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, by Francis Francis**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SADDLE AND MOCASSIN ***

SADDLE AND MOCASSIN

[Pg iii]

**BY
FRANCIS FRANCIS, JUN.**

AUTHOR OF
"IN A LONDON SUBURB," "WAR, WAVES, AND WANDERINGS."

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1887.
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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
THE LATE FRANCIS FRANCIS
(AUTHOR OF "A BOOK ON ANGLING," ETC., ETC., ETC.),
AN OLD-FASHIONED SPORTSMAN
"SANS PEUR ET SANS REPROCHE."

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PREFACE.

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The following sketches were made at different times and during various cruises in the States. The earlier ones are fairly close records of the scenes and incidents which they profess to describe. My movements in the country referred to in the two latter were, however, too desultory to admit of similar treatment; in some cases I traversed the same ground two or three times, and remained for weeks without gleaning anything that would be of interest to the ordinary reader. In the trips detailed in this part of the book, therefore, I have occasionally introduced characters and materials that do not strictly belong in the situations assigned to them. In fact, my object has been rather to present two characteristic studies of local colour than bare records of the travels that afford a pretext for them.

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SADDLE AND MOCASSIN.

[Pg 1]

CHAPTER I. THE YELLOWSTONE PARK. [\[1\]](#)—I.

"Wal, sir, I tell you that that thar Yellowstone Park and them geysers is jest indescribable—that's what they are, sure!" said all the packers, teamsters, and prospectors whom we consulted on the subject.

A greater measure of truth characterised this statement than is usually contained in eulogistic reports of scenery.

We were advised at Ogden that pack trains or waggons could be hired at various points on the "Utah Northern" branch of the Union Pacific Railway; in order to economise time, therefore, my companion preceded me to contract for transport, whilst I remained behind to conclude arrangements in connection with the commissariat department. These completed, I followed him. He met me at Dillon with a history of woe. No "outfits" were to be obtained elsewhere at so short a notice, and here the demands for them were exorbitant. No regard was taken of current rates; the teamsters seemed inclined to regard us as legitimate spoil. I ventured to expostulate with one man:

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"What you ask would pay you in three weeks more than your 'outfit' cost."

"Oh, horses is dear in this country!" he remarked irrelevantly.

"Quite so; but we don't want to *buy* any."

"Wal, it ain't much for them as has the means and wants to 'go in.'"

I am afraid that, to use a miner's expression, we did not "pan out" as well as was anticipated. A little diplomacy eventually secured us the services of a Mormon freighter named Andrews, his boy, a waggon, and twelve mules and horses, upon reasonable terms. We engaged a cook, and with Dick (the guide we had brought from Ogden) the "outfit" was complete.

Dick was an old soldier, and a first-rate fellow. True, the Dillon whisky proved too much for him when we were starting, but ordinary poison had been a mild beverage by comparison with it, and we were so glad that it did not kill him outright that we excused his temporary indisposition. Besides, even beneath its influence he displayed the most charming urbanity, and the greatest anxiety to get under way.

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"All I wants, Mr. Francis, is to make a start, to get away—beyond the pale of civilisation, as you may say—beyond (hic) the pale," he repeats meditatively.

"Beyond the pail or the cask, Dick?"

"Beyond the pale," replies he dubiously, after a thoughtful pause.

Dick was hearty in his endeavours to engage an "outfit."

"Say! you! look here, now!" he would explain to a native; "these here men don't want none of your — — snide outfits, but jest good *bronchos*, and a waggon, and strong harness."

"Wal, can't yer find no waggons?"

"Waggons! ——! waggons 'nough for a whole army! But, — — — it, these fellows all propose to make independent fortunes out of us in a single day. Why, they want jest as much to hire out one *broncho* for a week as'll buy whole team."

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Swearing is prevalent among these fellows. The reply given to us by a teamster that we met and consulted about the distance of a certain day's journey, concerning which it appeared that we had been misinformed, was by no means exceptional. "Thirty-five miles, — — — it! Why — — — it, it ain't a — — — bit more than twenty-five — — — no! ——!"

Our man, Andrews, was rather gifted in this line. He was to be heard at his best in the early morning, when engaged in catching the hobbled mules and horses. Amongst the more innocent titles conferred by him upon certain members of our stud were, "the yaller, one-eyed cuss," "the private curse," "the bandy-legged, hobbling, contrary son of——" etc., etc.; here following contumelious references to both the animal's remote ancestors and immediate progenitors. Frantic with rage, he usually concluded by hysterically imploring us to assist him in hanging them, or driving them into the river with a view of drowning them. Brown, our cook, one of the quietest, gentlest, and best old fellows in the world, rather enjoyed these scenes. His cooking,

which really left nothing to be desired, so far as camp cookery was concerned, met with severe criticism at the hands of this unwashed Mormon. The meekest cook would have resented this. [Pg 5]

"Yes," he said one day, as he turned the antelope steaks in the frying-pan, and listened to the voice of the teamster, softly swearing in the distance, "yes, Mormons always do swear ter'ble, and the women as well, and the children, too—and smoke. I guess they smokes more, and stands for the swearingest people as there is anywhere. And they're all alike."

We took no tent, but relied entirely on fine weather and buffalo robes. For the first few days the track lay through a gameless and uninteresting alkali country. The dryness of the atmosphere was remarkable. Moist sugar became as hard as rock; discharged powder left nothing but a little dry dust in the gun-barrels; our lips cracked, and our fingernails grew so brittle that it was impossible to pare without breaking them. As we proceeded, the scenery grew wild, and in places fine. On many slopes the pine forests had been swept by fire, and skeleton trunks, from which the bark had fallen away, stood out in ghostly array from the yellow, red, and russet undergrowth, or looked with ascetic asperity upon the bright belt of light-leaved willow bushes, whose boughs danced gaily in the sunlight on the foot-hills. [Pg 6]

At length we surmounted a low divide at the head of the Centennial Valley, and caught our first glimpse of Henry's Lake. In the purple haze of an autumnal sunset it lay below us; and the ripples that dwelt there, waked from their midday slumbers by the evening breeze, sparkled, and glittered, and tossed, and laughed, whilst they restlessly compared their blue, and gold, and violet reflections, and chased each other to the shores of emerald islands out on the silver bosom of the waters. Time was when only the sun came up and looked in upon the solitude of this beautiful sheet of water, dreaming its time away in the still heart of the mountains. At most an occasional Indian wandered thither, to hunt antelope on its grassy shores, wild fowl in its reedy fringe, or spear, by torchlight, the noble trout that haunt its crystal depths. Now it is in a fair way to become a summer resort. Already a log hotel has been tried there, and jam-pots and empty meat-tins lie around it in profusion. Fortunately, for some reason it has been deserted. So the pelicans, the swans, and geese that dot the lake's wide surface, the ducks and flocks of teal that sail there in fleets, or skim in close order to and fro, the grouse in the willow thickets, and the wary regiments of antelope upon the slopes, have yet a respite of comparative security to enjoy before civilisation drives them from their patrimony. [Pg 7]

We frequently camped near a trout stream. The trout, although proof against the persuasive influence of the artificial fly, were generally amenable to the seductions of the grasshopper, the butterfly, or grub. Dick's disgust at fly-fishing was amusing. One day B. lent him a rod, and I gave him some flies. He was absent about an hour, and then returned, with but little more than the winch and the butt of the rod.

"Well, Piscator, what luck?" inquired B.

"Why, these durned fish don't *piscate* worth a cent. Guess I'll go and *catch* some with a pole and a 'hopper, or there won't be any fish for supper."

The identification of trout was one of sundry points upon which the teamster and I agreed to differ. Trout vary considerably in their markings in these mountain streams; still, a trout is unmistakable.

"That's a pretty trout," I said one day.

"He ain't no trout. That thar's a chub." [Pg 8]

"How do you know that?" I asked.

"A chap told me so."

"I should call it a trout."

"Wal, they call it a chub down at the terminus,^[2] and I reckon the boys there know something. Anyway, he's a chub in this country."

With this conclusive argument Andrews always crushed me. We were at issue upon several questions of this and other natures. Only one, however, threatened to result unpleasantly.

Andrews had a boy. He was a surly, flat-faced boy, with a nose like a red pill. His name was Bud, or Buddy. The father thought all the world of Bud. He was one of the many "smartest boys in the States." Naturally his proud spirit brooked no restraint. On all subjects he considered himself the best-informed person in the party. Although only twelve years old, his education was complete, and he possessed, together with great experience and implicit self-reliance, a shot-gun, a rifle, and a racing pony. Bud from the commencement had assumed command of the expedition; he seemed to labour under the impression that we had come from England on purpose to accompany him. [Pg 9]

Whenever the trail was well travelled, he would drive our spare stock a few yards ahead of us, so that we were thoroughly annoyed by the dust. This amused him. Expostulation being without avail, I was forced to insist upon his taking his amusement in some other way. Bud declared that "he would be dog-durned if he was going to run his interior" (he called it by some other name) "out a-driving the stock any further ahead—durned if he would." However, he was induced to change his mind, and although the teamster expended a great deal of energy in bold talk and

gesticulation, the moment an opportunity was offered him of displaying his prowess, he collapsed. The matter was, therefore, settled amicably. Thenceforward Bud was more circumspect. He used to overeat himself. When just retribution overtook him, his devoted parent, in an agony of fear, would declare his intention of returning to the terminus in quest of a doctor. On two occasions we hung for awhile in the greatest anxiety upon Bud's languid responses to inquiries concerning his health; and we questioned him as if we loved him—which we didn't. We all doctored him, too. Yet he lived! Evidently his constitution was strong. Once, in a fit of meddlesome benevolence, I restrained his father from giving him a powerful aperient for diarrhœa. Like most acts of officious good-nature, it was often a source of regret afterwards.

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It is a fatal mistake to allow a boy to accompany a party of this kind, the more especially one of these ill-conditioned, never-corrected, western frontier cubs. They seem to think it incumbent upon them to air their smartness and impertinence at the expense of strangers. Dogs, in camp, are apt to lead to trouble, too, in the West. A dog is regarded there with somewhat the same feelings that he would excite in a Mussulman household. Our dog was the cause of annoyance on several occasions. Once the men mutinied in a body, because I collected some scraps after supper, and gave them to him *on a plate*.

Those who dwell in the neighbourhood of the Yellowstone National Park, love enthusiastically to term it Wonderland, and not without reason. Within its boundaries (one hundred miles square), there are over 10,000 active geysers, hot springs, fumaroles, solfataras, salses, and boiling pools. Of these, over 2,000 are found in the small area comprising the Upper, Middle, and Lower Geyser Basins. Sulphur mountains, an obsidian mountain, a mud volcano, a so-called blood geyser, and various other remarkable phenomena add to the interest of this extraordinary region, whilst there is scenery here that, for grandeur and grotesqueness, may challenge comparison with the world's most striking features. Proceeding at once towards the Upper Geyser Basin, we pass the Lower Basin with its so termed "paint pots," or "cream pots," boiling vats of a semi-silicious clay, which varies in colour from creamy white to pink or slate, some fine geysers, and the intermediate "Hell's half-acre," and adjoining pools. These are at once the most impressive and beautiful pools in the Park. I turned aside twice to them—once on my way to the Upper Basin, and once on my return; seeing them on these occasions under completely diverse aspects, for on the first day a thunderstorm darkened the wonted serenity of the sky.

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They are situated in a desolate expanse of white, formed by deposits from the numerous springs that bubble up on all sides. The first pool is of comparative unimportance. The second (whence the locality derives its name) considerably exceeds half-an-acre in size. It has but recently assumed its present dimensions. These are daily increasing, apparently, and it bids fair, if its devouring energies continue unabated, to unite with its fellow pools, and form a lake some acres in extent. Numerous cracks and fissures scallop its edges, indicating the direction of future encroachments, and it is with feelings of some misapprehension that the stranger to these infernal regions cautiously approaches to windward of the stream, to gaze into the awesome gulf below him. The boiling hiss and roar of many waters issues unceasingly from its depths, but heavy clouds veil them from view, and the miniature cliffs that plunge precipitously down are speedily lost in steam. A breath of wind sweeps past, and through a rift in the swelling billows of vapour a glimpse of the seething surface is obtained. It is a sight that alone repays the labour of a journey thither. And seen as I first saw it, when thunder rolled overhead, and the heavens were rent from time to time with the flash of lightning, the wild character of the scene was enhanced.

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Unlike "Hell's half-acre," the third and largest pool is brimful, and overflows its edges, forming, with the minerals that its waters contain in solution, a succession of steps and tiny ledges, which entirely surround it. It is impossible to conceive anything more beautiful than the colouring here presented. The water is of the purest, brightest cerulean hue, but near the shallow edges it takes its tone from the enclosing rocks, and the glorious azure is lost in yellow, pale green, or red, whilst chemical deposits, in exquisite arrangements, such as the genius of Nature alone can suggest, of écru and ivory, lemon and orange, buff, chocolate, brown, pink, vermilion, bronze, and fawn encircle the pool, or paint with ribbon-like effect the tiny streams that trickle from its overflow. Nor is this all. In the transparent curtain of languid steam—an airy tissue of impossible delicacy, that is gently wafted across the pine-wood landscape—dim reflections of all these wondrous colours, slowly dissipating and fading from sight, are visible. Alas, that anything so lovely should ever fade! The sleepy stillness, the appearance of profound depth, and the moist brilliancy of colouring in this pool defy description. The brush of the greatest artist, the pen of the finest writer would alike be laid aside in despair, and the genius of man forced to bow before the power of Nature, were it tasked to convey a faithful picture of the fantastic beauty of this unearthly scene.

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Passing on through a pine forest, seared and blackened by recent fires, and through the Middle Geyser Basin, with its columns of steam, its subterraneous rumblings, its hollow echoing of our horses' trampling, its hissing craters, and its bubbling springs (lying sometimes within a few feet of the track), we entered the Upper Basin towards evening. Imagine the head of a valley walled in by pine-clad hills, and threaded by a stream that rushes through a bottom of desert white, dotted by clumps of pine-trees, from amidst which dense columns of steam rise on all sides and tower into the heavens. All evidences of the storm had cleared, and sinking amidst gold and purple clouds, the sun shed a fiery glow through the trees upon the ridges, that caused each twig—almost I had said each pine-needle—to stand out clearly against the sky. As we crossed the stream and mounted the opposite bank, a vast body of steam, followed by a jet of water 160 feet high, shot up into the air at the further end of the basin.

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"There goes 'Old Faithful!'" exclaimed Dick; "the only reliable geyser in the Park. You can always bet on seeing him every sixty-five minutes."

Already encamped here, we found a large party of ladies and gentlemen from Boston, who were travelling through the Park. They informed us that the "Giantess" (perhaps the finest, but certainly the most capricious geyser of all) was expected to play in the morning, and the "Castle" to perform the next evening. There are nine principal geysers, namely, the Giant, Giantess, Castle, Grand, Beehive, Comet, Fan, Grotto, and Old Faithful. With the exception of the Grotto (which simply churns and makes an uproar), one or other of these tremendous fountains may be expected to cast a stream of water from one to two or even three hundred feet high into the air at any moment.

All geysers have not the same action, and most of them, in style of action, in the duration of their eruptions, and in the intervals that elapse between them, are apt individually to vary. Some play with laboured pumping, others throw a steady jet, some wear themselves out in a single effort, others subside only to commence again repeatedly. Thus an eruption may extend from two to twenty minutes—the approximate time occupied by the Grand—or even to one hour and twenty minutes, a period that the Giant has been known to play.

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The colours that tinge the edges of some craters, and stain the courses of the streams which they send forth, are indescribably beautiful. The snowy whiteness of the grounding is relieved by dainty buffs, pale pinks, and softest écrus, deep yellows shot with brown, orange streaked with vermilion, or straying into crimson, chocolate merging into black, and interlined with lemon—by colours, in fact, run riot, and all glistening wet beneath the clearest crystal water, that in the centre of the crater deepens into a heavenly blue. From such brilliancy it is a relief to turn to the sullen pines upon the hills.

Extinct domes and craters overgrown by flourishing trees, or mounds still bare, and even steaming, with otherwise only their immense size to attest the mighty power that formed and has capriciously deserted them, are found here and there amongst those known still to be active. Some of the more modern craters are surrounded by the skeleton trunks of trees that their eruptions have killed, and which, under the action of their mineral waters, are rapidly becoming petrified; whilst in the conflict betwixt desolation and verdure, which, owing to the frequent variation of the centres of action, is constantly in progress, the lowly bunch-grass steals ground wherever it dared draw a blade.

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Of the geysers whose eruptions we witnessed, the Grand was, I think, one of the most interesting. It played each evening at a regular hour. We were thus enabled to get comfortably into front seats, focus our glasses, and discuss the programme, as it were, before the performance commenced. This it did very abruptly, although the activity displayed at a small vent-hole, and the furious bubbling in another orifice connected with it, might be accepted as premonitory symptoms. Suddenly, with a single prefatory spurt, a vast column of water, over 200 feet high, was shot into the air. For a few minutes the pressure was maintained with unrelaxed vigour, then as suddenly it ceased, and the waters shrank back out of sight in the crater. Meanwhile the vent and cauldron were still furiously labouring, and subterranean thunder shook the ground on which we stood. After a minute's cessation, the water burst forth again without warning, and with even greater violence. This continued until nine successive pulsations had occurred, the later efforts, however, perceptibly diminishing in grandeur.

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It was a marvellous sight. The maddened rush of scalding water breaking free for a moment from its mysterious captivity, the gigantic columns of dense vapour, the showers of wreathed spray and crystal darts, forming, as they fell, screen upon screen of dazzling trellis-work, the lance-like jets pennoned with puffs of steam, the underground reports, the wondrous effects of the evening sun upon the silver spears that with lightning rapidity flashed forth and were shivered, broke and reformed again, the rainbow that shone through the slowly drifting masses of gauzy mist, the glitter and softness, passion and repose, formed a scene in which majestic fury was oddly mingled with the frailest loveliness. The packers and teamsters were right: "The Yellowstone Park and them geysers were jest indescribable." Over and over again was the admission forced from us, and not least heartily when, in the dim valley at night, the ghostly columns of vapour were seen winding from amidst impenetrable shadows and invading the silent heavens, whilst the rush and splashing of those mighty fountains from time to time broke the stillness of the breathless hours.

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Slightly removed from the main group here is one of minor importance, containing, nevertheless, objects of considerable interest. Chief amongst these is the Golconda spring. In some respects this is one of the most striking features in the Upper Basin. It lies in the hollow of banks that form an exact representation of an inverted horse-hoof. By tiny terraces (the creation of deposits contained in its heavily charged waters) the stream issues from the frog of the hoof, and spreads over a large surface on its shallow course to the river. There is a strange fascination in striving to pierce the profound, pellucid, and brilliant depths of this extraordinary spring. Somewhat akin the feeling is to that which impels us to gaze and gaze into some deep ravine. One could stand for hours here, tracing the ivory cliffs bathed in what seems to be a pool of melted sapphires—down, down, down to where the gleaming waters grow black and awesome, and the creamy rocks contracting, lose their fantastic imagery, and mass in mystery to form the gloomy portals of a lower world.

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As a game country the Yellowstone Park is a mistake. You may kill a few antelope, an occasional elk, or deer; it would not be impossible to happen on a stray bear or bison; but to go there merely

for game is to court disappointment. Besides which, hunting is restricted in the Park. Beyond its boundaries, good game countries are easy of access; within them, summer tourists have scared away all the game.^[3] Nevertheless, it is always possible to kill enough birds and antelope to vary the camp fare. It is a delightful climate there in summer, and a glorious country for gipsying. He must be hard to please who would tire soon of those cool, dim pine woods and grassy glades, where the chipmunk and squirrel curiously reconnoitre you, and the odour of pine-sap is heavy on the air; where the breeze from without penetrates only in softened and saddened murmurous tones, that, in rising and falling, seem to come from so far away, to linger so short a while near you, and to die so slowly away in the unexplored aisles of the forest.

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On we used to ride silently over the thick carpet of pine-quills, smoking pipe after pipe whilst we chatted unrestrainedly, or travelled back lazily over the past and its scenes in thought. From time to time we would halt, till the waggon wheels were heard creaking in the distance, and then pass on again ahead of the men. Occasionally the scene changed for a stream-threaded valley, full of beaver-dams, near which a few ducks sailed idly, in security, to the intense excitement of the wise-looking retriever, "Shot," who would glance from them to us with unmistakable meaning. Here the pine yielded place to the aspen, and the chipmunk and squirrel were succeeded by gorgeous butterflies, and red-winged grasshoppers that sprang away with a noisy clapping of wings from every tuft of grass beneath our horses' hoofs. At night, round a blazing camp fire, Dick, old Brown, B., and I would sit talking through many a pleasant hour, till the flames waxed low and red, and the vociferous snoring of the teamster and his cub warned us to turn in. Brown then "got off" his last tale or joke, and with a hearty "good night" we sought our couches of springy pine-tops and buffalo robes, where we slept the calm sleep of a natural life. What silver-lit skies spread above us; what a marvellous blue their fathomless depths embosomed; and how exquisitely delicate was the tracery of pine-boughs betwixt us and the late-rising moon! "Good night, good night!" And with a lazy yawn "Shot" would coil himself up close to me, and make himself comfortable for the night also.

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] Appeared originally in the *Nineteenth Century*.

[2] The "terminus" is whichever village on the railway the speaker happens to frequent.

[3] This was written in 1882. Since then hide hunters have completed their ruthless destruction of game in the western country, and the chance of finding any anywhere is now very small. I believe also that the Park has become a regular tourist resort, furnished with railways, hotels, etc., and hunting there is now altogether forbidden.

CHAPTER II. THE YELLOWSTONE PARK.^[4]—II.

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Quitting the geyser basins, we turned towards the Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone River. Since the new track thither was not yet (1882) finished, and it was impossible for anything on wheels to approach it, our waggon was despatched by another route, to await our arrival at the Mammoth Hot Springs, whilst we, accompanied by Dick, proceeded in light marching order.

"Deep i' the afternoon," we approached the Upper Falls. Through a gorge, redeemed only from utter desolation by patches of red and yellow moss, and a few shaggy pines, the broad river forced its way. Through whirlpools and narrow gates, formed by the jutting out of buttresses of rock, and by isolated crags in mid-stream, a succession of ledges led it on with gathering force. Its sunny ripples became wild and black, the veins of white that streaked them spreading fast until, in the last narrow bend through which it whirled, but for the green lights in one glassy wave, the rugged surface was a sheet of foam. Then came the grand plunge. Freed from restraint, the whole body of the stream overleapt the sheer precipice before it, and fell, draped in white, clinging lace. A hundred and thirty-five feet below, it was lost to view in clouds of mist, through which the transient gleams of water lightnings and of flashing rocks were visible occasionally. Anon it issued from this silver shroud, tranquil and temporarily tamed.

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To describe the Yellowstone Cañon with any degree of justice is an almost hopeless task; nor do the following lines pretend to convey even a glimmer of its real magnificence.

Some of the most marvellous effects and harmonies in colour that the world can show are displayed here, and that too on a scale of such grandeur, and in a mood of such majestic calm, that it is difficult in their presence to shake off the paralysis of simple wonder—to grasp the scene, and coin it into words.

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The rocks are of volcanic origin. Here their prevailing hue is that of old ivory, contrasted with warm tones of dead-leaf red, or purple masses of a hundred shades, and enriched by carmine and softest orange, till the cliffs glow like a sunset in that sunset home, the Sierra Nevada. Yonder russet and ruddy bronze kindle, and melt into buffs, cairngorms, and faded greens—all tints, in short, that autumn wears, mingled and scattered, intermixed and woven, like the wreckage of summer on a forest floor, are lavished here. Further still, a reach of pearly gray is shot with écu and crimson lake, faint veins of white, or scars of sullen black. This scenery endures for miles;

and as if a *tour de force* in colour were not enough, equal variety in form is exhibited in conjunction with it. Everywhere the rocks have eroded into quaint shapes. Forests and turreted castles, spires and cathedral domes, towers, monuments, and minarets, forts, forms, and faces are interspersed amidst a wilderness of pinnacles, boulders, and bluffs that have no likeness in the works of art.

It is as though the earth had yawned asunder not long since, for pine-trees, with all the appearance of having been but lately separated, fringe the sharp edges of the cañon, and nod for old acquaintance' sake at one another, in measured unison with cadences of wind, that idly chase each other down its solitudes. Through dreamy distances of chequered light and tangled shadow, the glance travels under a sort of spell, and unconsciously the fancy grows that you are gazing through the aisles of a vast cathedral illuminated by myriad and wondrously stained windows—not a cathedral wrought by the hands of man, nor one whose stillness was ever broken by his feverish tread, but the ruins of a colossal judgment hall, or place of worship, created by some long-gone superhuman race, of whose existence we retain no record.

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Great hawks and kingly eagles hang upon level pinions in mid-air deep in the abyss beneath, and scarcely seem of greater consequence than jays. Three thousand feet below rushes the dwarfed river that a short while ago was on a level with us; and it looks like a slender chain of jewels linked in silver; its boiling rapids, losing their thunder in a thousand echo-haunts, send only the drowsiest murmur upwards to join in the musical breathing of the pine woods.

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The frosted and ever-falling silver of the great fall itself, a giant mass of festooned spray, knit into one Titanic column (397 feet high), the clouds and clouds of hoar mist that float veil behind quivering veil, and fill the rounded chasm into which it is hurled, form, without reference to the surroundings, a picture of most impressive loveliness. Where the great stream abruptly drops, trembles a bar of emerald from bank to bank. For a space, as if stunned, the current clings together, and is still; then, shuddering, it awakes and plunges on, mightily, irresistibly, grandly, an ever-changing avalanche of sifted snow, beaded with flashing diamond-dust and scattered pearls, guarded by sheaves of slim-shafted water lances to its bed of foam, in a dim, lichen-gilded cradle.

No more glorious symbol of power could be conceived. There is about it that which rivets the attention. Willing or not, you must pause and watch it. And, arch-dissenter though you may be from the worship of Nature, this scene will, nevertheless, compel your admiration.

Go and sit by those falls at evening, and watch the rosy glow of sunset settle with softening influence upon the upper cliffs, whilst below all is already steeped in mystery. Listen to the ceaseless roar of waters, till, to the half-stunned ear, it grows dull and dreamily monotonous, as if far away. Or stroll along the verge of the cañon, where the air is redolent with the exhalations of the pine-trees, and hearken to their vespers, which, as if chanted by errant spirit-choirs, steal slowly up from unknown forest cloisters, loiter a moment over the abyss to join in the river's song, and, rustling, pass away, as another choir draws nigh. And smile not if such things have no effect upon you, for you have missed truer pleasures than may be found in the imitations of art, or the monotonous music of civilisation.

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Leaving—with how much regret!—the Grand Cañon, we passed on by the curious and beautiful Tower Falls, and not less lovely cascades of the Gardner River, to the Mammoth Hot Springs. They lie upon the flanks of the White Mountain, and have gradually added to it a distinct spur, which, in the distance, shines amidst the neighbouring pine woods like a breadth of white satin in a mantle of pile velvet. These springs are many hundreds in number. With the calcite their waters contain in solution, they have built for themselves cup-shaped fonts, that stand in rows and terraces in regular formation, and present the appearance of having been hewn and polished in the finest marble. In all directions the glistening white and ivory is stained by combinations of brilliant and delicate tints, such as only the laboratory of Nature can produce. Each pool is a mirror. In its pure depths the fleecy clouds reflected sail slowly by, the dainty biscuit-work of the fountain's edges is faithfully reproduced, and the beholder himself, as he gazes therein, is photographed with a clearness that is at first sight startling.

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A few days we lingered here, and then set forth again.

We were trekking quietly along one afternoon, when a riderless cavalry horse cantered towards us. With some difficulty it was caught, and a picket-rope, a coat, a pair of boots, and some saddle-bags were found attached to the saddle. No owner appearing, Dick took charge of the truant. He also took charge of the saddle-bags, which contained a cake of tobacco and a love-letter, or, as he styled them—"a chunk of 'baccar, and some durned gush from a gal who's got mashed on the owner." He learnt the letter by heart, and delighted in making apposite quotations from it. Two mornings later, however, a claimant appeared in the person of a smart little Dutch trooper belonging to the cavalry escort of a surveying party. It seemed that, after breaking loose, the horse had travelled back eighty miles on his tracks. Our visitor, a cheery little fellow, stayed to breakfast with us.

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"I can only give you back half that chunk," said Dick reflectively, when he was leaving. "I'm a bit short of 'baccar myself."

"All roight, partner, I got plenty. Py golly, ven I start out anyvers, I always go reparairet" (prepared?).

"Is that so? Wal, your head's level. By the way" (expectorating meditatively), "there was a

letter...."

The Dutchman's animation was arrested for a moment, then, looking quizzically at his interlocutor, he said: "You reet dat letter?"

"You bet yer! I wanted to see who that tearing war-horse belonged to. What shall I tell your gal when we get down Ogden?"

Again the Dutchman looked serious.

"You know dat gal?"

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"I should smile," replied Dick, with hopeless melancholy.

"Vell—vell—vell: you tell dat gal I bin on vilt goose chase after mine dam olt hoss, vat run vays mit her letter. And py golly, partner, joos take care and don' get on inside track of dat gal. Eh? Vat? You nee'n't tell her vat else. I finish der tale ven I kom." And again profusely thanking us, the errant lover trotted away with his steed in tow.

One evening we camped below a likely-looking ridge for hunting, and, leaving the waggon next morning at "sun-up," set out in search of game, intending to bivouac a night in the upper woods. Elk had already begun to descend from the summits of the loftier ranges, whither, owing to the persecution of flies, they are forced during summer to retreat. It was necessary, therefore, to advance with caution even on the foot-hills.

We had worked our way up through a belt of fallen timber into a forest of magnificent pines interspersed with grassy glades and willow bottoms, and were slowly proceeding, when a low whistle from Dick attracted my attention. He had halted to the left of me, and with furious gesticulations was indicating something in front of him. As I turned, an elk sprang up. Uncertain whence danger threatened him, for a second he paused, but a bullet from my Express rifle settled his deliberations. When my broncho, scared by the report, had concluded his part in the performance, I was able to inquire the effect of the shot.

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"Is he down, Dick?"

"You bet yer. He's a daisy! You've shot him in the couplings, and broke his back. I guess I'll finish him," and Dick put a bullet through its head.

A few yards from where we had first seen him lay the elk in the bracken, a magnificent fellow, with a fine head, only unfortunately two of his points were broken.

"How many poets gild the lapse of years!" May we not paraphrase it, and write for "poets" pictures?—for scenes such as these are like frescoes in the galleries of memory. The hollow that we bivouacked in. The sleepy willow bottom where our bronchos were picketed. The afternoon hunt afoot, marked by glimpses of an elk and four white-tailed deer. The evening vigil on an elk-trail in the dim forest twilight, when the winds slumbered, the earth was dumb, and even a falling leaf created quite a stir. The calumet and chat, with our mocassined feet to the camp fire, the light from which playing upon the giant trunks around, made them seem like pillars in some mysterious hall; the cheerful glow anear, the sombre gloom beyond. Is it not all photographed and laid aside to beguile us of idle hours hereafter? He who has no ambition in the future should create a pleasant past.

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At daybreak we climbed the highest peak in the ridge. Soft distances, with hills of violet and lapis-lazuli, stretched to the far-off horizon, where hung low-lying clouds. Nearer, half-hidden beneath coverlets of mist, still valleys slept, and broke, together with a tortuous, silver-gleaming trout stream, the vast expanse of sombre pine forest and bronze prairie. Miles and miles away to the south, keen-edged and transparent, loomed up the beacon towers of the Tetons. And on their centre peak, caught by a wreath of last year's snow, there played a lambent flame of roseate fire—a thing of inexpressible delicacy—the wraith of a long-lost old-world colour stolen forth from its rest in the sun.

