trigger. As I dashed by the infuriated animal he vainly endeavoured to gore and overthrow my horse by suddenly turning his head and springing at me.

The chase was now up, so far as I was concerned, for the pistol was a borrowed one, and very valuable. I had checked my horse and dismounted to search for it, when Lieutenant Lubbock came up. His horse was completely broken down and unable to reach the buffalo—in the hurry and excitement I told him to mount mine immediately and continue the pursuit. Soon he was up with the buffalo. By this time, so kindly had the horse taken to his work, that his rider was able to fire every shot without once passing the wounded animal. The latter stuck the horse once with his left horn, but did not hurt him seriously.

The other pursuer with the mule still continued the chase, and as the pace of the buffalo slackened from loss of blood and weariness, the former gradually crept up. I stopped to gaze upon the exciting scene. Every minute or two a flash and smoke would be seen, and then the sharp report of the pistol would reach the spot where I stood.

In this way the chase was continued until Lieutenant L. had discharged his own arms, together with my holster pistols. He then pulled up, and the other pursuer mounted my horse and continued the chase. I could not help pitying the noble animal, which had by this time run at least six miles. In a very short time the new pursuer was up with the buffalo, and again I could see the smoke as each pistol was discharged; but by this time the space between us was too great for me to hear the reports. I gazed until both the pursued and pursuer were mere black specks upon the prairie, and never turned my eyes until they were completely lost in the distance.

CHAPTER XII.

A successful Search. — The Buffalo brought to Bay. — Appearance of my Horse after the Chase.—Prospects of another Shower.—Adventure with a Rattlesnake in the Dark. — Fortunate Escape. — The Shower upon us.—Buffalo found in the Morning.—March resumed.—Swimming our Animals.—Singular Method of Cooking.—Wolves in our Vicinity.—Encounter with a Drove of Mustangs. — Excitement among us. — Mountains discovered ahead.—Leave the grand Prairie.—Singular Hills.—Compelled to abandon our Course.—Chances becoming Desperate.—Suffering and Starvation.—Large fresh-water Stream discovered. — Speculations as to its Name.—Mexican "Sign" seen.—More Remarks in relation to Red River.—Plum Patches. — Carlos and Brignoli seen. — Their Sufferings. — The Texans driven to the greatest strait for Food.—An Anecdote.—Compelled to eat broken-down Horse Flesh.—A cold, raw Night.—Fairly among the Rocky Mountains. — A beautiful Valley. — A Feast of Catfish. — Arrival at the Angosturas. — Encounter with a Party of Mexicans. — Unwonted Excitement. — Matias sent back to the Command.—Advance towards the Settlements.—Farther Sufferings of the Texans.—Meet with an immense Herd of Sheep. — A Feast. — Dissertation on Starvation. — Mexican Shepherds and their Dogs.

A SEARCH of brief duration enabled me to find the lost barrel of my pistol; and when this was accomplished I went back alone to seek the main body. After travelling a short distance, I met several of our men, who had previously been concealed by a slight roll of the prairie, and were now coming out, eager to learn our success. The last man who had taken up the pursuit of the buffalo with my horse was soon seen cantering back. Half an hour brought him up, when he informed us that after firing all his pistols he had brought the buffalo to bay, and that he had left him with the blood running from his mouth—a sure sign that he had received his death wound. I gave him Lieutenant Lubbock's horse, and with a small party he went back in search of the wounded buffalo.

