

head waters of the Brazos and Colorado, it is folly to indulge in idle regrets that we did not take that course.

CHAPTER VII.

Trail of the Chihuahua Traders.—Causes of the Failure of that Enterprise.—A fresh Indian "Burn."—Dr. Whittaker lost.—Indian Dogs.—Their forlorn Appearance.—Exciting Scene.—An Indian Buffalo Chase.—Well rid of annoying Visitors.—Buffalo Meat for Dinner.—Pack of miserable Curs.—A recently-deserted Indian Camp.—Dr. Whittaker again among us.—A white Flag sent out.—Beautiful Camping-ground.—An Eclipse.—Once more on Horseback.—Singular Chase.—Both Parties mistaken.—A Soaking.—Carlos, a Mexican, joins the Spy Company.—Plausibility of his Stories.—The supposed Red River.—Parley with a Party of Wacoos.—Their Insolence.—Arrival at a Waco Village.—Its desertion by the Inhabitants.—Beautiful Location of the Town.—Its Houses and Corn-fields.—An Indian Musical Instrument.—Speculations upon Love.—High State of Civilization of the Wacoos.—Causes of the Hostility of the Wacoos to the Texans.—Departure from the Village.—Brackish Water.—Fear of the Prairie Indians of Artillery.—Origin of this Fear.

WE left our camp, near the western margin of the Cross Timbers, late on the morning of the last day of July, and, such was the excellence of the travelling on the prairies, were able to make twelve miles on our journey. During the forenoon we crossed the great trail made the year before by the Chihuahua traders. A company of American merchants, residents of Chihuahua, had conceived the project of opening a direct trade with the United States by way of the prairies, in lieu of the circuitous and expensive route through St. Louis, Santa Fé, and El Paso del Norte.

Thinking that, by crossing the Rio Grande at a point

not far from the latter town, and then taking a course nearly east, they could reach Red River near Jonesboro, they visited the United States with the intention of testing its feasibility by experiment. Having purchased and loaded some eighty wagons, they left the western borders of Arkansas early in the spring of 1840. No less than five months were these men employed in cutting their way through the Cross Timbers, while the heavy bottoms, and the dismal bogs and fens of Red River, were rendered thrice dreadful by constant rains. After they had passed these disheartening obstacles, and reached the open prairies, they were still three months upon the road, making eight in all. So great was the expense, and so much time was lost in crossing the prairies, that the enterprise proved a losing speculation, and has not been repeated. A company of American equestrians, with all their horses, canvass, and circus appointments generally, crossed the prairies with the traders, and afterward performed in many of the towns and cities of Mexico with various success.

We had scarcely crossed the Chihuahua trail before we found ourselves upon a "burn," or place where the prairie grass had been lately consumed by fire. During the day we also noticed fresh Indian "sign," consisting of recent trails; and other more subtle evidences, cognisable only by the instincts of old campaigners, convinced us that we were not far from a body of savages. We passed a small creek of sluggish water during the day, but at night were obliged to encamp without any. Scarcely had the guard-fire been kindled, and the sentinels posted, before it was discovered that Dr. Whittaker, our surgeon, was missing, and no one could give the least clew to his mysterious disappearance. The band was immediately ordered out to play at dif-

ferent commanding points, fires were kindled on the highest rolls of the prairie around us during the night, and the cannon was fired the next morning, with the hope of attracting his attention; but he came not, and we were obliged to continue our march without him.

We had not gone more than three miles when a mean, sneaking, scurvy-looking dog came crouching and whining among us, and soon two others made their appearance. They were poor, miserable curs, half wolf apparently, and their homeless, half-starved, and forlorn condition would have protected them from the operation of any code of dog laws in Christendom. Their appearance created a good deal of speculation among us. That they were Indian dogs, and that their owners were not far distant, we were well satisfied; but why they came crying around us and seeking our protection it was difficult to conceive, for the dog of the red man usually avoids the whites.