Although tracks were fairly numerous, we saw no game. Still, if rewarded by occasional success, it is sufficient to feel that game is in the neighbourhood. To note fresh spoor, to find in grassy glades, upon the edge of willow thickets, the scarce deserted beds of elk and deer, to see the trees they have "used," rubbing the velvet from their antlers, to chance upon a bison wallow, or on the trunks of pines that have been barked by bears, even to watch the chipmunk and squirrel—Cobweb and Peaseblossom, "hop in your walks and gambol in your eyes"—and hear the blue grouse drumming on the trees, is a pleasure. The charm of hunting lies not entirely in finding.

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Soon after breaking the camp from which we made this trip, we reached Henry's Fork of the Snake River, the prettiest trout stream that I ever saw. General Sheridan and a large party, numerously escorted, camped just above us on the evening that we reached its banks, and Dick, who was of a social disposition, soon made the acquaintance of an old Irish sergeant in the escort. Being anxious to acquire any information to be had concerning routes, etc., he asked him which track they proposed to follow thence.

"Sure," replied the sergeant, "an' the dhevil of a whon of us knows at all, but ould Phil (the general) himself, and he dhon't express his moind very freely."

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A good tale is current concerning certain Grand Dukes and personages of their world, who were taken through the Yellowstone country about this time. I give it as it was given to me, without

vouching for its truth.

It seems that the party had with them an ample supply of what are known in the field as "medical comforts." Of these they not only partook freely themselves, but largely distributed them amongst the members of their escort. The consequence was that, as the day wore on accidents occasionally happened. The officer in command of the escort was jogging along quietly by himself one afternoon, when a private rode up and saluted him. The man was reeling in his saddle, and had the greatest difficulty in maintaining his balance. "Well, what is it?" inquired his superior sharply. "Please, sir (hic), worre them ki-kings 'as fallenoff's 'orse." The native of the great republic had, as I have often found in men of his class out West, very hazy notions about eastern titles.

Gradually we worked down stream, shifting camp from day to day. I generally travelled on a pine-log raft with Dick, fishing as we floated on the current.

"Dick," I would say, whilst affixing a new fly, "this is very lazy work."

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"Thet's so," he would respond, disposing the steering pole under his arm whilst he bit a fresh quid off the Dutchman's "chunk." And after chewing the quid and the reflection with equal gusto for some moments in silence, he would add: "Thet's what I like about it."

The happy-go-lucky manner in which the raft drifted on to boulders, and hung there whilst we caught fish until it drifted off again, the perfect ease of the motion, the beauty of the river scenery, the excellence of the sport, the health, the harmony, and simplicity of it all, rendered these sunny voyages extremely delightful.

B. followed the gentle art on horseback. Furnished with strong tackle, he used to ride into the water, hook his fish, put the rod over his shoulder, and ride ashore again. Then he would shout to the infamous Bud to come and take the fish off. Bud generally took himself off instead, and after a while the fish would do likewise. As a rule it happened that, when the fish was there, the boy was not, and when the boy came the fish had gone. Considered under the influence of daily contact with Bud, infanticide came to appear an admirable institution; but fortunately nothing disturbed B.'s equanimity.

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Dick's temperament was not so well regulated. Seeing him one day engaged in playing an unusually good fish, the boy ran up from behind shouting: "Oh, Dick! get on your meule, and ride him out."

Failing to catch the gist of the remark, Dick turned to see what was wanted of him and lost the fish. It is needless to transcribe his remonstrance; powerful as it was, however, it had no effect upon the imperturbable infant.

"Wall," he persisted with bewitching gaiety, as he moved away again; "ef ye'd only got on yer meule, yer might a' fetched him out."

Dick was still too furious to be reported; by degrees, however, he subsided into a grumble. "Get on my meule and pull him out! Get on my meule! —! I only wish I had *him* glued on that meule for a fortnight, and me driving it on a rough trail."

"I guess I'd better kill him," said old Brown, very gently. He had walked across from the camp fire to watch the sport, and was now absently stropping a big meat-knife on his thigh, "he'll do better, maybe, in Abraham's bosom."

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"The other bosomites couldn't stand him," said Dick hopelessly; "they'd fire him out, sure! Abe'd yank him out of that himself."

Any day in this stream from forty to fifty brace of trout, averaging two pounds apiece, might have been caught. Sketching and shooting, however, divided the time, and my best day's sport was nineteen brace and a half, most of which were returned to the water. Prettier, gamer, or better-flavoured fish could not have been found, and the days we spent in this valley will always be a source of pleasant recollections.

Scarcely less pleasant, though, were the evenings when hoarse-noted swans, pelicans, and herons winged their slow flight above the water's course; geese in a wedge, or ducks in line, sped past on their rapid way; and, later on, the curlew came, and swift, piratical night-hawks flitted to and fro in the filmy crepuscule. Through the dusky foliage then flashed the fire of moonlight, and the golden orb rose and rose until she hung above a pine-tree spire "comme un point sur un *i*," whilst her first-fallen beam, a lost diamond lately on the dark pavement of the waters, grew into a thread of quivering light that stretched across a shifting tracery of swirls and eddies. Soon all sounds were hushed, save those of fish rising, the occasional whirr of ducks' wings, or the fitful nocturnes played in the river reeds by silken winds which only made the stillness seem deeper, the serene spell of night more powerful.

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As we descended the stream, the fishing deteriorated; some memorable evenings amongst the ducks and geese were recorded, however, and these were varied by excursions into the hills after elk and deer, which, although not always successful, were sufficiently so to keep our interest in the quest alive, and our larder replenished.

One day the summer vanished. It had been one of the loveliest daybreaks during the trip, and after bivouacking a couple of nights in the hills, we were returning to camp when it commenced

to rain. As we were crossing the plains, the clouds that had suddenly enveloped the mountains drifted partially away, and, looking back, we saw that the peaks and ridges we had hunted but a few hours before, and had left sunning their rich tints in the autumn sunlight, were blanched by the first fall of snow.

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For the next three days and nights it rained incessantly, and when at length the fog lifted, even the lower spurs appeared cloaked in their wintry mantles. Our limit of time, however, was nearly exhausted, and already our faces had been set towards the railway.

FOOTNOTE:

[4] Appeared originally in the *Nineteenth Century*.

CHAPTER III. QUAIL SHOOTING IN THE SIERRAS.

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If the reader has ever undergone the Ordeal by Baggage at an American railway station in the middle of the night, he will appreciate our feelings when we learnt that we should not reach Emigrant Gap until 1 a.m.

Emigrant Gap is situated near the summit, or the highest point attained by the Central Pacific Railway in its passage of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. *En route* for San Francisco we had arranged to halt there for some quail shooting, and in due course the train deserted us, half asleep, upon a little wayside platform in the middle of a snow-shed. I have a hazy recollection of being introduced to a friend of my companion's, who met us there, a Western giant named Shin, who greeted me as cordially as if, instead of being a stranger, I was a rich relation. In a few minutes, comfortably installed in his cottage, we were sleeping soundly.

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Next morning, when I awoke, a flood of golden sunlight was streaming in at my bed-room window, and through the open door was thrust a Velasquez head in a broad, black sombrero, which shaded bronzed features, a crisp black beard, and a curly upturned moustache. There was a careless, genial air about the face, and a twinkle of humour in the dark eyes that was as infectious as it was irresistible. It was Shin, come to wake me.

"Thought I'd just see if you were right before I went to bed," he said.

I blinked at the dazzling window.

"That's only our Sierra moonlight," he continued imperturbably. "You'll get used to that; but if it keeps you awake, I'll pull the blind down."

Here a burst of laughter from an adjoining room interrupted us.

"Oh, pshaw!" cried B.'s voice. "Don't listen to that coon; you get up."

"Coon?" repeated my visitor attentively. "Coon!..."

But here his head was abruptly withdrawn and an amusing colloquy ensued in the next room.

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I turned out and soon joined them. Shin and B. were old friends; both, too, were "old Californians." The conversation of an old Californian is generally amusing. And so, another cup of coffee, and another yarn; and another yarn, and yet another cup of coffee, prolonged breakfast far into the morning.

Our plan of campaign was to drive slowly to Soda Springs and back, halting to shoot when and wherever we heard quail calling. Early in the afternoon, a buggy drawn by two horses appeared at the gate; and, lighting our pipes, we started. Scarcely had we left the outlying cottages a hundred yards behind us when:

"Quails!" said B.

"H'm—quails, sure!" coincided Shin judicially.

I said, "quails!" also, although without any very definite reason for doing so.

We pulled up.

"Hush!" whispered B.

"Hush!" repeated the giant.

I also said, "hush!" The driver made the same pertinent observation—the only remark he contributed that day. Then we all "hushed" in chorus, which started the horses, and quieted the quails. (*Par parenthèse*, may I inquire if you ever hush, when told to do so? Systematic experiments upon all sorts and conditions of people have led me to conclude that the impulse to "hush" back at once is one that human nature cannot resist.)

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Silence being restored, we listened. Soon the quails' calling burst forth again away up the hill-

side, and, hastily alighting, we plunged into the forest and followed them.

In a few minutes a bird suddenly rose before me, and vanished behind a bush. Whilst debating in my own mind whether it were a quail or not, another bird rose and whisked round another bush. I shot the bush. And then another bird got up, and I shot another bush. And then another bird got up, and there being no bush in its immediate vicinity, I stopped it, and proceeded to pick up my first Californian mountain quail.

What a pretty bird it is, with its long drooping top-knot, and its mottled breast and thighs! Of the sad-coloured birds, few can excel it in beauty of shape or marking. It has that symmetrically prosperous, that aesthetically fastidious, confidently reposeful, felicitously demure appearance, only to be observed in perfection in wealthy, wicked, and juvenile widows. Shin, an exquisitely bad shot (so bad indeed that he rarely succeeded in killing a quail, unless he caught one sitting for its photograph), used to assert that: "They would roll about on the granite boulders with their heels in the air, and laugh till they moulted, when they saw *him* coming with a gun." I cannot say that I myself ever witnessed in the quail any so striking an example of their just appreciation of the humorous as this; but my informant was a man of thoughtful habits, keen powers of observation, and unimpeachable veracity. Moreover, it is well known that certain birds do laugh, and that, too, under less provocation than Shin's quails experienced. To the curious collector of ornithological data I can, therefore, commend this instance.

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Having bagged a couple more birds, a sugar-pine, and a granite boulder, I rejoined the buggy, where the others soon met me, and, remounting, we drove slowly on again. In a few minutes the same proceedings were re-enacted, and this continued throughout the afternoon. It was the easiest sport that I ever enjoyed. Quail shooting after this fashion has all the attractive simplicity of vice. It induces that pleasurable exultation which, until detection supervenes, always, I believe, attends an infraction of the law. Enjoyment of such kind seldom fails to stimulate even the jaded appetites of the wicked, but more especially doth it afford a relish to those who, never having impaired their moral palates by intemperate indulgence in crime, are still able to sin with the sentiments of novelty and zest that ever reward moderation. Need I say that our moral palates were yet susceptible of these delightful impressions.

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At length the driver pulled up on the summit of a grade. The shadows had grown longer and deeper, the day had waxed old and weary, rich in colour and in gilded glory, but in breathing faint and low. Both near and far away the granite peaks were lurid with purple and with blood-red lights, as if the sun shone on them through stained glass. The crests of the ridges had become fringed with a lace-work of coruscated fire, that glittered through the dark pine-quills, and shot soft, luminous rays and ways down into the delicately pencilled pools of twilight in the bottoms, whose leafy edges seemed like pebbled shores. And at one point, where the hidden trout stream, winding on its course, had widened for itself a resting-place, deep in a wilderness of foliage and shade there gleamed a strange hieroglyphic in thread of gold, that flashed upon the shifting eddies of the water-node, as though some magic beetle circled there.

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The squirrels and the chipmunks had vanished. No longer did the challenge of the doughty quail call us to arms. It was that transient interlude betwixt the minstrelsy of day and night. Dumb stillness had fallen upon all the forest, and not a breath of wind wooed any flower, nor whispered round any cone, till, with one long, low sigh, like a lost, lonely note of music singing to seek its fellows in the brown whorls of curled leaves—those forest shells of daintiest biscuit-work—the dirge of day stole through the valley and passed on. There was only the murmur of the rock-embosomed stream, and from afar off, the fitful tinkling of a wether-bell came faintly down our way.

"Hence, thou lingerer, light!
Eve saddens into night."

"Drive on to Campbell's—we'll stay there to-night. It is getting too late to shoot," said Shin.

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The wheels grated once more on the stony track, and on we went to Campbell's hostelry.

Very many of the pleasantest days in life are the most poverty-stricken in regard to incident. In all this week, only one episode occurred which would make you really laugh, and that, I regret to say, Shin would not like me to relate. Do not infer though, that, because the current of the trip was placid, it necessarily was dull. So far from such being the case, we did not pass a single dull half-hour. An exhilarating freshness, an evanescent crispness is in this mountain air, which absolutely defies dulness. Moreover, we had started in that state of helpless good humour in which anything serves as food for laughter. It was not recorded that any one made a sensible remark during the whole drive; we talked pure nonsense exclusively. In this congenial spirit we were encouraged by the fact that, our wooden-visaged, saturnine driver—an eminently matter-of-fact and sensible man—preserved, throughout, impenetrable reserve. He sat on the box-seat in dignified silence, a mute protest against the egregious imbecility of human nature as exemplified in ourselves. Evidently he had been designed without any reference to the rules of risible acoustics. He was angular and flat all over. People constructed on this principle are not adapted for the expression of merriment. If he ever had laughed, the displacement of solemnity would have been so tremendous, that he would never have recovered his centre of gravity, and would probably have died mentally upside down, and mad. He only made one spontaneous observation during the excursion. We were talking of chipmunks and squirrels.

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"Chipmunks——" he ejaculated. And then he paused and thought for a while. "Chipmunks," he

resumed, later in the day, "is elegant food."

Up the hill we were slowly toiling towards Campbell's, when a ragged boy in a broad-leafed hat, seated upon a ragged pony, whose tail coquetted with his heels, came jogging on the down-grade towards us.

"Say!" exclaimed Shin, "now when this fellow passes, we'll all take off our hats to him. Don't say anything; just bow and watch him."

Accordingly, when the boy drew near we greeted him with three sweeping bows. Probably he had never seen any one bow before; evidently he was not familiar with this form of salutation. He pulled up, and was staring after us in dumb astonishment, when, a thought seemed to strike him. Removing his own hat, he carefully examined it. But there was nothing the matter with that, and he rammed it on again with an air of dogged perplexity. Anon, he shouted something—our inability to catch which was perhaps not to be deplored; and when, some minutes later, we turned a corner and lost sight of him, he was still where we had left him, gazing after us.

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À propos des bottes: this unkempt, young mountaineer possessed aquiline features of the purest type; and it appears to me, as a superficial observer, open to correction, that these will distinguish the American of the future. The fusion of races in America is remarkably rapid. Distinctive physical peculiarities vanish not less swiftly than do national idiosyncrasies in character. And the mould in which these disappear is one that bears a striking resemblance to that formerly prevalent among the higher class Indian nations of the continent. The typical American is aquiline-featured, stern or impassive in expression of countenance, spare of frame, chary of speech, impassive in demeanour, endued with unusual self-control and determination. But these traits—which, if further example were necessary, could be multiplied—were all once distinctive of the Indian; and that they should reassert themselves thus uniformly in the descendants of the divers alien races settled in America, opens a physiological problem of unusual magnitude and interest. Doubtless, in process of time, the citizen of the republic will become tinged with copper. A tone of brass is already noticeable occasionally.

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Next morning saw us early under way; and during all the forenoon the road led through rocky passes, or was blasted in the steep sides of sombre valleys. On we drove amidst a network of crumbled light, whose shadowed meshes were cast by the vast trunks of cedars, sugar and yellow pines, red and silver firs, tamaracks, and spruces. Nothing in the forest races can match the stately beauty of these straight-limbed giants, clad in dark plumes. They are an order of knights, a dynasty of kings amongst trees. Where they have fallen, they lie like vanquished Titans, and seem even grander stretched out beneath clinging palls of moss than when upreared, archetypes of strength and grace, they toss their quilled foliage in the winds, and tower majestically above the earth.

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Ever and anon the continuity of their solemn crypts and corridors was interrupted by some still glen, a cache of dreams and summer beauty. And here—scattered amidst enormous boulders, or gray and grim, or worked with gorgeous blazonry in lichens—red-leaved sumachs, golden-foliaged aspens, and masses of flushed flowers blent in the rich arabesque of purple, brown, and russet bracken, had writ an idyl in a silent language, whose words were colour, and whose characters were leafy tracery, delicate and ever new. Yonder, by the lucent gleam of sunbeams, its tinted poetry was touched with fire, and there in the pearly shadows of midday it was yet coolly sleeping.

Long must have been the list of killed and wounded in the *Quail Gazette* after that morning's work. At times the forest rang and re-echoed like a choice covert in England. Towards noon, having finished a beat before the others were ready, I walked on ahead of the buggy to a turnpike gate to ask for a glass of water. Instead of a crusty old gate-keeper I was agreeably surprised to see, tripping bare-headed from the neighbouring cottage, a pretty dark girl with black eyes, a "peart" air, and a smart *sang de bœuf* bow under her chin. In the course of some conversation which ensued I mentioned that Mr. Shin was on the road, and inquired whether she knew him. A smile rose immediately on her cherry lips.

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"Shin? Well, you'd better believe I do; he's pretty well known around. Say, Alice! d'ye hear?" she cried, raising her voice, "Shin's coming 'long."

A merry laugh from the interior of the log-house greeted this announcement.

"There ain't another just like Shin from here to Panama," explained the damsel. "He's a genius. He's bound to be foolin' all the time, and he looks so sad with it—like he'd got a pain somewhere, or was making up poetry. Oh! Shin's a whole show, and he plays the music himself."

We lunched here, the gate-keeper's daughter kindly undertaking to cook quails for us if we would pluck them. Shin "played the music."

In the afternoon we set forth again through the forest, and its clearings, and its old deserted villages, that had flourished when the route we were following was the high-way betwixt Sacramento and Virginia City, when placer mining was carried on in the district, and before the railway had usurped the traffic. Now, owing to neglect, and to the destruction caused by heavy rains, the track appears to have lain disused for centuries instead of for little more than a decade. Many a yarn had Shin and B. to relate of the days when this same dried watercourse was a well-kept road, and they rattled up and down its steep grades on the mail-coach. One, and not the least curious of the wayside features, is the still standing trunks of pine-trees that were sawn off

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twenty and thirty feet from the ground, when the snow lay that deep on the Sierras.

We had come in our old weather-stained hunting garments, and, in order not to burden the buggy, had brought with us very little extra clothing. During the day's work the dust had accumulated upon us, until it almost seemed as if we were fulfilling the biblical prophecy and returning to the original component of man. It was anything but comforting, therefore, to hear Shin remark, as we turned off the main road in the direction of Soda Springs, that it was the time of year when visitors were numerous there. He, however, was right. When, in due course, we issued from the forest, and crossing a rustic bridge drew up before the hotel, we found its verandah full of pretty faces and well-dressed men.

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Soda Springs is a summer resort, consisting merely of a hotel, a few outhouses, and a private cottage, all prettily situated in a valley. A dashing trout stream runs hard by, and there is some fair shooting in the neighbourhood.

To visit Soda Springs without ascending Tinkler's Nob was to incur an everlasting stigma of reproach. Nevertheless, as I sat smoking in the verandah next morning (Sunday), eyeing askance that most uncompromisingly perpendicular mountain, my heart opened towards the stigma. It was so hot. I suggested this to B., he merely remarked that it was nothing to what we should experience half-way up the Nob. B. had determined that I should go up. I indulged in another long and careful survey of the disagreeable eminence with the cacophonious appellation. It looked more inaccessible than ever. I observed that, the farther you were from mountains the finer they looked; that when once you had scaled a mountain you seemed to lose all respect for it; and that I had a reverence for Tinkler's Nob which I should be loth to disturb.

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But I had to deal with one of those energetic men who love to get to the top of everything. I confess to a preference for the base end, at any rate, of mountains and high places. It is shadier and safer, and not so far off where I generally am. However, after exhausting a variety of excuses, Tinkler's Nob and the path of duty still lay directly in front of me, B. was still sternly pointing at them, and the thermometer was still rising.

Shin did not accompany us. We reluctantly left him with a cool drink, a long cigar, and a newspaper in the verandah. He said that the only thing he had promised his parents when he left Kentucky, twenty years before, was, "to sit around and reflect on Sunday mornings;" that the more he sat around and reflected, the more he became convinced that there was "something in it;" and that as soon as he "struck a Bonanza," he meant to sit around and reflect on week-days too. He said, moreover, that he didn't believe mountains were ever intended to be ascended, or they would have been arranged somehow differently, perhaps bottom upwards—he wasn't sure; the question was too deep a one to go into on so warm a morning.

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We started without a guide, and when half the ascent was completed, lost the track. After some time spent in vainly seeking it, we laid the reins upon our horses' necks, and commended ourselves to their sagacity. They did not immediately bear us to our destination without guidance, although they must have known every pebble in the route; they started straight down hill, fast. With some difficulty we put them about, and eventually invented a way of our own to the summit.

I had carefully abstained from spoiling the effect of the final *coup d'œil* by studying the panorama in detail as we ascended. Lavishly was my patience rewarded. Far as the eye could reach on every side stretched a confused sea of keen-crested rocky billows. Ridge behind rugged ridge rose up, and bluff behind leonine bluff appeared like mountains couchant. Peak towered over peak, from the vast iron helmets near at hand to the thin, blue, palpitating spectres of hills upon the verge of the horizon; from Devil's Point and Fremont's granite roof away to Imperial Shasta "diademed with circling snow," queen of them all. And grim as sentinels, keeping a silent watch throughout all time over the pine-shut valleys, they reared their furrowed brows far up above the clouds that sought to veil their majesty, but only lay a wreath of snowy fleece about their mighty shoulders. The world lay below us. What solitudes were there not there, what distances, what joyous mood, what melancholy, what fields of light, what cloud-cast drifting wastes of shadow! Beside hollows of lapis-lazuli, brimming with golden haze, might be seen gulfs of sullen gloom; through the mantle of purple pines showed flanks of naked stone. Even summer noon but half beguiled the scene of its savage character.

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"There was wide wandering for the greediest eye."

Yonder was Emerald Bay; the Sacramento Valley there; there ran the railways, covered in for miles and miles by snow-sheds. Elsewhere two forest fires headed by columns of smoke crept on their devastating march. And in the distance, in the midst of all this wild scenery, like a great opal upon the iron bosom of the Sierras, slept crystal Tahoe beneath hazy curtains, its gray and silver ripples shivering in cold light, and winking through the atmospheric dimness with countless rapid flashes.

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Here, reader, upon the extreme summit of Tinkler's Nob, I purpose to abandon you: you must find your own way down. Shin met us when we returned half baked to the verandah. He said that he had changed his mind about going up, and if we cared to turn round and repeat the ascent, he would now come with us.

What followed was but a repetition of what had gone before. On the next day we started to return to Emigrant Gap, and parting there from Shin, the pleasantest of companions and hosts, sped on to San Francisco.

CHAPTER IV. A GLIMPSE OF SONORA.

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"At what time does the stage start for Magdalena?" I inquired of the bar-tender at the "Metropolitan Hotel," Tucson, where the Southern Pacific Railway had just landed me.

"Magdalena?" he drawled. "Well, guess you'll have to wait here till Saturday now. Stage went out this morning at eight o'clock."

It was nine o'clock on Tuesday. *En route* from the station I had seen quite enough of Tucson to put my ill-luck in its strongest light. But the bar-tender did not seem to realise that there could be any misfortune in a delay of four days there.

"Take a drink?" said he. "There's worse places than Tucson; there's places where you can't get a drink."

I took a drink, in which my new acquaintance joined me.

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"Is Mr. Maroney in?" I asked. Mr. Maroney was the proprietor of the hotel, and I had a message of introduction to him.

"Mr. Maroney ain't long gone to bed. The boys was having a little game of 'freeze out' last night. I guess he'll be around at midday."

A bed-room, or rather a loose-box, was assigned me in the quadrangle at the back of the saloon, and after breakfasting I strolled out to enlarge my acquaintance with the town.

Until twelve months previously, Tucson had been an unimportant adobe village; now it was growing rapidly. Edifices of brick were springing up in all directions. Practically it is the gateway between Mexico and the far Western States of America, and as such its future is assured.

Under the shop awnings in the main street loitered a crowd of handsome, bearded, bronzed miners from the neighbouring mining districts. To and fro flitted a few busy store-clothed store-keepers and clerks, and here and there a knot of men might be seen examining some specimen of quartz. A couple of leather-overalled cowboys, ostentatiously "heeled" or armed, rode down the street on their Mexican-saddled *bronchos*; a Chinaman stole swiftly and silently by; a half-breed led a lame horse along; a couple more "greasers" seated one behind the other went past on another equine scarecrow; sundry dogs—one dragging a swollen run-over leg after him—loafed about; and a chain-and-ball gang of convicts slowly advanced, sweeping the dusty road.

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The town was gay with the bunting displayed in the store signs, advertisements, and invitations to "walk in."

The "Head Quarters" store is "selling out at cost price," boots, shoes, bacon, lard, flour, stores, hardware, etc., with all intermediate articles, forming the stock to be sacrificed. A Saddle and Harness manufactory, outwardly rich in signs and specimens of its work, is followed by a "Nobby Clothing" store that even surpasses it in its ticketed display of "pants" and "vests." Inside, a customer, with his feet on the counter, leans back in his chair and chats to the shopman, who is perched on his own cask. "Ladies' Dress Goods," "Fancy Goods," "Gents' Furnishing Goods," "Stores and Tinware," "The Alhambra Billiard Saloon," "The Tucson Restaurant," "Markets," "Estate Offices," diagrams of gouty-looking boots, swollen loaves, gigantic pipes, guns, bottles, etc., etc., without end, in black upon a white linen ground, invite attention everywhere.

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In a town of this kind, next to the drinking saloons, the barber's shop is the chief place of resort. The barber, in importance, ranks second only to the artistic mixer of cool drinks. He is hail-fellow-well-met with every one. Especially cheery and amusingly ceremonious is Figaro if he happen to be a coloured man. His memory is prodigious. Men enter that he has not seen for months, and with whom he is perhaps only slightly acquainted; yet he resumes the conversation precisely where it terminated when they parted. He reminds his visitor of what he has said, and of what his projects were when he last was shaved there, and he persistently inquires how far those assertions have been verified, and those intentions fulfilled. Having posted himself up to the latest date in all that concerns the victim of his curiosity, he proceeds, in return, to furnish him with biographical sketches of such later passages in the lives of his friends as may have escaped his knowledge.

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In the barber's shop that I entered the three chairs were all occupied. A slender, graceful, "interesting young man," of an Italian type of face, dressed in a blue shell-jacket bound with yellow, a good deal of loud jewellery, and a "dandy-rig" generally, operated on one customer; a "wooden-mugged down-Easter," with bushy eyebrows, and quick, twinkling eyes, who sang over and over again, absently, though still with heart-wrung pathos, "Oh, my little darling, I love you! Oh, my little darling, yes, I do!" had the second in charge; the third was at the mercy of a black man, who was cross-questioning him very closely as to a recent trip to Tombstone.

I fell to the hands of the dude, and was sheeted and soaped by him with a theatrical flourish that led me to anticipate the rest of the performance with interest. Three various strops were necessary to put an edge on the razor that was to execute me. The first, a rough one, scraped like a file; the second made the razor ring like a bell beneath the reckless strokes of its dashing

manipulator; over the third it slid like soap. I was prepared for some fancy shaving, and was not disappointed. After a few false starts the young man, at one fell swoop, slid the razor through the stubble on my face from one end of the cheek to the other. For a little while he sliced about in a fashion that irresistibly reminded one of cutlass drill, and then settled down to more delicate work. Certainly he had a sure and dainty touch, but to be shaved by him often would take years off a nervous man's life. Even when the rougher work was finished he was sufficiently alarming. Running his fingers over my chin he would discover a hair that had escaped him, and, as if he were flicking a fly off a wall with a whip-lash, sweep down upon it and smooth it off at one fell stroke. As for the coloured gentleman, he arrayed himself in magnificent clothing and went out; the "down-Easter," having finished his task, took up a guitar and croaked a few amorous ballads in a decayed voice.

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Returning to the hotel, I found that Mr. Paul Maroney had arisen. I also found a card of invitation from (I think it was) the "Union Club" awaiting me. Being dubious with regard to the nature of a club in Tucson, I interrogated Maroney on the subject.

"Do you want to play monte?" he asked, weighing the card between his finger and thumb.

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"No."

"Well..."

That "well" drawled out and sustained, with the look that accompanied it, told me quite as much about the Club as I desired to know. Paul and I christened our acquaintance with cocktails.

Conversation at any time, on any topic, or with any person in Tucson (as elsewhere on the frontier), invariably led to this ceremony. Cocktail drinking has a charm of its own, which lifts it above drinking as otherwise practised. Your confirmed cock-tail drinker is not to be confounded with the common sot. He is an artist. With what exquisite feeling will he graduate his cup, from the gentle "smile" of early morning, to the potent "smash" of night! The analytical skill of a chemist marks his unerring detection of the very faintest dissonance in the harmony of the ingredients that compose his beverage. He has an antidote to correct, a tonic to induce every mood and humour that man knows. Endless variety rewards a single-hearted devotion to cocktails, whilst the refinement and ingenuity that may be exercised in the display of such an attachment, redeem it from intemperance. It becomes an art; I am not sure that it ought not to be termed a science. It is drinking etherealised, rescued from vulgar appetite and brutality, purified of its low origin and ennobled. A cocktail hath the soul of wit, it is brief—it is a jest, a bon-mot, happy thought, a gibe, a word of sympathy, a tear, an inspiration, a short prayer. A list of your experienced cocktail drinker's potations for the day constitutes a complete picture of life, and the secret joys and sorrows that he hides from all the world may almost be said therein to stand betrayed to the eye of a brother scientist.

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The four days' waiting passed at length, and seated in the corpulent old coach, with its team of four wheelers and four leaders, we rumbled slowly out of Tucson.

The passengers were a Mexican dame with a baby, a Mexican, an American miner, and myself. A sort of second whip sat beside the driver, armed with a short but heavy weapon, with which he made excursions from the box-seat to the ground, and whilst the coach was still in motion fought it out with any refractory member of the team, as he ran beside him. Collecting a pocketful of the wickedest stones that he could find, he would then return, and pelt the *bronchos* from his former elevation. Another of his duties was to disentangle the team, when, as not unfrequently occurred, so many of the leaders faced the wheelers that further progress was impossible. It also fell to his lot to tie the coach together with thongs and string when its dissolution appeared imminent. In the performance of his various duties this individual displayed considerable agility, ability, and resource.

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The Mexican woman was frightful, the infant very like her, only by no means so quiet. Mother and child left us at the end of the first stage. The Mexican slept all day; towards evening he awoke and reduced himself to a state of complete intoxication with *mascal*. The miner never opened his lips until the following morning just before entering Magdalena, when we happened to see a jackass rabbit.

"Next jackass rabbit we see, I'll be durned if I don't shoot him," he said.

He forthwith produced and cocked a long Colt's revolver. But, as we saw no more rabbits, I missed this exhibition of his skill.

From the pace at which we proceeded during the night, I presumed that the Mexican's bottle of *mascal* was not the only one we had on board. The jolting was terrific. Besides encountering the ordinary ruts and irregularities in the ground, we struck every now and then, when going at full gallop, against a loose boulder, or the projecting corner of a rock, the shock of which brought our heads in stunning contact with the brass-capped nails that studded the roof of the coach. I was sometimes in doubt a moment whether my neck were broken or not. When Magdalena was reached my scalp was raw, and every angle of my body bruised.

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Stage travelling in Mexico, if this were a fair sample of it, is neither luxurious nor speedy. Owing to the irregularity with which the service is conducted, it is impossible for relays to be in attendance. Not until the coach arrives is a *peon* sent out to drive in fresh horses from the country. As they roam free over the broad *vegas*, they may be miles from home; consequently it is

no unusual thing for the best part of a day to be wasted before they are found. Outward bound, we were singularly fortunate in this respect. On the return journey, our delays were all prolonged, in some cases exceeding even five or six hours. The wattled sheds and huts at which these intervals were passed were of the filthiest description.