I found my own horse completely white with foam, and much distressed after the long and exciting chase. Without mounting I trotted him briskly to the camp, distant about five miles, arrived there just at dark, and immediately commenced rubbing him violently with tufts of grass. Nobly had he sustained his part in our attempt to procure food, and I was anxious that he should not suffer after his severe, his killing race. While thus engaged, the heavens became suddenly overcast, and a distant roll of thunder warned me that we were to have another visitation of rain. I robbed myself of one of my blankets to favour the poor animal, strapped it tightly upon his back, and set out to stake him fast before the rain commenced. I had a *lariat* about his neck, some twenty yards long, and attached to the other end was an iron spike, which, when driven its full length into the earth, could not be drawn out by a horizontal pull. By this time it was pitchy dark, and while I was in the act of stooping to thrust the spike into the ground with my right hand, a rattlesnake, of large size, judging from the sound of his rattles, struck me a violent blow immediately above the elbow, but fortunately without breaking the skin. It is needless to say that I left horse and everything, and took the longest kind of steps out of the neighbourhood—my feelings I will not pretend to describe. By the remains of a fire, which had now nearly gone out, I ascertained that I had received no scratch. I was dressed in a coarse Attakapas cottonade short jacket, under which I had a red flannel and a linen shirt. Through the folds of all these the fangs of the serpent had not penetrated, although at the time I should hardly have known it had the venomous reptile bitten my arm half off. I can conceive of nothing more startling than to find one's self suddenly in

contact with a rattlesnake in the dark—the deadly sound of their alarm-notes is terrifying to a degree that sends the blood rushing to the heart, paralyzes the faculties, and strikes a cold tremour through the system with the suddenness of an electric shock.

The party who had gone out to look for the buffalo returned after dark, unsuccessful in their search. As the direction the animal had taken was well known, however, it was determined to send out a party early in the morning to hunt for him. We knew that he must be so badly wounded as to be past running; our hopes were that he had not died in the early part of the night and been devoured by wolves.

Frank Combs and myself were still bedfellows, doubling our scanty covering on the wet, cold nights, so as to render both more comfortable. I had now scarcely crawled under the blankets he had spread upon the ground, before the heavy drops which precede a prairie shower began falling, and before I had well tucked and nestled myself in a comfortable position a perfect avalanche of rain was pouring upon me. Every one of my readers who has taken a cold bath, must recollect the hesitation, the shrugs, the shiverings and the chills with which he first entered the water—the difficulty of making up his mind to essay the dreaded plunge when he knows full well it is to be made: so it is with a bivouac upon the prairie during a heavy thunder-shower. The unfortunate wight, who is destined to undergo a soaking, at first attempts to keep himself dry when his better sense teaches him that all efforts of the kind must prove unavailing. As the cold stream first penetrates his blanket, and trickles down his sides, he screws his body inward or outward to avoid the chilling current. Anon, another stream finds its way,

then another, until finally he feels that farther attempts to stay the flood from without are useless, and he then stretches himself in as favourable a position as he can, and composes himself to that sleep which tired nature is sure to exact. The shower which fell, on the occasion to which I have just alluded, was among the heaviest of the heavy. The lightning lit up the prairie in every direction, and the darkness which succeeded each flash appeared to me of more than common blackness —thick and impenetrable—a wall of gloom. The wind, too, howled and moaned around us, and struck a cold chill through our scanty covering. Tired and faint, however, from want of food and the unusual fatigues of the day, wet and cold as I was, I soon fell asleep.

The next morning, while we were drying our blankets, a party went out in search of the buffalo, and with success. They found him badly wounded and unable to run, and a single well-directed ball completed at length our work of the previous evening. On taking off his hide, it was found that more than thirty balls had struck him. They were mostly small, however, and not one of them had touched a vital part, although he must have died during the day from the wounds. Every pound of his poor and tough flesh, for he was an old and lean bull, was brought into camp, and after it had been equally divided among the different messes, preparations were made for our immediate departure.

Our encampment was on the bank of a small ravine, bordered by a flank of low hackberry and other trees. It was almost the only place we had yet seen on the immense upper prairie where a sufficiency of wood could be found for cooking purposes, even had we been in possession of anything to cook; now that we had

meat we were compelled by circumstances to continue the march, hungry as wolves, and with the raw material for at least a full breakfast hanging at our saddle-skirts.

We had scarcely proceeded a mile before we encountered a narrow but deep gully, running nearly north and south, filled to the top with water. Having no certainty of finding a fording-place near, we dashed boldly in and swam safely across. The passage made, the journey was resumed, and briskly we scoured across the desolate prairie. We hurried rapidly on, with the hope that before nightfall we might discover either trees or bushes of some kind with which to cook our buffalo meat, but the sun went down, and with it all our prospects of having a well-dressed supper.