But a far more exciting incident than the appearance of these worthless curs took place during this day's march. Our animals had had no water the night before, and this circumstance made all anxious to press forward to a small stream which had been discovered by the spies. As a consequence, such as had good horses left the ranks—for when there is no water there is no subordination—the advance-guard left the wagons to take care of themselves, the drivers pressed their oxen forward, in the vain hope of keeping up with the mounted men, and in this way the command soon became scattered for miles along the undulating prairie, the different parties not being even within sight of each other.

Mr. Navarro, who had only mounted his horse the last day we were in the Cross Timbers, had now resu-

the cattle and horses would not touch it when they could obtain the river water.

All the spoil we took from the Waco village consisted of a few pumpkins; the houses and everything about them were left untouched. Fine fish were now caught in the stream, which, with our regular rations of beef and the pumpkins we had procured in the morning, gave us a feast. Many of my readers may think this but a meager feast—boiled beef, fried fish, and boiled pumpkins—but they should recollect that we had eaten no vegetable substance for nearly two months, and that even fried catfish was a rare dainty.

During the day, Indians were seen scouting about on the distant hills, watching our movements; but our position was a strong one, and although we anticipated, no one feared the consequences of a night attack, farther than the danger of having our horses run off.

The fact that the Indians did not make an attack upon us, or attempt to steal our horses, was probably owing to the circumstance that they had seen our six-pounder. It is well known that the Camanches and other prairie tribes have the greatest dread of cannon, and can never be induced to approach within a mile of them. The story is told that a large party of Camanches attacked, many years since, one of the early Missouri expeditions journeying with a small cannon, loaded with grapeshot and rifle-bullets.

So greatly did the savages outnumber the traders, that they felt confident of an easy and sudden victory, and impressed with this belief attacked them in a solid body, and with their usual yells. The traders calmly waited until they had approached within a few yards, when they let fly among them the unexpected shower of missiles. The gun was well directed, and sent a

large number of the Indians tumbling to the ground. Those who escaped were so panic-stricken at the strange discharge, which carried such fearful destruction to their ranks, that they instantly wheeled and fled, and could not be induced to renew the attack. Overrating, as they did, the power of a cannon from the effect of this well-directed and fortunate shot, from that day to the present no party of the tribe has ever dared attack openly any company fortunate enough to possess a fieldpiece. The fame of the big gun of the whites, so it is said, has spread from the Camanches to the neighbouring tribes, and to such an extent has the story of its powers been magnified, that it is difficult to get an Indian within its utmost range.

CHAPTER VIII.

Join the Spy Company.—Farther Speculations as regards Red River.—Advantages of travelling with the Spies.—Beautiful Streams and cool Arbours.—Visit from Mustangs.—A dashing wild Horse.—Different Modes of catching Mustangs.—Indians in Sight.—Guarding against a night Attack.—Description of Country.—Rough Travelling.—Arrival at a Fresh-water Stream.—Carlos thinks Himself at Home.—General Joy in Camp.—Scanty Rations.—A Shower and a Stampede.—Cross the supposed Red River again.—Scarcity of "Sign."—Mountains ahead.—A Labyrinth of Difficulties.—Broken Country.—A hunting Adventure.—Get lost upon the Prairie.—Hopelessness of my Situation.—Ruminations upon the Horrors of being Lost.—Fortunate Escape from Difficulty.—A Ride through a Rattlesnake Region.—Once more among my Friends.—Unpleasant Dreams.—A Mesquit Prairie.—Carlos again "at Home."—Three of the Texans sent forward to the Settlements.—Carlos takes the Guidance of the Expedition.—A Buffalo Chase.—River seen to the South.—An Adventure with Deer.—Great Waste of Powder and Ball.—A severe Case of the "Buck Ague."—Symptoms and general Appearance of that singular Disease.

ON the 6th of August I joined the spy company. By this time I was able to ride without pain, although I walked with much difficulty, and required assistance in mounting my horse.

The course of the stream we were upon was a little south of east—to follow it up was not the right direction to Santa Fé, but as every one supposed that we must be on Red River, there was no suspicion that we were not taking the true route in doing so. At times, as we journeyed along its fertile bottoms, some bend of the stream would bring us directly upon its banks, which were fringed with a few cotton-wood trees; again, the river would turn away abruptly, leaving us at a distance of several miles from its waters. It was now low, being fordable in many places. Its bed may