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Some of our teams were curiously mixed. One consisted of three donkeys, two mules, and three *bronchos*. Most of them were partly composed of mules. Some were poor, others were remarkably good. Particularly noteworthy was the performance of a level team of sturdy *bronchos*, that we picked up late in the afternoon, and that of a fine team of mules that took us into Magdalena on the following morning. The stages were about sixteen and eighteen miles respectively, but with the exception of a few short stoppages, caused by trouble with the harness, were covered at full gallop; notwithstanding which, the teams pulled up almost as fresh as they had started.

In one instance a deficiency of stock necessitated the lassoing and breaking in of a horse that had never been used before. He fought gallantly for nearly half-an-hour, and several times was thrown half-strangled on the ground, when the lasso was loosened and he was given a few minutes to recover. Eventually he allowed himself to be harnessed, and once in the team had to go with the rest. I must do our driver the justice to say that he handled the ribbons with admirable skill and boldness.

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To add to the interest of the trip, it was expected that we should be stopped by cow-boys. These gentlemen had lately "gone through" the coaches with great regularity, and, in anticipation of trouble, our whip and second whip were armed to the teeth. Fortunately, the journey was without incident of this kind.

With demoniacal yells, and a furious cracking of both whips, we dashed into Magdalena, and pulled up in the *plaza*. It was Sunday. The good people were just issuing from church. Mexican maidens, in white or brilliant robes, trooped out in twos and threes, and hand in hand went laughingly homewards. And here I feel the scribbling traveller's temptation to romance. A fanciful picture of some dark-eyed beauty, with proud Castilian features, and bewitching dignity and grace of manner, would fit my tale so well. Besides, in a Mexican sketch, one expects a pretty woman, even as one looks for lions in African, and elephants in Indian scenery. But I was so disgusted in this respect myself, that it will be of some satisfaction to me to have you disappointed also. Expect, therefore, no glowing description of female loveliness from me. Good-looking women doubtless exist in Mexico; but, in the few miles that I went over the border on this occasion, I saw none. A hazy recollection of flowers in connection with this scene of church-going damsels haunts me, but whether they were worn in the hair, or in the dress, or simply carried, I no longer remember. Men in their coloured *zarapas*, and broad-brimmed hats, chatted and smoked the eternal cigarette. Old women in black robes loitered in knots (very like old wives elsewhere) and gossiped. The *commandante* and a few officials sat on one of the old, carved stone seats. A few miners loafed before the "American Hotel," kept by a plump, jovial, masterful American woman, and her subdued matter-of-fact English husband, by name Bennett. Here I breakfasted, and in the afternoon rode out, twenty-three miles, to the mine of a friend of mine, whom I had come down to visit.

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Past the Sierra Ventana (so called on account of the hole that completely perforates one shoulder of it), and over wave after wave of rolling country, sparsely covered with *mesketis*-bush, my guide and I rode on towards some hills in the distance; and dusk had fallen and night had come when we ascended the spur on which the mine was situated. The stalwart form of my friend (whom I will call by his local sobriquet, Don Cabeza) appeared at his cottage door as I drew up, and, not expecting me, in the dark he took me to be a new hand in quest of work.

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"Buenas noches, señor, said I.

"Buenas noches."

"Habla V. Castellano?"

"No hablo so much as all that comes to."

Then I burst out laughing.

"Why——! If it isn't Francis!"

What a warm-hearted greeting he gave me! How hospitably he spread the best of everything before me, and even would he have relinquished his own bed to me had I allowed it. I had a big budget of news from San Francisco about mutual friends, but much as he wished to hear it, he insisted on its narration being deferred until I had slept and rested.

It was odd. When I had last seen and known Don Cabeza, it had been in an atmosphere of clubs and drawing-rooms, where his wit, good-nature, geniality, and a certain old-fashioned thoughtfulness and courtesy of manner had made him one of the most popular men in a pleasant circle. Here, with that adaptability to circumstance which is so marked a characteristic of Americans (*when* they choose to exert the faculty), he had shed the drawing-room air, and appeared, for the time being, as a bluff, light-hearted, practical miner. The white linen, patent leather, and general fastidiousness of speech and taste, formerly so marked, were temporarily laid aside for the flannel shirts, top boots, Western slang, and sublime indifference to fare and comfort peculiar to the dweller in a mining camp. And yet he had not changed either. There is a

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tinge of old world chivalry in the character of those who came in early days to California. They are lost in a crowd of a different type and of later date now; wherever you do find one though, you find a large-hearted, generous man, with nothing small or mean in his whole composition. In the better type of old Californian, there is less of the snob than in any man in the world; and in supporting what he thinks is manly and unselfish, he is as fearless of what others may think, as of what they may do. Animated by the love of adventure, the Don had left a luxurious home in the East to come in early times to California, and had there "toughed through" all those scenes and times that now read like pages from a fascinating romance. And a fine type of "old Californian" he was.

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The Santa Ana was a new purchase that he had come down there to prospect. It promised well, but was not as yet worked on a large scale.

Those were pleasant days up at the mine. Lazy? Well, yes; I fancy everything in Mexico is more or less lazy. We were so entirely out of the world; the trip, moreover, was so utterly disconnected with anything that came before or followed it, that it stands out now in solitary relief.

An *adobe* cottage, of three rooms, had been built for the Don and his foreman, and here we lived. Below us, in wattled huts, dwelt the Yaqui miners and their families. A little removed from the adobe was an open arbour, with wattled roof, in which we took our meals. Near it was a stunted tree, that served for various purposes, besides being shady and ornamental. Lodged in the first fork was our water-barrel. The coffee-grinder was nailed to its trunk. In a certain crevice the soap was always to be found. Upon one bough hung the towels, the looking-glass depended from another. One branch supported the long steel drill, that, used as a gong, measured with beautifully musical tones the various watches of the miners. Amidst the exposed roots the axe in its leisure moments reposed. Our tree, in short, was a kind of dumb waiter, without which we should have been lost.

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The country teemed with quail and jackass rabbits. We bought an old Westley Richards shot-gun in Magdalena, and did great slaughter amongst them. Deer were reported to be numerous, but during my stay we saw none. A good deal of our time was spent in cooking. The "China-boy," nominally *chef*, was so wondrously dirty, that one day we rose against him, and degraded him to the post of scullion, and being, both of us, proud of our culinary skill, we undertook the preparation of our meals ourselves. Jerked beef, bacon, quails, jackass rabbit, beans, rice, chilies, and potatoes were the articles that we had to work upon.

Don Cabeza mixed the introductory cocktail, and took sole charge of the jerked beef and beans; the quails and jackass rabbit fell to my care, the remaining items were mutual property, with the exception of the rice, which the Celestial was still permitted to boil. Most elaborate (at least in titles) were the *menus* we produced. One Mexican dish that the Don used to prepare of jerked beef, pounded and fried to a crisp in butter, with a few chopped chilies, was worthy of note. Jerked beef and jackass rabbit! We laughed as we compared these frugal meals with the extravagant dinners and breakfasts of the year before, at the "California," "Marchands," and the "Poodle Dog," in San Francisco. And, by-the-way, if you are known at either of the above restaurants, you can be served there in a style that neither "Voisin's" nor "Bignon's" could easily excel.

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Every now and then, some Yaqui men or women would come up from their little colony below to purchase something from the store room, which, owing to the distance that we were from town, it was necessary to keep for their convenience; and great was their mirth to see Don Cabeza and me cooking. They said we were "loco," or mad. Good-tempered creatures they were, and certainly easily pleased, for they regarded it as a signal compliment if I sketched either of them.

I never could understand why time sped so rapidly here. There was really no occupation for us. Yet morning had scarcely broken fairly, it seemed, before evening approached, and what evenings they were!

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In the rear of the cottage, the spur on which we lived led up to rocky cañons and gaunt ridges before it, vast *vegas* stretched like a sea away to a far-off horizon of mountains, that, in the distance, looked as soft as low-down clouds. Behind these purple veins betwixt sky and landscape, the sun—a molten mass of palpitating fire, was lost at night. And as it passed away, swift shadows fell and dimmed the scenery, knitting its distances together with imperceptible process, and shrouding the intervals in mystery and obscurity. Soon only the deceptively near sky-line was clearly visible, and above it the glow of orange deepening into red still suffused the heavens with subdued illumination. Thus, on the one hand might be seen, high set in fathomless blue, amidst glittering hosts of stars, or far or near, twinkling or fixed, blue, and white, and red, and yellow, the silver beauty of a crescent moon; on the other, the lingering glory of the vanished sun. The effect was curious.

The foreman went early to bed, and was early abroad. Not so Don Cabeza and I. When the mocking-bird in the *mesketis*-bush had ceased its plaintive song, and save for the sound—like dropping water—of crickets, silence fell upon the land, we would light our largest pipes, endue us in our easiest garments, and sit (he on a carpenter's bench, I in a barrow) smoking and yarning, yarning and smoking, without thought of time, through the still watches of those enchanting southern nights. Many a swift and pleasant hour did we spend thus! But then Cabeza possessed a fund of crisp wit, and an inexhaustible store of anecdotes, experiences, quaint theories, and views.

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Occasionally we went into Magdalena for stores and letters. Magdalena can boast a past of some prosperity; a more important future lies before it. At present it bears a stamp of dilapidation, poverty, and squalor. Probably not a dozen of its inhabitants are unencumbered with debt; nevertheless, everybody, even to the beggar in the street, possesses from two or three to ten or a dozen mines. It sounds absurd to hear a fellow in rags discoursing glibly about "his mines." Still more ridiculous does it seem when you know that many of them are of great value. The iron safe, however, is only to be opened by a golden key, and a coined dollar in Magdalena is worth a fortune underground. Little doubt exists that, when the railways, now (1882) entering from the States, are completed, and capital and energy pour into the country, enormous wealth will be found hidden in its quartz. The hills around Magdalena give evidence of gold, silver, and galena ore in every direction. Nor is gold wanting in the river beds and valleys. All that is required is a little capital and systematic industry.

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The area of country suitable for cultivation is circumscribed by reason of the scarcity of water, but where this is obtained and utilised, its effect is magical, and the fertility of the land becomes almost incredible. Not a tithe of that which is eligible is cultivated, for the indolence of the natives is remarkable. Even such ordinary vegetables as potatoes and onions are extremely difficult to obtain. A *zarapa*, a handful of beans, and a little tobacco, suffice for all the Mexican's requirements. If his vocabulary were limited to "Porque?" and "Poco tiempo," it would not greatly inconvenience him.

Northern Sonora derives its chief support from cattle. In most instances the ranches are of large extent, but poorly stocked. Formerly, they were in better condition, but they suffered severely from Apache raids, from which they are said never to have entirely recovered. The Indians drove off or killed all but the poorest animals, and the ranches have been restocked by the slow process of breeding from those that they left. Latterly a few bulls and stallions of a better class have been imported from the States.

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One day the Don and I came into Magdalena with the avowed intention of hiring a cook. The foreman had been despatched once or twice, unsuccessfully, on the same errand; but Cabeza was undiscouraged, and said that "He guessed, if we went ourselves, and they saw how real nice we were, they would all want to come." Accordingly we enlisted all the store-keepers in the place in a search for "a real way-up cook, who could make chile-con-carne, tamales, and all the best Mexican dishes, besides understanding American cookery." "And say," Cabeza would conclude, in giving his directions, "she's got to be a beautiful woman, too, because we're good-looking ourselves, and we don't like to see homely women about the place."

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Having posted our requirements in the various stores, we went off to the American hotel, where, by dint of making desperate love to the plump hostess, we succeeded in obtaining a sack of potatoes and half a sack of onions—part of a consignment that she had lately received from Hermosillo. She had just been engaged in a battle royal with the waiter, whom she had demolished with the kitchen coal-shovel. She was inclined, therefore, to be very affable, and even volunteered, for a consideration, to come out to the mine and cook for us herself.

"You want a boss cook and a beauty, Don Cabeza, eh? Well, I guess, I'm both. What'll you give me to come out to the mine and cook?"

"Mrs. Bennett," we said, "if we got you out there we should lose the only pleasure we have to look forward to—the only ray of golden sunlight that illuminates our desolate path in life. We should no longer have the treat of coming in here to see you. We mustn't kill the goose that—I mean, we mustn't be greedy, of course."

The subdued condition of Bennett, and the bandaged head of the waiter, were not happy auguries for the peace of any household that Madame Bennett took charge of. And we probably should not have borne our chains as philosophically as did her husband. Bennett's dry, matter-of-fact spirit was aptly illustrated in a story that I heard here. A miner named Hess was recounting the following incident in his career as a soldier during the North and South war to him.

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It appeared that at Bull's Run Hess had a difference with the colonel of his regiment, and, refusing to fight, went off and sat on a rail by himself. A corporal's guard was sent to bring him into action, but Hess said that he "scared the filling out of *them* durned quick." A sergeant and a file of men then came, but he "got away with them, too." A lieutenant and half a company was despatched in search of him, but he "cleaned them out." A captain and a full company appeared, but this brave man "made them get." Finally half the regiment came down, and the invincible Hess did not hesitate to say that, he "stood them off." Old Bennett heard him to the end without a smile. Then he said: "Hess, I never hurt you any, did I?" "No." "Will you do me a favour, then?" "Why, cer'nly, if I can." "Well, I've got a bet of ten dollars, with Mike Sheppard, that Doc Brown is the biggest liar in Sonora, and if ever you tell that tale in public I shall lose the money, sure." And Hess said that he would not tell it again.

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In the principal square of Magdalena stood the old church, near which were the ruins of a still more ancient edifice. To the latter, called the church of San Francisco, a legend was attached. I give it as it was given to me by a miner.

"Yer see, this here San warn't always a saint, San warn't. They do say as he was 'customed to go on a scoop—on a bend, occasionally, as it were. However, he took a pull in time, and caught on to this preaching racket, and finally he came to be a bishop. Right here was all in his claim. Wal, happened once when he was prospecting around jest to see that the sky pilots under him was

keeping at it, that the outfit banked up here for the night. Next morning, when they was all hitched up and ready for a start, and come to hoist old San on his meule, they couldn't prize him up anyhow. They put on fresh hands and tried all they durned knew. But San, he'd kinder taken root, and thar he sot, like the sawed off stump of a Sierra pine, and jest about as nimble too. 'Boys,' says he, at last, 'let up hauling! ye can quit that soon as ye please' (Independent as a clam at high tide the old cuss was even then). 'Guess I'll stay right here,' says he. 'Waltz in and put up a church right away.' And that's how this church and town come to be built—least, so folks say hereabouts." Then he added reflectively after a pause: "But they do lie here, too."

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After the dusty and dirty town we returned to the prettily situated adobe cottage at the mine with renewed pleasure.

At length the time came for me to depart. The horses were driven in from the vega; the near fore-wheel of the cart (which, when not in use, was invalidated, and kept in water to prevent the wood shrinking from the tire) was fixed on, the old waggon lined with hay and blankets, and, one night after dinner, we started to drive into Magdalena for the last time.

The day had been oppressive, but now there was a refreshing coolness in the air. At every pace, as we jogged along, hares lolloped across the road, or played amidst the scattered *mesketis*-bush on either side of it. Occasionally the howl of a distant coyote might be heard. Night-hawks and owls flitted silently to and fro, and "shard-borne beetles" hummed drowsily as they wheeled in the dreamy welkin. The stars, the stillness, and the silken winds combined to work a charm. Night wore her richest jewellery, sang low her softest melody, whispered her sweetest poem, and showed her beauty all unveiled even by the lightest fleece of cloud. Until I saw these Mexican skies I never knew how much more beautiful night was than day. For every star dimly distinguishable in Europe a thousand are clearly visible there. Their number and refulgence are astonishing. Were I to live in Mexico I should be strongly tempted to rise at sundown and go to bed at dawn.

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Once more the corpulent coach looms in view. Once more am I uncomfortably ensconced therein. With a torrent of Spanish invective, and a terrific cracking of whips, we slowly start. The coach turns round a corner, and I catch a last glimpse of Don Cabeza, with his hat off, in the road, waving a kindly adieu to me.

CHAPTER V. THE WINCHESTER WATER MEADS.

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NOTE.—The following sketch has, locally speaking, no place in the present collection. But since it is somewhat similar in its nature to the others, since it describes a day's fishing with the well-known angler to whom the book is dedicated, and since, moreover, it serves to mark the interval which elapsed between the time when the foregoing and succeeding sketches were written, I nevertheless introduce it.

There is a wind which belongs only to spring mornings and they are chary of it. Soft, and yet fresh, if winds were subject to the condition of age, this one might be supposed to be in its first sunny childhood. It has no care nor business. If it blew with all its strength it could never stir a mill-sail, or set a ship in motion. A butterfly rides out its silken gales, and its boldest blast, like the whispered secret of a child, beguiles you of an involuntary smile. Imagine such a breeze fitfully exploring the Winchester Water Meads. Now it hesitates, now lingers, now pauses altogether; anon with a dainty tinkling of herbage resumes its progress. And a fair march it has.

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Once more the sumptuary laws of winter have been repealed, the fashions of a new *régime* adopted. The time has come when "the fields catch flower." Tall buttercups, and dandelions, and knots of the great marsh marigold strew the thick grass with ingots of gold. Myriads of daisies and "milkmaids" powder it with snowy flakes. "Welshman's buttons" and anemones fill every sheltered nook, and stud the borders of each turf-cut drain. Here and there an early plume of sorrel shows like a vein of rust in this floral mosaic work, and each blade or flower, still wet with dew, flashes brilliantly in the sunlight as it trembles in sweet air.

On all sides the air is thrilling with the full melody of larks. A couple of plovers, that are nesting in the neighbourhood, wheel and turn with plaintive cries aloft; and a solitary cabbage butterfly, the melancholy forerunner of its clan, wanders away across the water towards Winnal moors in quest of fellows.

But marigolds and "milkmaids," larks and solitary butterflies aside! The Itchen and its trout are at hand, the rod is ready, and the momentous question is: "The fly?"

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The swifts and swallows are ranging high, or at any rate totally ignoring the stream, sufficient proof that there is but little of entomological interest for them on the water.

"There's a rise!" ejaculates my companion, however, "and there's another. But they are only feeding on larvæ."

Fish are rising occasionally without absolutely breaking the water, and it is evident that their attention is devoted not to the casual insects floating on the surface, but to the larvæ ascending

from the river bed, which they seize before they reach the upper world. We catch a specimen of the full-fledged fly (a Light-Olive), and, having matched it closely in the fly-book, commence operations.

It is ticklish work, this Hampshire trout fishing. Long education has developed in the natives of these waters a degree of sagacity that is almost supernatural. Their appreciation of the faintest *nuance* of exaggeration in colour of wing or body, in the artificial flies offered them, is unerring.

Time was, when to take six or seven brace of fish was a common occurrence. But in the memory of chalk-stream *habitués* there has been a gradual and steady diminution in angling averages; and now, unless the trout have a silly interval, a brace and a half or two brace is a good day's sport, and to catch these demands far greater knowledge, and the exercise of far more skill and patience than was formerly dreamt of. Then men walked boldly along the river bank, and fished with ordinary tackle and a wet fly. Now, albeit the flies used are miracles of diminutive workmanship, the gut a filament of fineness, that, with any consideration for its strength, can scarcely be reduced, to stalk and capture a two-pound trout necessitates the use of a dry fly, and a degree of caution and address scarcely less than is required for successful moose hunting.

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As the best fly-fisherman in Hampshire said to me: "You want to put the exact fly just over your fish the first time, if he doesn't take it he doesn't mean to. By changing flies, and sticking to him half the day, you *may* worry him into an indiscretion, but it is a hundred to one that you are only educating him."

What fishing will eventually become in these streams it is difficult to imagine, for the decrease in sport arises from no reduction in the stock of fish, which are more numerous now than they ever were.

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To-day I am not wielding the rod, but act merely as gillie for a master of the art, on whom the mantle of old Isaac Walton has descended. Gradually we work up stream, trying to convert these Winnal incarnations of perversity from their unholy appetite for larvæ, with exquisite imitations of various Olives and of the Red Quill. But they remain obdurate. They come, but come short. They roll up and leisurely inspect the fly, and with not less contemptuous deliberation turn tail upon it.

At length a far cast under the opposite bank is followed by a slight break in the water, a quick tension of the line, and a good fish is in difficulty. But almost immediately the point of the rod flies up, and, owing to the knot attaching the gut to the eyed hook having drawn, the fish escapes.

"None do here
Use to swear,
Oaths to fray
Fish away."

And yet, methinks, with the "poetry of earth," something is mingled now that sounds not like the music of waters, the song of birds, or the fluttering of a butterfly's wings—no, nor was it a hymn in praise of tackle-makers' carelessness. Let us hope that the "recording angel" for the day was once a keen sportsman, and appreciated, therefore, the extenuating circumstances of the case. Eventually the fly is replaced, and the campaign continued.

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By lunch-time we reach one of the wooden shanties, with which it is becoming the custom on these streams to provide for temporary shelter. There is not a fish moving, and for the present it is useless to flog the water. Sandwiches and a pipe fill the interlude; and by-and-by the keeper, a shrewd, wooden-visaged, terrier-looking countryman, suddenly drops upon us (after the fashion of keepers), as it were, from the clouds. Locke, in his way, is a type, and his utterances occasionally have a refreshing dryness.

"Marning sir, marning sir," he says cheerily, laying a six-pound jack on the grass to leeward of the hut (for wind spoils the look of fish), and depositing his "rod," a bamboo pole furnished with wire noose, beside it. "Have you caught anything?"

"No, nothing; it's too bright."

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"It is so; 'sides, the rise was over afore you come. I eyed you coming with my glass. There was a few fish feeding 'tween nine and ten this marning. I wish you'd been here."

"We came in for the tail of the rise. How did you get the jack?"

"I noosed un, sir, I allus nooses 'em. You can't get 'em out with the net, they's too artful. They lies right close on the ground, and lets the net rub over 'em."

Incited to continue, Locke plunges into a dissertation on the art of snaring jack, against which he is very naturally the sworn foe. He proudly recounts how he one day removed eighteen of these cannibals from his water, and, on another occasion, snared a leviathan of nineteen pounds eight ounces. Every now and then producing from an inner pocket a small telescope, the lens of which he polishes on his velveteen cuff, he pauses to reconnoitre suspiciously some distant figures in Nun's Walk, near which he has a small backwater full of "store" trout, that cause him a good deal of anxiety.

"In fact," he continues, a little abstractedly, after one of these surveys, "they's reg'lar reptiles,

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they jack, and you can't never quite get rid of 'em. You has to keep 'em down. I'm allus looking for 'em. Now, maybe, you won't believe me, sir, when I tell you that, that there little bit of backwater alongside Nun's Waark gives me moore trouble than all this here put together. I'll just take a cast round there, and see what they chaps there is about. Don't you leave none of your things lying about wheere they Herefords can get at 'em," he warns us, as he prepares to move off, indicating some white-faced cattle grazing in the neighbourhood. "They's moore destructive than our beasts about here. They'll chew up a mackintosh, or a basket—anything. Now, maybe, you won't believe what I'm going to say, sir, but they eat up my coat once—moleskin it war—and my dinner was in the pockets. Walking pikes I calls they Herefords."

Beyond St. Catherine's Hill heavy rain clouds, fringed with long "drifting locks," are passing slowly across the scene, and a few drops of the shower reach us. But in a little while the magnificent skyscape of mountainous cumuli, mellowing in the afternoon light, regains its brilliancy, and my energetic companion marches off by himself, convinced that he had put up "the fly" at last. As for me I remain smoking on a rail, lazy and unambitious no doubt, but supremely contented. Perhaps my appreciation of the moment's ease is not a little enhanced by watching another laboriously drying his fly, and crouching low as he creeps along the bank. And so I sit, and let my glance go wandering across the meads to the big elms, over against Nun's Walk and Abbots Barton Farm, where crowded cities of rooks may be seen, the movements of whose black inhabitants are clearly distinguishable in the half-naked boughs; and on and on to scalloped ranks of trees in the farther distance, that, in the scanty foliage of the season, stand out against the horizon like fret-work fans; till, finally, by many a hedge, and field, and ditch, I come back to the river-side again.

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The silvery whisper of this spring's young rushes mingles with the harsher rustling of last year's dead blades, and the softened sleepy wash of water at a hatch-hole hard by. Locke says he took a five-pound trout out of that little hatch-hole some years ago, and though of course I believe him, I cannot help casually wondering whether—as an old hunter in Alaska once cautiously added to a choice yarn that he had been telling me about a three-headed fish—"he was the only man who saw it"? With its swelling spaces of glassy smoothness, mantling with opalescent gleams of colour, with its glittering arabesque and tracery of swirl and ripple, its tiny, short-lived surface whirlpools, the full-bosomed river glides by, bearing its now rapidly accumulating cargo of fly. And in serried hosts the swifts and swallows have congregated above its course, and are busy skirmishing to and fro there. Now mingling and now scattering, crossing and recrossing one another, they clamber up against little currents of wind, and poise themselves, then dive, and skim the surface of the water, daintily picking therefrom fly after fly, and rarely making that slight fault which breaks the deep tones in the distance of the river's reach, with a small fan-shaped flash of silver spray! The fly is up! By twos and threes they came at first, but hundreds inadequately number the unbroken swarms that now cover the water, and Olives of every shade dance past from ripple to ripple in alluring pageantry.

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In the whole range of Nature there is probably nothing more exquisitely, coquettishly graceful, than are these water insects. With the stamp of refinement that marks the typically aristocratic maiden, they somehow combine the traditional piquancy of the French actress in opera bouffe. Nothing can possibly appear more appetising. But these epicurean fish are spoiled. The splendid condition they show at this early season of the year proves that they are overfed; and even under the temptation of such a banquet as the present, they indulge with more or less deliberation.

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We are fishing a plain canal-looking piece of water—a kind of upper-school, only frequented by fish of good size, and under a dishevelled tuft of brown rushes on the opposite bank a trout is feeding, taking with the regularity of clock-work about three flies a minute. The little gleam of transparent wings can be seen approaching the fatal spot, undulating with the motion of the tide. There is a slight disturbance on the surface, a subdued rich "gulp" is heard, and a few expanding rings are drifting from the scene of the disaster, whilst the course of the hapless fly is pursued by a short-lived bubble. Again and again the tragedy is repeated, and, at length, opportunely substituted for the genuine delicacy, a Light-Olive of silk, feathers, and steel floats over the swirl that marks the masked lair. There is a sudden commotion, a tremendous splashing, and a second later a good fish is making a determined rush for a neighbouring sanctuary of heavy weed. It is a question of pull devil, pull baker. If he reach the weed, he will inevitably escape with the fly and half the collar, and in the absolute necessity of stopping him the butt is forcibly applied and a breakage risked at once. Fortunately the fine tackle stands the strain, and, foiled in his purpose, the trout turns suddenly and shoots down stream at a pace that makes the reel sing merrily. For a little while now he sulks in deep water, but, brought to the surface, catches sight of us and darts across the river, following this effort up by a succession of short and savage dashes. Some nice steering and manipulation coax him safely through a dangerous archipelago of weed, and then, though with lowered head, he still endeavours to plough on down stream, the constant strain of tackle begins to tire him. From time to time he yields temporarily to the power that turns him open-jawed against the current, and at length, almost a hundred yards below where he first was hooked, a two-pound-and-a-half fish, in the perfection of beauty and condition, glides into the net. He had fought so gallantly that he deserved to escape.

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Before the rise ceases another fish, of within an ounce of two pounds, completes our brace. Then a long period of tranquillity ensues, and it becomes evident that if the trout move again to-day it will be in the evening, and for the evening fishing we do not intend to wait. Pausing to make an occasional cast over a likely spot, therefore, we work back towards Winchester.

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In a mood of exquisite serenity the last phase of afternoon is closing. There is no wind. The sky is

filled with soft gold and silver clouds, dimmed by transparent veils of pearliest gray. Black rooks plodding lazily homewards are relieved against its pure tones, and an occasional couple of duck cross its broad fields with strenuous haste that jars oddly with the ineffable calm up there. Upreared in virtual isolation, Winchester Cathedral stretches its great length on the town like a stranded whale—possessed, though, of a majestic dignity and repose that I am afraid the simile does not convey. A curious contrast exists between its massive tower and the sharp, pretentious little spires of the modern churches near it, which seem to be tiptoeing enviously to attract unmerited attention. By his works shall a man be known. Does the difference in the style of these buildings indicate any parallel change in the character of the race that raised them?

CHAPTER VI. ON PEND D'OREILLE LAKE.

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With his back against a pine-log, B. sits cleaning his gun, and, for the moment unoccupied, I smoke and watch "Texas" singeing a plucked grouse over the camp-fire. Opposite to him, "Mac" is engaged in baking a damper in an enormous frying-pan, the ringed handle of which is propped against a deadwood stick. The fire itself, built just above the highest water-mark, is composed of drift-wood and confined between two pine-logs, on either end of which are arranged our tin cooking utensils. In the background lies the lake.

And who is B.? who "Texas"? who "Mac"? What lake is here alluded to? B. is an old travelling companion of mine; the reader has met him before. The lake is that called Pend d'Oreille, in northern Idaho, Texas and Mac (partners, and, respectively, an ex-cowboy and unsuccessful miner) are a couple of waifs, whom we found spending the summer in hunting round its edges.

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An oddly assorted pair they were, these two. Texas, the incarnation of action and life, was *vif*, cheery, and good-natured, industrious, ambitious, and roughly but genuinely polite—a man who economised labour, and yet whose hands were never idle, who foresaw events, and as far as possible prepared for them himself. If he were ostensibly wasting his time here, it was because, driven out of Texas by the "chills," he was endeavouring to reinstate his health, before resuming regular work. He chewed "baccer," talked "stock," washed dishes, had towels drying, water boiling, coffee cooling, an eye for passing events, and an ear for transient sounds, simultaneously. What he did, he, nevertheless, did thoroughly, and withal he was intelligent, and talked shrewd sense.

Texas was a true *gamin* in appearance. There was an irrepressible air of cock-sparrow-like bravado about him. His boyish figure was clad in a blue flax shirt, brown flax overalls, and mocassins. His perky nose, of a sun-burnt, fiery red, seemed to be in an everlasting condition of strenuous rivalry with the perky peak of his black cloth cap, and his small bright eyes sparkled in a small round face, of leathery-complexioned features, partially hidden by a dusty-coloured beard and moustache. He cocked his eye, he cocked his nose, he cocked his elbow. Cheek in his presence would have hung its head abashed. He had the effect upon one of a pick-me-up, and you often caught yourself involuntarily smiling as you looked at him.

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Mac (an abbreviation, by the way, of "Macaroni"), an old mining enthusiast, was an Italian by birth, and looked like the typical European organ-grinder—a resemblance heightened by the broad black sombrero that he wore. He was one of those easy-going, good-natured men, who inevitably obtain nicknames, and the familiar prefix "old." Old Mac was a capital cook, and though always willing to be employed, was not given, like Texas, to initiating work of his own proper motion. Texas lived entirely in the present; Mac chiefly in the past, or future, in a ruined palace, or brand-new castle in the air. Absently twisting a spear of grass, or piece of string, in his fingers, he would sit by the hour, cross-legged, gazing into the camp-fire, with eyes that smouldered and darkened, glowed and again grew shadowed, as he dreamt of magnificent "prospects," big "leads," and "twenty-stamp mills," or failure, and the enforced sale of claims at insignificant prices, for lack of "a little more" capital to develop their hidden treasures. Sometimes he would break abruptly into the conversation with an irrelevant remark concerning mines, or mining, and, seduced by the subject, launch out, and unfold the schemes he nourished for employing that wealth which he would probably never acquire. He had found a good mine once—a well-known mine, which produced \$17,000,000 after he had sold the prospect for \$1,000.

