

I have stood upon a high roll of the prairie, with neither tree nor bush to obstruct the vision in any direction, and seen these animals grazing upon the plain and darkening it at every point. There are perhaps larger herds of buffalo at present in northern Texas than anywhere else on the western prairies, their most formidable enemies, the Indians, not ranging so low down in large parties, on account of the whites; but I was told that every year their numbers were gradually decreasing, and their range, owing to the approach of white settlers from the east and south, becoming more and more circumscribed. It would seem almost impossible, especially to one who has seen them, numerous as the sands of the seashore, on their immense natural pastures, that the race can ever become extinct; but when he reflects upon the rapid strides civilization is making westward upon the domain of the buffalo, he is brought to feel that the noble race will soon be known only as a thing of the past.

The whites have two ways of hunting these animals. One is to creep up within a short distance, and shoot them with a rifle carrying a heavy ball, or with a musket—a mode of hunting seldom resorted to except by those who are in want of meat. The other way is to sally out after them on horseback, armed with heavy holster-pistols, run alongside, while under full speed, and shoot from the saddle. Of all hunting in the world this is probably the most exciting, at the same time involving the sportsman in no little danger. The horse that has been trained to it soon gets as fond of the sport as his master, will run directly up within three or four yards of the immense animal, and is always ready to sheer off and get out of the way in case the buffalo shows a disposition to fight. When the hunter wants

meat he rides in among the animals, and singles out a fat cow or young bull, which he marks for his own—if he is merely hunting for the sport, or for “grandeur” as it is called in the West, he attacks the oldest and largest bull he can find, and continues to blaze away at him with his pistols until he brings him down. He may possibly secure the tongue of the animal—the carcass is soon sought and preyed upon by the legion of buzzards which are ever on the scent.

Early on the morning of June 24th we left our encampment on Deep Creek, intending to reach Little River before night. We had travelled but a few miles before the cheering cry of “Buffalo! buffalo!” was heard along the line. Directly ahead, on the right and left of our road, innumerable small black objects could be seen, more resembling stumps than aught else. As we slowly approached them, the objects became more distinct, gave signs of life, and appeared to be slowly moving about on the interminable prairie. When within half a mile it was evident, even to those who had only seen badly-executed woodcuts of the animal in “picture-books,” that they were buffalo, spread out over the immense space, and in countless numbers.

Notwithstanding orders had been given the volunteers not to break their double-file ranks, nothing could restrain the youngsters from leaving the command and sharing in the exciting chase. The merchants, and others not attached to the military, were at perfect liberty to go when and where it might please them, as a matter of course. We were soon surrounded by buffalo, and every two minutes a Texan malecontent would leave the ranks at full gallop, and dash off after some huge animal, which chance, or a more clumsy gait, had left behind his fellows. Never have I beheld a scene

so full of excitement. Such of the command as did not join in the hunt continued steadily along, myself and Mr. Navarro, in our Jersey carry-all, keeping in line with them, while all around us was hurry-scurry and confusion. We had not advanced a mile, after reaching the outposts of the immense herd, before we were in their midst, seeing nothing in any direction save the immense animals speeding along at a heavy, lumbering gallop, the larger ones more resembling loads of hay in motion than anything else I can liken them to. In the distance, far as the eye could reach, they were seen quietly feeding upon the short prairie grass, and apparently unconscious of the wild riot and danger so near at hand.

Unable to mount a horse, I could not join the exciting chase; yet I could plainly see and enjoy the animated scene. At times, I could discern one of our men, apparently hemmed in on all sides by the frightened and infuriated animals, and running the greatest risk of being run over and trampled to the earth. Anon, the smoke of a pistol would rise, followed quickly by the report, and then succeeded a general and confused scattering. Perchance a bull—for the “green-horns” generally select the largest of the herd as affording a better mark—would be seen to totter, his tail lashing the air in furious circles, and then to tumble headlong to the earth; at another time, one of the animals, wounded and rendered furious by pain, would rush blindly and madly at his pursuer. The largest number of horses were entirely unused to the sport, and “fought shy” of the unsightly animals; others, again, had been regularly trained, and would eagerly carry their riders up to the buffalo, and allow them to “bang and blaze” away, pistol after pistol, without starting, or even moving a

muscle. Such is a faint description of the stirring scenes I saw around me on that day's travel.

