

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

every man to his feet, and the alarm was far from inconsiderable until it was ascertained that the young man Lockridge, of whom I have spoken elsewhere, had shot himself. Some two hours after, the camp was a second time thrown into excitement by the startling "Who goes there?" of one of the guard, followed by the heavy report of a musket. The hands of every man were instantly upon his gun, and every preparation was made to resist an attack from Indians, for in the hurry and alarm we could think of nothing else; but on inquiring into the affair it was ascertained that an honest Dutchman, a servant of Colonel Cooke, was returning late into camp, with a horse he had found after a long search, and that not answering the sentinel promptly, he had been fired upon. Fortunately he was untouched, although badly frightened. This second alarm satisfactorily explained, we again returned to our blankets, and the rest of the night was passed in quiet and sleep.

While encamped upon Little River, and I may say during the whole of the time we were in the buffalo and game country, there was a most improvident waste of beef, the regular rations being served out to each man. Those who could obtain choice portions of the buffalo and deer, which were now killed in immense numbers, of course threw away the coarse and tougher parts of the beef given them. These, however, soon found customers; for clouds of buzzards were immediately hovering over and lighting within the lines, playing the part of most excellent scavengers. Could we but have anticipated the horrible sufferings we were then bringing upon our heads, or rather stomachs, by this prodigality; had we thought the time was near at hand when the poorest morsels we were throwing away so lavish-

ly would be absolutely necessary to sustain life, a more provident course would have been adopted. Some of the old campaigners spoke of this waste at the time, remarking that the buzzards were fattening upon meat of which we should all feel the want before we got to our journey's end; but by far the greater portion of us were inexperienced, and went on the principle of taking special good care of ourselves to-day and letting to-morrow look out for itself. We gained experience and wisdom afterward, but we bought it at an enormous price.

The place where we encamped on Little River was the site of an old picket fort, garrisoned, some years previous, by a detachment of Texan soldiers, who were stationed there to keep a look-out for Indians. The location is one of exceeding loveliness, healthy, and combining every advantage for a flourishing settlement. A growth of heavy timber, some two miles in width, covers the fertile bottom, while the rich prairies afford the best of grazing for the immense herds of buffalo and deer always to be found in the vicinity. Bears and Mexican hogs, the latter a ferocious animal, are found in great numbers in the bottoms, fish of different varieties are caught in the stream, and many of the trees are filled with delicious wild honey.

While encamped at this place, General McLeod was attacked with fever, and was carried in a wagon to Bryant's Station, some twenty miles to our right, near the Brazos. Major Howard took the command of the expedition during his illness. On the evening of the 29th of June the order was given for an early march next morning—an order received with joy by all. The next morning, therefore, saw us again on our road, crossing prairies on which buffalo could be seen in almost every

direction. In the afternoon we passed the scene of Bird's celebrated battle with the Indians. With thirty-three Texans only he fought some two hundred and fifty Indians several hours, killing large numbers of them. Bird himself was killed, towards the close of the battle, which was a drawn one, both parties retiring after sustaining great loss.

At sundown a drove of *mustangs*, or wild horses of the prairie, paid us a flying visit. They were first seen ascending a hill at the distance of half a mile, and as they were coming towards us were taken for Indians. When seen on a distant hill, standing with their raised heads towards a person, and forming a line as is their custom, it is almost impossible to take them for anything but mounted men. Having satisfied their curiosity, they wheeled with almost the regularity of a cavalry company and galloped off, their long thick manes waving in the air and their tails nearly sweeping the ground. They are beautiful animals, always in excellent condition, and although smaller than our American horses, are still very compact, and will bear much fatigue.