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No occupation is so fascinating as that of mining, it would seem. Once a miner always a miner. Found in any other walk in life, the old prospector is only "lying by" to tide over evil times, or "making a raise" to enable him to return to his favourite pursuit. Even if he resolve to abandon it, sooner or later resolution fails him, and, metaphorically speaking, it is at the mouth of the shaft that he dies. Nor is there one in a thousand of these men but dies a pauper. Still they are not to be pitied. It matters little how a man dies; the material point is, how he lives. And the lives of these men are spent on the shores of enchanting mirage lakes, they themselves the very genii of wealth, in fancy. If life be a dream, theirs at any rate is a pleasant one, for, in expectation, they enjoy more happiness than is ever achieved by the most fortunate of practical men. And since expectation is the better part of happiness, and they never live to see their idols and ideals shattered, they are doubly to be envied. Perpetually, as it were, beneath the influence of opium, present miseries but lightly affect them, and they revel in "fine phrensies," the magnificence, if not sensuous splendour of which may fairly vie with the gorgeous visions of an Eastern

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imagination stimulated by majoon.

For a few dollars Texas and Mac had purchased a kind of duck punt, that an amateur undertaker had apparently begun to build as a coffin for his mother-in-law, or some other but little beloved relative. It combined the lightness and symmetry of a wood pile with the sea-going qualities of a crate, and the fact that its present owners had navigated the lake in it for some weeks in safety, afforded a most interesting instance of the inexhaustible mercy of Providence.

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It would be useless to recount what led us to this Ultima Thule, or how it further happened that we took ship haphazard with a brace of loafers, and went in quest of game there. Rub the Aladdin's lamp of imagination, and transport yourself to our camp-fire; do so, at least, if you admit the charm of a vagabond life in a fine climate, the enchantment of fine skies, fine days, and finer nights spent at Musette's Hôtel de la Belle Étoile, undisturbed, though, by the "*courants d'air*" she dreaded.

With doubtful hearts we had embarked in the modified coffin. Laden down with baggage it had had a more than usually unseaworthy appearance. But although once or twice we had shipped seas, and once had been nearly swamped by a billow at least four inches high, after a voyage of six miles we had safely reached the point where the reader first discovered us. Then, whilst B. and Mac had gone out to shoot some grouse, Texas and I had chosen a site for camp, shifted the baggage, lit a fire, and placed in readiness our cooking apparatus and stores.

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The million-voiced hum of tiny surf breaking upon the sand, some fifty yards away, was heard in long, low chords, singing a song writ long before the era of man, but whether betokening prophecy or strange record, an eternal requiem or only a passing overture, equally unintelligible now. In the crests of the little knot of cotton-wood trees by which we were located, the wind was stirring with a touch so light that it barely tilted the topmost leaves. But in endless corridors of quill-fringed pines, in leagues upon leagues of forest behind us, it had gathered force, and softened by distance, enriched exquisitely in sweetness, in a chorus audible only when sought for above the fairy clashing of leafy cymbals near at hand, its organ tones rose and fell like the measured breathing of a great sound that slept.

"So the bull chased you too, Texas, did he?" said B., looking up from his gun-barrels, as he continued a conversation with reference to an incident that had lately occurred on a small neighbouring cattle-ranch.

"That's what he did, now," replied the ex-cowboy sharply; and he paused to elaborate the singeing of an awkward corner in the anatomy of one of the grouse. "That's what he did—sure! The old son of a gun put after me once. A durned nasty old cuss he is, and don't you forget it!"

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"How did it happen?"

"Oh, I was crossing the fields on foot, and the bull he was feeling kinder ugly, I guess; that's all there was to it."

"And he came for you?"

"When he'd got up steam he did. He stamped, and tore, and frothed, and swelled, and primed, and snorted fit to bust 'fore he started. Then fust thing I knew, he dropped his head and put after me on all-fours—horns in front. I backed a piece, but the bull he kept coming, so, as I wasn't looking for any foot race, I jest drew a bead on him, and was going to shoot when Owens [from the ranch] runs down shouting 'not to kill him.' *He* drove him off; but the old bull hated to quit—the worst kind."

The autumn evening came early, and closed on us quickly, and save for one red cloud that lingered there, the blue sky was already growing silvery and gray, on the dark bosom of the lake only a few flickering lines of gold and scarlet were playing still, and the purple islands seemed to recede and partially dissolve in the swimming light and air when Texas called us to supper.

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Is there any gossip in the world more delightful than that which takes place round a camp-fire? Are there any meetings that leave such soothing impressions and recollections? Look back and note the host of faces, fates, incidents, even of local sounds that the thought of a camp-fire recalls. Yes, local sounds! With the everlasting restlessness, and melancholy of the sough of the wind from the sea, is heard once more the shy, fresh whispering of grass on the veldt or prairie, the silken *frou-frou* of bamboo foliage, the tinkling of pine-tassels, the murmur of falling water. And mingled with the memory of such voices as these, there is the distant thunder of an avalanche or of the hippo, re-entering his native stream, the reverberating roar of the lion, the wild, weird cries of lesser beasts of the bush or jungle, the notes of night-birds, the "Number one, all's well! Number two, all's well!" of the beleaguered camp; the "Lights out" bugle-call, or the sudden alarm of rifles, and the rush of many feet.

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Round a Western frontier camp-fire the conversation is always interesting. The change and incident that occurs in the lives of the men who collect there, gives them a fund of ideas not common to their class in Europe. The surliest old "tough" amongst them has experience of some line of country, some business, some isolated community, or fashion of life that is well worth while to listen to. Texas had punched cattle from Lower California to Louisiana; Mac had prospected from Mexico to Puget Sound. But besides this, B. was a perfect mine of wealth in Western lore. We had a wide country to range over, therefore, and not until the wood pile that we had collected was almost exhausted did we seek our blankets that night. One of B.'s yarns must

be recorded here.

"Away back in the good old times of the West—when fortunes were made and lost in a day, and one went to bed a pauper and woke a millionaire, or *vice versa*—I was cruising round, looking up new mines with an old sea-captain, named Rogers. We were coming down from Virginia City on the stage, and late one evening we got into —, and found everything in the shape of accommodation occupied. It so happened, however, that Rogers met a friend called Bob Malone, who kept a livery stable there, and he invited us to his place, and put us up for the night. The next morning we hired a buggy from him, to drive out and look at a new 'prospect' that we had some idea of buying, and coming back the horse ran away, and broke a little iron bar under the buggy—did, in fact, about ten dollars mischief to it. The following day we got a room at one of the saloons, and stopped about a week longer there. In the course of that time we tried on two or three occasions to get Malone's bill for damages. But he put us off, and put us off, saying that 'it didn't matter;' 'he had been too busy to attend to it;' 'there wasn't any hurry about it,' and so forth. And it wasn't until just as we were absolutely going off on the stage, that he came up and gave it to the Captain. We were in a hurry, the coach was starting, and there wasn't any time to look into it, so Rogers glanced at the total and paid it. We pulled out, and got on the road, and by-and-by I leant forward to the Captain, who sat on the box-seat, and asked him what I had to give him for my share of the bill. Then he remembered it, and fetched it out, and looked it through. This was how it ran:

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	Dollars.
"To Carpenter's Work on Buggy	20
To Blacksmith's Work on Buggy	20
To Painter's Work on Buggy	20
To Damage to Buggy	20
	—
Total	80
	====

"Well, the old fellow swore by all the gods of sea or land, and all the ports that he had ever been swindled in, that it was the stiffest bill that he had struck yet. And even after I had paid him my half of it, every now and then as we went along, he would pull it out of his pocket, and take another look at it. But that didn't seem to do him any good, for the more he studied it the madder he got, until finally, when we stopped for lunch, the first thing he did was to get some paper, and write Malone a letter. I forget how it ran, but the gist of it was that, 'In view of the extravagant total of the bill, he thought that Mr. Malone had taken the opportunity afforded by the injury done to his buggy to charge in a delicate manner for the hospitality that we had received from him. But that since Mr. Malone was a friend of his, not of mine, and he (the Captain) did not like to charge me for hospitality which he had indirectly been the means of *offering* me, he should be glad to know the exact state of the case, etc., etc.'

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"Some time afterwards, I happened to be going up to — again, so I got the bill from Rogers, and when I had leisure just dropped in to call on Malone. 'By the way, Malone,' said I, in the course of conversation, 'that was a devil of a bill that you slipped on us the other day.'

"That started him! 'Of all the ungentlemanly and disgraceful letters that he had ever seen, heard, or read of, the Captain's was the worst,' he said. 'He had never been so insulted in his life. After all his kindness to us—after the hospitality that he had tendered us—after taking us into the bosom of his family circle, to have a letter written to him in such terms was a perfect outrage! He couldn't have believed it, if he hadn't seen it.'

"'Well,' said I, 'that depends, of course, on how you look at it. Now, Dick Rose wants to give me forty dollars for that bill.' (Rose was the rival livery-stable keeper in the place.)

"'The — he does! What for?'

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"'Why, he wants to paste it up on his gate, and label it "Bob Malone's Bill," for the boys to come and look at; it would be sure to get into the papers, and there'd be no end of chaff about it. Of course it would be an advertisement for Rose.' 'But you ain't going to sell it to him?' 'Why not?' 'What, sell another chap my bill?' 'Why shouldn't I,' said I, 'if I can get half the total for it?' 'Oh!—well, I *am*—Well! Well, there, if it comes to that, I guess I can give as much for my bill as anybody else. — me if I am going to have anybody buy a bill of mine!' 'But I didn't say that I was going to *take* forty dollars for it,' I said. 'The — you didn't! What *do* you want, then?' 'Well, if you want to buy that bill, I guess I could let *you* have it for sixty dollars; but you'll have to make up your mind about it at once.' The end of it was that Malone brought out the money, and I handed him the bill. I gave the old Captain thirty dollars, and I think he was better pleased with it than he would have been if he had struck a big Bonanza."

Early morning saw us under way in different directions. B. and Mac rowed to a point two miles down the shore of the lake; Texas struck inland for a little lake in the woods.

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Into the broken country we plunged, where the scarlet of the vine aspen softened into amber; the shades of purple lake, that distinguished the fallen and decayed trunks, graduated into cinnamons and browns; the claret-hued bark of living pines contrasted with the charcoal of dead trees, which bore the indelible legend of a fire that had swept the hills a few summers ago. Passing into a section of the country that had suffered more severely from its ravages, we found

the new growth of pine saplings standing almost as thick as corn in a corn-field. It was tedious work thrusting a way through this miniature forest; and not less troublesome was it to traverse some of the intervening valleys, where the fire had not penetrated, and where fallen trunks, the accumulation of long decades, crossed one another in inextricable confusion, like gigantic squills. Sometimes, by emulating Blondin, it was possible to advance unimpeded for forty or fifty—even a hundred feet along the naked stem of a tree that lay athwart its brethren. But this was rare, and the incidental croppers rendered clambering in and out of the log wells the most satisfactory mode of progress after all.

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Occasionally we came to a partially bare-backed ridge where deer-tracks were numerous, and where usually we should have been likely to find game. But prolonged drought had rendered everything as dry as touchwood. Every twig, every fern, every leaf, every blade of grass crackled if touched. It was impossible to approach game noiselessly until after a rainfall, and the futility of endeavouring to do so was strikingly illustrated to us once.

We were resting upon a hill-side, when a series of reports, that fairly mimicked the "hammer" of distant rifle-firing in a wood, reached us. For the moment I thought that it was firing, but attention immediately corrected the impression. The sound approached, and though it might have been heard a mile away in the perfectly still air, it was evidently only the echo of breaking twigs and sticks, caused by a deer moving rapidly through a narrow bottom.

We reached the small lake we were in search of. In its hollow of purple pines it lay like a basket, woven of feathery reflections, filled with silver clouds, fragments of dusky blue, and floating aquatic foliage and flowers. Fish were rising wherever the windless surface was unobstructed by vegetation, and surely they could not have had a more delightful abode than was this crystal crypt, with its sapphire shadows, and myriad slender columns of emerald stalks.

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On the way back to camp Texas shot two grouse with his revolver. Grouse here, by the way, remain perched on the branches of a tree until one is within ten or fifteen yards of them.

B. and Mac had returned before us. B. (an old hunter in the States) had grasped the situation, and thenceforward refused to undertake the heavy work tramping through these woods entailed, when it was practically labour wasted. In future he devoted his attention to fishing and duck shooting. It was possible to bag a few stray duck, but although at certain seasons of the year the fishing is unrivalled in Pend d'Oreille Lake, when we were there, it was not worth mentioning.

We shifted camp, and for two or three days I persevered unsuccessfully with the rifle. Once, selecting the bald summit of a ridge where there were plenty of deer-trails as our point of operations, Texas and I lay hidden and watched from late in the afternoon till dark, when we bivouacked on the ground. But we saw no game, although two or three times during the night we heard deer moving.

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Disappointed of sport on the lake itself, we commenced the ascent of its tributary, Pack River. Five portages in the first four miles, however, and the fact that there was no prospect of the surrounding country growing any clearer, cooled our enthusiasm for exploration, and, eventually, having added a duck, a brace of plover, and three brook-trout to our game list, we returned to the lake, determined to seek other if not happier hunting-grounds.

The reader is disgusted—deceived, perhaps, in the expectation of perusing an account of dire slaughter. Undoubtedly, the supposition that game was to be killed on Pend d'Oreille Lake in September, was a delusion. But delusions, illusions, and the like are the salt of life. Only the illusions do not pall; only the illusions do not pass away. True disappointment lies in complete success. One thing, at any rate, we were not deceived about. Pend d'Oreille was very beautiful, and it is worth something to be able to close your eyes, and see it as I saw it on the morning that we left—as I see it now, in fact, although two thousand miles of mountain and prairie lie between us as I write.

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A slender shaft of blue smoke rises straight from the smouldering embers of our last night's fire on the beach. The air is fresh and still—there is no stillness, though, like that of the expectant pause which heralds the roar of day, no freshness like the evanescent freshness of sunrise. Texas is gathering drift-wood at high-water mark. Down where the boat is drawn up on the sands, the dark figure of Old Mac, in his broad black sombrero, is keenly outlined against the steely waters. Already the leaden sky is luminous with dawn; its pearly tones, as delicate in their nuances of shading as the neck of a dove, flush faintly and uncertainly. Cloud-edge after cloud-edge grows dazzling with silvery light, and, at length, the sun lifts the last clinging shred of the lake's gauze coverlet of mist, and reveals it in its bed of soft and hazy hills, motionless and pale for a moment before it is dyed with, surely the loveliest tint of rose that even Nature ever displayed. The first breath of the morning wind steals down from the mountains, to kiss its tranquil surface; it shivers, trembles, breaks into shattered light and motion like a thing of life awaking, and once more the old song of the waters has softly recommenced.

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Yonder gleam of white, low down on the far side, under that pine-scattered mountain, is Hope Station, whence we take our departure at noon.

ANIMAS VALLEY.—I.

"Well, there's Animas Valley, the 'rustlers' home,' where Curly Bill and all those boys used to lie up, when they had been sousing it to the 'enlightened citizen' a little too freely. There's the boss ranch in New Mexico! There's where the cattle graze, and graze, and graze upon a thousand hills, and go around laughing to think how much better off they are than other cattle, and saying to one another: 'Cows!' or 'bull, old pard!' or 'steers,' as the case may be, 'ain't we struck it big, eh? ain't we just eternally heeled?' There 're all kinds of grasses for them to eat, and if they don't like one they can take another. And there are big waters, and little waters, and all sorts, and they please themselves. And there are cable roads, and elevators, always running, to save them climbing up the steep places, and in warm weather every cow is provided with a canteen and a parasol. And Sundays you can see them taking their Bibles and campstools under their arms, and going off to sit down in the shade, and read to their calves; and when they want to know anything, why, they just come and ask old Murray or me. And ... and ... and if you think that I'm trying to boost the place up because it belongs to us, or if you think that it isn't all true what I'm telling you now, why, go ahead and call me an old mud-turtle, and say so at once. You don't mind how disrespectfully you speak to me, I know that."

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Don Cabeza, the speaker, had checked the horses, and the light spring waggon we were sitting in was poised on the summit of a down grade, at the mouth of a mountain pass we had just emerged from. A great valley lay below us, varying in breadth from twelve to twenty miles. Afar off to the right a mirage lake stretched its silver sheen across one end of it; the other was thirty-five miles away on the Mexican border, and, since the valley curved, was out of sight. To the left lay Animas Peak and the conjoining mountains; before us the rugged hills that separated us from the San Simon valley; and behind these loomed up the favourite highway, betwixt Mexico and the States, of the hostile Apaches—the wild Chiricaua range, whose naked crests glittered in the sunlight, above a confusion of scarped cliffs and jagged pinnacles, and lakes of purple shadow. Below, the broad valley bottom—flat here,

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"Gleamed like a praying carpet at the foot
Of those divinest altars,"

and was dotted by the small adobe buildings that marked Horse Springs, Granite Tanks, Russian Bill's Place, the Cunningham Place, and a few other such spots, towards which (for it was midday), small squads of cattle marched stolidly down to water from the foot-hills and the "draws," in single file, save where a calf trotted by its mother's side.

Four years have elapsed since the reader and I left Don Cabeza waving adieu to us in the streets of Magdalena. Then he was mining. Now he is a cattle king, with ranges, and ranges, and ranches, and ranches, and managers under him, and cow-boys under them, and under them again, cattle on a thousand hills, more or less. For the old style and title of Don Cabeza (by which he was known in Sonora) the cow-punchers of New Mexico have substituted that of "The Colonel." But nothing else about him is changed. He is the same old Cabeza, the soul of good nature and geniality, the most delightful of companions. Animas Valley, which we were now visiting, was one of the ranges under his control.

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"Get up!—get up, or I'll beat the stuffing out of you!" he says mildly, stirring the reins at the same time, and once more the horses resume their gait, and their driver a tale that he had begun a moment before we stopped. "Well, it was during one of these Indian scares. Is that an Indian over there, or is it only a soap-weed?"

"Indian," I answered, noticing the distant soap-weed that he indicated with the point of his whip.

The "Colonel" glanced at me sideways. "There's a hell's mint of soap-weed killed these Indian times, though—grease-bush too—and cactus—cactus gets fits! The boys are death on cactus when they get scared. Some of them would just as soon shoot a cactus as not—some of these Indian fighters, I mean. They don't care what they kill. Well, it was in one of these Indian times—old Hoo was out, and Victorio was out, and Geronimo was out, and—I don't know—they were all out—the Apaches were out to beat hell—at least that was the tune we were all talking to, about that time. And they *were* ginning her^[5] up, and making things a bit lively, that's a fact! Whenever anything of that kind is going on, I make a point of driving down from Deming into this valley, and the Plyas Valley, back here, just to encourage the boys and keep them in their places. Jim Tracy was with me that time, and as we drew near Sherlock's (where we slept last night), we saw a whole crowd of fellows come streaming out of the house. I knew at once that they had got scared, and had bunched up like a bevy of quail; so I said to Jim: 'Now, you let me do the talking when they begin to sing "Indians;" don't you chip!'

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"Jim caught on, and we drove up, and unhitched the horses, and came indoors. Every cow-puncher in the valley was there, sure enough—and polite!----! they were all as sweet as maple syrup. But I didn't say a word. Pretty soon they began:

"'Well, what d'ye know, anyhow?—what's the Indian news?'

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"'Indian news! I guess the Indians are quiet enough,' I said, a little surprised.

"'But who have they got away with lately?—where are they now?'

"'On the reservation, I suppose.'

"Oh, pshaw!"

"Why not?' I said. 'Have you boys seen any Indians round?"

"No, they hadn't seen any."

"Nobody been joshing[6] you, I suppose?"

"Oh, no! Joshing *them*?—not much!"

"Well,' said I, 'I don't know! It's the first talk that we've heard of Indians, and we've driven all through the country. But if you boys are frightened that there 're any about, why, you bunch up, and keep together until you feel safe. I don't suppose the Indians will hurt the cows any.'

"So, we got to talking about other things, and pretty soon Mat Campbell slid out on his ear and got his horse, and went off without saying a word; then Reid and Dan Patch pulled out—as quiet as sick monkeys. In about ten minutes there were only ourselves and Lou Sherlock left; they'd all skinned out, every man Jack of them. And you bet, grease-bush and cactus caught it for a day or two; the boys had to take it out of something."

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A shimmering bar of yellow, faintly tinged with red here and there, marked a distant line of autumnal foliage, in the direction of Animas Peak.

"Yonder lies the Double Adobes—near those cotton-woods," said the Colonel, pointing towards it. "To the left—there—is Pigpen's place, and to the right—in that second deep cañon under the shoulder of the Peak—is what they call Indian Springs, where there are some curious Indian drawings on the rocks. There is permanent water at all those places; and in spring and summer there is any quantity of water away back in those hills, and oceans of feed for the cattle too. They drift back there then, and give the valley a rest."

On we drove past the tumble-down adobe huts, that had once been inhabited by Curly Bill, Russian Bill, Black Jack, Cunningham, and other celebrities of their type, whose stronghold and cache for stolen cattle Animas Valley had been a few years ago. Then the "rustlers" had congregated there in force, the locality affording exceptional advantages for their chief occupation, namely, "running off" cattle and horses from either side of the border. Many a spot is pointed out as the scene of a sanguinary skirmish between these modern moss-troopers, and the owners and their followers (Mexican or American), whom they had despoiled and were endeavouring to escape from. And many a local legend relates how the "rustlers" were overtaken and surrounded or besieged in this or that adobe or pass, lost their booty, obtained reinforcements and recaptured it, were similarly outnumbered and again stripped by their pursuers, and so on, with glowing details of the feats performed in these encounters. But more prudent and artistic methods of spoliation have spread with civilisation and the law from the East. And now, although some ambitious youngster, or knot of youngsters, burning to emulate the thefts and assassinations that are the eternal theme of frontier history under the red line of "Bills" (Why should nineteen-twentieths of these butchers have been named "Bill," by the way?), occasionally sneak off with an old man's *burro* or a steer or two, or blow the top off some unoffending Mexican's head, the halcyon days of such knight-errantry are gone. It is no longer customary, when you hire or borrow a horse, to ask its nominal owner before setting out, "which way it is *good*?" The sheriff and his posse are quickly on the trail of any young aspirants to fame, and as a rule they are soon brought into town, handcuffed, red-eyed, and penitent.

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A jury of fat store-keepers, saloon proprietors, and rancheros, without romance or remorse in them, but all more or less interested in preserving unimpeded the rolling of the dollar, sits in judgment over them, and if the case admits of it, and the offenders are too poor to buy themselves off, glibly sentences them to be hung by the neck until dead; whilst the populace, instead of rising *en masse* to rescue the heroes, as might have been the case formerly, rush *en masse* to buy copies of that journal which gives the most intimate and repulsive details of their execution. These are not healthy times for vulgar crimes. Education has refined our minds, and broadened our views. It is as hard as ever, perhaps, to offend our morals, but our taste in crime, as in other matters, has become fastidious.

The prairie dogs had colonised in a part of this, the upper end of the valley, and we traversed a "dog town" some acres in extent, each underground habitation of which was marked by a little heap of excavated earth. Queer little squirrel-like beggars are these burrowers; the resemblance would be even more complete were it not for the short spigot-shaped tails they jerk so comically when, lodged in the entrances of their abodes, head and tail alone visible, they chirp and chipper so desperately at the intruder. One is tempted at first to laugh at, and consider them harmless, but a glance at the extent of grass-land which they have desolated, checks the impulse. As for the Colonel, he does not experience it apparently, but apostrophises them in language grotesquely solemn and ingeniously opprobrious, as long as we are in the neighbourhood of their city.

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Following the level strip that wound through the centre of the valley, we passed the Red Rock, and sighted Juniper Point.

We had left the flats behind, and were now in a rolling country, intersected by grassy "draws," or miniature valleys which afforded the "finest kind" of shelter for cattle. A cavalcade hove in sight, consisting of three horsemen and a four-mule team and waggon, the latter full of soldiers and loafers (from the supply camp[7] at the Lang ranch), *en route* for the railroad. Amongst them was a camp trader with whom the Colonel was acquainted, and who stopped to exchange news with

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him.

"By the way, Colonel," he said, as he was leaving, "your boys want to ride that San Luis Pass carefully, and read the 'sign'[8] there; that's the weak point in the valley, and being so near the border, them Mexicans can run a few head of stock over from time to time, without taking any chances.[9] I met a couple of greasers there the other day, driving off three cows and a couple of calves. If I'd had any show, I'd have drawn on 'em right away—I wanted to ter'ble bad; but I hadn't got no Winchester along, and only two cartridges in my six-shooter, whilst they was both well heeled."

"You got the stock, though?"

"Oh, —, yes! I run a bluff on 'em.[10] They said they wasn't *driving* 'em anyhow, but they got started in the trail ahead of 'em, and it wasn't their business to turn 'em. That's a point, though, that you want to watch—all the time. Well, so long." And ramming his great jingling Mexican spurs into the belly of his little mustang, he scurried away to overtake his party.

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"Three cows and two calves! Three cows and two calves!" ejaculated the Colonel wrathfully from time to time, as we proceeded. "I'll fix them, though! I'll fix them—and fix them good while I'm about it. I'll put Long-necked Abner and Indian George over there, and then those greasers'll have a good time. They'll round 'em up! Just let them catch one of them with any of our cattle! They'll pump him so full of lead that if a prospector happens to find the corpse he'll 'denounce' it for a mining claim. Three cows and two calves, eh! Three—" Then assuming a painfully querulous tone to the horses, awaking suddenly to the fact that they had slackened their pace into a walk: "Now, why can't you get up? What's the matter with you anyhow? Get up! Get up, or I'll knock the filling out of you! Get up, I say, or I'll haul off and beat the—the—the eternal wadding right out of you—once for all! Now I've said it, so look out!" And in pursuance of these dire threats, the Colonel gently stroked the quarters of each horse in turn with the point of the whip. "Three cows and two calves, eh? Well, that's pretty good for those greasers, isn't it?" he resumed more cheerfully—"and the cattle business lying on its back burst wide open, too! I'll fix those noble descendants of Cortez and his crew, though—those blanketed, horse-thieving hidalgos!—and while I am about it I'll fix 'em good—so they'll know it. You never shot any Mexicans, did you?"

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"Never."

"Well, we'll put you over there too for a bit, along with Long-neck and Indian George. If you have any sort of luck you'll get a fight on once a day, and you can make out the rest of the time killing Apaches."

I thanked him in language befitting the occasion.

We passed the Clanton Cienega,[11] and near it some large cattle corrals built for branding and marking cattle in; we drove along the edge of the Gray Cienega (the best water in the valley), and passing the end of a large "draw," in which two troops of U. S. cavalry, under Major Tupper, were encamped, finally reached the Gray Place, the headquarters ranch of the valley.

As we pulled up before the long, low, rambling adobe house, two or three dogs ran forward and barked. But they did so only half-heartedly, and prudently, to be on the safe side as it were, and soon, confirmed in their partial recognition of my host, desisted altogether. Meanwhile a young girl had arisen from a bench in the shadow of an angle made by the walls, and in that leisurely and somewhat forced style of Western indifference—a manner more often the result of shyness than of anything else—was strolling down the slope towards us.

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She was very small and slight—a girl of twelve years old might well have been bigger; she, however, was more than fifteen. Clad in a rough woollen frock, that showed considerable signs of wear and tear, and was gathered in at the waist by a dilapidated old cartridge-belt, she certainly owed nothing to dress. But she wore her rags as surely no one born to them could have worn them; and a curious contrast existed between the pretty preciseness of her slightly foreign pronunciation, the infantine clearness of her voice, and the Western slang that she talked.

Save for a few crisp curls, her black hair (which was cut short) was thrown back from her forehead, and with her sunburnt, glowing complexion, betrayed her Southern origin. Her head and features were small. She had a superficially old manner, the healthy look and self-reliance of a boy, but the eyes of a woman—of an angel sometimes. Eyes that recalled legends of the "star-eyed Egyptian"—dusky hazel orbs, grand and pure in tone, with a world of deep lights and sorrowful shadows in them—divinely innocent now, and now far-reaching, full of haunting mystery and meaning—eyes that in their more serious moments looked immortal, and seemed to have lived in ages past, to have seen all, to know all, and to be striving passionately to break the mute spell that now overpowered them. But this was only in their serious moods. For the most part they mocked the world with restless mischief and malice. And this temper it was that had gained for her the sobriquet, "Mosquito," usually contracted into the more easily available "Squito."

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Murray had picked up Squito on one of his trips into Mexico to buy cattle. The old man liked to have a youngster dependent on him—something to pet and to spoil—something to "swap affection with." And Rafeleta and he were devoted to one another.

FOOTNOTES:

[5] Working things up. "Her" is often used in an impersonal and general sense out West, instead of "it." On the frontier the "Colonel" used (as does every one else who stays there for any length of time) all the frontier slang. It has always been a marvel to me to see the ease with which such men shed, like an old coat, all such frontierisms when they return to more cultured society.

[6] Chaffing.

[7] At the time alluded to, the Apaches were "out," and there were two military camps in Animas Valley.

[8] Tracks, etc.

[9] Risks.

[10] "Bounced" them.

[11] A swamp formed by springs in low ground.

CHAPTER VIII. ANIMAS VALLEY.—II.

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"How are you, Squito?—how's your health?" inquired the Colonel cheerily.

Rafaeleta silently nodded her acknowledgments of the civility manifested by the question. "Where're yer from?" she returned laconically.

"The Plyas."

"Laid over at the Sherlock boys' last night?"

"Yes." (We were engaged in unharnessing the horses by this time. Hedged round affectionately by the dogs in various positions, Squito stood watching us.) "Any Indian news?"

She shook her head, and then an after-thought evidently occurring to her, a smile lit up her face, and she shrugged her shoulders indifferently. "Some of the boys down to the Lang ranch and Cloverdale have ter'ble times standing 'em off—least, that's how they talk when they get a chance at me. Piggy Farrel has killed 'bout eight, *he* says. But he always buries 'em—guns and all."

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"Piggy's a great and a good man," said the Colonel, smiling. "And Piggy wouldn't be dishonest enough to bury an Indian if he wasn't killed first, so if he told you that, it's all right."

"If he could kill Indians shooting off his mouth at them, he'd soon clean out all there is," remarked Squito sharply.

The Colonel cast a veiled glance at her as he passed round to put some harness in the wagon. "What's the matter, then? Has Piggy been too 'fresh'?"^[12]

Her sunburnt cheeks flushed redly, and a gleam of temper flashed in her eyes. But she checked herself, and only laughed scornfully.

"Where's your father?" (Old man Murray was always so termed.)

"He's over to Alamo viejo after a steer that strayed out there; he wanted to see the country, so he went himself. Joe and Jake's out on the range somewheres. 'Spect father back to supper," she observed after a pause; and after a further pause employed in a survey of our tired-out nags, she added: "Want some grain for them, don't yer?"

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Don Cabeza nodded.

"Have you been feeding them grain lately?"

"Yes; they can have a full feed."

I volunteered to fetch it myself, but looking me over ungratefully, Squito lifted her eyes to mine for the first time, and said coolly: "You'd best pack those things out of the wagon into the house." And picking up a couple of empty candle-boxes, which stood on a carpenter's bench near at hand, she passed round a corner of the wall with one under each arm, and reappeared presently with the feeds of maize.

We moved our traps from the wagon into a room in the house, and lit a log fire on the wide hearth, for the sun was nearly gone, and at this time of year the nights were frosty. Major Tupper paid us a visit from the neighbouring camp with a couple of his officers.

"What news?"

"Well, the Indians had killed the marshal and another man near Wilcox. Lieut. Fountain was reported to have had a brush with them in the Dragoon Mountains. Captains Crawford and Davis were on the point of starting on separate expeditions into the Sierra Madre after them. A scout from Casas Grandes, in Chihuahua, had passed through the camp yesterday on his way to General Crook, at Fort Bowie, and reported that Natchez, Nané, and Mangus, with a

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considerable following, were located in their old stronghold—the mountain on the San Diego ranch—and that small parties of them were trading daily with the Mexicans in Casas Grandes. Etc., etc."