We gathered a few buffalo chips*—excellent fuel when dry, and universally used for cooking purposes by all travellers upon the lone prairies—but in the present instance they had been made damp by the heavy night-showers, and it was with the greatest difficulty that we could ignite them at all. We made out, however, to *warm* our meat a little—I will not say that it was *cooked*—and voraciously did I swallow several pounds of the tough, unsavoury food.

That night, and for the first time since we had struck the grand prairie, we were serenaded by a pack of wolves, which skulked and howled for hours within a few yards of our outposts. The "sign" was considered highly favourable, as these animals are seldom found

* This is the name given by Western traders to the immense quantity of buffalo ordure found scattered over the surface of the prairie. When dry and ignited it gives out a strong heat, emits little offensive smell, and answers the purpose of a wood fire very well. The hunter throws his meat upon the coals, or places it upon his gunstick and holds it over the fire—in either case it is well cooked.

far from woods or settlements. An old backwoodsman remarked that we should find Indians, white people, or an end to the prairie, the next day.

On the following morning we made an early start, the prairie before us still presenting the same lone and dreary appearance. We had travelled but a few miles when a drove of horses, numbering some seventy-five, was discovered a short distance to our left. They were near enough for us to see plainly that they were horses, and if wild ones that they were uncommonly tame, while many of our party asserted that they could see human beings among them, resting quietly upon the ground or moving about. Some even said that they could see mounted men in the extreme distance, as though driving in the *cavallada;* at all events, the different surmises and assertions created an unwonted excitement among us. If our neighbours were only mustangs, it was an evidence that we were near the edge of the gloomy prairie, for those animals are seldom seen in large numbers far from mesquits and watercourses; if they were Indians, we might obtain some information from them, as they could hardly be Caygüas; and again, if they were Mexicans, and we really thought they were, then our journey might almost be considered at an end—we could obtain information of the nearest route to the settlements, and very likely a supply of provisions for our immediate use. Our main party halted and formed, while three or four of us set off with the intention of taking a closer look at our neighbours. We hoisted a flag of truce, and a sorry flag it was. I was the owner and possessor of a handkerchief which, in its better days, had been white. It was now a miserable whity brown; but at the same time it came nearer a peaceful colour than anything we had, and was accordingly

hoisted upon a ramrod and held aloft. As we gradually approached, there appeared to be no little commotion among the animals—a running hither and thither, as is the custom with wild horses. We had noticed three or four white spots among them, which, in the distance, we had taken for flags; a nearer approach convinced some of us that these spots were young colts. With this impression we returned to the main body, but even up to this time I more than half believe that they were tame animals, and that human beings were moving among them. Had we proceeded a short half mile farther towards them all doubts would have been set at rest, and possibly we might have saved ourselves many miles of weary travel and many hours of starvation.*

About the middle of the day, and some ten miles from the place where we had seen the horses, the deep-blue tops of a range of mountains were discerned, which, as we journeyed on, soon more plainly developed themselves. It may be readily conceived that this was a joyful sight to all. We had now been seven days upon the prairie, averaging at least thirty miles a day, and many began to despair of ever getting off the dreary waste. There was now a prospect of a change, and any change, we then thought, would be for the better.

We continued on until near three o'clock, when suddenly a beautiful valley, studded here and there with a clump of trees, appeared in sight. To the north, in the distance, there was every appearance of a large stream of water, and that, in our fond anticipations, we put

* We afterward met with a party of Mexicans who said that, while encamped, they had seen us upon the great prairie, and that from our actions they thought we were about to approach them. Perhaps this was the same party.

down as the long-sought-for Red River. A halt was called in a pleasant little grove of cotton-woods, through which a small stream of fresh water was gently purling, and here we built a large fire of wood from a dry and fallen tree, cooked what was left of our tough buffalo meat, and dried our wet blankets and clothing. Two hours were spent at this comfortable camping-ground, after which we mounted and pursued our uncertain journey. Unable to continue our old course, northwest, on account of deep and abrupt ravines to the northward, we travelled west this afternoon, through narrow valleys encircled by high, conical, and singularly-formed hills. At sundown we reached a small spring among these hills, where we bivouacked at once. During this night there was a panic and half stampede among our animals, caused, in the opinion of the guard, by the appearance of a small drove of mustangs on the steep hills which overlooked our encampment.

