriodendron*, or tulip-tree, out of which the Indians always make their canoes, when they can get them of sufficient size. This, because their wood is extremely soft and light—weighing only twenty-six pounds to the cubic foot. While busy myself, I directed Cudjo to cut a number of these logs into equal lengths. Cudjo knew how to handle an axe with any other man, and the logs were soon of the proper dimensions. We now rolled them together,

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and, by the aid of our ropes and cross pieces, lashed them firmly to one another; and our raft was completed. Upon this, we placed our great chest, containing the jerked meat, with our blankets, and such utensils as were necessary to be saved. We laid in no stock of water for the expected voyage—we had no fear about our having enough of that.

"We had been occupied nearly two hours in constructing the raft; but during all this time we had been so busy, that we had hardly looked in the direction of the flood—only to see that it still continued to rise. As soon as our arrangements were completed, I ran down to the water's edge. After watching it for a few minutes, to my great joy I perceived that *the flood was at a stand!* I shouted the glad news to my companions, who, on hearing it, hastened to join me, and assure themselves by actual observation. For half-an-hour, we all stood upon the shore of the new-formed lake, until we became convinced that its waters were rising no higher. We saw, too, that they did not subside, but remained stationary. 'It has reached the top of whatever has dammed it,' thought we, 'and is now flowing over.'

"'What a pity, Massa Roff,' said Cudjo, as we

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wended our way back to the camp; 'what a pity we make dat fine raff for nuffin!'

"'Ah, Cudjo,' rejoined my wife, 'we should never regret having performed that which is a work of precaution; and we must remember that the raft—although it may not be required as we intended it—has already far more than repaid us for the labour bestowed upon it. Remember the misery we were suffering but a short time since, and from which the idea of this raft at once relieved us. Measures of precaution, however irksome, should always be adopted. It is only the slothful and vacillating who either neglect or regret them.'

"'Dat's true, Missa—dat's berry true,' said Cudjo, in a serious tone, for he well knew how to appreciate the teachings of his noble mistress.

"It was now very late, or rather very early, and Mary, with the children, returned to their usual resting-place in the wagon. Cudjo and I, fearing to trust to the capricious water, determined—lest it might take another turn, and 'catch us napping'—to keep watch on it till the morning.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE BEAVERS AND WOLVERENE.

"When daylight came, the mysterious flood was still standing at its full height. I call it mysterious, for as yet we knew nothing of what had so suddenly created it. We could think of no other cause than the falling in of the precipice below. I had determined, as soon as the day fairly broke, to make my way through the woods, and remove all doubt —for we still felt some uneasiness in regard to this strange phenomenon.

"Leaving Cudjo with his long spear, and the boys with their rifles, to guard the camp, I set forth alone. I took with me my gun, as well as a small hatchet which we had, to clear away a track through the brushwood.

"I struck at once into the woods, and guiding myself by an occasional glimpse of the sun that had

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now risen, I kept on in a south-easterly course. It was my intention to get out on the edge of the flood some distance below, when I could then skirt around it. After cutting my way through the brambles to the distance of nearly a mile, I came suddenly out upon the bank of the rivulet; and guess my surprise, on seeing that the stream was not only not swollen, but there was even less water than usual running in its channel! I noticed, however, that the water was muddy, and that green leaves and fresh broken twigs were floating down upon its current.

"Of course, I now turned my face up-stream, knowing that the dam must be in that direction; but, for my life, I could not imagine how any accident of Nature could have stopped up the channel above. The falling of trees could not possibly have produced such an effect; and there were no high bluffs abutting on the rivulet, that could have fallen into its bed. I began to believe that human hands had been at work; and I looked for the prints of human feet. I saw none, but the tracks of animals were numerous. Thousands of them, at least—great broad feet, webbed like those of a duck, but with sharp claws—were impressed in the sand and mud, all along the banks of the stream.

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"I moved forward very cautiously; for, although I could not discover their tracks, I was still fearful that Indians, and of course enemies, were near. At length, I reached a bend in the stream, above which I remembered that the channel was narrower, and ran between banks of a considerable height. I remembered this well—for, on first entering the valley, we had been obliged at this place to draw the wagon out of the bed of the rivulet, and cut a way for it through the adjacent woods. No doubt, then, I would there find the obstacle that had so mysteriously intercepted the current.

"On reaching this bend, I climbed out upon the bank; and, stealing silently through the underwood, I peeped through the leaves. A most singular scene was before me.

"The stream, as I had rightly conjectured, was dammed up, at the point where the channel was narrowest, but not by any accident. The work bore the marks of design, as much as if it had been constructed by human hands. A tall tree had been felled across the stream—so that the place where it had been cut through was not detached from the stump, but still held fast by its crushed fibres. On the other side its top branches were buried under

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rocks and mud, so as to render them secure. Against this tree upright stakes rested; and these again were wattled together, and firmly bedded in rocks that had been collected around their lower ends. Behind these uprights were piled other stakes and branches laid crosswise, and bound together with layers of rocks and mud—so that the whole structure formed a wall of full six feet in thickness—broad along the top, and sloping off toward the water. On the lower side it stood nearly perpendicular, as the uprights were thus set. The top of this was plastered with mud, and at both sides was left a narrow sluice, or wash, through which the water ran smoothly off, without wearing away the breastwork.

"I have said that the work bore the marks of design, as much as if it had been constructed by human hands. But it was not. The builders of that breastwork were before my eyes, and apparently just resting from their labours.