Among the merchants was a wild, frolicking Irishman, named Fitzgerald, one of the best fellows that ever the sun shone upon. Fitz, as he was universally called, was descended from one of the best families in Ireland, nearly every member of which has been distinguished as an officer in the British service. His mother was a daughter of the celebrated Archibald Hamilton Rowan, who acted so conspicuous a part in the Irish rebellion of '98, and one of his uncles, a major-general in the English army, has recently returned to England from Bombay, where he was governor. As several of Fitzgerald's brothers held commissions in the British service, his family thought it expedient to make a clergyman of him, although nature had intended him for anything but that. To carry out their plans successfully they sent him, when only some eight years of age, to a school near Boulogne, in France. There he learned the usual amount of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, and, according to his own statements, an extra amount of mischievous practices generally. At the age of eighteen he returned to Ireland, and on his peremptorily refusing to take holy orders his father ordered him to Jamaica, to fill a lucrative station he had procured for him in the customs. He set off for that island, but on getting as far as London, he saw the walls covered with handbills calling upon volunteers for General Evans's Legion, then about to embark for Spain to the assistance of Isabella. Here was just the thing that suited Fitzgerald's wild temperament and ardent impulses, and to enlist, leaving the customs at Jamaica to regulate themselves, was his first movement. Arrived in Spain, he was promoted, step by step, for his gallant conduct,

and finally, for skilfully and successfully leading a forlorn hope, received a captain's commission, and was also created a knight of the Order of St. Ferdinand. The return of the Legion to England left Fitz without employment; but hearing that he could obtain a commission in the Persian army, he pushed for that country to join the service. Finding, on reaching his new and singular destination, that there was little fighting and less pay, he returned to England. He next visited the Cape of Good Hope, either with or in search of his father, and from that point went to Van Diemen's Land and the parts adjacent. Thence he returned to England, taking Brazil in his route. A life of inactivity he could not endure; so hearing that there was not only fun but fighting in Texas, he embarked for that Republic by way of New-Orleans. We next hear of him selling dry goods at San Antonio de Bexar. This business, however, did not prevent him from joining the different expeditions against Mexicans and Indians that were continually fitted out at that place, and in this way he became enamoured of a prairie life—a feeling which induced him to join the Santa Fé Expedition. Educated in France, he spoke the French language, and his three years' sojourn in Spain had given him a smattering of Spanish—enough, at all events, to carry on an ordinary conversation.

Always willing, ready, and among the first to enter into any madcap, daring, or break-neck scrape, as a matter of course Fitz led off the chase after the buffalo. He was mounted on a game and untiring Mexican pony, loaded down with saddlebags, water-gourd, blankets, and the miscellaneous equipage which constitutes the fit-out of a campaigner; but all this did not deter him from starting off at once. Away he went in neck-or-

nothing style, riding up to the first buffalo he met, and banging away with his pistols as fast as he could load and fire. In all his wanderings he had never met with buffalo before, and so exciting was the dangerous sport of riding among them that he could not command himself. In the mad chase he lost first his hat, then his blanket, and finally his saddlebags and water-gourd; but these were mere trifles when such game was in sight, and as Fitz never stopped to pick them up, they are probably now lying on the prairie in the exact places where he dropped them.