Many were the stories told that night in camp, by some of the older hunters, of a large white horse that had often been seen in the vicinity of the Cross Timbers and near Red River. That many of these stories, like a majority of those told by gossiping campaigners, were either apocryphal or marvellously garnished, I have little doubt; but that such a horse has been seen, and that he possesses wonderful speed and great powers of endurance, there is no reason to disbelieve. As the camp stories ran, he has never been known to gallop or trot, but paces faster than any horse that has been sent out after him can run; and so game and untiring is the

"*White Steed of the Prairies*," for he is well known to trappers and hunters by that name, that he has tired down no less than three race-nags, sent expressly to catch him, with a Mexican rider well trained to the business of taking wild horses. The latter had nothing but a *lasso* or *lariat* with him—a long rope made either of hemp or horse hair, but generally the latter. One end of this rope is made fast to the pommel of the saddle, while the other is formed into a noose: the Mexican carries it coiled up in the right hand, and throws it with astonishing dexterity and precision, casting it directly over the head, feet, or even tail of the animal he may be pursuing.

The Mexican who was sent out to take the wild steed, although he mounted a fresh horse as the one he was riding became tired, was never near enough the noble animal to throw a slip-noose over his head, or even to drive him into a regular gallop. Some of the hunters go so far as to say that the white steed has been known to pace his mile in less than two minutes, and that he could keep up this rate of speed until he had tired down everything in pursuit. Large sums had been offered for his capture, and the attempt had been frequently made; but he still roamed his native prairies in freedom, solitary and alone.\* The fact of his being always found with no other horse in company was accounted for, by an old hunter, on the ground that he was too proud to be seen with those of his class, being an animal far superior in form and action to any of his brothers. This I put down as a rank embellishment,

\* Since my return, I have been informed, by a Texan gentleman, that a horse in many respects answering the description of the "*White Steed of the Prairies*" has been caught, after a hard chase, between the head waters of the Trinity and Brazos. He lived but a short time, however, the excessive fatigue of the race causing his death.

although it is a fact that the more beautiful and highly-formed mustangs are frequently seen alone.

On the 1st of July we reached Cow Creek, killing large numbers of buffalo during the day. The 2d we halted to repair some of the wagons which had been upset and injured. The gullies and creeks we were compelled to cross were many of them impassable until much time had been spent in cutting and digging away the steep and lofty banks. With all the cutting and digging, however, hardly a day passed in which we escaped an upset; and then the expressions made use of, by the drivers and fatigue-men, sounded so much like swearing of the most forcible kind that there was no mistaking it. It appeared to be the only study of some of our teamsters to invent the most blasphemous oaths; and the cool, slow, and decided manner in which these imprecations were uttered showed that they wished all within hearing to have the full benefit of their studies. I asked one of them, just as he had finished a long and most horrid oath which I would not dare to put on paper, why he uttered such profanities. His answer was, they saved much whipping, and that his oxen drew much better than with the common kind of swearing. Be this as it may, I believe that if the unfortunate animals had possessed the powers of understanding they would have run away in the middle of one of the long list of blasphemies. I have heard swearing in many quarters, but for originality, deliberate utterance, and deep wickedness, I have never heard that of some of the drivers on the Santa Fé Expedition equalled.

Our route from Cow Creek led us over high and dry prairies, and after travelling some twenty miles—a long distance for wagons—we were finally obliged to encamp without water. The day had been insupportably

hot, without a cloud, or hardly a breath of air stirring, and all the water in our canteens was consumed before noon. As a consequence, we suffered extremely that night; and had there been a glass of water up at auction, I should certainly have bid high for it. Visions of sherry cobbles, soda, and other cooling drinks haunted me the whole night, and when I awoke it was to the painful reality that there was no reality in my dreams. Since that time I have gone ten miles for a cup of water.

An early start the next morning, which was the Fourth of July, enabled us to reach a cool and delicious spring early in the afternoon, and here we slaked our intolerable thirst. A few seconds after, we had forgotten our sufferings. A man may endure the most torturing thirst for thirty-six or forty-eight hours—thinking of water, and nothing but water the while—but the moment he has reached it, and swallowed a sufficiency, all thoughts of past suffering are at once banished.

