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 Freshwater 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

have been sixty or seventy yards in width, its banks, in many places, high and steep, and giving evidence that in the rainy season there was depth of water sufficient to float the largest steamers.

There were two great advantages in marching with the spies: one was the opportunity of meeting with more exciting adventure, while the other was the brisk pace at which we travelled, being a steady trot, instead of the snail-like movement of the wagons. On the day when I joined them, after a pleasant ride of some ten miles, we arrived at a small creek of fresh and running water, a delicious treat on a hot prairie march. It was a beautiful stream, overhung with grape and other vines now in the full richness of summer verdure. In many places the vines had completely crossed the creek, thus forming a delightful natural arbour, and under this cool shade the restless waters swept along to mingle with the hot and brackish river, now some two or three miles to the south. After finding an easy crossing-place, a man was sent back to the command as a guide, while we unsaddled and turned our horses loose to graze, and then threw ourselves upon the green carpeting of grass under the shade-trees, to enjoy a quiet noonday siesta.

We scarcely had time to establish ourselves comfortably before three or four mustangs were seen approaching at a rapid gallop. Ever and anon they would halt for a moment, throw up their heads as if to scan us more closely, and then, as though not satisfied with the scrutiny, would again approach at the same rapid pace. It may be that they could not see us while reclining under the shade-trees, or mistook our animals for some of their own wild companions; be this as it may, they approached within a few hundred yards, wheeling and

dashing about with all the joyousness of unrestrained freedom, and occasionally stopping to examine our encampment more closely. The leader was a bright bay, with long and glossy black tail and mane. With the most dashing and buoyant action he would trot around our camp, and throw aloft his beautifully-formed head, as if, after the manner of some ringleted school-girl, to toss the truant hair from his eyes. Then he would lash his silken tail, shake his flowing mane in pride, and eye us with looks that plainly told his confidence in his powers of flight should danger or treachery be lurking in our vicinity. I had formed a strong attachment for my own powerful bay, for he was gentle as a house-dog, and would run all day if necessity required it; yet I would instantly have "swapped" even him for this wild horse of the prairies, with no other knowledge of his qualities than what I could discover at the distance of a hundred and fifty or two hundred yards.

After gambolling about us for some little time, his bright eyes apparently gleaming with satisfaction, as if conscious that we were watching and admiring his showy points, he suddenly wheeled, and, in a canter, placed himself at a more prudent distance. Then he turned again to take another look, curved his beautiful neck, once more tossed his head, half timidly, half in sport, pawed the ground playfully, and again dashed off. Several times he turned to take still another look at our encampment, and even in the far distance we could distinguish his proud and expanded nostrils, his bright, flashing eyes, and the elastic movements of his symmetrical limbs as he playfully pranced and curvetted about. I watched him until he was but a speck upon the prairie, and then turned from gazing with regret that he was not mine.

The Indians and Mexicans have a way of capturing mustangs by running up on their fleetest and most untiring horses and noosing them with the *lariat*. The white hunters have also a method, which is often successful, of taking the wild horses. It is called *creasing*, and is done by shooting them with a rifle-ball upon a particular cord or tendon in the neck, immediately under the mane. If the ball takes effect precisely in the right spot the animal falls benumbed, and without the power to move for several minutes, when he is easily secured. Should it strike too low, the horse is still able to run off, but eventually dies. An attempt was made to *crease* the magnificent steed I have mentioned; but it was impossible to approach near enough to shoot with accuracy, and to endanger his life would have been a wanton act, which the most eager hunter among us would not have committed. When our provisions became scarce several of these animals were shot for their flesh. It seems repugnant to the feelings to eat horseflesh; but the meat is tender and finely flavoured, and a three-year-old mustang is really better food than either buffalo or common beef.

After the mustangs left us we passed two hours very agreeably in a shade which completely screened us from the hot, noonday sun. In the cool of the evening we once more saddled our horses and continued the march in close order. Deer and antelope were seen in every direction, but as they were at too great distance to be shot from the ranks, not one of them was killed. Our party was small, and as Indians were seen several times during the day, watching us from the different swells of the prairie, it was deemed prudent to keep close and in a body. The Indians seen were to the right of our line of march; that bodies of them

were also watching us from the timber on the left was more than probable, as there they could find secure hiding-places. At nightfall we encamped upon the banks of the river, and were obliged to drink the brackish water or none, as no fresh spring could be found. An abundance of the finest catfish were caught in the stream, the bed of which was here nearly a hundred yards in width.