Resuming the march early on the following morning, we soon became entangled among high, steep, and rugged hills, the passage over which was almost impossible. Such was the nature of this singular piece of country that we were compelled, although reluctantly, to abandon entirely the course we had so long travelled, and seek an outlet from the hills in a direction south of west. We were all anxious to visit the river on our right, to note its general appearance, taste its waters, and form some opinion as to the probabilities of its being Red River; but as well might we have undertaken the task of climbing the largest cotton-wood upon its banks on horseback as that of cutting our way through the natural obstacles which intervened between us and the stream. But go on in some direction we must; and, as there was no alternative, we set off in a

southwest course—the nearest point we could possibly make to what was considered the right one.

Even the country over which we were now compelled to travel, much as it threw us off our course, was exceedingly rough, and for the sake of our poor horses at least, we wished ourselves back upon the smooth and open prairie. Many of their shoes were torn off by the rocks, and, unused to go without them, their feet became so tender and sore that they could not move without difficulty. To this should be added our own catalogue of misfortunes—travelling, day after day, while enduring the sharpest pangs of hunger, and in a state of harassing uncertainty as to our present situation, even more annoying than the starvation—with all these hardships to undergo, the reader can easily imagine that our chances were becoming desperate. We saw numbers of antelope and deer during the day, and passed through one or two prairie dog towns situated deep in the narrow and secluded valleys; the animals were all so shy, however, that it was impossible to get a shot at them. The prairie dogs, in particular, appeared to shun us with more than their ordinary prudence—giving their short yelps of alarm before we were within half a mile of them, then tumbling hurriedly into their holes, and not once showing their heads so long as we were in sight. At night we encamped at another spring among the hills, without having tasted food since our scanty meal of buffalo meat on the preceding day. We tightened our belts by taking up still another hole—a great relief when suffering from want of food—and then threw ourselves upon the ground to seek forgetfulness in sleep.

We made another early start on the following morning, winding our way among rough and steep hills, and

slowly nearing the chain of mountains west of us. About the middle of the afternoon—it was the 8th of September; I can never forget the date—we got clear of the hills, and entered a narrow but fertile valley running nearly east and west. A light fringing of trees in advance convinced us that the valley was watered by a stream larger than any we had recently met with, and with excited feelings we pressed our jaded animals forward. Our anticipations of finding a fresh-water stream were more than realized—we came suddenly upon the banks of a beautiful river of most delicious water, running over a bed of yellow sand, and so low that we forded it with ease. In the vicinity we found stumps of trees which had evidently been cut down by Mexicans. Remnants of old cart-standards and wheels were also discovered: proof conclusive that the place had been visited by other than Indians. With gladdened hearts we scanned these evidences of civilization, and even the keen cravings of hunger were for the moment forgotten in the anticipation of soon reaching the settlements.

All was now inquiry and speculation as to the name of the stream we were upon. Some of our men, and they the wisest, too, contended that we had either crossed or headed Red River, and that we were now upon one of the southern forks of the Canadian. Others, again, said that if there was any such stream as Red River above the lower or middle prairies, this must be it, although its waters were entirely dissimilar in all respects to what existed in our received opinions as the general features and appearance of that stream. Then there were two or three men among us, old trappers and traders who had visited Santa Fé by way of St. Louis, who said that we were upon the

Mora, and but a few miles from San Miguel. Of course, nothing certain can be known; but the more probable conjecture is, that we were now upon the waters of the Arkansas, and that we had headed the Red River of the United States. This cuts off some two or three hundred miles from the length of the latter stream, as laid down upon a majority of the maps; but I am inclined to believe that it deserves this abbreviation.