"There were about an hundred of them in all, squatting over the ground, and along the parapet of the new-made dam. They were of a dark brown—or rather a chestnut colour — and reminded me of so many gigantic rats, except that their tails were not elongated and tapering like these. Their backs,

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however, were arched, and their bodies of a thick rounded shape, similar to animals of the rat kind. Moreover, I could perceive that they were armed with the cutting teeth, which distinguish the family of the *rodentia*, or 'gnawers.' These teeth I could see distinctly, as some of the animals were using them at the time, and they even protruded when their mouths were shut. I noticed that there was a pair of them in each jaw, broad, strong, and shaped like chisels. The ears of the animals were short, and almost buried in the hair, which although long was not shaggy, but presented a smooth appearance over all parts of their bodies. There was a tuft of stiff bristles growing out on each side of the nose, like the whiskers of a cat; and their eyes were small, and set high up, like those of the otter. Their fore limbs were shorter than the hind ones, and both had feet with five claws, but the hind feet were broad and large, and completely webbed between the toes. It was they, then, that had made the tracks I had observed in coming up the stream. But the most striking feature of these animals was the tail. This appendage was entirely without hair, of a dark colour, and looking as though it was covered with the well-known substance shagreen. It was about a

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foot in length, several inches broad and thick, and not at all unlike a cricket-bat — except that it appeared heavier and more oval-shaped at the end. The animals were somewhat larger than otters, not so long, but much thicker and heavier in the body.

"I had never seen such creatures before, but I knew at once what they were—for although I had neglected my other studies, natural history had always been my favourite, and I had made some progress in that. I knew, then, that the strange beings before me were *beavers* — the *castor fiber* of the naturalists.

"The whole mystery was now explained. A colony of beavers had migrated into the valley, and constructed their dam; and this it was which had caused the sudden inundation.

"I remained for some time, after I had made the discovery, watching these creatures and their interesting movements. The breastwork appeared to be quite finished; but this did not follow from the fact that the animals were no longer at work upon it, as it is only by night they perform such labour. In fact, they are rarely seen except by night, in countries where they have been disturbed or hunted; but here they were evidently unaccustomed to man. They

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appeared to be resting after their night's work. It is not likely that they had built the whole breastwork during that one night, but had only put on the finishing part which had produced the sudden flood. As the glade above where they had dammed the rivulet was nearly level, a very small stoppage in the stream sufficed to inundate a large extent of ground, as it had actually done.

"Some of the beavers were sitting upon the newly-raised work, gnawing the leaves and twigs that stuck out from the mud; others were washing themselves, disporting playfully through the water; while others squatted upon logs that lay along the edge of the dam, every now and again flapping their heavy tails upon the water, like so many laundresses beating out their wet linen.

"It was a curious and comical sight; and, after having enjoyed it for some time, I was about stepping forward to witness what effect my presence would produce, when, all at once, I perceived that some other object had created a sudden commotion among the animals. One of them, who had been stationed upon a log at some distance up the lake, and apparently acting as a sentry, now ran out upon the log, and struck the water three quick heavy flaps

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with his tail. This was evidently a signal; for, the moment he had given it, the animal, as if pursued, pitched himself head-foremost into the lake, and disappeared. The rest started as soon as they heard it; and looking around for a moment, as if in affright, they all ran to the bank, and plunged simultaneously under the water—each of them striking a blow with his tail as he went under!

"I now looked for the cause of this sudden movement. All at once I perceived, coming around the lake where the sentry-beaver had disappeared, a strange-looking animal. It moved slowly and silently, skulking among the trees, and keeping close in to the water's edge. I saw that it was making for the new-built dam, and I remained where I was to watch it. At length it reached the breast-work, and crawled cautiously along it, keeping behind the parapet—so as not to be seen from the lake above.

"I had now a good view of it, and a vicious-looking creature it was. It was not much larger than one of the beavers themselves; and in some points not unlike them; but in other respects the difference was marked. It was of a very different colour—being nearly black upon the back and belly, while a light brown strip traversed both its sides,

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meeting over its rump. Its nose and feet were completely black, while its breast and throat were white, and a whitish ring was around each of the eyes. It had small ears, with stiff bristles at the nose, and a short and bushy tail. The hair over its whole body was long and shaggy. Its legs were thick and muscular, and so short that, when it moved, its belly seemed to trail along the ground. It appeared rather to crawl than to walk. But this arose from the fact of its being an animal of the plantigrade family; and using its feet to walk upon — which in many other animals, such as the horse, appear to form part of the legs. With the animal in question the feet were long, black, and armed with white curving claws. Its whole appearance was that of a carnivorous creature — in other words, it was a beast of prey. It was the *wolverene*, the dreaded enemy of the beavers.

"On arriving out near the middle of the breastwork, it stopped; and, planting its forefeet up against the parapet, raised its head slowly, and looked over into the lake.

"Although the beaver is an amphibious animal, and spends full half of his time in the water, he cannot remain long, without coming to the surface to

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take breath; and already the heads of several were seen at different points in the lake. Others, again, had boldly climbed out on the little islets which here and there appeared above water, and where they knew that the wolverene, who is not a good swimmer, could not reach them. None of them, however, showed any signs of returning to the breast-work.

"The wolverene seemed also to have arrived at this conclusion; for now—apparently careless of being seen from the lake—he looked around him on all sides and above, as if he either intended giving up the pursuit of his prey, or adopting some more effective measure to secure it. At length he appeared to have formed some resolution, and leaping boldly up on the parapet, so as to be seen by the beavers, he walked back again along the water's edge whence he had come. On getting a good distance from the breast-work, he stopped for a moment; and then, turning away from the lake, ran off into the woods.