Again a strong position was chosen for our camp, and the guard had strict orders to keep a good look-out at night, to prevent a surprise from the Wacoes. It was evident that they were watching us at every turn, and while their fears prevented them from attacking us openly in a body, they were still, as is their custom, looking out for an opportunity to *stampede* our horses and cattle, or cut off any little straggling party that might wander from camp in search of water or to hunt. The night passed, however, without a visit from them, and the only inconvenience occasioned by their proximity fell upon our horses, for we were compelled to hobble them well and stake them inside the lines of sentinels, where the grass was soon cropped close to the ground.

For three days after leaving the village of the Wacoes our route was along the wide and fertile bottoms of the river. Our course, as already mentioned, was a little south of west, but being confident that we were on the banks of Red River, it was thought from day to day that the stream would soon turn off more to the north.

On the opposite or south side of the river the country had been rugged and broken up by hills—on the side along which we were travelling, nothing could be seen but a boundless and unbroken prairie, with naught to

destroy its sameness except here and there a light fringing of trees bordering the banks of the small creeks and rivulets, which, rising in the prairies to the north, found their way to the river after flowing many miles along cool and secluded courses. Rack fancy to the utmost, and it is still impossible to draw a picture of more enchanting, sylvan loveliness, than some of the beautiful arches formed over these murmuring streamlets. In many places the limbs of the trees which decked either bank would cross over as if to commune and shake hands, one with the other. Along these the wandering grape-vines would creep, lock themselves, as it were, in each other's embrace on meeting, and thus form a cool and delicious arbour, so closely interwoven that not a solitary ray from the sun could reach the recess below. Under these natural arches the deer would while away the hot, mid-day hours, slaking his thirst from the gently-flowing waters which were gliding with sweet music at his feet ; there, too, we saw the solitary white heron, standing tall and erect, like some elfin spirit. Our approach would frighten him from his secret place, only to seek some other lonely dell of equal beauty, coolness, and seclusion. Such scenes of rural beauty—of soft, pure, unsophisticated nature, are clearly, brightly painted upon my memory—but I am utterly wanting in the power to delineate them.

Our encampment on the banks of the river we left early in the morning, the spies starting some hour in advance in search of fresh water and the best route for the wagons. We had travelled but a few miles when the country before us appeared more rough and broken, and by mid-day the hills and gullies we encountered almost prevented the farther progress of the wagons. The spies finally were fortunate in finding a fresh-water river, running into the larger and brackish stream, and after much fatigue and trouble a crossing-place was discovered, which we were able to reach with our wagons. The banks, on the side at which we approached, were high and steep, offering serious obstacles ; on the opposite side of the river, a gradual ascent from the water led to a pleasant valley. Carlos, the Mexican, at once pronounced it the Rio Utau, or Eutaw, a stream upon which he said he had often trapped ; and to give his story greater plausibility, he said that at the very point where we made the passage the Mexican hunters had frequently crossed with carts laden with dry buffalo meat.

There really was every appearance of an old wagon road when we reached the opposite side of the river, and if any one had previously doubted the statements of Carlos, those doubts were now set at rest. He said that he was as well acquainted with the country in the vicinity as with his mother's door-yard, and spoke of the country beyond with a plausibility that convinced all of his being now "perfectly at home." He said that the *angosturas*, or narrows of Red River, were distant only some seventy miles, and that the same distance beyond would bring us to the Mexican *ranchos*, or farms, in the immediate vicinity of the frontier town of San Miguel.

