

himself about, he has "*seen the elephant.*" We had been buffeting about during the day, cutting away trees, crossing deep ravines and gullies, and turning and twisting some fifteen or twenty miles to gain five—we had finally to encamp by a mud-hole of miserable water, and the spies had been unable to find any beyond—this combination of ills induced the old hunter to remark, "I've seen the elephant," and upon the same principle I will here state that I had by this time obtained something more than a glimpse of the animal myself.

We were now fairly within the limits of the Cross Timbers, a singular strip of wooded country, a description of which may not prove uninteresting.\*

The immense western prairies are bordered, for hundreds of miles on their eastern side, by a narrow belt of forest land well known to hunters and trappers under the above name. The course of this range is nearly north and south, with a width ranging from thirty to fifty miles. The growth of timber is principally small, gnarled, post oaks and black jacks, and in many places the traveller will find an almost impenetrable undergrowth of brier and other thorny bushes. Here and there he will also find a small valley where the timber is large and the land rich and fertile, and occasionally a small prairie intervenes; but the general face of the country is broken and hilly, and the soil thin. On the eastern side of the Cross Timbers the country is varied by small prairies and clumps of woodland, while on the western all is a perfect ocean of prairie. The belt, therefore, for whatever purpose it may have been fashioned

\* My own opinion is, that we entered the Timbers near the southern extremity. What distance this singular forest extends north I am unable to say, but I believe it terminates not far from the Canadian or Arkansas. It probably reaches no farther south than a point near the junction of Noland's River with the Brazos.

by the Great Creator of all things, appears to be an immense natural hedge dividing the woodlands of the settled portions of the United States from the open prairies which have ever been the home and hunting-ground of the red man. To use another figure, it may be looked upon as the western side of the frame of an immense landscape painting, the United States forming the subject. The Gulf of Mexico may be considered the frame on the southern side, the Atlantic on the east, while the great lakes which divide the picture from Canada must serve for the northern side.

In that portion through which we passed, and we spent nearly a fortnight in the Cross Timbers, we found the face of the country broken, and full of deep and almost impassable gullies. These, in the rainy season, carry off the waters from the hills to the larger streams outside the woods, but in July we found them all dry. Had we been able to travel directly west we should have materially shortened our journey; but the country was such that we were compelled to pursue a diagonal course, subjecting men, cattle, and horses to great privation and suffering, to say nothing of the vexations of our slow and toilsome march.

Bear and deer are found in the Cross Timbers and the vicinity, and small gangs of buffalo take shelter in them when scattered and driven from the prairies by Indians. In many of the trees swarms of wild bees are found, affording delicious honey—a great luxury to those who are engaged in a border life, for it is well known that the absence of breadstuffs increases the appetite for sweets of every description. Often, while living upon nothing but poor beef and not half enough of that, did fallacious pictures of confectionary-stores and cake-shops pass before my dreaming fancies—the shadows

of pies, puffs, and patties, of comfits, candies, and creams were there, but the substance was far away.

For two or three days we journeyed through the middle of the belt, every attempt to find a passage out proving futile. On one or two occasions, distant fires were seen upon the hills at night, but we were unable to get a sight of the Indians who were encamped by them.

On the night of the 23d we reached Noland's River.\* As many of our oxen were much travel-worn, and some of our horses needed shoeing, we encamped upon this stream until the 26th. At this camp the officers of the expedition held a consultation to devise means for more rapid progress. While upon the prairies, it was evident that the wagons were too heavily loaded, and now that we were in a much rougher country it was deemed imperatively necessary that they should in some way be lightened. The first step towards effecting this desirable object was the throwing away a large portion of the dry beef we had brought from Austin, much of which was found to be spoiled. This meat had been provided as a last resort in case the Indians should deprive us of our cattle; but to carry it farther was considered unwise, and such portions of it as were fit for use were immediately served out to the men instead of green beef, but half the weight of the latter being given. It was also resolved to deprive us of one of our greatest comforts—the tents. There were many of them new, well made, and easily pitched—but that there should be no repining, nor ill-feelings engendered in the camp, all the poles were burned, as well those of the officers,

\* Some of our men thought it was one of the forks of the Trinity. I am inclined to believe they were wrong in their surmises, although far from confident.

commissaries, and merchants, as of the men. But one was saved—the hospital tent, for the use of such as might be sick—and we had now nothing to protect us from the rain or cold but our blankets and the sky. During the three days we passed on the western side of Noland's River the wagons received a thorough repairing. The fatigue men also dug away the steep banks of the stream, and cut a road through the heavy timber of the bottoms.