"I was curious to see whether the beavers would now return to the breast-work, and I resolved to remain a while longer without showing myself. I waited about five minutes or more, at the end of which time I saw several of them—who had gone to

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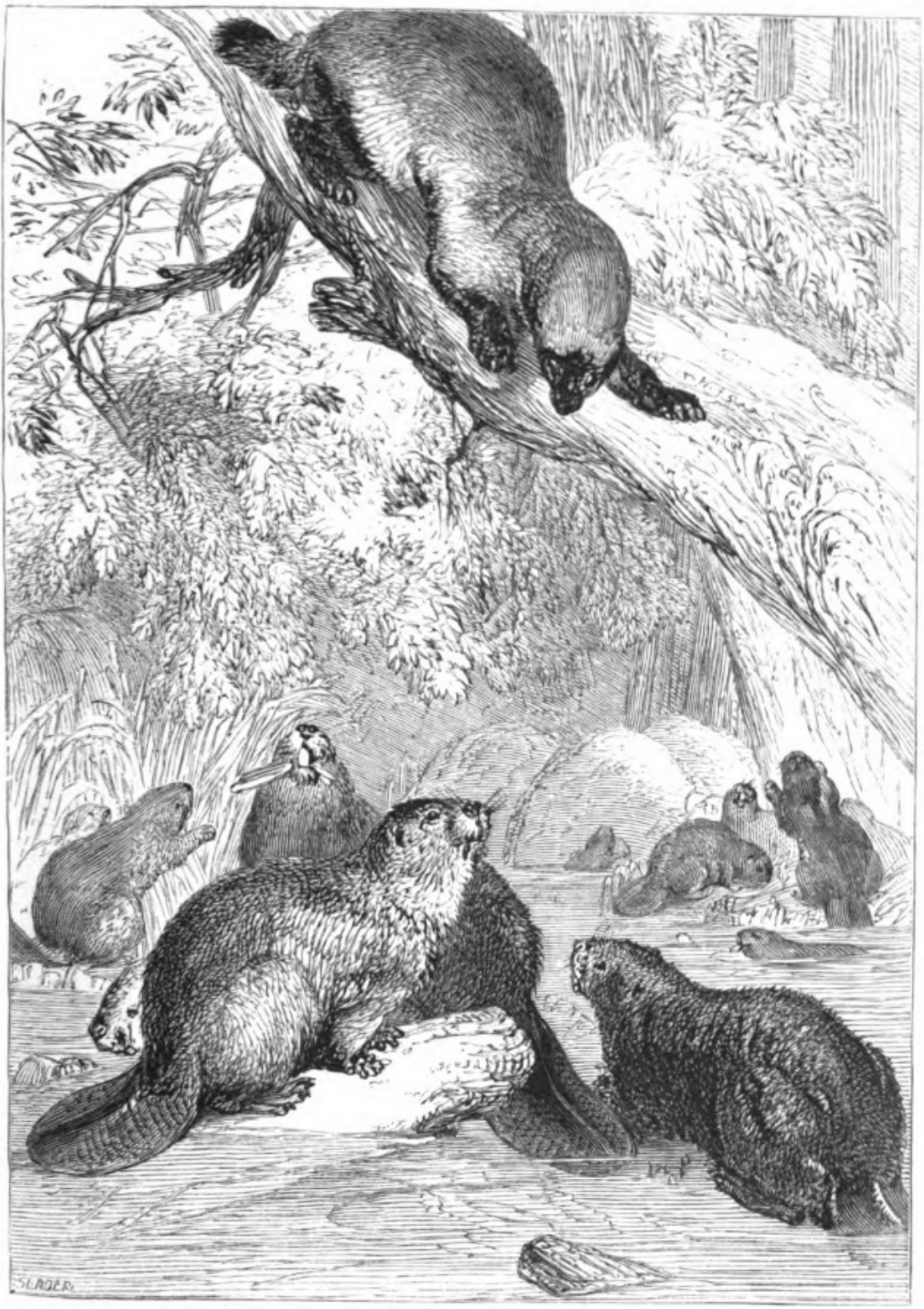

The Wolverene and the Beavers. P. 184.

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the most distant islets—plunge into the water and come swimming towards me. As I was watching them, all at once I heard a rustling among the fallen leaves near the dam; and on looking I perceived the wolverene making all the haste he could toward the breast-work. On reaching it, however, instead of running out behind the parapet as before, I saw him plant his long claws against a tree, and commence climbing upward, keeping on that side farthest from the lake. The branches of this tree stretched horizontally out, and directly over the breast-work. In a short time the wolverene had reached the fork of one of these; and, crawling out upon it, he laid himself flat along the branch and looked downward.

"He had scarcely settled himself on his perch, when half-a-dozen beavers—thinking from what they had seen that he must have gone clear off—climbed out upon the breastwork, flapping their great tails as they came. They were soon under the very branch, and I saw the wolverene with his legs erected and ears set for the spring. This was my time, and glancing up the barrel of my rifle, I aimed directly for his heart. At the crack, the astonished beavers leaped back into the water, while the wolverene dropped from his perch—a little sooner, perhaps,

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than he had intended—and rolled over the ground evidently wounded. I ran up and struck at him with the butt-end of my gun, intending to finish him; but, to my astonishment, the fierce brute seized the stock in his teeth, and almost tore it to pieces! For some time I hammered him with huge stones—he all the while endeavouring to lay hold of me with his long curved claws—and it was not until I got a down-blow at his head with my axe that the fight was ended. A fearful-looking monster he was as he lay stretched before me, and not unlike the carcajou which had killed our ox at the camp, only smaller. I did not attempt to take his carcass with me, as it was a useless burden. Moreover, from the fetid smell which he emitted, I was glad to part company as soon as I had killed him; and, leaving him where he lay, I took the shortest road back to the camp.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW TO BUILD A LOG-CABIN.