"They'll get you one of these days, Colonel, when you are driving around in your wagon," said the Major.

Don Cabeza laughed, as he sent the cigar-box round again. "They don't want me; old Geronimo and I, we're——" (here a little horizontal motion of the hand smoothed the matter over and disposed of it completely) "we're solid. I've fixed things with him. 'That'll be all right,' as the boys say. When the Indians are out, Major, it is like having a needle in a carpet: you may tread on it first step, and you may not strike it in ten years. If you have any business to attend to, you'd best go right along and do it. Keep your eyes skinned, of course, but don't stay home."

Our visitors left; Jake and Joe, two limber, sinewy, six-foot models of health and strength, came in, and in due course, under the direction of the Colonel (a finished *gourmet*, who not only could give you points with regard to anything of gastronomic interest between the Poodle Dog and Delmonico's, but could post you almost equally well as to the best temples of culinary art that lay between Bignon's and the Café St. Pétersbourg, in Pera), we produced a sumptuous repast. With difficulty was our *chef* dissuaded from delaying supper whilst he made a venison stew—a stew of any kind being a favourite *tour de force* of his. Of course we all differed as to the best method of cooking what had to be prepared, and for the fun of baiting the Colonel, most of us united in deriding his decisions. But when Rafeleta, after roundly challenging his ability, finally deserted us, and went over to his side, we had to "take water."

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In such scenes as these Squito was in her happiest element. Her infectious laughter, as frivolous and light as air, ending often in the sweetest and gayest of sighs, lent a nonsensical tone to everything. She roved irresponsibly here, there, and everywhere—impeding, assisting, commanding, interfering, insisting with privileged authority—playfully executing freaks of impulse that had no motive, but were none the less exquisitely graceful, and which charmed if only because they proved that beneath her prematurely old manner the wayward spirit of childhood still lingered, and the time had not yet come in her career when every word had its billet, every gesture its design, every action its object. The movements of a child are generally graceful, awkwardness, like shyness, being only the result of false training or ill-health. Rafeleta had had no training, and was a perfect type of all that was healthy. In moments like these, therefore, she was a beautiful study.

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It was interesting to note the guard the cow-punchers kept over their tongues in her presence, and since cleansing the Augean stables had been a light task by comparison with purifying the language of a New Mexican ranch hand, the task must not be underrated.

Those were pleasant meals at the Gray Place. Rough? Naturally they were rough; but none the less they left an agreeable impression, and this is a good test. How often do the old wines and delicacies, the vapid enumeration of social events which forms the conversation, the general luxury and jaded appetites of London dinners do this? It is possible to go through life, day after day, without realising what we enjoy or do not enjoy. There are probably people who have become so thoroughly accustomed to ask, what *is* interesting? so entirely unused to ask themselves, what *they* really enjoy? that amusement is a lost art for them. They have stunted and coerced their inclinations until their natural and artificial appetites are indistinguishably confused, and they could no longer get a sure answer from their own hearts, did they ask themselves, what they enjoyed?

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Jake and Squito are busy at the stove. Murray, the manager, a cheery little man, with a *vieille moustache* face, and a twinkle of quiet humour in his eyes, is drying his hands on the round towel. (Murray is an Irishman by birth, but the Irish element in America is so generally unpopular in the West, that he always laughingly denies the nationality which his unmistakable brogue betrays, and declares that he is an "*I*-talian.") The Colonel, Joe, and I are already seated at the long table at one end of the kitchen, together with a teamster from Separ, on his way to the camp at the Lang ranch, with a load of goods for the "gin mill" there. The Colonel is stroking his beard, and smiling in anticipation over a tale that he has just been reminded of and is going to tell.

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"Yes," he agreed to some remark that had been made, and he smiled a little reflectively, "you're right. Andy Sullivan is a daisy—what Louis Timmer would call a 'Yoe dandy.' He's a great and a good man is Andy—'Not great like Cæsar stained with blood, but only great as he is good.' Did he ever tell you about his playing 'seven-up' with the old Scotchman?"

We had none of us heard the tale.

"Well, Andy found himself harnessed on to an old Scotchman one day, and they got to playing seven-up to pass the time. Andy could hardly be called 'anybody's fool' at seven-up, and the old Scotchman was no slouch either, it seemed—he had some talent into him, as they say. Anyhow, they were playing along pretty evenly; and the drinks were mounting up all the time. Pretty soon Andy began to notice that his opponent didn't always take his word for the score, but sorted his cards over, as well as his own. He got so particular at last that the thing became rather pointed, and Andy said finally:

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"'You don't seem to be very easy in your mind, sir; you're picking the cards over a good deal. You surely don't mean to suspect me of taking any advantage of you.'"

"Not for the world, Meester Sullivan! I wouldn't be suspecting ye under any saircumstances; but,' the old Scotchman added grimly, 'the man that would be watching ye would be attending to his own bizeness.'

"And,' said Andy confidentially, when he told me the tale on himself, 'I was moighty hard up at the time—right down on the bed rock—and it is just possible that I may have been monkeying with the cards a little.'"

"You bet yer!" cried Jake, from the store. "He'd play his hand for all there was in it, anyhow. Come to drink with him, it's just as well to keep the handle of the jug your side."

"He's another of them *I*-talians, ain't he?" inquired old Murray, with a wink.

"That's what he is, sure! By the way, Colonel, did you see Sam around Deming?"

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"Sam?—Sam Rider? Isn't he in the valley?"

"Not much! Sam got two months' wages ahead, so he cracked his whip, and went off on a bend."

"To blow in?"[13]

Jake laughed assent.

"I seen him," chimed in the teamster.

"Where?"

"Up at Silver."

"How was he making it?" asked Squito, with her back to us.

"About making 'a stand off,' I guess. I met him going along with his head down, like he was drunk. *We'd* been having 'a time,' and my keg was pretty full, too. But I seen him all the same. 'Come into the "Ranch," and have a drink, Sam,' says I. 'A drink goes,' says he. 'How do you come on?' says I. He said as he'd been gambling, and was two hundred dollars ahead of the town. He 'got there with both feet'[14] at starting, and was eight hundred ahead once. But he played it off at monté. 'Well,' says I, 'you're full now; you'd better go to bed, and not play again till you're sober.'

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"I believe I will,' he says.

"But later on Thin Pete told me that he was up at the 'Central,' gambling again. I went in and stood behind him, and looked on for a few minutes. There he was, sure enough, bucking at faro, and just a-sousing it to her red hot—betting only on the 'high card,' or 'high card, copped.'

"That's my kind,' says old Sam; 'you get "action" there every turn. No waiting for any durned cards to come up!' He's a high roller, by gum!—when he's got it."

"You bet your buttons!" murmured Squito proudly, "Sam'll 'stay with 'em' as long as he's got a check."[15]

"Bully for you, Squito!" cried Joe. "When it comes to gambling he's a thoroughbred; he puts it up[16] as if it was bad."

Squito laughed impulsively.

"They came near socking him in the cooler,[17] the other day," said the teamster.

"Is that so? What for?"

"Oh, I d'n' know!—he'd been singing the music to 'em. Sam's too broncho;[18] he gets all-fired mean[19] sometimes when he's full."

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"There ain't a drop of mean blood in him," denied Squito flatly.

The teamster shrugged his shoulders.

"Anyhow, Doc Gilpen the Marshal jumped him.[20] I was right there when they met. 'Sam,' he says, 'you've made one or two bad breaks since you've been in town. Next time you ring, I'm coming for you—and going to get you, too.' 'What's the matter with your getting me now?' asked Sam. And they both stood with their hands on their six-shooters—so—watching one another like strange Indians. 'I don't want you now.' 'Well, that'll be all right! You can find me whenever you do; and you'll find me heeled,[21] too, you bet your sweet life!' says Sam. For a minute or two they stood looking at one another, and then Doc 'pulled out.'[22] Right opposite Lindauer's store it was. I thought there was going to be a shooting, sure. And it wanted powerful little to set 'em going now, and don't you forget it!"

"Doc would get away with him," said Joe.

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"Would he!" ejaculated Squito hotly.

"Yes. He's got all Sam's sand,[23] and is cooler."

"That's what," coincided Jake. "I guess he's a shade quicker, too."

"There ain't a quicker than Sam this side o' Memphis," said Squito defiantly.

"Well, there'll be hell a-popping whenever they do come together, and it——"

"You bet there will!" exclaimed the girl, with blazing eyes. "And Doc Gilpen will get left right there."

The little tigress had ceased her work, and faced about to the company. She was evidently ready for anything. The boys glanced at her and "passed" good-naturedly.

"Talking about Doc, I have to laugh when I think of the last time that I was in Deming," said Joe. "One of these chaps from Texas come in there to paint the town,^[24] and got his tank full, and tried to ride his horse into the 'Cabinet.' Doc and I was taking a hand at stud-poker there when we heard him shouting outside: 'I'm a roaring, raging lion, I am! I'm a hell-tearing cyclone! I'm a pitch-fire, singeing, wild-cat terror from Texas!' And just about when he had got that off, Doc, who had pocketed his chips,^[25] and skinned out to get a front seat, knocked him off his horse with the butt-end of his six-shooter. 'What are you now?' he asked, as the chap picked himself up. 'I'll be —— to —— if I know,' he said. And you should have heard the boys laugh! I tell you, Deming is a bad little camp for a fellow to try and run a bluff in. You don't want to make any of those foolish plays there, or you'll be apt to find a contract on your hands that you ain't looking for."

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"That's what," assented Jake again. "If Doc or the Deputy^[26] ain't around, there's always some one on hand to shoot you in the belly if you need it."

Corn-meal mash and cream, antelope steaks, and bacon (known to the rancho as "sow-belly"), baked potatoes, corn cakes, "muffins," honey, coffee, and milk. Take your choice; it is all clean, and the best, of its kind, to be had. Perhaps you find it impossible to bring yourself to eat with "aw, cow servants you know," as certain young Englishmen, but newly come from college to New Mexico, and unpurged, as yet, of their old-world prejudices, found it not long ago. Then you can take advantage of the alternative which was offered to them—you can wait until the "aw, cow servants," and others, untroubled with your scruples, have finished. The title, "cow servants," so delighted the gentle "puncher," by the way, that it has become a standing quotation in New Mexico.

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I am far from advocating a style of hail-fellow-well-met familiarity betwixt master and servant. Here, as elsewhere, this naturally destroys the former's influence, and is neither necessary nor wise. But "gentlemen ranchers" are a greater mistake than even "gentlemen farmers," and the man who holds aloof from the society of his ranch hands "out West," and treats them as farm labourers are treated in Europe, commands only their begrudged service. They never have his interests at heart, but rather those of their own kin and kind on adjoining ranches. Any one who understands the full meaning of this—any one who knows how completely the option lies with the cow-puncher of working or not, of riding the range honestly or shirking the doing so, of learning to know the cattle on it and their habits, of "reading sign" in order to be acquainted with the movements of strays, of treating horses and cattle gently and well, or of failing in these duties—will appreciate the advantage of winning something more than unwilling labour from his men.

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Naturally, the society of ranch hands and their kind is not very refined or attractive. But the man in search of cultivated society should not engage in the cattle business. He who does do so will find it most profitable, and in the aggregate most comfortable, to live amongst his men. It is quite possible to mix freely with them, to talk and laugh with them, to treat them with as much real civility as would be bestowed upon an equal, without ever confusing your relative positions, or degenerating into a mutual condition of absolute familiarity. The cow-punchers know and like a gentleman. Many a time have I heard them allude to "Mr. This, or Colonel That," as "an elegant gentleman—a fine gentleman, sir, that's what he was! He always treated me well. But ——! he didn't stand no monkey-business, all the same." The cow-puncher is perfectly well aware that he himself is not a gentleman, and, so far from taking a liberty with his social superior, will invariably yield him place, if treated properly. But then the gentleman must make his rank felt by self-control, not endeavour to enforce the recognition of it by self-assertion.

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One thing may be noted here. A cattle-ranch is not, like a good mine or many another source of wealth, able to afford extravagant management. To a very large extent, the money made in cattle is money saved. Cattle-ranches will not always pay handsome dividends if called upon to support fancy managers, separate establishments for hands and master, tribes of servants, four-in-hands, trotters, good cellars and cooks, etc., etc. They may do this when cattle are "booming," but the fluctuations in the value of stock are enormous, and periods of depression recur at intervals, when even the economic rancho finds difficulty in making both ends meet.

Where were we, though? At supper! My progress will be representable by some such eccentric tracing of involved curves and turns, as Sterne used to illustrate his advance in "Tristram Shandy."

"Which of you boys shot this antelope?" inquired the Colonel, helping himself to a steak.

"Her," answered Joe laconically, nodding towards Squito.

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"Are you a good shot, Squito?" I asked.

"Well, I should rather say she was!" rejoined the Colonel, whilst the boys chuckled quietly. "She can knock the spots out of these boys at that game."

"That's what she can," assented Joe good-humouredly; "she can whip us the worst kind. She's

liable to whip a 'most any stranger that comes along, too," and he smiled significantly at me.

Rafaeleta, meanwhile, turned fresh steaks in the frying-pan, and paid no heed to the conversation.

"Where did you kill the antelope, Squito?" inquired Don Cabeza.

"Oh, pshaw!" she ejaculated indifferently.

"Well, where was it? We want to know, because——"

"In the big draw, back of Clanton's ciniky, then. Have another biscuit, Colonel?" And with her sleeves rolled up on her little muscular brown arms, she approached the table with the biscuit-tray in one hand, and a fork in the other.

"How far off were you from him?"

"Shan't answer any more questions," she said capriciously, but with hopeless decision. And seating herself at the head of the table, she appropriated Joe's muffin and Jake's teaspoon. "Joe, you can get another, and Jake, there's one in the cupboard." [Pg 153]

Supper over, Jake "washed up," whilst Joe took a lantern and went off to milk the cows (which grazed free during the day and came in at night to their penned-up calves). The rest of us retired to the adjoining room, and gathered round the blazing logs to talk "cattle" and their prospects. On such occasions Squito would nestle down on a log by the hearth, and, taking no part in the conversation, glance keenly from speaker to speaker, or gaze dreamily into the fire, rolling herself little Mexican cigarettes, in bits of maize-leaf, from time to time. Sometimes, during a lull in the conversation, she would hazard prettily, addressing either the Colonel or me: "Won't you tell us some more about them foreign lands?" When the boys, having finished their work, rejoined us, she generally slipped off silently to her own room.

FOOTNOTES:

[12] Cheeky.

[13] Spend his money.

[14] Was very successful.

[15] A counter.

[16] Spends money.

[17] Putting him in prison.

[18] Wild.

[19] Savage.

[20] Took him to task.

[21] Armed.

[22] Left.

[23] Pluck.

[24] Have a spree.

[25] Counters.

[26] Deputy Marshal.

CHAPTER IX. ANIMAS VALLEY.—III.

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It was still dark when Murray rose and looked outside, letting an eager rush of frosty air into the room that brought me back from heaven knows where I had strayed in dozing. Without—

"The dawn in russet mantle clad,
Peeped o'er the brow of yonder distant hill,"

—old Animas Peak, which loomed up indistinct and colourless in the distance. Everything was ghostly and still, even the breath of chill wind that crept almost noiselessly up the valley. Presently, like a great trumpet's blare, the calling of a far-off cow to its calf rang through the hollow silence. Swiftly the red ripples of sunrise broke on the gray sea of dawn. The spectral Animas issued from obscurity, clad regally in purple and a few plumes of silver mist; [Pg 155]

"The fair star that gems the glittering coronet of morn,"

in these latitudes, shrank back and paled out of sight.

"And like a lobster boiled, the morn
From black to red began to turn."

"Whist! it is cold!" we gasped, as we broke the ice in the pails of water that stood on a bench under the wall, and proceeded to wash as we might.

While breakfast was being prepared, I walked out on to the cienega to look for ducks. But one shot cleared the swamp, and returning to the house with a mallard, I fell in with Squito and Joe driving the band of cow-ponies into the corral. With a broad-brimmed, leather-banded cow-boy hat on, an old pair of cow-boy, high-heeled^[27] Wellington boots, a red canvas overcoat of old man Murray's, buckled in round her waist by her cartridge-belt (to which was now attached a genuine six-shooter), and her vivid little face nestled in its deep collar, the child was a quaint picture.

"Oh, pshaw!" she exclaimed, with a merry little laugh of malice, for she utterly refused to believe in a "Britisher," "you've 'done' got up, then! Joe, the man's up a'ready!" (She always called me "the man.") [Pg 156]

"Why not?" rejoined Joe, with a smile of greeting. "You ain't the on'y one that can get up mornings."

"Why, no! do you suppose that you have a monopoly of early hours?"

"Yes, yes, yes! That's what I do, exactly. The Colonel said th' other day, when I was wanting to be 'a capitalist,' that he'd give me all the gold that I could see in the valley at sunrise. You ain't got no sort o' right to come prospecting around now. I've 'denounced' it all—it's all mine, all mine." And she threw an arm out, and grasped at the sunny skies, laughingly. "'Sides" (mischievously), "ain't you one of these dudes as the Colonel brings down sometimes from El Paso and Silver, that wants kettles o' hot water to twelve o'clock? Oh, pshaw! we ain't got to joshing you yet! You wait till the boys and me puts up a job on you."

"Shucks! you think nobody ain't got no sagass but you," ejaculated Joe, as, launching her sauciest grimace at me, with a seat so sure and finished, that it was a treat to watch her, Squito shot off at a tangent on the broncho she was riding, with only a *hackamore* or headstall, to bring back a couple of ponies that were straying from the bunch. [Pg 157]

"Well, now, you boys," said Murray one morning after breakfast, "we want to keep on picking up the calves that ain't branded. Joe, you'd best ride in back of Cunningham's. Jake, you make a bend out towards the Peak, and the Double Adobes. I'll go in towards the Baker Place and Skeleton Cañon, there's two big calves runs in there somewhere that we missed at the round up. We've got to get up that band of mares that's running with Charles Dickens, and count 'em, one day this week, too."

"That's so," chimed in Squito; "I ain't got a colt at all in the corrals to 'gentle' now."

Squito, who was perfectly fearless, and unerring with the *lariat*, used to amuse herself during the day with 'halter-breaking' and 'gentling' the young colts as soon as they were weaned. In doing this she required but little assistance, and displayed judgment and patience only less remarkable than her skill.

"Well, we'll get you up one," said the old man. "What are you going to do to-day, Mr. Francis?" [Pg 158]

"I'll ride with you, Murray," I said.

Out in the horse corral there was a busy scene for the next few minutes, as each man lassoed his half-broken mount, and brought him to a standstill, snorting with fear, a quivering statue of flesh and streaming hair, and then led him to the saddling bench by the house. With a horse-hair *lariat* on her arm, the loop trailing from her shoulder, Squito looked on watchfully. But presently, taking compassion on my unskilful efforts, she whirled the rope twice round her head, enlarging the noose at the same time, and with the most perfect ease dropped it over the head of the "clay-bank" nag that I was endeavouring to catch. Almost simultaneously, she bent the other end of the lasso round one of the "snubbing" posts that stood about in the enclosure, and the "clay-bank" suddenly found himself captured. The Colonel, a martyr to rheumatism at the time, limped round meanwhile, chewing the end of a long cigar savagely, and swearing, not inaudibly, at the affliction which enforced his inaction.

Leaving the Gray Place, and turning our backs to the Peak, we headed for the Baker Place—some springs, about nine miles from the ranch, in the foot-hills of the San Simon range. [Pg 159]

"Wild music makes the wind on silver strings."

A fresh breeze blew, not forcibly, but coolly and merrily, forming, one could almost fancy, the song of the world, as it grappled light-heartedly with its day's work. In the pale blue, far-off sky the sun shone brightly, and translucent cloud formations, of delicate texture, floated out like woman's hair on the sea of light, crossed and recrossed by one another as they lay in transverse currents of air at different altitudes. In the clear sunny atmosphere of the New Mexican winter, everything looked near and shone vividly; distance seemed to magnify rather than reduce in size the well-conditioned cattle that our quick-stepping ponies bore us past. And as we rode, keeping a sharp look-out for unbranded calves, that had been dropped since the fall "round up," or had

then been overlooked, Murray (a one-idea man, whose heart and soul were wrapped up in cattle, and whose gods were the cattle-kings of California, "Dan Murphy, Haggin, Lux, and Miller, and them fellows,") held forth, as usual, on his favourite subject.

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"There's lots of things to look to in choosing a range," he said. "There's some ranges that you couldn't hold cattle on, not if you had a man to every head of stock. They won't stay there; they'll keep on straying away. The grass don't suit 'em, or the water don't taste right, or there ain't 'nough shelter, or something—you can't always tell what *is* the matter exactly. Fact is, you want good grass, and good water, and good shelter too, if you can get 'em. And you don't want your water all in one place either, or you'll soon find your grass at one end of the ranch and your water at the other; and when cattle have to travel eight or ten miles back and forth, they're going to be in pretty poor fix^[28] all the time. You want the water well distributed—a spring here, and a spring there, and a creek or a cienega somewheres else. When you've got that kind of a range, you won't have no trouble holding your stock, they'll stay right there. I could handle 20,000 head of cattle in this valley with eight men. To be sure, our stock is pretty well corralled here by the hills, but all the same they don't want to quit. There's ways out of the valley, and they'd find 'em sure 'nough if they did. Why! last round up, over in San Simon Valley, there was only one of our steers there, and that was one that got driven off with a bunch of strays which the San Simon boys was taking back.

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"It's a great thing to get a range that's isolated, and have your cattle by themselves. One thing is that you want your cattle gentle and in good condition, and when there's half-a-dozen bands mixed in together they don't get no peace; there's always some one in among 'em, 'cutting out' cattle, and running 'em round, and likely enough handling 'em, too, in a style you don't approve of. Another thing is that, when you're off by yourself, it encourages you to go to the expense of turning in good bulls, and grading up your stock, which you ain't nearly so liable to do if your cows and your neighbours' run in together.

"I'm all for grading up cattle. Look at it! Graded cattle are more valuable, ain't they? And they're gentler and easier to handle, so you work your capital at a less expense than if you run scrubs. Besides this, there's a larger percentage of increase to them than there is to scrubs. They always command a sale, and at a fair price too, even when cattle are way down in the market, like they are at present; and on a fair range they're always in condition. You can't never get these wild scrub cattle into condition anyhow; they run all the flesh off their bones. Why, some of these here black cattle from Mexico, if they see a cow-boy a mile off, will 'light out and run four miles; they graze at a lope, and water at full gallop.

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"Buy your stock right in this country, if you settle here; never mind if it costs you more. You may go away down into Texas or Mexico and buy scrubs cheaper; but see here, now! one of these graded yearlings will outweigh one of them two-year-olds. Then, again, this is by far the finest breeding-ground in the States; from eighty to ninety-five per cent. of the cows here will drop calves every season; the climate suits 'em. They're lucky if they get a forty per cent. increase up in Montana. When you bring cattle from a distance, too, some of 'em is sure to die on the road; and more'll die before they get wanted to the range; and no matter how fine a range you turn 'em on to, it'll take a long time for 'em to find their condition again after a change of country. Then very likely half the cows you bring from a distance ain't been served, and many of them as has calves loses 'em on the trail. In the long run you'll always find it pay to buy cattle that you know something about, and buy 'em pretty near home, too.

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"Spring's the best time to buy stock. Turn 'em on to your range when the grass is green and there's plenty of it; they get stuck on it^[29] then and stop there, you don't have no trouble locating 'em. But you bring 'em in in summer, when everything is burnt up, and they'll drift off a thousand miles; and if you bring 'em in in the fall, even if the grass has recovered a bit, they haven't time to pick up after the change before winter sets in. Not that that matters so much here, where the winter don't amount to anything; but there's places where it does; and if they struck a bad season then they'd die like flies.

"You want to look at everything in a business way. You don't keep a ranch for fun. You want the cattle that's easiest handled, and easiest sold, and that matures quickest and keeps in best condition. And you want to get the most work you can out of your horses, and to place your men on the outside of your range so that all their riding tells, and they cover the greatest possible stretch of country. And you want to work your stock slowly. Don't you never have none of these hell-tearing rustlers from Texas on your ranch, if you get one. It don't pay to have fellows blazing off their revolvers, and stampeding the cattle, and spurring their horses on the shoulders, and always going on a lope, and driving cattle at a lope too, and lassing steers by the fore-feet on the trail, and throwing 'em head over heels, just for the satisfaction of hearing the thud they make when they fall. That kind of monkey business is played out! There ain't no object in wearing out your horses and giving 'em raw backs; and as to cattle, if you want 'em in good condition—that is, so any one will buy 'em—you never should let 'em out of a walk. You run a steer a mile or so, and lass and throw him for fun, and the flesh he loses afterwards would hardly be credited. Well, that's so much money out of your pocket, if you want to sell him. And you have a horse with a sore back for a month or two, and you can reckon that loss in money, too. Work stock slowly, and save your horses when you can, that's all there is to it, if you want to make money ranching."

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Murray would ramble on like this by the hour, seldom repeating himself. Many were the rides we took together, but never returned from one without his having broached a fresh chapter on the habits and management of cattle. It is useless to retail these dissertations, however; such

information is only used when gathered by experience—fortunately the case with all useful knowledge, or by this time the world would have grown wise and infinitely dull.

We had ridden over a good stretch of country in the direction of the Baker Place (the old man occasionally marking down an unbranded calf, to be picked up on our return), when we became aware of a few white dots amongst some live-oak, on the edge of a slope which led down into a large draw. "Antelope!" I ejaculated. Murray nodded silently. We had reined in our ponies on some rising ground, the summit of which we had scarcely attained. The game was about a mile off.

"We'd best get back, and get around to them by that ridge," said my companion, withdrawing the extinct pipe he was sucking at, and pointing to the left. Retiring slowly, until all but our heads were concealed, we watched the band feeding for a little. It is always interesting to observe the movements, even of the commonest of wild animals, and, notwithstanding the distance which separated us from these, so clear was the air that, as soon as the eye became focussed to the range, they were easily distinguishable. After vacillating for some time, they finally all disappeared into the draw.

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The direction of the wind and the nature of the country rendered it necessary to approach them from the side on which we already were—the opposite side of the draw to that on which we had first seen them. We cantered towards the nearest tributary of it, therefore, and entering it, drew as close to the game as we were able to do on horseback. Leaving the ponies then with Murray, I proceeded on foot with a little Morse carbine that I had with me. I found that the antelope had made but little progress, and were about five hundred yards off, feeding at the foot of the further slope. The intervening ground afforded no cover, and was perfectly flat; the dried course of a little stream, which found its way down from the mountains in the rainy season, ran near me, however, and, having gained this, I succeeded in crawling a hundred and fifty yards nearer to the band without having attracted notice. Then, since it was impossible to diminish the distance, I cautiously raised the 45.70, took a full three hundred yards sight, and dropped the best shot that offered. As the rest turned and fled up-hill, I risked a shot at their leader, and killed him also. They were both hit fairly behind the shoulder, and were dead before reached. Unfortunately, I can by no means lay claim to this as being my usual form with the rifle. Very far from it.

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We gralloched the carcasses, and having divided and packed one behind our saddles, hung the other on a live-oak to be fetched by the soldiers from the neighbouring camp. A little further on we found one of the two big calves that Murray was in search of, and taking this, with its mother, as the nucleus of our band, turned back, and drove them slowly towards the Clanton cienega, gathering, *en route*, all those that we had marked down as we came out. At the cienega we left them unherded, whilst we went into the Gray Place to lunch, there being no fear, since it was mid-day, of their quitting the water until we wanted them for branding.

The boys had also brought in a few calves, and immediately after lunch, we sallied forth on fresh ponies to drive our joint capture into the corral. For this task, I had been furnished with a trained "cutting" pony, reported to be one of the best in the valley, and well did he sustain his reputation. It was only necessary, after having shown him a cow or a calf getting away from the herd, to give him his head, and at full speed he started for it immediately. Needless to guide him. Wholly uninfluenced, he would check and counter-check in mid-career each break of the truant's with stops and turns so sudden, that once a pocket-book and some letters were jolted clean out of an outside breast-pocket in my coat, and fell a yard or two clear of where my mount had stopped. The cattle were soon penned, and, dismounting, we entered the corral on foot.

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About a baker's dozen of cows and calves were collected. One of the former was what is termed a "hooking" cow, and to escape her repeated charges tested all our agility, and afforded considerable amusement to Don Cabeza, who sat upon the top rail of the corral, smoking, and exercising his wit at our expense.

The brands were heated in a small wood fire, and a calf being lassoed and thrown, if necessary it was also hog-tied, or had fore and hind legs crossed and bound with a few turns of the lariat. The tip of the right ear was then squared off, the left ear split, the calf was dewlapped (or had the outer edge of the loose skin of the throat cut, so as to leave pendent a small rope of flesh, an inch in diameter, and four or five inches long), and finally the diamond A was branded on its hip. To cleanse the iron before making a fresh application of it, it was dipped in a pan of grease.

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The foregoing marks may appear cruel, and, some of them, superfluous. In reality, however, they seemed to cause but little pain. And in a country where cattle run free, and the brands are endless in variety, it is of the utmost importance to avoid the possibility of mistakes, or of any criminal alteration of the marks by which herds are distinguished. *A propos* of marks, the Colonel, of course, had a happy instance to quote.

The boys had just released the last calf, and we were about to turn the lot out, when something was said which caused the Don to refer to the tale, and we gathered round where he was perched on the rails, the blue sky behind him, his hat thrust back, his beard grasped affectionately in one hand, the stump of a cigar between the fingers of the other, and a smile of delicious knowingness and good humour lighting up his handsome phiz.

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"Ear-marks! Did I never tell you that? No? Well, away back in my old State, at a little place on the Shenang River, there was an old fellow called Joshua Welch. His neighbours used to say that he stole their hogs. Maybe he did; maybe he didn't. Joshua is dead long ago, anyhow—for all we

know he may be squinting through his trumpet at us, right now—and I shouldn't like to say of any gentleman cherub that once on a time he stole hogs. Most of the folks kept hogs where he lived, and some used one mark, some another; some squared the right ear, some the left. Old Joshua always seemed to be in doubt about his mark; he used all kinds, and claimed 'most anything that came his way. So one day they went to him. There was hell a-popping! One fellow said he had roped in a sow with the left ear off, belonging to *him*; and another fellow said that he had got a young boar with the right ear off, belonging to *him*. So they went to him—madder than hell they were, too—and the spokesman said:

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"Now, Mr. Welch, we just want to know, once for all, what your ear-mark is? Which ear *do* you crop, anyhow?"

"Ear-mark?" said old Joshua; 'ear-mark? Why, that's clear enough. Ear off next the river—that's my mark."

In the way of altering brands there is comparatively but little mischief done in these days. Stock associations, and the like, have almost put an end to such trespasses. The ranchero who does not get his own calves now, or who loses his cattle, has only himself, and a carelessness or ignorance that absolutely offers a premium for theft, to thank for it. An old cow-puncher that I met in Washington Territory, regretted this new order of things very feelingly to me once, over our second cocktail.