My friend Falconer, too, was seized with a fit of excitement. His horse, however, unlike that of Fitzgerald, was a sedate, quiet, slow-and-easy kind of animal, holding a gallop or canter in such special abhorrence that neither whip nor spur could induce him to indulge in either. Still Falconer must needs have a trot after the buffalo, as he could not chase them in a gallop; and it was droll enough to see a gentleman, who had started upon the expedition in search of strange weeds, stones, and the picturesque, now jogging along after buffalo, with a glass raised to his right eye. As he was armed only with a double-barrelled gun, loaded, probably, with bird shot, he did not essay the killing of any of the huge monsters by which he was at times surrounded.

The number of buffalo killed during the day, in our immediate vicinity, was twenty-eight; the number of prisoners taken in the shape of young calves, some ten or twelve. As to getting the number of wounded, that would have been impossible.

In the afternoon we reached Little River, where we encamped for the night, and where we had a feast of choice buffalo meat, tongue, and also the marrow bones of that animal; some of the calves also were killed, and

furnished us with delicious veal. The simple things followed our men into camp without the least trouble. It was only necessary to blind their eyes with the hands for a moment, push their noses to the ground, and hold them in that position until their dams were out of sight. On raising their heads they would stare about, and the first object that caught their gaze, whether man or horse, they would follow like dogs. Thus ended our first day among the immense buffalo herds of the Western Prairies.

CHAPTER V.

Sending back for more Cattle.—Rations of Beef for each Man.—Idle Hours in Camp.—Annoying Insects.—Night Alarms.—Death of Lockridge.—A Dutchman shot at.—Improvident Waste of Provisions.—Game in our Vicinity.—Sickness of General McLeod.—Once more on the Road.—Bird's Battle-ground.—A Visit from Mustangs.—The "White Steed of the Prairies."—Stories in relation to this Horse.—Cow Creek.—Plenty of Buffalo.—Repairing Wagons.—Profanity of the Teamsters.—Out of Water.—Fourth of July on the Prairies.—Celebration among the Clouds.—A troublesome Visiter.—Rattlesnakes and Tarantulas.—Death of Flint.—Crossing the Bosque.—The Antelope, or Mountain Goat.—Simplicity of this Animal.—Another Branch of the Bosque.—Difficulty of crossing.—More Swearing.—A Stampede!—Singular Effect of Fright upon Horses and Oxen.—Falconer's Horse at his Eccentricities.—A Private Stampede.—Laughable Antics.—Falconer's Philosophy

BEFORE the main body of the expedition left Austin, in May, it was thought by those most familiar with the subject that the journey to Santa Fé would not occupy more than six weeks, or two months at the very farthest, and a supply of beef on the hoof was purchased, amply sufficient for that length of time. On arriving at Little River, our commissary stated that it would be impru-

dent to go farther without sending back for more beeves, as in the long delay on the Brushy the volunteers had consumed a large portion of those originally furnished. Had the expedition started at the time originally proposed, there would have been no necessity for a fresh supply; but inasmuch as it had been delayed three weeks, the wants of the men, admitting that the journey would occupy two months, would require some thirty head of cattle more. The regular ration to each person was three pounds of beef a day, a quantity amply sufficient for an ordinary man even when he has no breadstuffs or vegetables, as was our case. In addition to the beef, coffee enough to give each man two pints a day, with the needful sugar, was served out. Instead of breadstuffs, for which transportation could not be provided, a quantity of tobacco was served to each man.

The sending back to the settlements for an additional number of beeves occasioned a delay of five days, the time being passed in fishing and hunting by some, lounging and sleeping by others, and heavily enough by all; for the desire to be on the move was a serious drawback upon the enjoyments even of those most fond of buffalo hunting. The place where we encamped abounded with a small insect called, I believe, the seed tick, which penetrates under the skin in great numbers, raises small sores or pimples, and causes a burning and continual itching. I was completely covered, or rather filled, with these annoying visitors, and lost many an hour's sleep in consequence.

We had two alarms the second night we passed on Little River. The first was about ten o'clock, and was caused by the sharp report of a rifle directly in the centre of the camp. A circumstance so unusual started