If the Red River of the United States rises in the Rocky Mountains—the reader will bear in mind that I say *if*—how and where does it make its descent, from the high table-lands which form the base of those eminences, to the prairies beneath the main western steppe? The descent can hardly be gradual, but, on the contrary, the stream must tumble, in some places, hundreds of feet down the eminences which the traveller is obliged to ascend as he journeys westward from the Cross Timbers. These steppes grow higher and more abrupt, as they extend to the south, after leaving the valleys of the Canadian and Arkansas; in fact, I do not know that they extend north of the southern fork of the Canadian at all.

The New Mexicans have a Red River, rising in the mountains north of Santa Fé, but this is known to be but a branch of the Canadian. Farther south rises the Mora; this is another stream finding its way to the Canadian, and at this, although by this time the name may have been changed, I have little doubt we had now arrived. Its waters are as unlike those of the Red River as are those of the Croton unlike the Mississippi. A majority of the map-makers, by joining the Red River, as far as known with some one of the rivers rising in the Rocky Mountains, have made a long and very pretty stream, as seen upon their charts; were they to

journey along the line of their imaginary river, with the hope of finding the water they have traced, I am inclined to believe they would suffer much from thirst before they had crossed the boundless prairie spreading eastward from the outer spurs of the Rocky Mountains.

Not to tire my reader much farther with speculations in relation to Red River, I will here state my belief that it takes its rise at the base of the high steppe I have so often alluded to, and but a few miles north of the head waters of the Brazos and Colorado of Texas. On its southern side it receives the waters of the Quintufue and Palo Duro, rising from the sides of the high steppe,* with other short but wide streams, which in spring contain much water. We crossed them during the dry season, and at a time when their beds contained but little, and that brackish and standing in sluggish pools. Southeast of the steppe, at a distance of perhaps seventy-five miles, rises the Wichita, which, after running a course a little north of east, empties into the Red River some fifty or seventy miles west of the Cross Timbers. It may be recollected that in a previous chapter, and prior to the departure of Carlos, we had noticed a large stream south of the Wichita, and running nearly parallel; that was undoubtedly the red fork of the Brazos.

It is certainly not a little amusing to examine the Red River of the different maps, and trace its most singular windings. On several of the maps now before me, I see that it rises north of Santa Fé, near latitude 38° north, and in longitude varying from 104 to 106° west of Greenwich. On one of these maps its general course,

* The Mexicans, who started with Albert Pike in his journey across the prairies, spoke of this steppe, and gave the name of *Las Cejas*, or the Eyebrows, to the singular range. Mr. P. appears to have passed to the south of the steppe, his Mexican companions returning before he reached the Brazos.

for some five hundred miles, is southwest; on another it only runs some three hundred in that direction, and then strikes off across the prairies north of east. The most correctly-laid-down course of the stream, on any of the charts I have examined, may be found on Tanner's map of Mexico; but there it is somewhat too long, although the general eastern course he has given it is in the main correct. But I must leave speculation, and return to the watercourse we had by this time reached.

Our little party remained some half hour upon the banks of the stream, considering which route to pursue. The general course of the river, as I have before stated, was a little north of east, and to follow it up was finally decided upon. We proceeded along its northern banks, as that side afforded the best travelling, until dark, when we encamped in a copse of cotton-woods. A dreary, rainy night, was followed by a day so cloudy that we could not steer a course; yet there was the river acting as guide, and we followed it. At times we were close in upon the narrow but fertile valley which skirted its borders; at others, some long bend in the stream would throw us out upon a succession of low, barren sand-hills, with little other vegetation gracing their sides than dwarf thorn, prickly pear, or plum bushes. The latter were not more than eighteen inches high, yet they appeared to thrive luxuriantly in the sand, and when we were among them they were loaded with plums of the largest size, and such as were ripe were of delicious flavour. Ripe or unripe, however, the bushes were stripped by our famished men, the fruit filling their stomachs for the time, but yielding no real nourishment. Some of the half-dried plums we found in the sand tasted like prunes. During the day we also found large quantities of small but well-flavoured grapes, which