Placing confidence as we did in his reports, it is needless to say that all was joy and congratulation in camp that evening. Our beef, the only thing we had in the shape of provision, was now becoming extremely poor from the fatiguing marches and want of grass and water. Our sugar was all gone, and although our coffee still held out, we were too near the end of that great luxury to expect that it would last much longer. Inde-

pendent of this, many of us began to think, in earnest, that bread, if not *the* staff of life, offered at least a very comfortable support. We still had our regular allowance, three pounds of beef a day, but it was greatly inferior in comparison with the same allowance we had in the earlier stages of our journey, and this inferiority began to be felt seriously. Nevertheless, all was joy and gladness in camp at the good news of our near approach to settlements, and it was thought that twenty days, at farthest, would bring us to the rich wheat and corn fields, as well as the sheepfolds of New Mexico. Far different would have been our feelings had we anticipated the sufferings yet in store for us.

Had we known that four or five hundred miles of dreary travelling were still before us, and that hunger and thirst were to weaken our frames and destroy our spirits; had we been aware that hostile Indians in great numbers were in our paths, and treacherous friends—if it is not a solecism—in our very midst, far different would have been our expectations and our feelings that night, on betaking ourselves to our earth, our blankets, and our sky.

Scarcely had we finished our scanty and homely supper, and quietly nestled ourselves each on the spot he had chosen for his lodging-ground, when a drizzling rain set in, which, before sleep had visited our eyelids, deepened into a heavy shower. Our encampment was in a grove of small timber, within some thirty yards of the river. A flock of hooting, screeching owls had engaged a cotton-wood tree, almost directly over our heads, for the purpose of giving a grand concert, while a pack of sneaking wolves were howling a horrible accompaniment in the edge of the prairie near us. In the very midst of this discord, our oxen, which had been quietly

feeding in a neighbouring prairie, took a *stampede*, and came rushing madly towards us. The earth fairly trembled as they bounded along, many of them with their yokes still on, and all impelled by an indescribable panic. I took to a tree at once, or rather clambered up a small sapling hand over hand, to place myself out of harm's way, for I well knew that no human obstacle could check the onward career of a drove of fear-stricken oxen. Fortunately the steep bank of the river on the opposite side, or some other cause, stopped them in their headlong flight. The guard were unable to collect and herd them that night, yet they were all found without much trouble the next morning. What could have given them the "scare" no one could divine. The cattle-guard declared that they suddenly started off in a body, as if impressed by a common fear, and that in the hurry-scurry they had no time except to look to their own personal safety. Some of the old campaigners hinted that the cries of owls and wolves, heard a short time before the stampede, were but imitations of these birds and beasts by Indians in the vicinity, and that some lurking savage had frightened the oxen. Whatever the cause, I knew the effect well enough; and in my half-asleep, half-awake condition, felt well satisfied that I had not been run over and trodden under foot.

Our start on the ensuing morning was late, several hours having been occupied in drying our blankets and collecting the scattered beeves. We had marched but a short distance before it was evident to all that the stream we had been following up—the same we had crossed at the Waco village—now bore more to the northward, and that from the appearance of the country before us we should be compelled to recross it. This

troublesome labour was effected in the afternoon with no little difficulty, and night found us once more encamped near its banks, with no other than its brackish waters to drink.

By this time both buffalo and Indian "sign" had become extremely scarce, and the little seen appeared to be months old. The general impression among our older hunters, whose opinions we all looked upon as law and gospel, was that the buffalo had all gone north and the Indians with them; for although natural enemies, they are seldom seen except in company.

The next day we made but six or seven miles, the country in every direction becoming more and more broken. Ahead we saw nothing but chains of steep and rugged mountains; low, but of sufficient height to render our farther advance extremely problematical, at least in the right course. At night we found a small spring of fresh water within a mile of the river, and in the luxury of a cool, sweet draught, forgot the hardships and privations of the previous twenty-four hours.

Carlos still insisted that he was acquainted with the country, and that he could extricate us, in a day or two, from the labyrinth of difficulties by which we were surrounded. An early start was made the next morning, and near half the day was spent in climbing steep and abrupt hills, so rocky that the feet of the oxen suffered severely, and many of them had to be unyoked and turned loose. I thought I had previously seen a country in a state of nature, but this was the roughest part of "out doors" it had ever been my unfortunate lot to traverse. It appeared to have been just *got out* rough hewn, without a single finishing stroke in any quarter. Rough and misshapen hills, formed of rocks and sand, were piled up here and there without system or order,

and not a bush or blade of grass could be found upon them to relieve their desolate appearance.