By the 26th of July everything was in readiness for resuming the toilsome journey, and after crossing the river without accident we were enabled to travel some ten miles before we encamped. The road was through a stony and hilly country, interspersed with an occasional grove of black jacks and post oaks. To the right of our line of march we saw the ruins of what had been a large Indian village, many of the wigwams being still in a partial state of preservation.

The next day we reached a small grove of timber, bounded on all sides by a level and beautiful prairie—an island, it would almost appear, in the heart of the Cross Timbers. The water and grass being good at this place, and the country beyond appearing rough and our farther advance almost impossible, it was determined to remain until the spies had found some outlet from the labyrinth of difficulties in which we were entangled.

At this camp, for the first time, the latitude and longitude were taken by Mr. Falconer and Lieutenant Hull, the latter of whom had been an officer in the English navy and fully understood the use of the quadrant. According to their calculation, we were upward of two hundred miles in a course nearly north from Austin, and the distance to Santa Fé was close upon five hun-

dred miles, the direction a little north of west. The exact latitude and longitude I made a memorandum of in my note-book, together with a description of the country through which we passed, the course each day, and the number of miles we travelled. This book is now in the hands of the Mexicans, and as a matter of course I am compelled to depend upon memory. Circumstances difficult to forget, however, occurred every few days, the dates of which were so strongly impressed upon me that I still retain them, and the events of the intervening time I am obliged to fill up, as I have said before, from memory.

The spies returned in the evening and reported that they had found a route through the timber in a north-westerly direction—the only one in which we could travel. They stated the distance to be about twenty miles, the country covered with brush and post oaks, cut up by ravines, and without water; but it was believed that by sending a large fatigue party in advance with shovels and axes, and by making a very early start, we could cut our way through in one day—at all events it was determined to attempt it. Mr. Navarro, although extremely lame, would not trust himself in the little Jersey wagon, but mounted a horse and left me the only passenger. Fitzgerald volunteered to drive the mules for this day only. His style of handling the reins was peculiarly of the break-neck order, but as we had to travel over a break-neck road the driving may be set down as in perfect keeping.

The morning was pleasant, but the bright July sun gave promise of an unusually hot day, and did not disappoint us. At the first gully we crossed, which was not more than half a mile from our starting-point, two of the foremost wagons upset. The labour of righting

them and repacking their heavy loads occupied some two hours, and thus it was near the middle of the day before we had made one quarter of our day's march. In the mean time, the road grew worse and worse as we advanced, the weather was unusually hot and sultry, our stock of water was soon exhausted, and with that went our patience and good temper. One difficulty was no sooner passed, than even a worse stared us in the face. The narrow passage cut for the wagons was stumpy and stony, cut up every two or three hundred yards by deep gullies, or the dry beds of what had been running streams. The ground was covered with a heavy undergrowth of briers and thorn-bushes, impenetrable even by mules, and these, with the black jacks and post oaks which thickly studded the broken surface, had to be cut away, their removal only showing, in bolder relief, the rough and jagged surface of the soil which had given them existence and nourishment.

Night finally overtook us, when we were but half way through our toilsome march. By this time fatigue-men and drivers were worn down, hungry, half choked with thirst, and completely dispirited; the oxen were jaded, unwilling or unable to draw, as well as suffering for want of water, and the imprecations bestowed upon them were louder, deeper, and more disgustingly blasphemous than ever. Several wagons had been upset, broken to pieces, and left by the roadside, while the command was scattered for miles through the woods, every one eagerly pressing forward for water, uncontrolled and uncontrollable. To make the matter worse for Fitzgerald and myself, we had fallen in the rear of the long train of wagons, with the hope of finding a better road, and it was impossible to pass them. Had we started with the party in advance, we might have pressed forward

in our light wagon, and thus have reached water; as it was, we were compelled to keep the position we had originally taken in the cumbrous and gloomy procession.

To make our situation still more desperate, a dark and cloudy night followed a clear and hot day. How fervently we wished it might rain, that it might descend in torrents, and thus enable us to slake a thirst which was almost intolerable; yet while the muttering thunder plainly told us that heavy showers were passing around us, a few drops only fell to our share—the clouds but made our march more difficult and dangerous.