We had no opportunity of keeping the birthday of American Independence as many of us could have wished; but the heavens got up a private celebration, in the shape of a thunder-storm, and seldom have I heard such continued, heavy, and rattling peals. It always seemed to me that in the early part of summer the thunder was louder, the lightning more vivid, and the storms generally were more severe on the prairies than anywhere else. They are not, perhaps, attended with as much rain, but the accompaniments are altogether on a grander and more magnificent scale.

We had a troublesome and unwelcome visiter in camp on the night of the Fourth of July. The storm had induced the mess to which I was attached to pitch a tent. The wet grass without probably drove a prai-

rie rattlesnake to more comfortable quarters within our canvass, the first intimation we had of the vicinity of his snakeship being his crawling over one of us in an attempt to effect a lodgment under some of the blankets. A more disagreeable companionship cannot well be imagined, even if one has his choice from among all living, moving, creeping, flying, running, swimming, and crawling things; and to assert that any of us felt perfectly easy and at home with such a neighbour among us would be saying what is not true. For myself, fearing to move lest I should molest the reptile, I rolled myself, head and all, under my blanket, and lay perfectly quiet until daylight. Where the intruder went no one could tell, and we had the very great satisfaction of seeing no more of him.

Very frequently, on the great prairies, a man wakes up in the morning and finds that he has had a rattlesnake for a sleeping partner; but there is one excellent trait in the character of these reptiles—they never bite unless disturbed, and will get out of the way as soon as possible, except in the month of August, when they are said to be blind, and will snap at any and everything they may hear about them. The ordinary prairie rattlesnake is of small size, seldom being seen over three feet in length; but those living in the holes of the prairie dogs, mention of which I shall make hereafter, grow to an immense magnitude. The former, I believe, are considered not only the most vicious, but the most poisonous.

In addition to the rattlesnake, the *tarantula* is frequently met with on the Texan prairies, is also often found under the blanket of the campaigner, and is said to be as poisonous as the former. They are large, black, venomous-looking insects, with bodies about the

size of a dove's egg, although their long and strong legs make them appear much larger. When attacked with a stick, they will rear up on their hind legs and attempt to bite, and are extremely ferocious in every respect. The least scratch from their long fangs throws a person into convulsions, and will produce death unless immediate remedies can be procured. The ballet of *Le Tarentule*, in which Elssler gained so much applause, is a beautiful creation, although founded upon an idle superstition of the Italians. The bite of the real tarantula drives a person to anything but dancing, subjecting him rather to fits and strong nervous excitement. The opinion prevails, among the ignorant and superstitious of many countries, that music will cure the individual who has been bitten by one of these venomous insects. What effect it might have in soothing the nervous system I am unable to say; but were I bitten by a tarantula I should certainly prefer hartshorn, taken inwardly and outwardly, for the purpose of procuring a safe and speedy cure.

It is deemed an easy matter to keep the rattlesnake from sharing your bed while sleeping upon the prairies. It is said that they will never cross a hair *lariat*, so that by circumscribing the ground you occupy with one of these instruments, you enjoy an exemption from their more sociable visits; but this is no guard against the poisonous tarantula. Few persons, however, are bitten by either, not an instance occurring on the route, although we saw great numbers of each.

On awaking the next morning, after the adventure with the rattlesnake, we found that there had been another visiter in camp, and one from whose insatiate fangs there is no escape. Death had carried off a poor fellow named Flint. He had eaten freely of unripe

grapes or berries during the previous day, which brought on a colic that no medicine could reach. He was buried at an early hour, and a volley was fired over his grave, after which the march was resumed.