By noon we had partially extricated ourselves from the maze of hills on which our feet had been stumbling during that morning's march. Seeing what appeared to be a level and grassy prairie, a mile or a mile and a half to the left of our line of march, which seemed as though it might afford pasturage for a stray deer or antelope, myself and "Old Paint" rode off in that direction. As the old hunter expected, we quickly saw a drove of some fifteen deer; but they happened to see us first, and set off on a run. My companion was well enough versed in their "ways" not to think of following them; for after having once seen an enemy, the deer seldom allows him to come within gunshot.*

My experience, in comparison with that of the veteran borderer, was limited, and I was simple enough not to resist the temptation of following the herd over a roll of the prairie, in the vain hope of obtaining a shot. They halted, as I supposed they would, but were on the lookout, and before I was within three hundred yards again bounded off across the prairie. Hope induced me to give one more trial, which terminated like the first. I now reluctantly gave up the chase and cast my eyes about for my fellow-hunter, but he was nowhere in sight. I tried hurriedly to ascertain the direction in which I had left him; but the result of my reflections convinced me that I was, to use a common expression, thoroughly "turned round"—lost. I put spurs to my horse and galloped to the highest roll of the prairie, with the hope of obtaining a sight of my companion or companions, but without success.

* It appears to be a point of honour with an old hunter never to follow a deer after the animal has once discovered him.

A sickening feeling of loneliness came over me on *finding* myself in that worst of all situations upon a prairie—*lost!* The sun was still high in the heavens, and I could not tell which was north or which south. I had my rifle and pistols with me, was well mounted, and had a sufficiency of ammunition, but I was not well enough acquainted with a prairie life to steer a course, even if I had known what course to start upon, neither was I hunter enough to feel confident that I could kill a sufficiency of meat in case I should be unsuccessful in finding my companions. Another thing: I had already found out, what every hunter knows, that the more hungry a man grows upon the prairies the more unlikely he is to find game, and the more difficult it is to shoot it. There, then, I was, without a companion and without experience—starvation staring me in the face, or even if I was fortunate in obtaining meat, I still was almost certain to be killed and scalped by the Indians or end my days in vain efforts to reach the settlements. I thought of home, and made up my mind firmly that if ever I was fortunate enough to reach it, I should be in no particular hurry to leave it again.

I dashed off to what appeared a still higher prairie swell than the one I now stood upon—nothing could I see except a solitary wolf, trotting stealthily along in the hollow below me: I even envied this most contemptible of the brute creation, for he knew where he was. I strained my eyes as though to penetrate beyond the limits of human vision; but all was a waste, a blank. I leaped from my horse and sat upon the ground for a moment; it was only for a moment, for in my uneasiness I could not remain motionless. I tried to reflect, to reason; but so fast did thoughts of starvation and of Indian perils crowd on my mind, that I could come to

no definite conclusion as to my present position with reference to that of my companions. I tried to follow my own trail back to the point where I had so foolishly left "Old Paint," but the ground was so hard that my horse's hoofs had made little or no indentation, and I was too impatient to examine the face of the prairie with that searching scrutiny which might have resulted in success.

Yet I resolved to make one desperate effort, at least, to find the command. I knew enough of my situation to feel convinced that by circling about, from prairie roll to prairie roll, I might gallop my horse for hours, and at last find myself at the point I started from, "with confusion worse confounded"—travelling in a straight line alone might save me. Here was another difficulty; for the course I might adopt, even were I successful in keeping it, might leave me at a still greater distance from my friends. How I wished for the presence of Tom Hancock—the presence even of the greatest dullard in the command would have assisted in removing the mountain of torturing uncertainty that pressed upon my mind. Man never knows the full weight of *hopelessness* until he is made to bear it alone, with no human intelligence near from whose resources he can hope to draw something for his relief when he is too consciously aware that his own are exhausted. Even sympathy imparts something of hope. I felt that even my horse was some company to me: I patted him kindly on the neck and told him so, aloud.

"But," the reader will perchance inquire, "why did you not give your horse the reins and trust to his natural instinct for regaining his and your companions?" And again, "Why did you not wait until the sun was low in the western heavens, then reflect, for one moment, in