"I NEED not describe the joy of my wife and the rest when I returned, and related to them what I had seen, as well as my adventure with the wolverene. The discovery that our new-made lake was nothing else than a great beaver-dam at once decided the question as to our remaining in the valley. Here was a source of wealth to me far greater than would have been any situation in the mines of Mexico — in fact, better than a mine itself. The skin of every beaver in that dam I knew to be worth a guinea and a half. I saw there were at least an hundred of them —there might be many more — and how soon would these multiply into thousands, producing annually four or five young to every pair of them. We could tend them—taking care to provide them with food— and destroy the wolverenes and any other of their

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enemies, that might exist in the valley. They would thus increase the faster, and we could easily prevent them from becoming too numerous by trapping the older ones, and carefully preserving their skins. After several years thus employed, we could return to civilized life, carrying with us enough of their valuable fur to sell for a smart fortune.

"The prospect of staying where we were was now delightful—the more so, as I was satisfied it was the best thing I could do. Even had I been able to procure a pair of fresh oxen at that moment, I should not have moved a step farther. What Mary had said in jest was now likely to be realized in earnest, *We might yet make our fortune in the Desert!*

"Of course, it was a settled point—we resolved to remain.

"The first thing to be done, then, was to provide ourselves with a house. It would be a 'log-cabin,' of course; and putting up a log-cabin was a mere bagatelle to Cudjo. During our residence in Virginia, he had built two or three on my farm; and no man knew better than he how to do the thing. No man knew better than he how to shape the logs, notch them, and lay them firmly in their beds—no

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man knew better how to split the 'clap-boards,' lay them on the rafters, and bind them fast, without even a single nail—no man knew how to 'chink' the walls, clay the chimney, and hang the door of a log-cabin better than Cudjo. No. I will answer for that—Cudjo could construct a log-cabin as well as the most renowned architect in the world.

"There was plenty of the right kind of timber at hand—plenty of tulip-trees with their tall straight trunks rising to the height of fifty feet without a branch; and for the next two days the axe of Cudjo could be heard with its constant 'check—check,' while every now and then the crash of a falling tree woke the echoes of the valley. While Cudjo was felling the timber and cutting it into logs of a proper length, none of the rest of us were idle. In cooking our meals, scouring the vessels, and looking after the children, Mary found sufficient employment; while Frank, Harry, and I, with the help of our horse Pompo, were able to drag the logs forward to the spot where we had designed to put up the cabin.

"On the third day, Cudjo notched the logs, and on the fourth we raised the walls up to the square. On the fifth, we set up the gables and rafters, which, you know, is done by shortening the gable-logs suc-

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cessively, as you go upward, and tying each pair of them by a pair of rafters notched into them, at the ends, precisely as the wall-logs below. A ridge-pole completed the frame, and that was laid by the evening of the fifth day.

"Upon the sixth day, Cudjo went to work upon a large oak which he had felled and cut into lengths of about four feet each, at the beginning of our operations. It was now somewhat dry, so as to split easily; and with his axe and a set of wedges he attacked it. By sunset, he had a pile of clap-boards beside him as large as a wagon—quite enough to 'shingle' the roof of our house. During that day, I employed myself in tempering the clay for chinking the walls and plastering the chimney.

"On the seventh day, we all rested from our labour. We did so because it was Sunday. We had resolved ever to keep the Sabbath. Though the eyes of men could not see us—which I fear is too often the reason for observing the sacred day—we knew that the eye of God was upon us, even in that remote valley.

"We rose as early as usual, and after eating our breakfasts, the Bible was brought forth, and we offered—the only sacrifice to Him acceptable—the

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sacrifice of our humble prayers. Mary had been busy during the week, and our little ones were dressed out, as if for a holiday. Taking them along with us, we all walked down to the lake and some distance around its edge. We saw that the beavers had been as busy in building as we; and already their cone-shaped dwellings appeared above the water—some of them near the shore, and others upon the little islets. There was only one which we could reach, and this we examined with great curiosity. It stood only a few yards from the shore, but at a place where the water was deep on its front side. It was nearly cone-shaped, or rather the form of a bee-hive; and was constructed out of stones, sticks and mud mixed with grass. Part of it was under water, but although we could not look into the interior, we knew that there was an upper story above water-mark — for we saw the ends of the joists that supported the second floor. The entrance was toward the centre of the lake and under the water—so that in going out of and into his house, the beaver is always under the necessity of making a dive. But he does not mind that, as it seems to be rather a pleasure to him than an inconvenience. There was no entrance toward the land, as we had often heard. Indeed, it would

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be bad policy in the beaver, thus to make a door by which his enemy, the wolverene, could easily get in and destroy him. The houses were all plastered over with mud, which, by the flapping of the tails and the constant paddling of the broad web-feet, had become as smooth as if the mud had been laid on with a trowel. We knew that they were also plastered inside, so as to render them warm and commodious in winter.

"Some of these dwellings were not regular cones, but rather of an oval shape; and sometimes two were placed, as it were, 'under one roof,' so as to steady them in the water, and save labour in the building. They were all pretty large—many of them rising the height of a man above the surface of the lake, and with broad tops, where the beavers delighted to sit and sun themselves. Each house was built by its own inhabitants, and each of them was inhabited by a single pair of beavers—man and wife—and in some instances where there were families by four or five. Some of them who had finished their houses earlier than the rest, had already commenced gathering their provisions for the winter. These consisted of the leaves and soft twigs of several species of trees —such as willow, birch, and mulberry—and we saw

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collections of these floating in the water in front of several of the houses.

"It was late in the season for beavers to be constructing a new dam. It is generally in spring when they perform that labour; but it was evident that the present colony had just arrived—no doubt driven by trappers or Indians, or perhaps drought, from their last settlement, hundreds of miles away. We conjectured that they must have come up the stream that ran away to the eastward.

"They must have entered the valley some time before we discovered them, as it would have taken them several days to gnaw down the trees and accumulate the materials for the dam that had so suddenly started up to alarm us. Some of these trees were nearly a foot in diameter, while many of the stones—which they had rolled up or carried between their fore paws and throat—would have weighed nearly a score of pounds.