"These ain't no sort of times to go to raising cattle down Texas way," he said indignantly. "No, sir; don't you try it—not now they've got all their associations, and conventions, and mutual-protection schemes, and all that monkey business. Why, I've known the time when, if you started me in business with one steer, and the proper kind of branding-iron, I could have raised quite a nice bunch of cattle in a twelvemonth. Half the 'draw'[30] was worth something those times! Nowadays you don't dare to clap a brand on a mavorick[31] even; and if they catch you *altering* a brand—hell! that's a penitentiary job. The cattle business ain't what it was; and any one who expects to make 'a raise' in it now, in any sort o' reasonable time, is going to get pretty badly left, and don't you forget it. I know what I'm talking about! Why, Lord! I tailed cattle across the plains from Missouri to California away back—way back! I was in California in '47—when it was a cattle country, mind; when you could sit on your horse, and tie the wild oats together across the pommel of your saddle. I was in 'Frisco in '49 and spring of '50. Yes, sir" (with a semi-defiant air), "that's what I was. I can remember, just like yesterday, when the water used to come up on Montgomery Street. Those times, when people had money they spent it; they let it roll! There wasn't none of this small-minded scraping, and shaving, and adding up, and keeping tally. Them as'd got it paid, and them as hadn't didn't, and that's all there was to it; and if anybody said anything ugly about it, you just blowed the top of his head off, and set up the drinks, and there was an end of him. As to these here Californians that's come out since then, they're a tin-horn lot compared—half Jew, half Chinaman; on'y fit to take their pleasure in a one-horse hearse. Why, I remember—Are you acquainted in 'Frisco, sir?" he asked, pausing in mid-career prudently.

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As I had heard this kind of thing numberless times before, I intimated that I was so, and also that I knew several old-timers.

"Ah! fine city! fine city!—compared, that is," he said approvingly. "But as to this here cattle business, that's played out. *I've* quit."

Evidently, in his own mind, this set a seal on the decadence of cattle-ranching.

"What are you doing now?" I inquired.

"Well—well—I'm just prospecting around—looking at the country. I've got two or three schemes on hand; there's big money—big money in 'em—millions, if they're worked properly! But it'll take a little capital to start 'em. Now, if you want a really good investment, you're in luck. Me and my partner's got a mine, that—," etc., etc.

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Many scores of these philanthropists, who have spent their lives in looking for men to enrich, whilst anxious only "to make a small wad" for themselves, have I encountered! Many a time have I let "the boss mine," or "the boss ranch," slip through my fingers! Such men always take it for granted that an Englishman is a "sucker." It is as well to foster the belief, for the amusement of hearing them ingenuously unfold their magnificent schemes. Besides which, as a matter of policy it is unwise to endeavour to seem too smart when in quest of information, for a fool is allowed to see more in an hour than one who is credited with ordinary sense will discover in twelve months.

FOOTNOTES:

[27] It is an odd thing that cow-boys, particularly Texans, will wear, if they can get them, boots with heels that would look ridiculous even on a Parisian *cocotte*.

[28] Condition.

[29] Fond of it.

[30] The cattle that an employé could steal for his master.

[31] An unbranded motherless calf.

CHAPTER X. ANIMAS VALLEY.—IV.

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"We have *got* to go to the Double Adobes anyhow, so why not go to-day?" I said, after breakfast, as I stood at the door of the Gray Place.

"Why not?" observed the Don. "If we *can* only get well started before night—which doesn't seem likely, at the rate you fellows stand still—we shall very likely manage to get soaked through, and have to camp on the plain in wet clothes, by the look of the sky over there."

"That'll be all right; I am not frightened at a little rain," said I, laughing.

"That settles it, then," rejoined the Colonel. "We shall have to go now, whether or no. This Englishman can't bluff us worth a cent. Murray! tell the boys not to turn the little black mules out to grass; and I guess you'd better come over with us, and see how old Tommy is fixing up that new spring he found back of Pigpen's place."

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It was about sixteen miles to the Double Adobes ranch, and since, after all, it did not rain on our way thither, the drive was very enjoyable. The Colonel's rheumatism being somewhat better, he was in great spirits, and told a score of good tales as we went along, only one of which recurs to me at the present moment. That one, however, I will jot down at once lest it be forgotten also.

"Well," said Don Cabeza, something having given him his cue, "a lot of youngsters were collected, one Sunday afternoon, round a badger hole in which there was a mighty obstinate old badger—one of these old toughs that you could knock sparks out of with a hammer. Anyhow, the young sports had put all their swell imported terriers in to him, and the old badger had come out on top every time—at least, he hadn't 'come out' on top, because he hadn't come out at all; but when he and the dogs got to chewing one another underground, he appeared to have away ahead the finest appetite. It seemed he had enough patterns of hide down there for old Ma'am Badger to make a crazy quilt of; and the boys were just about to quit when a chap who was standing by looking on said, kind o' sadly:

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"I guess, misters, that my old dog 'd fetch that badger out for you—if you want him out, that is.'

"The stranger was one of these plank-shaped citizens, with shiny hair, like sea-weed; he was a coffee-coloured cuss, and looked as melancholy as a sick monkey. His clothes might have been entailed clothes, in which the family had lived for centuries; and the mongrel was about as nearly like his master as a dog could be. Well, sir, the young bucks took a look at them both, and the more they looked, the more they laughed. The notion that *that* cur could beat all their finely-bred, imported terriers, just tickled them to death; and first one, and then another, and finally the whole boiling of them offered to bet twenty, thirty, forty to one against him—anything the owner liked, in fact. But they couldn't bluff the old man off; he stayed with them; he seemed to have more money along, too, than you'd expect to find in such old clothes. And the more the boys kept sousing it to him, the more he kept taking 'em, till finally they quit. And when the bets were all laid out on a big stone, there was more money there than would patch hell a mile!

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"Well, they stood around to see the fun. It was pretty clear that some one was going to fall awful sick before the deal was over. However, the visitor didn't seem like he thought that it was going to be he. He picked the mongrel up and stroked him tenderly, and the old dog winced a little mite too, as if he could see a chapter or so ahead of him. 'Put him in,' said the boys, 'put him in!' 'Right now, gentlemen,' said the stranger, and stooping down he prized him gently into the earth—*stern first*. Well, sir, you should have heard those boys laugh when they saw that. Laugh? Well, I should say they did laugh. For a minute or two the old dog lay there with his head out of doors—one eye fixed reproachfully on his master, the other cocked anxiously backwards. Then, all of a sudden there was a terrific yelp, and a cloud of dust, and he shot out of the hole with the badger fastened on to him. And for the life of you, you couldn't have told which looked the most foolish—the young sports, or the old badger. As for the stranger, he raked in the bets, and when he'd got a little way off, he turned around as if he'd forgotten something, and says he, mournfully: 'Boys—Misters, I'm from Pecos county, Texas. I'm on'y a schoolteacher thar, but they all know me. Shuf's my name—Eb'neezer Shuf—ask for "Joyful" Shuf.'

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"'We're coming to call to-morrow,' said the boys."

The Double Adobes, one of the four occupied ranch houses in the valley, was prettily situated at the base of the Peak, and near the mouth of a gorge that penetrated the Animas range. During the rainy season a considerable stream threaded this pass, but at the present time its bed was dry. A number of cotton-wood trees dotted its banks, and surrounded some neighbouring springs; and, beneath their shade, hundreds of cattle that had come in to water at the latter, were standing, in a condition of complete oblivion, drowsily switching their flanks, licking the boulders of rock-salt which had been placed there for their use, or lying on the cool earth, chewing the cud, in dreamy idleness.

In the shade of a giant cotton-wood (whose trunk bore the carved initials of more than one well-known "rustler" who had since passed in his checks), stood the little mud-coloured hut, dignified by the title of ranch house. To the right of it was a circular corral, stoutly constructed of juniper posts; to the left of it, a rail, furnished with pegs, to which the bridles of nags in waiting might be linked; and, not far off, lay a pile of dead fire-wood from the hills. A gleaming axe-head stuck in the chopping log, and in the carpet of dry chips around it were stretched two large mongrels, red

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and white respectively in colour, but totally indistinguishable in type. The brilliant sunlight of the winter's noon fell on the cabin—dingy, flat-topped, and unlovely, and probably accentuated all its bad points. On a bench outside the door was a tin basin and some soap; hard by stood a tin pail. If you care to remove the dust from your hands and face after the drive, there are the springs—fenced in there by split posts! Take the pail down, old chap, and fetch yourself some water. To wait upon yourself is good for you, they say; at any rate, it is a little compliment that nearly everybody pays himself in this country, and certain it is that constant advantages are to be derived from the practice which are not obtainable in any other way.

As the Double Adobes is a rather typical ranch cabin of the smaller class, it will be as well, perhaps, to describe it. Adobes, of course, are unbaked bricks, for the manufacture of which the bottom earth of the country is peculiarly adapted. They are generally made about 6 x 14 x 24 inches. A space having been marked out for three rooms of about 18 x 16 feet, to compose the present house, the two end rooms had been completed, the space between them being left open, save inasmuch as it was covered in by the roof which ran from end to end of the whole building. The two rooms had originally opened into the *portière* in the centre, but the entrance to the one which was inhabited had since been changed to the front of the house. The roof was flat and consisted of brush-wood covered with mud, and supported by pine *vigas*. As only two men were living here, they occupied one room, and kept their stores in the other.

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Come inside;—there is no one here; both the boys are out. Yes, judging from those poker drawings on the door, artistic talent *is* at a low ebb; but, until lately, it has been accounted of more importance in this country to draw a straight bead than a straight line. Loop-holed! Well, the men who built this place expected occasionally to have to "stand off" irate Mexicans who had followed stolen stock into the valley, and, even now, it is impossible to say with certainty that a band of skulking Apaches will not turn up in its vicinity to-morrow. There is one small window through which light may be admitted; but, as a rule, the shutter is closed, and the cabin illuminated through the open door. The floor is of beaten clay, and the wide, open fireplace is built in one corner of the room. A pile of logs, some brush-wood, and a broken-handled axe lie near it. On the hearth are some dog-irons, the ashes of the breakfast fire, and a Dutch-oven. The walls in this corner are decorated with frying-pans, and other cooking utensils, all scrupulously clean, be it observed.^[32] "And," as old Herrick says:

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"... to your more bewitching, see the proud,
Plumpe bed beare up, a-swelling like a cloud."

In opposite corners of the room are two roughly-carpentered frame bedsteads, in which a lacing of raw-hide stripes supplies the place of laths and mattresses, a few blankets constitute the bedding, and folded great-coats serve for the pillows. In the fourth corner is the table, covered with burnt tracings of brands, but beautifully clean, for it is washed every day. Hard by is a sack of flour, near it hang a side of bacon and the hind-quarters of an antelope, and on the neighbouring shelves are a few tins of canned tomatoes, some plates and cups, and a coffeepot, etc. Canvas garments, leather overalls, old boots, old saddles, carbines, old carbine and revolver scabbards, a spade, and innumerable odds and ends lie about in a very wreck of order. If the gentle housewife ruled here, they would all be tucked away under the bed, to moulder with other accumulations of litter and dirt. Here and there, about the room, stand upright posts affording extra support to the roof. And to these are nailed a few horns of antelope, black or white-tail deer, from which cartridge-belts, *lariats*, bridles, *hackamores*, quirts, spurs, and an old canteen depend. The bowl of a briar-root pipe is stuck on the end of one prong, a newspaper is transfixed on another, and an empty whisky-bottle sticks, bottom upwards, on a third. A three-legged stool, a crippled chair, and a couple of empty grocery boxes, standing on end, complete the furniture.

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We took possession of the premises, and proceeded to get lunch. But before we had finished doing so, "old Tommy" appeared in the doorway, pipe in hand, and feeling for a match. I know not why it should have been so, but Tommy always seemed to me to be pressing the last of a load of tobacco into the bowl of his dilapidated old pipe, with the forefinger of one hand, whilst, with the other hand, he felt somewhere about in the band of his canvas pants, probably in a watch-pocket there, for a match.

Here and there I have met many a gnarled old limb of humanity, but he was the driest that I ever encountered—"as dry as the remainder biscuit, after a voyage." Mummy dust would have been something of refreshing moisture by comparison with his nature. Tommy—what his surname may have been, it never occurred to me to wonder until this moment—Tommy was a sort of odd man in the valley. He repaired houses, corrals, or anything that required repairing, cleaned out the springs, dug troughs, or turned his hand to anything. He was about five feet four or five inches in height, spare of build, and as "wrinkles, the d—d democrats, won't flatter," his brown-crusty physiognomy showed him to be on the high road to sixty, if not already there. There was not very much of him, but what there was, was tough and of good material; he was a "worker;" he bore his years lightly, and liked nothing better than to get into a circle of young cow-punchers, and chin and josh^[33] with them in his funereal fashion, as though he were their contemporary. And the boys liked old Tommy, too—all those, that is, who were worth anything. For the loafer and the braggart he "had no use," and, sooner or later, his acid tongue would be sure to embalm such an one's tendency or foible in some crisp epigram, or clinging irony.

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No one in the neighbourhood, but he himself, knew the history of his past life. He claimed to be a Southerner, and it pleased him to say that, away back in some Southern State, he owned a small but prosperous farm, a good house, a beautiful wife, and all that the heart of man could desire. It

appeared, however, that, during the war between North and South, he had joined the Southern army, and in the second day's fighting in the Wilderness had been wounded. He recovered sufficiently to return home, but he was no longer the man he had been. His wife, impatient of having a permanent, though only partial, invalid about the place, became estranged from him, and finally Tommy, having induced a robust young neighbour to undertake the management of the farm on half profits, with touching resignation had sallied forth alone into the great West world to reconstruct his fortune. Time had deprived his misfortunes of their sting, he said; and if he now told the tale of it with less emotion than had been the case formerly, this deficiency was compensated for in effect, by the artistic modesty, resulting from long practice, with which he threw out, and reluctantly allowed a veiled hint to be developed by the curious questioner into the whole history. Successively he had excited the sympathy of all the ranch wives in the country, by enlarging upon this sad immolation of connubial felicity on the altar of patriotism.

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Tommy's sole possession was a donkey—a *burro*, I should say (for, amongst the many Spanish words that have become naturalised in New Mexico, *burro* is one of the most universally adopted). And a magnificent *burro* he was, too—the finest and fattest that I ever saw. Sancho Panza and Dapple were not gifted with greater individuality than were Tommy and "John L. Sullivan." Numerous and tempting though the offers were that were made for him, they were always scornfully rejected, for, as the somewhat sarcastic owner would often ask:—What would it profit him if he gained the whole world, and lost the society of his *burro*? *Burro* and master were bosom friends. In moments when the relations between them were most strained, when they differed in intention almost to the point of open rupture, Tommy would only ask sorrowfully whether it were the perverse John's desire to force him to sell him for a riding horse to a New York dude. But such little family breezes were hushed up, and, as a rule, the spirit which marked their intercourse was sweet and calm.

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Long and serious were the confabulations which these two held together. In all the news of the day, local, foreign, personal, or political, Tommy religiously kept the ass posted, and gravely consulted with him about it. He was wont to remark that, were every man as fortunate in his counsellor as he was, the affairs of the world would be much better managed than they were.

I am uncertain what the *burro*'s politics were; some of the boys asserted that he was a Mugwump; whatever he may have been nominally, however, party ties sat lightly on him, and his decisions were extremely independent. I often regretted, when I heard his commanding voice away off on the hillside, that a debater and orator so admirably fitted to lead in our own House of Commons at that time (1885) should be lost to the Ministerial benches. It was, indeed, a sad case that one who "could have given the odds of two brays to the greatest and most skilful brayer in the world, for his tones were rich, his time correct, his notes well sustained, and his cadences abrupt and beautiful," should have been born to waste his persuasive voice on the desert air.

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Major Tupper was quartered once at the Cloverdale ranch when "John L. Sullivan" and his master were there; and one evening whilst we were at supper, Tommy entered, looking graver than usual, if possible.

"I've just been talking to John, Major," he observed.

"Oh! and what does the *burro* say, Tommy?"

"He's awful scared that this Indian war's going to end."

"It don't matter much to him anyway."

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"Oh, yes, it does," drawled Tommy, in his slowest and gravest fashion. "Oh, yes—John knows better'n that. Just as soon as Geronimo^[34] comes in, he knows that he'll lose his corn and have to go to chewing grass for a living, along of the cows. Of course as long as your pack-train is here, he can go down to the picket line whenever the bugle sounds for 'stables,' kick the padding out of one of your mules, and eat up his feed."

"Can he? Well, if he can kick anything out of a Government mule, he's a daisy *burro*, and he's welcome to all he makes by it; he can keep any change he gets, too."

Nevertheless, this was a fact. No sooner were "stables" over and the mules fed, than "John L. Sullivan" swaggered down the front of the picket line, selected a helping of maize, turned round, backed a little towards the owner of it, measuring his distance carefully, and landed him a tremendous double savat on his nose. He continued to kick until the neighbouring mules formed an orderly though envious and admiring congregation, ranged in a semicircle, straining at their halters, around him. Then having described, as a *tour de force*, a few unusually surprising and altogether inimitable hieroglyphics with his heels in the air in a spirit not entirely free, it must be admitted, from ostentation, he would proceed peaceably to appropriate the spoils of war. Well might his owner be proud of him! "John L. Sullivan" was indeed "the boss!"

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One day Tommy visited the farrier's quarters in camp, and intimating that he wanted the *burro* shod, sought through the contents of box after box of shoes there. Unable apparently to find what he required, he was leaving in silence, when the farrier commented on his departure, and regretted that his search had been unsuccessful.

"Oh, it's all right, Mr. Gorham," he said politely, "it doesn't matter; I thought you'd got some *silver* shoes, perhaps."

Witman and Johns, two of the hands, reflected disparagingly once on the quantity of work that

Tommy had done lately.

"Well," rejoined Tommy, in his most deliberate tone, addressing the rest of the company, "there's Jim Witman here; of course I don't give up so much of my leisure to work as he does, that ain't to be expected; and there's Oliver Johns, I don't claim to direct others how to do my work for me as well as he does either. But then, in the first place, my business ain't sitting under a stoop chewing other people's baccy; and in the second, I don't want to get away and shoot off my mouth at every gal, with a head like a pisened pup, that lives within fifty miles of the valley, so there ain't any necessity for any one to do my work."

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In the adjoining valley dwelt a man named Donohoe, who had the reputation of always professing to know better than anybody else how anything should be done. How far he was justified in his professions I cannot pretend to say. Tommy knew and disliked Mr. Donohoe. He had put the finishing touch one day to a spring that he had been cleaning out, stone-lining, and fencing round, and was gathering up the tools that he had been using for this purpose. "And now," he remarked in the most matter-of-fact way possible, "I think I'll just ride the *burro* over into the Plyas Valley, and tell Mr. Donohoe what I've been doing, and ask him if I've done it right."

I am sorry that, of the many really good things said by this interesting old gentleman which were current in the valley, the foregoing feeble specimens are all (of a publishable nature) that I can now recall to mind. They will serve, however, to indicate the vein in which he ingratiated himself with his public. He exercised considerable freedom of speech; but then he was known to carry "a long crooked knife" about him somewhere, and was credited with plenty of nerve and a very hot temper.

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We spent a couple of days at the Double Adobes ranch, inspected the new spring that Tommy had discovered, hunted a little in the hills round the base of old Animas Peak, rode over a good deal of the Pigpen and Double Adobes range, and finally returned to the Gray Place.

FOOTNOTES:

[32] To find a really filthy ranch house, to see really filthy cooking and eating services, to have real garbage placed before you to eat, you must seek amongst establishments presided over by women.

[33] Chat and joke.

[34] The Apache leader.

CHAPTER XI. ANIMAS VALLEY.—V.

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At the Gray Place we found Lieut. Huse, who had come up from the supply camp at Lang's; and as he was returning on the following day, and we had decided sooner or later to go there also, we drove down together. Eighteen miles in the teeth of a wind that would have driven an old Dutch lightship, with only a jury-mast and a small flag set, at the rate of fifteen knots an hour. How it came roaring up the funnel of that valley out of the very heart of the great, mysterious Sierra Madre—steadily, obstinately, unyieldingly!

About eight miles before the Lang ranch was reached, and at the broadest point in the valley, we crossed a very curious dyke, or levee. Leaving the foot-hills, it stretched across to the valley plain, in a direct line, for about seven or eight miles, turned then at right angles, and ran straight down the valley for about ten miles, and with another bend at right angles rejoined the foot-hills. The space thus enclosed was perfectly flat, and lay slightly higher than the outside plain. At its base the levee was about 120 ft. broad, diminishing at the top to thirty or forty, which was raised about twenty-five above the surrounding levels. These dimensions were maintained throughout with perfect regularity, save at one point (in the south-western corner), where a small gap destroyed the completeness of the lines. The labour expended in its construction must have been enormous; and since it is hardly likely to have been built for defence (natural positions of so much greater strength abounding in the neighbourhood), and there is no reason to suppose that it was meant to exclude water, what was the object of it? Possibly it was intended to *hold* water. Springs still exist within its boundaries, although, at the present date, they are comparatively insignificant. About eight miles off, in the Cojon Bonita, there are some warm springs at which a permanent stream takes its rise, however, and centres of aqueous, like centres of volcanic activity, are liable, I presume, to change. Many Aztec works of the kind mentioned occur in Mexico, although this, I believe, is of unusual magnitude. So far as I know, no satisfactory hypothesis has yet been started to account for the object of these enclosures.

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It is certain that, at no very distant date, the whole of the territory now comprising Northern Mexico, New Mexico, and Arizona was thickly populated. The site of an Aztec village remains not far from the levee (at the Cloverdale ranch, in the south-western corner of the valley), where fragments of pottery are often found; and in digging a water-trench there not long since, the workmen discovered a large quantity of buried maize, which was black and partially petrified. But traces of a vanished population are found in all directions in the districts mentioned, and a

curious question arises in connection with such evidence: How did these people live? Under existing circumstances the country referred to could not support a large population. The rainfall is not great enough to permit of crops being raised in the ordinary way, and the area of land suitable for irrigation is very limited. Can it have been that formerly the climate was not what it is at present, and that the scarcity of rain is a deprivation of recent date? I believe it is claimed, and the claim substantiated by statistics, that, in proportion as population rolls out and settles on the western prairies, the rain-belt extends in that direction also. Something of this sort may have been the case here.

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The influence of population indirectly on climate would be a curious study. In parts of Oregon it was frequently asserted in my hearing that the late spring frosts which once prevented fruit-growing there, had notably decreased since the country had been settled up, vanishing in some instances altogether. Amongst other extraordinary phenomena, bearing a relation to this subject possibly, is the fact that the agues and fevers prevalent on the Hudson River in early times, disappeared for a long while entirely, but within the last fifteen years have returned, and in places are now more common than ever.

But from Animas Valley to the Hudson River is a "far cry!" Where were we? No matter! Here we are at any rate, on the top of the levee, in a cloud of dust, the wind unabated, and the off-side horse (a good worker, but of uncertain temper) jibbing—jibbing as, fortunately, horses only do jib where the performance can be properly described without hurting anybody's sensibilities. For half-an-hour, exposed on this monument of Aztec industry, we were fully occupied in a battle royal with this monument of equine obstinacy. But without result, until, finally, having exhausted every other expedient, we bent a picket-rope round his fore-legs, and by sawing the inside of them vigorously with it succeeded in starting him again.

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À propos, the very spot at which we crossed the dyke was the scene, a few months later, of a peculiarly cold-blooded murder. The proprietor of a canteen at the Lang camp was proceeding on horseback to Separ, when four of his familiars (camp loafers and gamblers), who lay in wait for him behind the dyke, rode down towards him as he approached and "held him up," *i.e.*, covered him with their six-shooters, and made him throw up his hands. He had about six hundred dollars with him, which he begged them to take without murdering him. But, notwithstanding this, and whilst he was in this defenceless position, one of them shot him through the side, the bullet traversing his pocket-book and marking the corner of each note. They took his money, and he having entreated them in his agony "to finish him," one of them shot him through the head. In this condition he lived until a teamster carried him into camp, and although too exhausted to say much, he was able to furnish the names of his murderers. They were all men that he had more or less assisted, but it transpired subsequently that he had expected them to make an attempt on his life. The gang divided and fled to Mexico, where they reunited, and one of them winning at poker the whole of the sum they had taken, was shot by his companions. One was captured and brought back to the States; one was shot soon afterwards in a horse-stealing scrape; and the fourth was still at large when I left the neighbourhood.

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No one was sorry when the drive was over, and having knocked some of the dust off our clothes, we walked up from the ranch house to the camp, where we found a hearty and hospitable welcome in Huse's shanty.

Comfortable chairs! and newspapers! and blanket carpeting! a fire-place, mantelpiece, looking-glass, pipe-rack, shelf of poets and novels, and, what! an Irish setter!—a well-bred one too! It was like meeting a friend from the old country to find that handsome red muzzle resting on one's knee.

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"Halls of Montezuma!" ejaculated the Colonel in a reverential voice, as he took a seat and glanced round him, in the little adobe room, with its canvas roof and red calico decorations. "I have seen the Escorial, and Versailles, and the Vatican, and the Dolme Bagtche, and Windsor Castle, and lots of those little dug-outs 'over there,' but I'll be darned if this establishment of yours, Huse, don't knock any one of them gallywest!—gallywest, sir, that's what it does! It just dumps the filling out them!"

"Well, I'm lucky in my servant, Colonel. He was in the German army—servant to some big dog on the staff—and the consequence is that he knows a thing or two. He is an A 1 cook, and a good forager, and—in fact, this sort of thing is play to him after the discipline over there. This red rag and silver paper business, the pictures, and all that, *he* did. He fixed up that mantelpiece with the red calico border—goodness knows where he got it from! The silver paper and leadfoil come off packets of tea and tobacco. Those silver candlesticks look gorgeous, don't they?"

"Well, I should smile!" rejoined the Colonel admiringly. "He's a dandy in his business, that chap, and his business is fixing things. Huse, if the *señoritas* in the sister republic only knew what it was like here, how they would come and camp with you! They'd come over the border on *burros*, and in *carawakis*, and ambulances, and waggons, and—and pack-trains of them, and—and—and all their families would be along, too. *They* always come, to be 'brothers,' and '*amigos*,' and so forth; and—and they'd stay right with you, and love you. Yes, sir, I suppose there'd be no end to the love that you would have—no end to it at all."

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"All right, Colonel, let them come," replied Huse laughingly, as he stood mixing *mascal* toddies on the hearth; "let them come. You won't mind if we kill one of your fat steers now and then to feast them with, I suppose?"

"It would make them sick, Huse," said the Colonel, with some solicitude. "Animas beef would be too rich for their blood. Antelope would be better for them—antelope and jack-rabbit, with a few of Uncle Sam's canned tomatoes now and then."

The camp being a fixture, its inhabitants had had an opportunity of displaying their architectural ingenuity, and the variety of dwellings there was curious, comprising log-huts, semi-subterranean dug-outs covered in by tents, and every kind of adobe building, in every stage of development, from a mere fire-place extension to a complete house with a mud and brushwood roof.

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During my stay here, I rode out one day with Huse to a spot, about nine or ten miles off, where Lieut. Day with a troop of cavalry and a hundred Indian scouts were encamped. And here, perhaps, it will be as well to notice more particularly the Indian war, which occasioned the presence of the troops so frequently referred to.

Several months before the dates concerned in these chapters, a band of Chiricaua Apaches had broken out of the San Carlos reservation, and made good their escape into the Sierra Madre. Joined here by Apaches of other tribes, and by a few renegade Navajos from Arizona, they had divided their forces, and roving, or rather sneaking, through the border States of Mexico and the United States, in small bands, had murdered soldiers, rancheros, and travellers, American or Mexican, with perfect impartiality. Their favourite haunts were in Sonora and New Mexico, but occasionally they made raids into Arizona and Chihuahua. The rugged ranges of hills that intersect the plains in this part of America, afforded them highways and sanctuaries for retreat in all directions. Here also they found whatever game they required for subsistence.

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Old Indian fighters, and others who have the means of judging, assert that the Apaches are superior in endurance and physique to any other Indians in the States, whilst in intellectual power, prudence, subtilty, and tactical skill, they are probably unrivalled, the world over, amongst savage races. Although not naturally born to the saddle, like some Indians, they covet the possession of horses, and are expert horse-thieves. Since they require no baggage; since they find a remount depôt in every ranch they pass through, and can, therefore, ride their horses to death without inconvenience; since a hundred miles on foot, through the roughest country, is a trip that even their squaws will accomplish without rest; since they are wise as serpents, prudent as elephants, well armed, and intimately acquainted with every cañon, cave, and water-hole in the country they infest, it is scarcely to be wondered at that the United States troops experience some difficulty in recapturing them. The very organisation of regular troops is a disadvantage to them in such warfare; it is like setting a team of yoked oxen to "round up" wild two-year-old scrub steers.

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The Apaches never risked an open conflict. If they attacked a small convoy, or surveying party, a few miners, a couple of cow-boys, or a teamster, it was always with overwhelming numbers, at a place selected with the deepest cunning, whence they themselves, secure of a safe line of retreat, were enabled to fire from admirable points of vantage, without leaving cover. Under these circumstances they had done a vast deal of mischief, their victims amounting to about three hundred, or nearly double the number of men that their whole force of men, women, and children comprised.

They moved so rapidly, and covered such distances, that it was impossible at any time to locate them with certainty. Their presence was only announced by some unexpected massacre. Hotly pursued, they scattered like a band of quail, to reunite at some preconceived spot. And if, notwithstanding all their advantages, the white troops were pressing them dangerously, they vanished for a time into the heart of the Sierra Madre, where soldiers could not follow them.

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With the policy of leaving these Indians on a reservation that lies within spring of their own natural and practically inaccessible stronghold, after repeated experience of the results of so doing, we have nothing to do. The border population of Mexico and the States is not contented with it. But it should be remembered that the *ranchero*, whose son or brother has been massacred, and who runs some daily risk himself, is hardly able to judge coolly of such a matter; whereas the Eastern philanthropist, who really directs the above policy, is far enough removed from the seat of danger, and sufficiently disinterested in the prosperity of the district involved in it, to view the question with an impartial eye. This is as it should be, no doubt.

"You will like Day," said Huse, as we splashed through a pretty little stream, and caught sight of the filmy pillars of smoke that curled up amongst the cotton-wood trees, from the camp-fires; "all his men like him; he can do anything with these Indians. He'll fight, too, you bet! and he's as tough as raw-hide. Britton Davis told me that Day did a thing which he wouldn't have believed possible, if it hadn't come under his immediate notice. He was on a hot trail once with his scouts—they had been following it for some days—and it set in to rain. Well, you can't travel in mocassins in wet weather, and Day's boots were away behind with the regular troops. Do you think he quit? Not he. He just pulled off his mocassins, and followed the trail barefooted for three days, like the Indians with him—in the Sierra Madre! Eh? just think of it! all amongst those rocks and thorns! They got the redskins—killed eight of them—but Day was lame for weeks afterwards."

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Thus talking we had ridden by the empty picket lines, and little shelter tents, which marked the quarters of the cavalry, passed through the neatly arranged trappings and lines of the pack-train, and now pulled up before the three headquarters tents. A pleasant shout of recognition greeted Huse's summons, and the subject of our conversation appeared.

The last man in the world that you would have expected to see, were you accustomed to draw portraits in imagination, and drew in this instance solely influenced by the Lieutenant's record! The hero of a score of Indian fights was slightly built and fair, with pleasant blue eyes, and a voice as gentle as a woman's, with one of those delicate complexions that the sun cannot tan, a singularly winning smile, and an almost caressing gentleness of manner.

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It was nearly lunch-time, so we lounged round the tent in the shade, and smoked and chatted with our host, and the other officers of his party, until it was ready. Apache warfare, and the stratagems which these ingenious warriors employ when pushed, furnished an inexhaustible theme of conversation.

Amongst other tricks—new to me, though not so, possibly, to my reader—is one which might be used upon occasion in civilised skirmishing. Hard pressed, and anxious to divert their pursuers' attention to a false scent, the Apaches have been known to detach men to light small dry wood fires on their flanks, and so place cartridges under them, that the latter will explode at intervals in representation of a fusillade. Lunch over, we strolled round the camp. This was situated in a picturesque glen. Rocky hills towered above us, but we were down amidst grassy nooks, screens of willow bush, and groves of sycamore and cotton-wood trees.

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"Come and see the way that the men bake in our army," said Day, after we had witnessed the distribution of rations to the scouts, and experienced some amusement from the haggling that ensued on the short measures of flour which "Rowdy Jack," one of their fellow-men, served out;—"come and see the way that the men bake in our army, it will interest you. It is simpler than the means your fellows employ, over the water. There is a little cooking stove, used in our service, which I want to show you, too."