Midnight came, finding us in the midst, I might say in the very thickest, of our troubles. The extended train of wagons made an unusually long stop, and while we were peering through the gloom and wondering what had caused the delay, word was passed along the line that the artillery-carriage had stuck fast in a gully some half a mile ahead, that most of the fatigue-men had mounted their horses and started off in search of water, and what was more annoying than all, that we must remain where we were through the night! Here was a climax to a day and night of horrors. Had I been in possession of the use of my limbs I would have started at once for water; as it was, I was compelled to bear my sufferings as best I could. Fitzgerald merely unhitched the mules from the wagon, and without taking off the harness made them fast to a neighbouring black jack with the reins. He then betook himself to the ground under our carriage, while I took an inside seat, or rather couch. Thirsty and hungry as I was, I soon fell asleep, and never woke up till morning. It must have been sheer exhaustion that induced this sleep, for my mind was certainly attuned to anything else.

When the morning light enabled us to see the surrounding objects, we discovered that our mules had broken their fastenings, and started off, probably in search of water. Here was a prospect of another annoying delay, for we could form no opinion as to the time when the mules had left or the course they had taken. After a long search, however, they were found, led back to the wagon, and a few minutes saw us again on our journey. About the middle of the day we finally emerged from the Cross Timbers, and a short ride across a smooth prairie brought us to our companions, who were comfortably encamped on the banks of a running spring of fresh water. Those, and those only, who have passed twenty-four hours without water, half the time under a hot broiling sun and in circumstances of feverish excitement, can judge of our feelings and sufferings—are alone able to appreciate the perfect happiness experienced as the parched lips and swollen tongue first touched the precious element. But our march of the previous day and night—never can I forget that march. I had previously travelled many weary miles, over the worst roads, and by the worst conveyances; I had *thought* my sufferings great during these different journeyings; but to alter a remark of the facetious and renowned Sancho Panza, all those sufferings were cakes and gingerbread compared with what I experienced the last day and night we passed in the Cross Timbers.

We were hungry as well as dry on reaching our encampment; so, after having slaked our thirst, we sat down to a most delicious repast. And what was this repast? the gentle reader may ask: simply a piece of ordinary beef, cooked before a fire on a ramrod; but keen appetites supplied bread, vegetables and seasoning,

and a heartier meal I never enjoyed. I thought, while eating, of the *gourmands* of cities, men who spend half their time in getting up an appetite to relish the delicacies placed before them—I pitied them, and ate on.

It was not until a late hour in the evening that the broken wagons and scattered oxen were safely brought into camp; if my memory serves me aright, several of the latter had strayed so far away that they were never found. The blacksmith's forge was, in the mean time, put in operation, the greatest exertions being made so to patch up the injured wagons that they would be in condition to resume the journey early on the morrow.

Now that we had made the dreaded passage of the Cross Timbers, we were sanguine in believing our troubles and difficulties over. As far as the eye could reach in a west-northwest direction, which was the course resolved upon by our guide, Mr. Howland, nothing could be seen but a succession of smooth, gently-undulating prairies. From several hills in our vicinity, known to many hunters who were among us, it was evident that we were within twenty miles of Red River: in fact, the distant timber which skirts the borders of that stream was now supposed to be in sight. It was also known that we were but a short distance from an old Towish Village, a noted camping-ground for the Pawnees and other prairie Indians in their annual excursions south in quest of buffalo.

By going directly to the banks of Red River, and attempting to follow it too closely, it was feared that we should meet with many of the deep gullies through which the waters falling during the rainy season pour themselves into that stream, and should find none but the river water for use, which, in the dry months, is characteristically brackish and unpalatable. By keep-

ing farther out, it was thought we should not only find fresh water in greater abundance, but a far better road than by a route nearer the stream. Unfortunately for us this was the course adopted. Mr. Howland formed his plans with much judgment and deliberation; that we afterward encountered and followed a stream mistaking it for Red River, was one of those unfortunate errors against which no human foresight or prudence could have guarded. The fate of the expedition might have been altogether different had we adopted the repudiated plan, keeping on until we had reached the above stream, and then followed it so closely that there would have been no possibility of losing it.

Another important error, in the opinion of many, was the crossing of the Brazos. Had we kept directly along the ridge which divides that stream from the Colorado, we should certainly have avoided the toilsome and tedious passage of the Cross Timbers, and it may be have suffered as little from scarcity of water. This route would certainly have been much nearer, as we could have travelled almost a direct course; but to oppose it, different objections were raised. By some it was said that we should be obliged to cross large prairies abounding with salt lakes, where no fresh water could be procured; others, again, prudently contended that the country in that direction was much of it unexplored, and consequently unknown, while by crossing the Brazos, a short distance below the Camanche Peak, we were almost certain of finding fresh water every day, and a country over which the wagons could be taken. Perhaps it was better that we took the course we did:

“There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.”

and until more is known of the country between the