"It was evident, then, they had arrived late in the season, and had worked hard to get ready for the winter. But Cudjo and I were determined, as soon as we should have finished our building operations, to lend them a hand in laying in their stock of provisions.

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE SAGACIOUS SQUIRREL.

"WHILE we thus stood watching the movements of our beavers, and conversing about the habits of these interesting animals, an incident occurred which very much amused us, and proved that the beavers were not the only animals whom Nature had gifted with extraordinary sagacity.

"Near the middle of the lake stood a clump of tall trees—their trunks immersed for two or three feet under the water. These trees had been upon the bank of the rivulet, previous to the formation of the dam; and they were now surrounded on all sides, forming a kind of timber islet. It was evident, however, that they were destined to decay, as they were trees of the poplar species, and such as could not live with their roots covered with water.

"Among the tops of these trees we observed

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several small animals leaping nimbly about from branch to branch and from one tree to the other. They were squirrels. They seemed to be labouring under some unusual excitement—as though they had been alarmed by the presence of an enemy. But there did not appear to be any such enemy near them. We noticed that they passed from tree to tree, running down the trunks of each, as far as the water would allow them; and then, after looking outward, as if they intended to leap into the lake, they would suddenly turn back again, and gallop up into the high branches. There were in all about a dozen of them; but the nimbleness, with which they passed from place to place, would have led one to believe that there were ten times that number; and the twigs and leaves were constantly kept in motion, as though a large flock of birds were fluttering through them.

"We had noticed these animals before, from time to time, dashing about in the same clump of trees; but not thinking it anything unusual, had paid no attention to their movements. Now, however, it occurred to us that these little creatures—who never take to the water unless compelled by absolute necessity—had been suddenly cut off from their usual

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range by the forming of the dam, and were held where they were in a state of captivity. This was the more evident, as the trees had been stripped of many of their leaves, and the bark was peeled from the more tender twigs and branches. It was plain that the squirrels had been living for some time upon short allowance, and were anxious to get off from the place.

"We now saw what was causing the unusual commotion among them at that particular time. Near the clump of trees, but higher up the lake, a small log was floating in the water. It had somehow got into the stream above, and was being borne down by the current. It was at this moment nearing the little island of timber upon which were the squirrels; but it came on very slowly, as the current through the lake was hardly perceptible. It was this log that was causing such a flurry; and the animals evidently intended—should it come near enough—to use it as a raft.

"We seated ourselves to watch their manœuvres. On came the log slowly and gradually; but, instead of drifting directly for the timber, it was borne by the current in a direction that would carry it at least twenty yards from the trees. The squirrels had

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gathered upon that side; and now, instead of running up and down the trunks, as before, they all stood upon the topmost branches apparently watching the motions of the log.

"'Poor little creatures!' said Mary, 'they will be unable to reach it, after all. What a pity!'

"Just as she made this reflection, the log floated forward to the point where it was likely to be nearest to the clump in passing. A long branch stretched out in that direction; but, as we calculated, the drift-wood was not likely to pass nearer than twenty yards. On this branch, however, the squirrels had now gathered, one behind the other in a long string, and we could see the foremost of them straining himself as if to spring.

"'Surely, they do not intend,—surely, they cannot leap so far!' said Mary, as we all stood holding our breath, and watching them with intense curiosity.

"'Yes, Missa,' replied Cudjo; 'de do intend. Gosh! de leap him, too. Dis nigga see 'em in Vaginny leap far furrer. Looky now! Yonder de go—wap!'

"As Cudjo spoke, the foremost squirrel launched out into the air, and the next moment pounced down upon the log. Then another followed, and another,

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and another, looking like so many birds flying through the air in a string, until the log was covered with the little creatures, and floated off with its cargo!

"We supposed that they had all succeeded in getting off, but in this we were mistaken. On looking up to the trees again, we saw that there was still one remaining. He appeared not to have got out upon the projecting branch in time,—for the weight of each of those that preceded him, coming down upon the log had pushed it so far off, that he became, no doubt, afraid to venture taking such a long leap. He was now running to and fro, apparently in a frantic state—both on account of his inability to escape, and his being thus left alone. For some time he kept springing from tree to tree, running down the trunks of all to the very edge of the water, and stopping now and again to look hopelessly after his companions.

"At length, we saw him descend a tree, whose bark was exceedingly rough—in fact, crisped outward in great broad pieces, or scales of a foot long, and several inches broad, that looked as though they were about to fall from the tree. For this reason, the tree is known among backwoodsmen as the 'scaly bark.' Having descended this tree, nearly to the

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point where it rose above the water, the squirrel was seen to stop; and for a moment we lost sight of him, where he was hidden behind one of the broad pieces of bark. We thought he had taken shelter there, intending to rest himself. Presently, however, we saw the bark moving backwards and forwards, and from what we could see of the little animal, it was evident he was trying with all his might to detach it from the tree. Occasionally he ran out from the crevice—scratched the bark outside with teeth and claws—and then hurriedly disappeared again.

"These strange manœuvres were kept up for several minutes, while we all remained upon the shore, watching with curiosity for the result.

"At length, we saw the piece of bark move rapidly outward from the trunk, and hang down suspended only by a few fibres. These were soon gnawed by the teeth of the squirrel, and the broad scale fell into the water. It had hardly touched the surface, when the animal ran nimbly down, and leaped upon it! There was no current at the spot where the bark fell into the water; and we were in doubt whether it would carry him out from among the trees; but we were soon convinced that our squirrel knew what he was about. As soon as he had fairly balanced

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himself upon his tiny craft, he hoisted his broad bushy tail high up in the air, by way of a sail; and, the next moment, we saw that the breeze catching upon it wafted the little mariner slowly, but surely, outward! In a few seconds he had cleared the trees; and the wind soon brought him within the influence of the current, which caused his bark to float downward after his companions.