We repaired to the cavalry camp, and found the process of baking in operation. In a small trench, about fifteen inches broad, a foot deep, and seven or eight feet long, half-a-dozen flat-bottomed tin bowls or basins, containing the dough, were placed. These were covered by inverted bowls of a similar material and shape. The trench was then partly filled with wood ashes (from a neighbouring fire), mixed with sand to regulate the heat and prevent the dough burning, a few ashes were scattered on the tops of the inverted bowls, and the make-shift oven was complete. A dozen or two of these tins could be packed one inside the other; they weighed little, and occupied but little space, whilst the bread which could be baked by their means was excellent.

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The stove was a small, flat-topped cooking stove of sheet-iron, which formed an easy load for one mule. In a country where wood was scarce, it would be invaluable, for with a most trifling consumption of fuel, it cooked, and cooked rapidly, a meal for a whole company. Both these expedients are worth the notice of English officers. *À propos* of "camp fixings," I may mention here an idea which has often occurred to me for a camp table—always an awkward and unpackable article. Let the top of the table be made on the principle of Tunbridge Wells tea-kettle holders, or of laths of wood riveted on to a canvas back. Cross pieces, turning on a screw, such as serve to hold the back of a drawing-board in its frame, would keep the top flat when unrolled, and when not in use, it might be wrapped round the legs, and would pack with ease.

Quitting the cavalry quarters, we proceeded to those of the scouts. They also were supplied with shelter tents, which they had pitched face to face, in couples, close together, a wood fire smouldering between them, and a brush-wood fence snugly surrounding them. No order seemed to regulate their choice of site. They had located themselves wherever there was a crack or inequality in the broken valley bottom, a bay in the banks of the stream, or a nook formed by the fallen trunks of great trees, and their camp was thus scattered over a considerable area of ground.

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For the most part these Apaches were drawn from the White Mountain tribe, between which and the Chiricauas a deadly feud existed. Their physique was magnificent. Square-shouldered, lean, and supple types of feline humanity, six feet in stature were not uncommon amongst them, although a lower standard of height naturally ruled. They were handsome, too, in a Mephistophelean style. One group that I saw is photographed on my memory with peculiar vividness.

The trunk of a giant sycamore had fallen, and, stripped by time of its foliage, even of its bark, and all but its larger branches—reduced, in fact, to a white skeleton—projected above the stream. Under the bank (six or eight feet high at this point), Stove-pipe, the native chief of the scouts, had pitched his tent. We visited him, and whilst we were conversing together a score of his men collected about us. Some seated themselves on drift-wood logs, others on boulders, some lounged with their backs against the fallen sycamore, one leant forward with his arms on the trunk, another, seated amidst the branches, dangled his legs over the pebbly stream, which caught their swaying reflection, and near him, a splendid panther-like brute had stretched himself at full length on the naked bark, and leaning on his elbow, gazed lazily at us. All faced us, and the attitude of each one was perfect in its physical ease and unstudied repose. A striking study of heads, too, was afforded by these bronze-visaged warriors, with their black snaky locks (bound by the red handkerchief, their distinguishing badge), their half-closed, volcanic orbs, and scornful features, lit by chill smiles, and gleams of strange intelligence. Savages are always interesting as links with the past—interesting as dusky shadows that linger to tell us of a phase in the history of man obscured now in the twilight of ages—interesting as belated wayfarers in the race of human development which they will never live to finish.

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Stove-pipe's urbanity delighted me; "he was the mildest-mannered man that ever raised a scalp,

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or cut a throat." In his domestic concerns, however, he was, to say the least of it, peremptory. Returning to the reservation one day, after some Apache war, he learnt that his squaw had presented him with triplets. Being a modest man, in respect of family his requirements might have been more easily gratified. The news disturbed him, and he took action at once, thereupon cracking the three little skulls of his offspring upon the nearest available stone. Then he warned his wife that "he had not intended to marry a dog, and if she did it again, he would treat her pericranium in the same fashion." It was an unusual course to have pursued in such a case, perhaps; but, as the Secretary of one of the foremost of Liberal Associations in London (an extremely pleasant man, and an advanced thinker, enthusiastic, moreover, in the cause of civilisation) once remarked to me, concerning the infantine victims of some Holy-Russian atrocities in Central Asia, "What does it matter?—they would only have been savages after all." One of the beauties of civilisation—of being humane and wise, that is—lies in the fact that it absolves us of all duty towards our neighbour, if he be a savage, and permits us the privilege of "wiping him out" with a clear conscience, in the name of God.

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The muffled sound of a wild chant reached us from a point hidden by a bend in the stream, and on walking to the overhanging bank, we found that it issued from a small beehive-shaped tent of blankets on the further side of the water. It was a sweat bath. Some large stones are heated in a fire, and placed on the floor in the centre of the tent, into which ten or a dozen men then crowd. A little water thrown on the stones generates steam, and this from time to time is renewed, whilst the bathers amuse themselves by chanting a chorus. Having perspired sufficiently, they plunge into cold water, and some of those who had completed the process, were lying stark naked in the sun to dry, or being dry, were sleeping.

We continued our cruise round the camp. Here one or two men were seated in a tent full of tanned deer-skins, which they were working up and softening with the hands; there, an industrious warrior was embroidering a mocassin or shirt; elsewhere were men occupied in hammering ornaments out of silver dollar or half-dollar pieces, or in burning patterns on the beautifully coloured beans, gathered in the Sierra Madre, with which they make bracelets and necklaces. For a little while, we watched a knot of men playing Nazouch, a monotonous and uninteresting game, to which the Apaches are passionately addicted. Finally we joined a ring of spectators that were gathered round some card-players.

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It is refreshing, in these times of jaded appetites and *blasé* indifference, to see real interest displayed in anything. These men were in earnest. Their flashing glances, short, sharp utterances and cries, their vivid gestures, the *élan* with which, having secured the call, one or other of them would dash down lead after lead, and the lightning pounce with which an opponent would produce a trump or winning card to check such a one's career, were positively exciting.

The Apaches are inveterate gamblers, and hold cheating to be legitimate in their games, thus eliminating from it the stigma which attaches to it in civilised communities. Cards with them involves a trial of skill indeed, and I am told that they display a degree of subtilty in such trials that the blackleg fraternity in black cloth would have some difficulty in checkmating. Occasionally they club together and lay siege to a *monte* or faro bank. Only one of the subscribers to the pool plays at a time, but they succeed one another rapidly at the table until one or other of them has revealed a vein of luck. He is then allowed to play on until his good fortune appears to be wavering, when he is promptly superseded. They contrive thus always to play "the man in luck," and are *said* to achieve considerable success by this means.

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The afternoon was wearing away when we quitted the charmed circle; we had a rough ride before us; and bidding adieu to our good-natured cicerone, therefore, once more turned our faces towards the Lang ranch.

CHAPTER XII. ANIMAS VALLEY.—VI.

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Amongst other trips of a similar nature, which we made about this time, was one into the Cojon Bonita, or Beautiful Box, a district adjoining Animas Valley (only lying on the Mexican side of the border), where the Colonel had lately purchased 360,000 acres of land from the Mexican Government. The few cattle that had drifted down there excepted, this tract was as yet unstocked, and was said to contain a great quantity of game. Unfortunately it was noted also as being a favourite haunt of the hostile Apaches, to whom the broken nature of the ground peculiarly recommended itself. An Indian there was as safe as a rat in a rabbit-warren, and a white man as completely at his mercy as though he had been a bound sheep.

As Apaches were known to have been recently in the neighbourhood, it would have been foolhardy to go down there and camp with less than six or eight men, and these we had not at our disposal. However, Major Tupper simplified matters by saying that he himself wished to make a reconnaissance in that direction, and would come with us and bring an escort of ten men. F. and W., two friends of the Colonel's, accompanied us from the Gray Place, and Huse joined us as we passed the Lang ranch. With the addition of four packers for the inevitable pack-train, therefore, we formed an extensive party. It augured badly for sport, and the augury was verified, for the joint bag (and most of the men went out) was one black-tail killed by F. Tramping and climbing,

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wading and sliding, I tore two new pair of mocassins to rags, and only saw two head of game—two black-tail in the distance—some wild turkey tracks, a fresh Indian mocassin track (whether of scout or hostile I knew not, but its Indian origin was proved by the in-turned toes, and absence of any sign of instep, or of thrown-up dirt at the toes), and a lately deserted camp-fire still burning. Nevertheless the trip was a delightful picnic, and as such deserves grateful recollection.

A mile or so over the Mexican border-line, the track we followed suddenly descended, and we found ourselves in a maze of beautiful glades and valleys, the grassy hills which formed them being of the same height as the level of the plain that we had quitted. As we proceeded, the hills rose rapidly, here and there revealing their rocky framework in gaunt cliffs and naked elbows; live-oaks intermingled with the cotton-woods in the bottoms and towered above them on the hillsides, whilst the richest and most luxuriant grasses spread everywhere. Truly the district deserved its name of Beautiful Box.

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The old Spaniards, by the way, displayed great felicity in their nomenclature. They were evidently closely observant, too, for, in the same virile spirit of simplicity and directness which characterises all that is really typical of old Spanish art, they generally seized on the salient features of the place to be christened, and allowed play to the imagination only in so wording the title that, although apt and descriptive, it did not become absolutely commonplace. In travelling through the States, the poverty of invention, patent lack of observation, and vulgarity displayed in the nomenclature is extraordinary,[35] and is in striking contrast with the work of the superseded Spaniards, or with the exquisitely beautiful names that sprang like inspirations from the hearts of those admirable godfathers and godmothers, the Indians, and remain a legacy of unset poetic gems, croppings up of a great lead of poetry buried now for ever beneath an avalanche of the Caucasian race. Nowhere can you find that the untutored savage has bestowed his own name on a mountain or river! Such sublime insolence is far less frequent even in Mexico (colonised though the country was by the proudest and most egotistical race in the world) than in the States. But in the States, with everything grand and beautiful in nature to stimulate the imagination, the refined product of modern culture has found nothing fitter to inscribe upon the newest and fairest page that civilisation has turned than his own unmeaning appellation, nothing more remarkable to call attention to than his own vulgarity, and Jonesvilles, Smithtowns, Robinsonopolises, Brown Cities, and the like, besides similarly denominated mountains and rivers, render the map hideous and the Anglo-Saxon race ridiculous. Curious indeed is the influence of modern culture. Has it not founded the mighty order of Snobs, and created the distinctive spirit of modern times—vulgarity—the religion without creed or God, fashioned as it has been since faith and God-manufacture perished beneath the growing blight of egotism?

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In the Cojon Bonita we threaded our way along a narrow smuggler's trail, through scenery that grew wilder and wilder every moment. The topaz-tinted grasses of autumn contrasted with gray or purple cliffs, the dark foliage of the live-oak with the pale leaves of the cotton-tree, sycamore, or willow. Some of the clouds of colouring that the latter triad presented were simply exquisite. Every shade of amber, crushed strawberry, and all their next-of-kin, combined to make a chord of marvellous delicacy, soft in its gradations as the clouds of heaven, and as powerfully relieved against the velvet-toned rocks, as they against the azure sky. Through all this chaos of colour and beauty, shattered light and shadow, wound a little stream—*lento, piano, dolce, allegro, vivace, forte*—gliding now over gold and chocolate bars of shingle, now over purple shelves of rock, now silent and deep, now garrulous and shallow, now unimpeded and smooth, now checked by a great drift-wood trunk from below which trailed long liquid tresses, foamy, rebellious, and white, or undulating, glossy, and dark in hue, whilst everywhere amidst the crystal ripples danced flitting reflections of blue sky and lovely foliage, crossed by the darting phantoms of frightened fish. The *frou-frou* of dried leaves and herbage, the murmur of waters, and the whispering of the afternoon winds as they played hide and seek in the thousand cañons of the Cojon Bonita, filled the air with a dreamy tumult. It was a wild spot—as wild

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"As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon lover."

Here, if anywhere, it seemed that the old mythical people of the woods, and mountains, and streams—the nymphs, the fauns, and satyrs, and other damsels and gentry of irregular habits and questionable record that were once the fashion, must have retreated. But if they had done so, like "ole Brer Rabbit," they "lay low." No nymph, with scanty costume and dishevelled tresses, sprang from the long grass and fled at our approach. No satyr appeared and faded from sight amidst the aged trunks. We were alone, apparently.

At length we reached the spot where it was decided that we should camp; the stream that we had followed was joined here by another, and three cañons debouched upon a little open space, trefoil-shaped. It was too late to start on a tramp, so the close of the afternoon was spent in catching fish. How did we catch them?—we had neither tackle nor nets. Well, we exploded a bit of giant powder in the midst of a shoal, and that is the shameful truth of it. It was the only possible means at hand of getting them, and the Colonel had set his affections on a fry for that evening. The confession is disgraceful, but the crime was partly expiated by our having to strip and wade into the icy water, in that deep corner in the rocks, after sundown, in order to collect the stunned fish that floated on the surface.

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Hunting, as has been remarked, proved a failure. The size of our party, though it ensured our own safety, militated against our success. Moreover, not very long before, a band of native scouts had spent three days here, and killed over a hundred deer. My most vivid recollections of the trip,

therefore, are connected with the evenings that we spent round the camp-fire. A steep amphitheatre of hills surrounded us, overspread by jewelled skies as serene and blue as the deepest coral seas; at an hour that grew later and later, the red moon stole up over the jagged ridges and shed its gorgeous light on the scene; a hundred yards off, on ground below us, were the quarters of the men, and their camp-fires flashed and twinkled amidst the cotton-woods, their laughter and choruses reached us pleasantly on the night air.

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Oh, the songs that were sung, and the tales that were told, the yarns that were spun, and the jokes that were cracked in those few nights! "Old songs," you say, "that we had each sung hundreds of times before, and should have thought intolerably wearisome had we heard them on one another's lips! Tales for which we were each prepared, and of which we had sometimes even to remind one another in order that the lawful owners should dispense them! Yarns which only the narrator believed, and that, probably, only from force of repetition! And jokes—God save the mark!—mellow already when they were cracked in the fo'k'sle of the ark!" Likely enough, gentle cynic. There is nothing new; the freshest lily is as old as the world. The "merry jest" may, as Andrew Lang sings, descend to us from some Aryan brain. But the laughter is our own, and that is all that concerns us.

"Hand me the canteen again, then," says the Major, as with his swarthy face beaming joyously in the fire-light, he stands moistening the sugar for a second round of toddies, in obedience to a general request. "You boys remind me of the fellow who said that, 'When he had taken one drink it always made him feel like another man, and then, of course, in common politeness he felt obliged to treat the other man.'"

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A general laugh followed the Major's sally.

"Do you remember Bat Hogan, at Georgetown, Major?—a fellow with a hare-lip," asked Huse.

"Bat Hogan? Yes—every cold night that I miss the pair of Navajo blankets he stole from me."

"Bat came in up there from a long drive on the stage one night, and got hold of the whisky-bottle and a tumbler at the bar. Well, sir, he poured himself out a full glass of it. 'Say! that ain't cider, you know,' said the bar-tender. 'I shoul' hope no',' said Bat. 'I woul'n't drink tha' much cider for a thousan' dollars.'"

A score of similar anecdotes succeeded this one. The Colonel stroked his beard, removed his cigar deliberately, pausing every now and then as deliberately at exciting junctures to keep it alight, and reeled off a few; and by degrees the conversation drifted on to cards and gambling.

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"Were you there, Colonel, the night that the fellows put that job up on Mills' partner?" asked F.

"Why, of course I was. Didn't Tom Templeton come down to the 'Depôt' to tell us about it? It was the night that that dance was going on there,—when Skippy said that when old Mac danced he put on so much style that 'he only touched on the high places as he floated round the room.'"

"Ah! and nearly got a six-shooter rammed down his throat for it, too!"

"Well, Tom came down just in the middle of that business, and told us all that they were going to have a game with—what was his name, anyhow?"

"Cuff."

"Old Cuff, yes."

"What was it?" asked some of us.

"Well, Mills and Cuff had a saloon and a faro-bank up town, in Deming," said the Colonel. "Mills was a smart fellow, and a square man, too; but old Cuff was a sort of drivelling old jackass, only fit to sit under the stoop in front of the house, and give the time of day to the passers by. However, he wanted to do things—he would deal at faro, and he would meddle in this, that, and the other, until Mills was very often so mad that he could have taken him by the heels and dusted the ornaments with him. One day he got half-a-dozen tin-horn gamblers together, and between them they put up a cold deck^[36] in a faro-box. Then, when there was nothing particular going on, Mills gave up his place as dealer to Cuff, and rung in the new box on him. Well, the tin-horns were there in a body, with a few stacks of chips,^[37] playing light—waiting for the deal, you see—and as soon as Cuff took his place they began doubling up, and doubling up, and just sousing it to him red-hot. Before half the deal was over, the whole bank of checks was gone, and Cuff was giving markers for hundreds as hard as he could go it. At the end of the deal he was about nine thousand dollars out. And, by gosh! you never saw a man in such a state in your life! The perspiration rolled off him in streams; he began laughing and crying like an idiot. I thought he was going to choke once."

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"How did it all end?"

"Oh, the boys kept him on the 'anxious seat' for two or three days, and that cured him. He never wanted to deal any more; he would hardly believe that they *had* been joshing him, when they did tell him the truth."

"Talking about 'tin-horns,' Frank Therman used to tell a good yarn," observed the Major presently. "Dick Miller came to him one afternoon, and said, 'Look here, Frank! I've got a dead sure thing on—can't lose! I want you to lend me fifty dollars to work it with.' Frank gave him the

money—he didn't care anyhow, he'd stake anybody. Pretty soon, in came Jim Baker. 'Say, old pard! do you want to stake me with fifty dollars?—it's a real good investment—can't help winning.' 'What's on?' asked Frank. 'Oh, some suckers want to play poker.' He got his fifty dollars, and quit. Just as soon as he had gone, in came Dutch Henry. 'I was joost looking for you, Fr-r-ank,' says he. 'I hef got something so goot vat a man vants.' 'The — you have! Have you caught a sucker too?' 'Sucker! Ven you poot 'im in zer son, he ron vays—melt, I min!' 'You don't want that,' said Frank. 'No—no, zir!—you pet! Look here, Frenk, olt man! I got no tollars—von't you lent me a feefty-tollar pill?' Well, he got his fifty-dollar 'pill,' and he hadn't been gone long before Smiling Moses appeared. 'Frank, old pard! I just want fifty dollars for an hour or two—give it to you again to-night. I've got a "soft snap" on—can't miss it.' 'You don't say!' said Frank. 'Well, I'll be good — —, if those quail showers your tribe used to catch in the wilderness were in it with our sucker storms! Here's your bill! go right along and make an independent fortune while you can.' Well, Smiling Moses skinned out, and the more Frank got to thinking of it, the more he couldn't make out what in — had come to town to make the boys so busy. So as there was very little faro play going on, he left Moore to deal, and strolled out to look round a bit. He went into the 'Corral'—there were none of his men there. He looked into the 'Ranch' and the 'Mine'—devil a sign of them. He went pretty well all round town, and, finally, it occurred to him to drop into a little 'dive' on Jim Street. He walked through the bar and pushed the card-room door open. And there they were, sir, playing poker together—all four of them! Each tin-horn with the most profound contempt for the others' skill. I think that's a delightful bit of satire on humanity."

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"Moore tells a tale of the old Mississippi steamer days that isn't bad," said W. "A tender-foot got in amongst the gamblers on board one of the boats once, and what with 'strippers,' and 'stocking,' and 'cold decks,' and 'bugs,' and 'reflectors,' and 'codes,' and so forth, he hadn't the ghost of a show. They played him to h—l and gone in a very short time. It was a regular case of 'Shuf, dad, shuf!' it's all you'll get.' They soon cleaned him out. Well, walking round the deck afterwards, thinking it over quietly, he found a ten-dollar bill left in one of his pockets, which he had forgotten, and rushed back at once to the saloon with it. 'Boys,' he shouted, 'I want to bet this ten-dollar bill that I can whistle louder than the engine.' 'Oh, quit!' they said; 'if you've got ten dollars left, freeze on to it. Don't throw it away in any such fooling.' 'That'll be all right,' he said, 'I know what I'm about; I'll bet, anyhow.' So finally one of them took him up, and they went outside to see the fun. The chap, he got up on one of the paddle-boxes, and asked the captain to let off the whistle. Well, he just turned her loose, and there was a shriek that you might have heard in China. Of course the 'tender-foot' wasn't in it. However, he didn't seem disappointed. He came down, and paid his bill cheerfully enough. 'You can laugh, boys,' he said quietly, 'but I'll be durned if that ain't the squarest deal I've had on board yet.'"

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My stay in Animas Valley was drawing to a close when I returned to the Gray Place one afternoon, bringing with me an antelope that I had shot, and having parted with Jake, who had followed a fresh trail down into the Skeleton Cañon, to turn back a small band of cattle that were straying in that direction. The house was empty. Don Cabeza had gone over to the neighbouring camp to chat with the officers; Murray and Joe were still out; and Squito was not seated, as was generally the case, on the bench by the door, her curly black head bent over a dime novel. While I was yet in the distance, I had noticed her little figure on one of the hillocks behind the house, where she would often stand for an hour at a time, shading her eyes, and scanning the valley for "old man Murray," of whom she was passionately fond. But she had vanished now. Unsaddling my horse, I turned him loose to join his fellows on the *cienea*, and, lighting a cigarette, strolled up towards Squito's favourite coigne of observation to enjoy the stillness which the great expanse of the view from thence seemed to accentuate always.

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The sky was fretted with the faint fires of a sunset, delicate in its colours as pale orchids—colours that might have been conceived by a fairy, and broadcast by a gale. The soft air mused and mused in the dry crowsfoot gramma grass that clothed the country, making a music that seemed a very air-treasured echo and tradition of sweet old-world sounds become transiently audible again in the silence of the moment. From the yellow slopes around its base, old Animas towered king-like above the valley; and dim blue, mystic peaks and crests, like a company of ghosts, low down on the horizon to the south, marked the commencement of the Sierra Madre.

I was surmounting the brow of the first knoll, when involuntarily I stopped. In a little hollow before me, Squito was dancing by herself—a dance that probably had its origin in some old Spanish bolero, seen by her in her early childhood, and partly retained in memory. But the gestures, poses, motive and method of the dance were her own, and it seemed that her mind was filled with some theme as she danced. The hot blood of her race had sway over her, and totally unconscious of my presence (for only my head and shoulders were visible, and these partly concealed amidst cacti and rocks), she abandoned herself entirely to the impulse of the moment. The slant, rosy gleams from heaven played upon her, as she danced, partly in light and partly in shadow, turning and swaying, and swiftly moving over the little flat that served her for a floor. Pliant as a willow wand, lissom as a rabbit, her light form changed its poise rapidly or slowly, but always with swimming ease and continuity of motion. Where did her actions begin—where end? It was impossible to say. They were, and they were not. They came, they passed away; merged into one another, but measurable, distinctly, as little as is the sound of something that travels. With steps small, or for a moment boldly prolonged, she came and went. And now her little figure seemed to dilate with passion, now droop in exquisite languor, her arms and head moving in unison with the spirit of her mood—beseeking now, now beckoning, scoffing, defying,

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imperiously commanding.

Oh, Squito, Squito! how many a *première danseuse* would pledge her jewels to acquire a title of the natural gift that you possess, of the very existence of which you cannot be said to be fully conscious, and the evidence of which, only old Animas, and the cacti, and the scored, purple boulders of the hills, or, perchance, a select circle of cow-boy familiars are permitted to witness.

Breathless she paused, her brown eyes flashing fire, and in a second she caught sight of me. She started, halted, then turned precipitously and fled. From that moment until when I left, a few days later, she never addressed me unless forced to do so, and then only in the brusque monosyllables. However, when the Colonel and I were preparing to start, she hovered round us restlessly for some time, and finally conquered her shyness sufficiently to speak to me.

"The boys say that you're going down into Mexico—Chihuahua and there?"

"Yes, I shall run down there again shortly, Squito."

"Likely you'll see Sam somewheres."

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"Sam? Who is Sam?"

"Sam," she repeated simply, in the glorious egotism of first love taking it for granted that all the world knew her Sam. "Sam Rider, who used to work in the Animas," and her increasing confusion suddenly reminded me of the man she had taken up the cudgels for, on my first evening in the valley, and who I had since heard had got into some shooting scrape and fled into Mexico.

"Oh, yes, I remember—of course."

"Won't you give him a message for me?"

"Certainly, if I see him. What can I tell him for you?"

"Tell him—tell him——" and hesitating painfully, with a world of trouble in her marvellous eyes, the child looked up at me earnestly. The colour had faded from her face, all its lines were exquisitely softened, and as she smiled apologetically her lips just trembled. "Tell him you seen me—and—and—tell him I told yer to say so. Will you?—please. He said he'd write."

"I'll tell him, Squito. Anything else?"

"No—*he knows*," she murmured almost inaudibly, turning her crimson face aside.

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"Good-bye, then."

"Good-bye," and she moved away rapidly.

But as we drove off, we saw the little figure in its broad leaf hat, on the hillock behind the house, watching us. And as long as we were in sight it remained there.

FOOTNOTES:

[35] Why is this? Americans lack neither imagination nor artistic feeling.

[36] To "ring in a cold deck" is to order in and substitute a fresh pack, in which the cards are prearranged.

[37] Counters.

CHAPTER XIII. A CRUISE IN NORTHERN MEXICO.—I.

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We were seated at dusk on the platform outside the *Depôt* or railway hotel at Deming, enjoying what the Colonel called: "A feast of reason, and a flow of souls." "We" consisted of the Colonel himself, Joe,^[38] a life-long friend of his and an old friend of my own also, Navajo Bill, and myself. The Colonel had just returned from Silver City, Joe had just broken a journey from New York to San Francisco to visit us, and I had just returned from Chihuahua City via El Paso. As for Bill, with a vague smile flickering on the end of his nose and muzzle—an unengaged smile, waiting for a job as it were, he was merely "standing around" on the chance of the Colonel saying: "Navajo, here's two-and-a-half for you. Go and get drunk."

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Who was Navajo? Ah, "that's where you've got me, young man." Heaven knows! I don't think Navajo aspired to have as much identity as that question would imply. He was a sort of odd-man-out-of-place. He had a little shanty up town, and a kind of costermonger's barrow, in which he used to "take the air" with Mrs. Navajo, a lady who looked as if she had been born and bred to make him a suitable wife. Bill had no particular profession. He "went trips" if any one wanted him to. He could drive a team, cook indifferently, was cheerful, obliging, a fair worker, had good pluck, long hair, a queer amusing smile, a gutta-percha physiognomy, a fund of quaint sayings, and altogether was a good man to "have along" on a trip. At present, as the Colonel was suffering a good deal from rheumatism, he attended him as valet and rubber. Bill, with equal confidence,

would have undertaken to manage a bank, or transact a diplomatic mission to the Court of St. James.

The Colonel "had the floor," and was referring to his visit to Silver City. "And whilst they were knocking the sawdust out of the *Pirates of Penzance* all these amateurs—every man and woman in Silver that could squawk, in fact—Lindauer, and Louis Timmer, and Judge Falby, and I, we played pool." [Pg 237]

"It isn't everybody that *could* play pool, while the *Pirates of Penzance* were catching it like that," commented Joe severely.

"Eh? what does Joe say? Oh, well, Nero fiddled while Rome was burning, and we didn't see why we shouldn't be just as cruel as Nero if we liked. Anyhow—"

"A letter for you, Colonel!" said the hall porter, approaching.

The Colonel arose, and producing his *pince-nez* glasses, drew near the light that streamed from the hotel door, to glance through the papers contained in the envelope.

"I guess it's only to say that some of your old ranch houses have been burnt by the Apaches, or that your old cows have got 'black-leg' or something," remarked Joe grimly.

"A judgment, likely, for fiddling when the Pirates was a-catching it so," suggested Bill, with a grin.

"That's it," chuckled Joe; "that's it, no doubt!"

"Navajo, can you make corn bread?" asked the Colonel, returning to his seat. [Pg 238]

"Corn bread, Colonel! I can make it so a dog can't eat it."

"You can, eh? Well, that settles it. You *shall* come, then. Go away up to Holgate's stables, and tell them to have the waggon and team ready to-morrow at midday—you see yourself that it is properly greased—and see that three days' feed of corn are put in for the horses, too. I am going down into Mexico."

"And perhaps you won't mind telling us where we come in, in all this? What is going to happen to us?" inquired Joe, with some asperity.

"You will both come too," replied the Colonel calmly.

"To Mexico?"

"Yes."

"Well, we don't want to know your business, of course—we're not asking who your letter is from, or what it's about—we don't want to know how little you gave, or how much you got, but we should just like to know where *we're* going to in Mexico, and *what* we're going for? Are we going to 'make a killing,' or to buy a ranch, or only to steal some cattle? And what's the matter with our stopping here, and living comfortably, until you get back?" [Pg 239]

"You won't stop here, you'll come right along with me, both of you; and I don't want you to give me any trouble about it, now! Travel improves the mind, and enlarges the ideas. You shall come and study the sister republic, and Navajo and I will introduce you into society down there. If you're smart, you *may* catch a *señorita* with a big ranch before we get back."

"Where are we going to?"

"The Corralitos ranch. The agreement has just come back from El Paso, accepting the final offer that I made for between two and three thousand yearling and two-year-old Corralitos steers, and I must go down and receive them."

The restaurant at the Depôt was the rendezvous, at meal-times, of all the high-toned people in Deming. When we left the hotel after the mid-day dinner, therefore, to mount the light waggon in which Navajo sat, curbing the impetuosity of our corn-inspired plugs, with a magnificent assumption of conscious importance, the *habitués* of this frontier Bignon's, armed with tooth-picks and unlit cigars, assembled on the platform to bid farewell to the Colonel. Many a good-humoured sally ensued at his expense, but in no wise disconcerted, he returned shot for shot, as he walked round the waggon and inspected it, expressed his usual surprise that he should be the only man in New Mexico capable of packing a waggon properly, had the blankets, grain, provisions, cooking utensils, Winchesters, and other baggage taken out, replaced it all with his own hands, and finally mounting the box seat, gathered up the whip and reins. [Pg 240]

Joe was taking a light for his cigar from one of the bystanders. "Joe isn't ready yet," observed Don Cabeza in a pleasantly ironic way, glancing at the mammoth shoulders that were rounded over the cigar-light. Joe vouchsafed no response. "But give him time," pursued his tormentor more cheerfully, "give him time and he'll get there. Joe will never die *suddenly*."

The old "forty-niner" approached the waggon with a withering glance at the repacked cargo.

"Have you shown them all how you can pack?" he asked dryly.

"Yes."

"Then we're where we were before, I guess—ready to start again, eh?"

"Exactly."

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"Ugh!" And Joe silently mounted, and amidst a shower of "good-byes," we drove off.

They were types, these two. Though nothing delighted them more than systematically to contradict and pooh-pooh one another, to less intimate acquaintances they were the essence of kindness and chivalrous courtesy; and let any one *coincide* with them when they spoke slightly of one another, and he would soon find that he had unconsciously undertaken to whip a dogged-looking giant, over six feet high in his socks, and, without being in the least degree stout, apparently about four feet broad across the shoulders.

The Corralitos ranch lay between seventy and eighty miles over the border, in Chihuahua, in Mexico, and was a hundred and ten miles from Deming. The first day's drive to Smith's Wells was only eighteen miles. Thence to Ascension was an easy two days' drive, over a somewhat heavy road. On the fourth day Corralitos was reached early in the afternoon. Between Smith's Wells and Ascension, it was necessary to camp out on the Boca Grande River.

The gradual settling up of waste lands in the United States had already begun to turn attention towards Northern Mexico, when railway promoters recognised a fresh field in it for their enterprise. But until the lines they projected to connect it with the railway systems of the States were completed, properties purchased there were comparatively worthless. Now the aspect of things is changed; land is rising rapidly in value; and the probability that the magnificent provinces which compose the upper tier of the Mexican provinces will eventually become incorporated with the United States gathers strength each day. American politicians still scout this notion. But it must be remembered that such men are for the most part politicians by profession—theorists unaffected by the interests, and ignorant of the influences that sway the masses, not business men engaged in every walk of life and practically cognisant, therefore, of the questions submitted to them.