We had already, and with no inconsiderable difficulty, crossed one branch of the Bosque, and on the evening of the 5th arrived at another fork of the same stream, where we encamped for the night. It abounds with excellent trout and soft-shell turtle. This day, for the first time, we saw the antelope, or mountain goat, an animal somewhat resembling both the deer and the goat, but with flesh preferable to that of either. It runs with great speed, and has a stride like a horse. How fast the animal can run when in possession of four legs is a question I am at a loss to answer, but one with a fore leg broken by a rifle ball made out to escape from one of our best horses after a long chase. On the table-lands at the foot of the Rocky Mountains they are met with in great numbers, and many are seen on the Upper Brazos and Colorado. Although a shy, they are still a very inquisitive animal, and are frequently lured within gunshot by simply hanging a red handkerchief upon a ramrod or stick, and moving it aloft. The hunter keeps his body out of sight as much as possible, when the antelope, seeing nothing but the handkerchief, approaches, with head erect and by slow degrees, until within rifle-shot, and then pays the penalty of its curiosity with its life.

The early part of the 6th of July was spent in cutting a road through the thick belt of wood which skirts either side of the main branch of the Bosque, and in partially digging away the high, steep banks of the stream. The labour of crossing the river was incredible. In descending the abrupt banks which led to the channel,

it was necessary, not only to lock the wheels, but to hold back the wagons with ropes to prevent them from pitching down, "head first" as it were; the greatest difficulty, however, was in ascending on the other side. The ascent was nearly perpendicular and some forty feet high, with no better footing than a deep sand. Some twenty yoke of oxen would in the first place be hitched to a wagon; then ropes would be attached wherever there was a place to make them fast, manned by about fifty or sixty of the fatigue party; finally, all the drivers would be called in requisition, and when all was ready for a start such a jumping, whipping, cracking, yelling, pulling, cursing and swearing would arise as to set all description at defiance. Bedlam itself, with five hundred Indians as an accompaniment, seemed let loose in a body. I will not pretend to say that had Bonaparte met with the Bosque while crossing the Alps he would have been compelled to return; but he would have found a serious detention at all events. Yet difficult as was the crossing, everything was safely over before the middle of the afternoon, and we still made a march of a few miles to a spring a short distance from the River Brazos. At this camp we were favoured for the first time with the magnificent but much-dreaded sight of a *stampede* among our horses.

As there was no wood near our camping-ground, some half a dozen men pushed on to a small piece of timber in search of it. One of them had a wild, half-broken, Mexican horse, naturally vicious and with difficulty mastered. His rider found a small, dry tree, cut it down with a hatchet, and very imprudently made it fast to his horse's tail by means of a rope. The animal took it unkindly from the first, and dragged his strange load with evident symptoms of fright; but when with-

in a few hundred yards of camp he commenced pitching, and finally set off at a gallop with the cause of all his uneasiness and fear still fast to his tail. His course was directly for the camp, and as he sped along the prairie it was soon evident that several of our horses were stricken with a panic at his approach. At first they would prick up their ears, snort, and trot majestically about in circles; then they would dash off at the top of their speed, and no human power could arrest their mad career.

"A *stampede!*" shouted some of the old campaigners, jumping from the ground and running towards their frightened animals; "a *stampede!* look out for your horses, or you'll never see them again!" was heard on every side. Fortunately for us, the more intractable horses had been not only staked, but hobbled before the panic became general, and were secured with little difficulty, else we might have lost half of them irretrievably.

It is singular, the effect that sudden fright has, not only upon horses, but oxen, on the prairies. The latter will, perhaps, run longer and farther than the former, and although not as difficult to "head," because they cannot run so fast, their onward course it is impossible to stay. Oxen, so I was informed, have been known to run forty miles without once stopping to look back; and when they did finally hold up, it was simply because exhausted nature would allow them to go no farther. Not one in fifty of them had seen the least cause for fear, but each ran simply because his neighbour did. Frequent instances have occurred where some worthless but skittish horse has caused the loss of hundreds of valuable animals. In the instance I have above alluded to, we did not lose one, but on a subsequent occasion, no less than eighty-seven were irrecoverably lost by one *stampede*.