"These had well-nigh reached the breastwork of the dam; and Harry wished very much to intercept them as they got to land. This wish, however, was overruled by his mother, who very justly declared that the little creatures deserved to escape, after having so well amused us by their ingenuity.

"In a short time, they all leaped ashore, and went scampering off among the trees in search of a dinner—for by this time, no doubt, they were sufficiently hungry.

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CHAPTER XX.

A HOUSE BUILT WITHOUT A NAIL.

"NEXT day Cudjo and I went on with our house-building. This day was appropriated to roofing it. We first laid a row of the clap-boards, projecting considerably over the eaves—so as to cast the water far out. These we secured near their lower ends by a long straight pole, which traversed the roof horizontally from gable to gable, and was lashed down by strips of wet elk-hide. These we knew would tighten as they dried, and press the pole firmer than ever against the boards.

"We now laid a second row of the clap-boards—with their lower ends riding the upper ones of the first row, and thus securing them. The second row was in its turn secured by a horizontal pole, along its bottom, and at its top by the lower ends of the third row; and so on up to the ridge.

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"The other side was shingled in a similar manner; and the ridge itself was secured against leakage, by allowing the clap-boards, on one side, to project upwards, and shelter the ends of those on the other. This gave our cabin quite a chanticleer sort of comb along its top, and added to the picturesqueness of its appearance.

"Our house was now built and roofed, and we could say that we had finished a house without ever having been inside of it — for as yet it had neither door nor windows. As the spaces between the logs were not yet 'chinked,' it looked more like a gigantic cage than a house.

"Our next day was devoted to making the door and window—that is, making the apertures where these were to be. We designed having only one window—in the back.

"The manner in which we opened our doorway was very simple. Having first carefully rested the logs—which were to be on each side of the door—upon firm wedges, we sawed away the parts between. Fortunately, we had a saw, or this operation would have given us a good deal of trouble. Of course, we sawed away the proper size for a door; and thus our doorway, by placing the lintels and posts, was com-

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plete. In a similar manner we cut out our window in the back. We then went to work upon one of the soft tulip-trees, and sawed out enough plank to make a door and window, or rather a window-shutter. These we cut to the proper size, and bound them together by slats, and tre-nails made out of the hard locust-wood. We then hung them—both door and window-shutter—with strips of elk-skin. That night we carried in all our bedding and utensils, and slept under the roof of our new house.

"It was still far from being finished; and, the next day, we set about building a fire-place and chimney. This, of course, was to be in one of the gable ends, and we chose that looking northward—for we had built our cabin fronting to the east. We wedged the logs precisely as we had done with the door, and then sawed away the space between—up to the height of an ordinary mantel-piece. Behind this, and altogether outside the house, we built a fire-place of stones and clay—laying a hearth of the same materials, that completely covered the sleeper — in order to prevent the latter from being burned. On the top of this fire-place, the chimney was still to be erected; and this was done by notching short straight pieces of timber, and placing them across each other,

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exactly as we had laid the logs of the house itself. These pieces were put in shorter, as we advanced to the top—so that the top ones might be lighter and more easily supported by those below; and when the whole was finished, and the chinks filled with clay, our chimney tapered upward like the funnel of a little factory. The chimney and fire-place occupied us quite a day, and at night—although it was not very cold—we tried it with a log-fire. It drew beautifully.

"Next day we 'chinked' the walls all round with chips, stones, and clay. We chinked gables and all, until not a hole was to be seen that would let a mouse through. The floor still remained; but we intended to lay this with plank, and as we had no means of getting them except by our small saw, and they would require some time to dry, we resolved to attend, first, to several other things that were of more necessity, and finish the floor at our leisure. We carpeted the ground, which was quite dry, with green palmetto leaves, and that rendered it sufficiently comfortable for the present. We now formally entered our new house, which we had built from floor to chimney *without a nail!*

"Our next care was to furnish our horse with a

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house—in other words, to build a stable. Not that the weather rendered it at all necessary for Pompo—so our horse was called—to sleep under a roof; but we were fearful lest some beast of prey, prowling about by night, should fancy him—as the carcajou had fancied our poor ox.

"The stable was only a two days' job—as we built it out of logs already cut, and roofed it with the refuse of our clap-boards. Besides, we had no window nor chimney to make, and we did not chink the logs, as that was not necessary for a stable in such a climate. Our horse would be warm enough without that, and Cudjo had made him a trough by hollowing out one of the tulip-trees.

"From that time forth Pompo was regularly called every evening at sunset, and shut up in his stable. We could not afford to let the carcajou make a meal of him, as in our log-hauling and other labours he was of great service to us.

"As soon as the stable was finished, we set to work and put up a table and six strong chairs. As I have said, we had no nails; but, fortunately enough, I had both a chisel and auger, with several other useful tools. All of these I had brought in the great chest from Virginia, thinking they might be needed

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on our beautiful farm at Cairo. With the help of these, and Cudjo's great skill as a joiner, we were able to mortise and dovetail at our pleasure, and I had made a most excellent glue from the horns of the elk and ox, along with their hoofs. We wanted a plane to polish our table, but this was a want which we could easily endure. The lid of our table was made of plank sawed out of the catalpa-tree; and with some pieces of pumice I had picked up in the valley, and the constant scouring which it received at the hands of our housewife, it soon exhibited a surface as smooth as glass. From my finding this pumice-stone, I concluded that our snow-mountain had once been a volcano—perhaps like the peak of Teneriffe, standing alone in the water, when the great plain around us had been covered with a sea.

"Cudjo and I did not forget the promise we had made to the beavers. We could see these little creatures, from day to day, very busy in drawing large branches to the water, and then floating them towards their houses. We knew that this was for their winter provisions. They had grown quite tame, as soon as they found we were not going to molest them, and frequently came out on our side of the lake. For this confidence on their part we were

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determined to give them a treat they little dreamt of —at least, of receiving from our hands.

"I had noticed a clump of beautiful trees, which grew near one side of the glade, and not far from where we had built our house. Our attention had been called to them by the aromatic fragrance of their flowers, that blew around us all the time we were engaged in building. They were low, crooked trees, not over thirty feet in height—with oval leaves, six inches in length, and of a bluish-green colour. The flowers were about the size of a rose, although more like a lily in appearance, and white as snow. Their perfume was extremely agreeable, and Mary was in the habit of gathering a bunch of them daily, and placing them in a vessel of water.

"I have already said that my wife understood botany, and all botanists take a pleasure in imparting their knowledge to others. She explained to us, therefore, the nature and properties of this sweet-scented tree. It was a species of magnolia—not that which is celebrated for its large flowers, but another kind. It was the *magnolia glauca*, sometimes called 'swamp sassafras,' but more generally known among hunters and trappers as the 'beaver-tree.' It is so named by them, because the beaver is fonder of its

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roots than of any other food; so fond of it, indeed, that it is often used as a bait to the traps by which these animals are caught.

"Whether our beavers had already discovered their favourite tree in some other part of the valley, we did not know. Probably they had; but, at all events, Cudjo and I by a very little labour, with our spade and axe, could save *them* a great deal; and so we set about it.

"In a few hours we had dug up several armfuls of the long branching roots, and carried them down to the edge of the lake. We flung them into the water at a place where we knew the animals were in the habit of frequenting. In a short time the aromatic roots were discovered, when a whole crowd of beavers were seen hurrying to the spot, and swimming off again to their houses, each with a root or a whole bunch of them in his teeth. That was a grand festival for the beavers.

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CHAPTER XXI.

A BATTUE OF "BLACK-TAILS."

"Of course we could do nothing more for our beavers at present. It was not our intention to trap any of them until they should become very numerous, and then we could obtain annually a large number of skins. Their tails, we knew, were very good to eat—in fact, quite a delicacy—but we could not afford to kill one of them merely for the sake of eating his tail, and the other parts of the beaver's flesh are by no means palatable. Besides, we expected to find enough of game without that, as in every part, where the ground was soft, we saw the tracks of deer and other animals.

"By the time we had fairly furnished our house, the flesh of the elk was beginning to run short, so that a grand hunting excursion was determined upon. It was also to be an exploring expedition, as up to

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this time we had not visited any part of the valley except that which lay immediately arouud our house. Frank, Harry, and myself, were to form the party, while Cudjo was to remain by the house, and guard the female portion of our little community with his great spear.

"Everything being ready, we started out with our three rifles, and took the route up the valley. As we passed along under high trees, we could see squirrels upon all sides of us; some of them sitting on their hind-quarters like little monkeys; some of them cracking nuts; some of them barking like toy-dogs; while others, again, leaped about among the branches. Of course, as we advanced upon them, they sprang up the trees, or streaked off along the ground so swiftly that it seemed more like the flight of a bird than the running of a four-footed animal. On reaching a tree they would gallop up it, generally keeping on the opposite side to that on which we were, so that they might be secure. Sometimes, however, their curiosity would get the better of their fears, and when they had climbed as high as the first or second forking of the branches, they would stop there and gaze down upon us, all the while flourishing their light bushy tails. We had

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excellent opportunities of getting a shot at them, and Harry, who was not so thoughtful as his brother, wished very much to try his skill; but I forbade this, telling him that we could not afford to throw away our ammunition on such small game. Indeed, this was a thought that frequently entered my mind, and made me anxious about what we should do when our ammunition became exhausted. I cautioned both my boys, therefore, not to spend a single shot on any animal smaller than elk or deer, and they promised to obey me.

"When we had gone about a mile up-stream, we saw that the trees grew thinner as we advanced, and then opened into small glades, or spaces covered with herbage and flowers, usually called 'openings.' This, surely, was the very place to find deer—much more likely than in the thick woods, where these animals are in more danger from the cougar and carcajou, that occasionally drop upon them from the trees. We had not gone far among these openings, before we saw fresh tracks. They were more like the tracks of a goat than those of a deer, except that they were much larger. They were nearly as large as the tracks of the elk, but we knew they were not these.

"We advanced with great caution, keeping in

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the underwood as much as possible. At length we saw that there was a large glade before us, much larger than any we had yet passed. We could tell this by the wide clear spaces that appeared through the trees. We stole silently forward to the edge of this glade, and, to our great satisfaction, saw a herd of deer feeding quietly out upon the open ground.

"'Papa, they are not deer,' said Frank, as we first came in sight of them. 'See! who ever heard of deer with such ears as those? I declare they are as long as a mule's!'

"'Yes,' added Harry; 'and who ever heard of deer with black tails?'

"I confess I was myself puzzled for a while. The animals before us were certainly deer, as their long slender legs and great branched antlers testified; but they were very different from the common kind —and different, too, from the elk. They were much larger than the red or fallow deer, though not unlike them in shape and colour. But that which was strange, as my boys had at once noticed, was the peculiarity of their ears and tails. The former were quite as long as the ears of a mule, and reached more than half way to the tops of their antlers. Their tails, again, were short and bushy, of a whitish

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colour underneath, but on the top and above as black as the wing of a crow. There were also some black hairs upon their backs, and a black stripe along the neck and shoulders, while their noses on each side were of a pale ashy colour—all of which marks gave them a very different appearance from the Virginian or English deer.

"I have said that I was at first puzzled; but I soon recollected having heard of these animals, although they are but little known to naturalists. They could be no other than the 'black-tailed deer' of the Rocky Mountains—the *cervus macrotis* described by the naturalist, Say. This was evident both from their size, the great length of their ears—but more than all from the colour of their tails, from which last circumstance their common name has been given them by the hunters and trappers.