Nothing can exceed the grandeur of the scene when a large *cavallada*, or drove of horses, takes a "scare." Old, weather-beaten, time-worn, and broken-down steeds—horses that have nearly given out from hard work and old age—will at once be transformed into wild and prancing colts. When first seized with that indescribable terror which induces them to fly, they seem to have been suddenly endowed with all the attributes of their original wild nature. With heads erect, tails and manes streaming in air, eyes lit up and darting beams of fright, old and jaded hacks will be seen prancing and careering about with all the buoyancy of action which characterizes the antics of young colts; then some one of the drove, more frightened than the rest, will dash off in a straight line, the rest scampering after him, and apparently gaining fresh fears at every jump. The throng will then sweep along the plain with a noise which may be likened to something between a tornado and an earthquake, and as well might feeble man attempt to arrest either of the latter.

Were the earth rending and cleaving beneath their feet, horses, when under the terrifying influence of a *stampede*, could not bound away with greater velocity or more majestic beauty of movement. I have seen many an interesting race, but never anything half so exciting as the flight of a drove of frightened horses. The spectator, who may possibly have a nag among them which he has been unable to get into a canter by dint of spur and whip, sees his property fairly flying away at a pace that a thorough-bred racer might envy. Better "time," to all appearance, he has never seen made, and were it not that he himself is as much astounded as the horses, there might be very pretty betting upon the race.

On one occasion, when a closely-hobbled horse was rushing madly along the prairie under the influence of fright, his owner coolly remarked, "I wish I could make that critter go as fast on my own account without hobbles, as he can on his own with them—I'd gamble on him *sure*." And so it is. No simile can give the reader a fair conception of the grandeur of the spectacle, and the most graphic arrangement of words must fall far short in describing the startling and imposing effect of a regular *stampede*!

While upon this subject, I should not, perhaps, neglect to notice one of the little private *stampedes* my friend Falconer's horse was in the habit of occasionally getting up, principally on his own individual account and to gratify his own peculiar tastes and desires, entirely regardless, all the while, of his master's convenience as well as of the public safety.

He was a short, thick-set, scrubby, wiry nag, tough as a pine knot, and self-willed as a pig. He was moreover exceedingly lazy, as well as prone to have his own way, and take his own jog—preferring a walk or gentle trot to a canter; and so deep-rooted were his prejudices in favour of the former methods of getting over the ground, that neither whip nor spur could drive him from them. He possessed a commendable faculty of taking most especial good care of himself, which he manifested by being always found where water was nearest and the grass best, and on the whole might be termed, in the language of those who consider themselves judges of horse flesh, a "tolerable chunk of a pony" for a long journey.

He had one bad quality, however, which was continually putting his master to serious inconvenience, and on more than one occasion came near resulting seriously to all. One day we stopped to "noon" close by a

spring of water, and had simply taken the bridles from our horses to give them a chance to graze, when he improved the occasion to show off one of his eccentricities. Falconer had a way, as I have before stated, of packing all his scientific, cooking, and other instruments upon his horse, and on the occasion to which I have alluded, some one of them chanced to chafe or gall the pony, inducing him to give a kick up with his hinder limbs. The rattling of the pots and pans started him off immediately, and the faster he ran the more they rattled. We immediately secured our horses by catching up the *lariats*, and then watched the fanciful antics of the animal that had raised all the commotion.

He would run about ten jumps and then stop and kick up about as many times; then he would shake himself violently, and then start off again on a gallop. Every now and then a culinary or scientific instrument would be detached from its fastenings, when the infuriated pony would manage to give it a kick before it struck the ground and send it aloft again. The quadrant took the direction towards the sun without taking it; the saucepan was kicked into a stew; the thermometer was up to 100—inches above the ground, and fell to—worth nothing. To sum it all up, what with rearing, pitching, kicking, and galloping about, the pony was soon rid of saddle and all other encumbrances, and then went quietly to feeding, apparently well satisfied with all the trouble he had given his owner.

The whole affair was ludicrous in the extreme, defying description. The rattling of the tin, earthen, and other ware, as the pony snorted, kicked, and pranced about, made a noise resembling that produced at a *charivari*. His antics were of the most unseemly nature, too—and the cool philosophy of Mr. Falconer, as he