"We did not stop long to examine them. We were too anxious to have a shot at them; but how were we to get near enough? There were seven of them in the herd; but they were quite out in the middle of the glade, and that was more than three hundred yards wide. The nearest of the seven was beyond the range even of my long rifle. What, then, was best to be done?

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"After thinking about this for a moment, I saw that an open passage led out of the glade through the trees on the other side. It was a wide avenue leading into some other glade; and I knew that the deer when startled would be most likely to make off in that direction. I determined, therefore, to creep round to the other side, and intercept them as they attempted to run through. Frank was to remain where we first saw them, while Harry would go half way along with me, and then take his stand behind a tree. We should thus enclose the deer in a sort of triangle, and some one of us would be sure of getting them within range before they could escape.

"I had scarcely got to the edge of the opening when I saw that the herd was browsing in towards Frank. They were every moment getting closer and closer to him, and I watched eagerly for the shot. I knew he would not fire until they were very near, as I had cautioned him not to do so, on account of the smallness of his rifle. Presently I saw the stream of smoke and fire issuing from the leaves; then followed the sharp crack, and then the yelping of our dogs as they broke forward. At the same time one of the deer was seen to spring upward and fall dead

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in its tracks. The others wheeled and ran, first one way and then another, in their confusion; until, after doubling several times, they made towards the opening where I stood. In their flight, however, they had gone too close to Harry, and as they were running past his stand, the tiny crack of a rifle was heard among the bushes; and another of the black-tails rolled over on the plain.

"It was now my turn; and I prepared myself to make the best shot I could or be beaten by my own boys. So as they came up I let drive at them, to my mortification missing them every one—as I thought at the moment. It soon appeared, however, that I was mistaken in this. Castor and Pollux swept past upon the heels of the herd; and before they had disappeared out of the long avenue, I saw the dogs spring upon the haunches of one that lagged behind, and drag him to the ground. I ran to their assistance, and seizing the wounded animal by one of its antlers, soon put an end to it with my knife. I had wounded it in the flank; and that had enabled the mastiffs to overtake it, which they could not have done otherwise, as its companions were at the time several hundred yards ahead of it. We all now came

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together, exulting in the fine fortune we had met with, for we had made a regular *battue* of it. We were glad that none of us had missed, and that we had succeeded in obtaining so much good meat, for we were not slaughtering these beautiful creatures out of wanton sport, but from the necessity of procuring food. Each congratulated the others upon their good shooting, and said nothing of his own—although it was plain that all three of us were proud of our respective shots. To do justice, however, that of Harry was decidedly the best. He had knocked his one over while on the run—no easy matter with these black-tails, who do not gallop regularly as other deer, but bound forward, lifting all their feet together, as you will sometimes see sheep do. This mode of running is one of the peculiarities of their species—which, perhaps, more than any other thing, distinguishes them from the common deer.

"After carefully wiping out, and then reloading, our rifles, we rested them against the trees, and set to work to skin our game.

"While engaged in this operation, Harry complained of thirst. Indeed, we were all thirsty as well, for the sun was hot, and we had walked a good

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distance. We could not be far from the stream, although we were not sure of its direction; and Harry, taking the tin cup which we had brought with us, set out to find it, promising soon to return with water for our relief. He had only left us but a short while, when we heard him calling back through the trees; and thinking that some animal might have attacked him, Frank and I seized our rifles, and ran after him. On coming up, we were surprised to find him standing quietly on the bank of a crystal rivulet, holding the cup full of water in his hand.

"'Why did you bring us away?' asked Frank.

"'Taste this,' replied he; 'here's a pickle!'

"'Oh, papa!' cried Frank, after applying the cup to his lips; 'salt as brine, I declare.'

"'Salt you may say,' continued his brother; 'the sea itself is not so salt—taste it, papa!'

"I did as I was desired; and, to my delight, I found that the water of the rivulet was, what Frank had alleged, 'salt as brine.' I say to my delight, for I was greatly pleased at this discovery. The boys could not understand this, as they, being now very thirsty, would much rather have met with a cup of fresh, than a whole river of salt water. I soon

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pointed out to them the importance of what we had found. We had been in great need of salt—for we had not a single grain of it—and had felt the want ever since our arrival in the valley. Only they who cannot get salt, can understand what a terrible thing it is to be without this homely, but necessary article.

"The flesh of our elk, which for many days past we lived upon, had proved quite insipid for want of salt, and we had not been able to make a soup that was in any way palatable. Now, however, we should have as much as we desired; and I explained to my companions, that by simply boiling this water in our kettle, we should obtain the very thing we so much stood in need of. This, as they saw, would be great news for mamma on our return; and the prospect of making her happy, by imparting the information, rendered all of us impatient to get back. We did not stay a moment by the salt stream, which was a very small rivulet of blue water, and evidently running from some spring that bubbled in the valley. Not far below us, we saw where it ran into the main stream of fresh water; and, keeping down to the latter, we quenched our thirst, and then went back to our work.

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"We made all the haste we could, and our three black-tails were soon skinned, quartered, and hung upon the trees—so as to be out of reach of the wolves while we should be gone. We now shouldered our rifles, and hurried back to the house.

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CHAPTER XXII.

CATCHING A TARTAR.

"Of course, Mary was much pleased on hearing of the discovery we had made. One of the first requisites of a housewife is a supply of good salt; and that we promised to obtain for her on the morrow. It was our intention to carry the kettle up to the salt stream, and there manufacture the article, as that would be more convenient than to bring the water down to the house. This piece of work we laid out for the next day. Meanwhile, as it was not yet near night, we caught Pompo, and set off again to bring our black-tails home. This required us to make several journeys, as we had no cart by which we could bring the deer all at once, and each of them was as large as a good-sized heifer. We succeeded, however, in getting all to the house before sunset—except the skins, which we left hanging on

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