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To judge fairly on such a subject as the one now broached, look at the map, contrast the characters, condition, strength, and relative rates of advance of the two peoples concerned; above all, gather the views of the American cattle-men, miners, traders, and railway stockholders, of the large landowners (foreign, American, and *Mexican*) interested in the consummation of the union referred to, for these are the people who intend to bring it about.

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It is idle to talk of justice and the obligations of honour in days when the hereditary right of a people to valuable land is hardly recognised, certainly not respected, unless they make good that right by cultivation. On all sides we see the traditions of law in this respect disregarded. Land would appear to belong in reality to those who most want it—to those who can render the best account of it. The tenure of the sluggard is on sufferance only. Even the strong, conservative, but unprofitable oak yields place to the seeded corn-stalk. And where Yankee enterprise and British tenacity have penetrated, and are busy, the rule of Mexican sloth is doomed. The Eastern politician may say that the annexation referred to is impossible, that the United States has land enough, and does not require any part of Mexico. But a nation is as little able to control its growth as a child. How much of what was once Mexican soil lies now within the borders of the United States? What were once California, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas? How many are the sacred contracts that the Washington Government has entered into, to respect the reservations of the Indians? Yet one by one these reservations have been redeemed by the plough, or overrun by the horned hosts of the cattle king. And now, in travelling through the States, one frequently hears indignant protests uttered against the Government for "giving" (!) the Indians the little land which still remains in their possession.

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As a matter of fact, there is no unoccupied cattle-range of any importance left in the States. The range there is absolutely diminishing, since in many places it is being, or already has been, eaten out. The rancho in overcrowded Texas, in full New Mexico, and dry Arizona looks over the border and sees in Northern Mexico a vast cattle country, superior to anything that the States ever possessed, still comparatively unused, in the hands of drones for whom he has an undisguised contempt, and under the dominion of a weak and corrupt Government. What does he care about the political feelings of his rulers, or the diplomatic difficulties of annexation!

Side by side with the temptation afforded by this splendid grazing, lies another, equally powerful, but affecting a different class of men, namely, the evidence of greater mineral wealth than was discovered even in California. The conclusion arrived at many years ago by Humboldt, that in these States would eventually be found the richest mineral deposits in the world, seems likely to be verified. And has the Government at Washington ever shown signs of the qualities that would be necessary to preserve Mexico from absorption by the American people under these circumstances?

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The "Government!" The Government will have little voice in the matter. In the United States more than in any other country, is the so-called Government merely an institution for formulating, and shedding a legal glamour over the wishes of the masses. It deals with and rounds off accomplished facts; it does not initiate movements, and dictate them to the people. The duty of Government in this case will be to arrange some scheme of purchase to tickle the national conscience and soften the aspect of the transaction, whilst none the less enabling the United States troops to remain in Northern Mexico when once a revolution has given them an opportunity of "crossing the border to protect their fellow citizens." Talleyrand once said

indignantly: "On s'empare des couronnes, mais on ne les escamote pas." Things have changed since he lived; the latter course now fits far better with our temper. [Pg 246]

If there is any cause for surprise in this matter, it lies in the fact that Mexico should have remained isolated so long—that so shiftless a race should have retained their independence in so rich a country. This is due not a little to the ill success which attended the earlier speculations there of American capitalists. The causes of this ill success were various. A prejudice originated in Mexico against Americans during the war, and the behaviour of the "rustlers" and malefactors of all kinds, who, flying from justice in the States, have been accustomed to seek refuge in the sister republic since then, has kept this feeling alive. Even the better class of Americans who penetrated into Mexico, have been apt to display there (as, for that matter, they are often apt to display elsewhere) an autocratic, impatient, and pugnacious spirit, which contrasts oddly with their tolerance of abuses, and free admission of the right of "a coon to do as he durned pleases," in the States. The American abroad and the American at home are two totally different beings. In Mexico they have had to deal with an intensely conservative people, whose dilatory and slack way of doing business was the very polar antithesis of the slap-dash, energetic, and decisive style to which they themselves are accustomed. In place of accommodating themselves to these conditions, they appear to have endeavoured to force their own methods on the natives, and failing in this, to have treated them with systematic contempt. Unfortunately their numbers, and the influence of their Government, have not been sufficient until lately to sustain them in this mode of procedure, and consequently, in the face of an already established ill-feeling, it has resulted in uniform business failure. "They could not get on with the Mexicans," they found. It would have been strange had it been otherwise. Add to the unfavourable impression which the above circumstances left in American minds, the unfortunate experience which some investors gained by plunging into land speculations, without previously inquiring into Mexican land laws, and sifting the titles to the ranch property they coveted—titles which are vested sometimes in all the living members of a family—and the once marked indisposition of American capitalists to invest in things Mexican will be fully understood. [Pg 247]

I have said that, as a cattle country, Northern Mexico is preferable to any section of the United States. Bold though the assertion may seem, it is undoubtedly correct in so far as the greater part of Sonora, Chihuahua, and Coahuila are concerned. In Northern Mexico, the percentage of increase amongst a hundred cows frequently reaches ninety-five, and is rarely below eighty—an average that is unapproached anywhere in the States, save in Southern New Mexico. There are no winters to kill the young calves, and at intervals sweep off forty or fifty per cent. of the whole herd, as in Montana, Wyoming, etc.; no piercing "northerns," or cold sleet storms to cause cattle to drift a hundred miles or more; no droughts, such as entail enormous losses in Colorado, Kansas, Texas, and elsewhere in the West (dry seasons do occur, but they are never sufficiently dry to prevent the growth of new grass); there is no sickness; neither flies nor screw-worms trouble the cattle; no plagues of locusts strip the ranches of herbage in a night, as is the case sometimes in California; the country is far enough south to be within the limits of the semi-tropical rainy season, and yet lies, for the most part, at such an altitude that the summer climate is comparatively cool and bracing. None of the risks and dangers which face the rancharo in other countries have to be encountered here. On the other hand he has the advantage of fine breeding and maturing grounds in close juxtaposition, inasmuch as the plains are unrivalled in the former respect, whilst the gramma-carpeted foot-hills and plateaux of the Sierra Madre compare, upon almost equal terms, with the bunch-grass valleys of Montana and Wyoming as regards the latter. [Pg 249]

Another advantage enjoyed by the rancharo in Mexico—one which cow-men will be amongst the first to recognise, and which, as cattle countries fill up, will become of more and more importance—is that he is able to purchase his ranch entirely, and does not simply graze his cattle on Government land which he controls in virtue of the water rights that he holds. His herds, therefore, are isolated, and he alone derives the advantage of any expense that he may choose to go to in improving their breed. No outsider can sink a well or take up a desert claim in the midst of his range, and either run cattle there or impound those of the original tenant for trespass. If he pleases, he can put a ring-fence round his property and remove any intruder from it. And this is no slight privilege. [Pg 250]

In Sonora and Coahuila very many of the old grants, besides immense tracts of public land purchased from the Mexican Government, have already passed into the possession of foreigners. In Northern Chihuahua, only one large ranch (the Boca Grande) remains in Mexican hands. Foreigners also own large bodies of land further south in this province. Influenced, no doubt, by the present agitation against them in the States, the Mormons are silently but continuously pouring into Sonora and Chihuahua, and acquiring land in all directions. Polygamy is a little out of date certainly in times when even monogamy is apt to be regarded as too irksome a burden. But the United States have no quieter or more industrious a class of men to send forth than are these much-married individuals. They work systematically and have capital to invest if necessary, and the condition of prosperity that they will initiate wherever they settle will soon enhance the value of adjoining land.

Few people, who have not at intervals passed over waste lands out West, can conceive the rapidity with which a country, once opened up, is appropriated and developed in these days of steam and telegraphy; few people can realise what enormous masses of population year by year roll forth from the crowded hives of Europe and the Eastern States. [Pg 251]

And be it remembered that the country to which I have referred lies not in any remote corner of the world, but close to the centres of trade and population in America, and within twelve days'

journey of England. The "boom" in land, therefore, will be sharp and swift there. Of course, the possibility of these provinces being annexed to the States is a question of importance for the investor to consider, since the future value of property there hinges to some extent upon it. But this aside, the advance in the value of ranches will be rapid enough. Already it is treble that which it was six or seven years ago. Annexed or not annexed, at the rate that foreigners are now occupying the country, the power of the Mexican Government there will be merely nominal before long. The taxes levied by it are extremely light, and sensible settlers have absolutely no trouble with the officials; judicious investments there can hardly fail to prove profitable, therefore.

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Whilst we have been discussing the fate of Northern Mexico, our waggon has made good its way to Smith's Wells, where a little adobe building of three small rooms was to be our shelter for the night.

Smith was an Englishman who had been settled for many years in the States, but had formerly served as steward on board one of the Transatlantic passenger steamers. He was rather amusing, inasmuch as, a great talker, he gave absolutely true, or at any rate matter-of-fact accounts of things, without using any of that pleasant varnish of fiction often adopted even by a whole community as if by mutual consent, in the discussion of open secrets of corruption, or the disgraceful conduct of affairs, public or otherwise. Smith called murderers murderers, thieves thieves, cowards cowards, and so forth; in fact, his ill manners were quite refreshing.

He was well informed on the subject of recent Apache wars (having held the post of packer, teamster, or something of the kind with the troops), and his histories of the battles, skirmishes, etc., that had taken place, compared with those currently accepted, were very laughable. They were particularly amusing in the present instance, for Navajo Bill having been a "long-haired scout" in these campaigns, much of our information was derived from him. The Colonel and Joe took a malicious delight in leading Smith to narrate events, glowing descriptions of which we had already received from Bill. But the latter hero's equanimity was not to be disturbed by any matter so trivial as the direct controversion of his most brilliant yarns. When Smith incidentally remarked that he and Navajo had been twenty miles in the rear on the occasion of "a little skirmish with a few Indians, *mostly squaws*," which we had been taught to believe was a bloody and decisive battle, indissolubly connected with the glory of Navajo—a battle in which we had pictured him, or rather he had pictured himself, as careering through the awed forces of the enemy with the irresistible majesty of the cyclone—the Colonel's imperturbable valet merely shifted in his chair, smiled one of his own inimitable smiles, and added to the mirth by some quaint remark, without attempting to support his original tale.

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We left on the following morning, and camped on the Boca Grande River after a thirty-mile drive. The Boca Grande ranch is a league broad, and follows the course of the river for thirty or forty leagues. The grass on it is mostly coarse, and since the soil is light and sandy, would trample out if heavily stocked. But the close proximity of the Southern Pacific Railway lends the ranch value, and its long stretch of water gives it control of a large extent of outside grazing, some of which is first-rate.

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At this distance from its source the river does not flow uninterruptedly throughout the year, but during the dry season (winter and part of spring) shrinks and stands in a series of short canals and water-holes, where an ample supply of water is always to be found at every hundred yards or so. Here and there also a spring occurs, and the river flows permanently for a few hundred yards.

Another characteristic of certain rivers in this part of the world may as well be mentioned here. In places they sink, flow for some distance underground, and then rise again. The explanation given of this is, that the bed rock dips, the water filters through the loose surface soil and follows it, reappearing only when the natural fall of the country in the same direction brings the bed rock near the surface again, and the level of the water above it. Of course, in the wet season there is a sufficient rainfall in most cases to fill these inequalities, and keep the bed bank-full.

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I have heard it argued that a dam sunk to the bed rock would have the effect of preserving a full head of water. But since the stream must inevitably pass these sinks sooner or later, and the only way to neutralise the ill effect of them is to fill them, it seems to me that one built where the water reappears would be equally effective and less expensive. But the matter requires study, and I am only justified in offering the most diffident suggestion.

FOOTNOTE:

[38] It is needless, I presume, to warn the reader not to confuse this "Joe" with the cow-boy who appeared in the last sketch.

CHAPTER XIV. A CRUISE IN NORTHERN MEXICO.—II.

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On the following day we drove into Ascension,—a small place of recent date. When New Mexico was taken over by the Americans, a body of Mexicans emigrated thence and settled here. Ascension bears little resemblance, therefore, to the ordinary Mexican town; it has no ruins, its

population is increasing, it is growing in size—an altogether unparalleled state of things.

Repairing to the Customs House, we gave bonds for the return of our horses and waggon, and submitted our baggage to be searched. A new agent, whom none of us knew as yet, having lately arrived from the City of Mexico, the search was rigid. However, we had nothing contraband, with the exception of a few cartridges, the duty on which was (as it is on most things taxed at all) fully equal to their value. Had it been levied to protect a home manufacture, it might have been comprehensible; but, unless imported, cartridges are not procurable at any rate in Northern Mexico. Pillage of this nature is apt to encourage evasions of the law; for any one resident in the country to smuggle, or countenance smuggling though, is extremely foolish, and in the long run inevitably leads to mischief. It is important at present to stand on good terms with the official class. Intrigue in the City of Mexico, and the jealousy of their neighbours, renders it impossible for the officers to wink at anything like systematic smuggling, although a little diplomatic hospitality soon serves with these degenerate, albeit still often chivalrously polite descendants of Old Spain, to secure the passage, unsearched, of such an "outfit" as ours. Moreover, the penalties incurred where smuggling has been detected have been rendered so severe lately, that the risk is not worth running. Yet there are men with a large stake in the country who, for the sake of saving a few dollars, live under perpetual suspicion and supervision, in an atmosphere of constant annoyance.

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A good story was current about the Colonel's first visit to the Ascension Customs House. He was on his way with a large party to survey a ranch for which he was then in treaty. The Superintendent at that time in power was a ceremonious and pompous old gentleman, possessed of something of the pride of race characteristic of Spaniards of the old school. Reasoning from the number of Don Cabeza's companions that he was a man of great importance in his own country, he showed every disposition to treat him with consideration. Through the medium of the Colonel's interpreter conversation was established; sweet phrases flowed and compliments were bandied between the principals with courtier-like agility and address. The Customs Superintendent placed his house, his subordinates, his resources—in short, with Spanish figurative magnificence, placed even his country and fellow-countrymen at the disposal of his guest; and not to be surpassed in generosity, the Colonel magnanimously gave him the United States, and as many American citizens as he wanted. If the old *hidalgo*, or "son of somebody," were "bluffing," he had struck the very man to "see him and raise him back." Things were progressing swimmingly when, at Don Cabeza's suggestion, some bottles of champagne were produced from the waggons and uncorked. The Superintendent had never seen champagne before, and supposing its effervescence to be a rare and precious property appertaining only to the wines of the great, was more than ever convinced of the exalted rank of his new acquaintance. Unfortunately, it occurred to him to inquire at this juncture into the position of the other members of the party, and to save himself the trouble of a little explanation, the interpreter briefly described them as his master's peons. With his own hands the old fellow thereupon collected their glasses, and placed them all together in the middle of the table. "Since *he* did not drink with peons," he said, "it would only be necessary to fill two glasses." "That settled it." All the Colonel's tact and diplomacy were necessary to preserve peace now, for the Superintendent, having adopted the peon notion, clung to it, and the "boys," some of whom were friends of the Colonel's and gentlemen anywhere, and all of whom were gentlemen on the frontier, got the "big head," and displayed effervescence scarcely less remarkable than that of the champagne itself. The result was that the wine, intended to propitiate a dozen thirsty officials, was finished on the spot by the indignant "peons," and the interpreter, not permitted to drink with the Customs official and the Colonel, was not permitted either to partake with the rest of the party, and narrowly escaped receiving a far more severe expression than this of their displeasure.

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Juan Carrion, an *ex-presidente* or mayor, with whom we lodged, and the avowed "*amigo*" of all Americans who frequented the road, was a delightful creature. He kept a little all-sorts shop, the stock in which ranged from pastry and sweet-stuff to pins and needles, from wine and native spirits to grain or fuel. His *tinada* in Ascension was what the coffeehouses were in old London—the rendezvous of wit and fashion. Here prospectors and cattle buyers, immigrant Mormons, *rancheros*, banished "rustlers," and Mexican horse thieves, with the local loafers and a bibulous local doctor, assembled, and seated on the counter, on benches, flour-sacks, inverted boxes, or in the grain-bin, interchanged gossip over *copitas de masca*, and the eternal cigarette.

Little Juan—we apologise—Don Juan had a monkey-melancholy physiognomy, furnished with a radiant and an instantaneous smile—an inexhaustibly rich smile, which never for a moment slackened or lost its freshness. Behold him standing behind the counter, quiescent, for a wonder, and as dejected in appearance as a lost dog. "Don Juan!" "Si, Señor." In a second, as if it were the surface of still water into which a brick had been dropped, his face irradiates with a series of expanding rings of cheerful import. Amongst other faculties that he possessed, was one for *seeming* to understand an almost incredible amount of bad Spanish. His sympathy with the foreigner, whose incoherent ravings proved him to be labouring under the influence of "somebody's Spanish teacher," was without end. Don Juan's looks of intelligence and soothing "Si, Señor," cheered such as one in his darkest moments and most agonising paroxysms.

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A busy man was Juan—an indispensable man, weighed down by his own, his American friends', his clients', his neighbours', and the State's affairs. Undoubtedly the conviction haunted him that, were he removed from this vale of tears, chaos would come again. To hear him sigh inspired a vague impression, not less significant of vast, troublous schemes, and ponderous businesses, than the faint rumbling of thunder is of the distant thunder-storm. Occasionally he remembered that

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he considered it incumbent upon him to make his importance felt, to "Assume the God, affect to nod," to be dignified in demeanour and choice in language. Animated by these sentiments, Juan behind his counter giving audience to a poor neighbour was a study equal in sublimity to a well-executed idol of Buddha. He always had some new long word running in his mind, culled from a legal document or newspaper, and under circumstances such as the above, would haul it into his conversation sideways, head first, anyhow, altogether regardless of how awkwardly or heavily it alighted. It was a treat to hear him sling it blindly around, prefixing adjective after adjective to it as he did so, until with accumulated weight and impetus, at last he brought the whole tautological string down "kerflop" full and fairly upon the devoted crown of his auditor, and raising his eyes inexorably from the destruction that he had caused, would purse his mobile under-lip severely, whilst the wretched victim of his eloquence crept mutely from the shop.

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The Corralitos ranch^[39] consisted of 820,000 acres of magnificent grazing land, lying, for the most part, in a great basin, through which a river of from one to two hundred feet broad flowed for a distance of over thirty miles. Besides this, there were several springs upon it, one of which gave birth to a stream of seven or eight miles in length, and which, with a little work and improvement, might have been made to flow much further. The Janos River traversed it for a distance of twelve miles in the north-west, and in all directions water was found at a depth of from ten to twenty-two feet, which, raised by windmills, would have supplied unlimited herds. These various waters gave the owners of the property control of at least another million acres of Government land for grazing purposes. The grass was of the finest kinds of *gramma*, and since the soil was mostly hard, was not likely to pull or trample out, however severely it might be grazed. In the Corralitos River bottom at least thirty thousand acres of land was susceptible of irrigation and cultivation. This principality, to which the Corralitos Company possessed a clear title, lay within only a hundred miles of the nearest point on the Southern Pacific Railway, the intervening country affording easy and well-watered trails by which cattle might be driven thither.

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"Man seems the only growth that dwindles here,
Contrasted faults through all his manners reign;
Though poor, luxurious; though submissive, vain;
Though grave, yet trifling; zealous, yet untrue,
And e'en in penance planning sins anew,"

quoted the Colonel with mock solemnity, as we hove in sight of the Corralitos country.

"I don't know much about 'luxury,'" ejaculated Joe, "unless you're looking for fleas and chilies."

As we surveyed the glorious expanse of country before us I could not forbear saying: "Colonel, I thought that the Animas was the 'boss' ranch in the country."

"In *another* country; we're in Mexico now," he rejoined.

"You won't catch *him*," said Joe. "Years ago, when Frisco was blooming, and the stock market was alive there, a period of depression occurred once, and I asked Cabeza what he thought about it. 'Oh, things have reached bottom,' he said. A few days afterwards, when they had gone a durned sight lower, I showed him the stock list, and reminded him of what he had said. 'Well, well,' said he, 'I meant *high* bottom, of course; we're getting down to *low* bottom now.'"

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The Colonel shook his head hopelessly. "Did Joe say he *remembered* that, or invented it? Well, Joe'll say anything; he don't care what he says. But this isn't a finer range than the Animas, anyhow—only, of course, they own every acre of it, and can put a ring-fence round it if they like, and that's an advantage."

We drove on and in due course reached the *hacienda*, which lay near the river, and was situated about the centre of the property. In former times over a thousand people had dwelt here, but the population had now dwindled to half that number, consisting principally of the wives and families of the workmen employed by the Corralitos Company on the San Pedro mines.

These old Spaniards did things on a grand scale; a ranch with them was a little principality of which the *hacienda* was the capital. Surrounded by rows of small adobe houses—like some old country alms-houses—there was a *plaza* here that would have made a magnificent drill-ground; a corral capable of holding 10,000 head of cattle; smaller corrals for branding, etc.; wool yards, stables where hundreds of horses might have been bestowed, yards for killing and drying meat, blacksmiths' forges, carpenters' shops, shops of every description, store-houses, a church, acres of long-neglected pleasure-grounds, and ruined quarters and premises of every description, besides those still in fair condition where a strong military force might have been comfortably housed at any time.

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The prettiest feature of the *hacienda* was the Caille des Alamos, or street of cotton-woods, upon which the head-quarters, visitors' quarters, the offices, the laboratory, and store looked. When I was last there the trees were in full leaf, and, meeting above the road, formed a perfect archway which defied the penetration of the sun's most searching rays. "Here in cool grot," with unseen birds in the thick foliage filling the air "with their sweet jargoning," Lieut. Britton Davis, the manager (an old Indian fighter of wide reputation), Sheldon, Neil, Massey, Slocum, Wallace, McGrew, Don Cabeza, "Joe," Follansbee, Murray, Roberts, Posehl, Bunsen, and a few cow-boys, in variously mingled parties, spent many a bright half-hour, spun many a web of yarns, smoked many a score of cigarettes, and submitted to, or took a hand in many an attack of good-humoured

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chaff. The Caille des Alamos, at Corralitos, has grown, I find, into one of those memory pictures that form the pleasantest relics of travel, and many of which I have gathered up and down the world, from the Golden Horn to the Golden Gates, from the bays of Alaska to Table Bay, from the banks of the Rhine to the banks of the Meinam.

Since the vendors had agreed to deliver the steers in the Plyas Valley, only two men had accompanied Murray from the Animas to assist in branding and to watch the "round up," preparations for which were immediately commenced.

FOOTNOTE:

[39] This ranch is, I believe, for sale.

CHAPTER XV. A CRUISE IN NORTHERN MEXICO.—III.

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There are two things that the settler will find gaining a hold on him after a short residence in Mexico, namely, cigarette smoking and indolence. Very few foreigners successfully resist the seduction of the *siesta*. However fierce their original abhorrence of the practice may be, gradually the climate saps and softens it, and induces them to regard it leniently. It is hopeless to attempt to combat the native predisposition to midday slumber. The custom of generations has become an instinct. For the time being all idea of business is as completely relinquished as during the hours of midnight. There is nothing for the best intentioned and most energetic individual to do but wait until in due course the Mexican world wakes again. And this period of enforced idleness it is which proves so fatal to the good intentions of the stranger in the land.

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The laws that govern the attraction of cigarette smoking are more mysterious; but their influence is also more swift and certain. I believe that no one escapes this injurious habit. As for me, I did not endeavour to do so, but avoided a good deal of trouble and self-mortification by falling into it at once; and although a rooted indisposition to sleep in the day-time under any circumstances preserved me from indulging in the *siesta* during any of my trips into Mexico, I must confess that about that period of the day which may be designated the fore-afternoon, a sense of most enjoyable laziness would steal upon me, when not in the saddle.

No doubt there are lazier creatures than the typical Mexican; for all intents and purposes, however, he is lazy enough. He unites with his indolence a constitutional indifference which is very enviable. I have seen the combination described somewhere as "the tropical philosophy of the Mexican." He can be idle without reproaching himself, poverty-stricken without repining. His soul is unvexed by envy or those yearnings of vulgar ambition, not unfrequently mistaken for the still, small voice of conscience, urging us to labour. Life with him is one long *siesta*. In the fulness of our restless hearts let us not condemn his equanimity too hastily. To struggle and strive are not essentially admirable unless the ulterior ends of those who are so occupied are disinterested and noble. And, as a rule, unselfish and noble views, grand schemes, are usually propounded, not by the hard-working citizen, but by the more or less unreliable dreamer, of more or less dubious integrity. The "tropical philosophy" of the Mexican is often evinced in an amusing fashion.

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Whilst we were at Corralitos, the blanket-maker of the *hacienda* came into the office one afternoon on business, and Mr. Neil, the book-keeper, took the opportunity of telling him that, upon their last regulating his accounts, he had been charged by mistake with owing the company three hundred, instead of two hundred and odd dollars. A considerable difference this to one in his position. But the ragged old weaver merely waved his hand, and shrugging his shoulders indifferently, said, with all the air of a prince receiving the intimation: "No hay diferencia." There may have been some truth in this literally, however, inasmuch as, like most Mexican ranch hands, he doubtless intended to die, as he had lived, in debt to his employers.

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The reply of the Corralitos store-keeper to his customers, when they inquired whether the stock of sugar (which had been exhausted some days before) had been renewed—sugar being the very light of a Mexican's life—was also characteristic. "Azucar? No hay, Señores, pero tengo muchos frejoles." Who but a Mexican, when earnestly besought for sugar, could placidly answer that he had none, but had "plenty of beans"? To be able to distinguish any connection between sugar and beans, and offer the latter as a substitute for the former, seems incomprehensible to a practical mind. But philosophers tell us that to be able to generalise is a rare and precious gift, and surely the above incident evinces the possession of it to an unlimited extent.

But for sublime indifference, due, however, not a little in effect to the speaker's manner, a response that I received in Janos is not to be overlooked. I chanced one morning to ask a "tropical philosopher," seated on an erratic boulder in the street, with his *zarapa* covering his ears, and a cigarette between his fingers, what time it was. He lifted his eyelids and gazed at me curiously. "What manner of fool is this that waits on time?" his looks said palpably, and smiling compassionately, his contempt gaining infinitely from the indolent style in which it was expressed, he murmured: "Quien sabe?"

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Nevertheless, very winning traits may be found occasionally in these expatriated descendants of the old Goths. Whence comes the courtly courtesy and dignity displayed by some of the owners of

little insignificant shops in Mexican towns? Uneducated and untravelled, these old fellows have lived all their lives in these out-of-the-way corners of the world, yet the demeanour of some of them is as inimitable as is any other inspiration of true genius. It is neither taught nor copied, but inherited, and is the result of long custom acting upon successive generations. "Bon chien chasse de race." These men are polite for the same reason. Skin deep! you object. Very likely. But surely the beautifully combined colours and variety of artistic designs that adorn the surface of Eastern china, are more pleasant to look upon and live with, than the rough surface, scanty, vulgar, and monotonous ornamentation that offends the eye on Western crockery.

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I have heard the advice given by one who knew Mexico well: "Cuff and curse the peons, bribe the middle classes, and if you can only outvie the old Dons in politeness you are eternally heeled." One is often reminded by the native character of Harrington's lines:

"A tailor, thought a man of upright dealing,
True but for lying, honest but for stealing."

By another who had had a good deal of experience with Mexicans, a broad rule for my guidance was offered to me once, in the following words: "You don't really want to treat them with delicacy. Pretend to—yes, 'pretend,' to beat h—!—the more you pretend the better, if you want to get on with them. But don't let it enter into your heart. Never let them get a chance at your sentiment; keep that dry." The speaker was a shrewd judge of men, and was probably not far wrong. The Colonel dealt with them upon a somewhat similar principle, and I was amused upon one occasion by an example of it.

During a drive through the country, three of us had spent the night at the house of an old fellow at Janos, who had entertained us in a style that was simply delightful—I allude, of course, more to the spirit displayed by our host than to what he had absolutely offered us, for in a land where there is no costly food, and where every one carries his own blankets, and requires only a few square feet of floor to sleep upon, visitors are not a great trouble or expense. Nevertheless, we were unwilling to leave without signifying our appreciation of what had been done for us. Money, however, our host unhesitatingly refused to accept, saying that his house was ours, and that whenever we came to Janos we were to make the freest use of it. Don Cabeza bowed and smiled with politeness not less ceremonious than that of our entertainer. "We were *amigos*," he said; "we understood that; we did not dream of offering to pay for ourselves. We lived in the hope of being able some day to return in Deming the hospitality that we had received in Janos. But the Señor Don Manuel must accept five dollars for the accommodation that he had so kindly afforded our two horses." This was another matter altogether. Don Manuel took the five dollars without raising any objections, but reiterating with even greater fervour his professions of friendship and regard.

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A somewhat similar incident came under my notice elsewhere. Travelling alone, I was recommended to the house of a small trader, whose courtesy and good-nature were perfectly ideal. He was a man of remarkably fine presence, and his manners were superb—easy, courtly, thoughtful, and charming, yet never for a second anything but deliberate and exquisitely dignified. They reminded me of the manners of a thorough-bred Turk, only this man had a pleasant smile, his laugh was not unfrequent, and altogether he lacked much of the solemnity which governs the usual demeanour of the Osmanli.

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I had only to express a fancy, to evince, even unconsciously, a desire, and the means of gratifying it, were they procurable, were not pressed upon me, but unostentatiously placed within my reach and power. And this unwearying attention was paid me in such a way, that it never became in the least degree irritating or oppressive, as is often the case where extreme solicitude is displayed. I spent two afternoons and nights in the house of this gentleman (on my way to and from a ranch that I had gone to look at), but, unfortunately, I was using hired horses which were looked after by my guide, and lodged elsewhere, and being under no obligation to my host for their keep therefore, I was unable to avail myself of Don Cabeza's expedient, when the remuneration that I offered for my own lodging was refused. My host was by no means rich, and I was anxious to reimburse him. It happened that I asked him to change a ten-dollar United States bill into Mexican paper money. I forget the exact value of the Mexican paper dollar at that time, but at any rate it was less than seventy cents American money. My host produced some Mexican notes, and counted me out ten, of the value of one dollar each. Then he paused to see whether this change would satisfy me, and curious to find out what he would do, I folded them up as though contented and thanked him. On his side, he placed my ten-dollar note with the rest of his own bills in his pocket, and bowed gravely, having made at least four dollars, Mexican paper, by the transaction. An odd medley of qualities therefore exists in the Mexican disposition. Traces of the traits that were so marked in their Spanish ancestors still reassert themselves, and side by side with something of the old Castilian pride and manner is found the same avarice that supported the early settlers, under the dangers and hardships which they encountered in order to obtain gold in this country.

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CHAPTER XVI. A CRUISE IN NORTHERN MEXICO.—IV.

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Twenty-six miles from Corralitos lay Casas Grandes, a place containing between two and three thousand inhabitants, and a fair type of the collection of ruins, partial ruins, patched ruins, ruins deserted, ruins inhabited, and a few passable adobe houses, that in Northern Mexico is dignified by the denomination, town. The site occupied by it appears to have been a favourite one from early times, some interesting ruins of Aztec buildings still remaining here, and traces of labour that must be referred to an even more remote date, occurring in the neighbourhood.

I had visited Casas Grandes twice without seeing the ruins (or "Casas Grandes de Montezuma," as they are called), when one morning I found myself in the company of the priest of the village. This functionary spoke some English—some Ollendorf, perhaps I should say—very little of which was intelligible, and still less coherent. But this did not seem to concern him. In an unfortunate moment I invited him to take some bottled beer at the principal store. He finished four bottles gaily, and was preparing to accept a further renewal of the invitation, when it occurred to me that, inasmuch as I did not drink beer, and the division of labour was scarcely a fair one, it would be wise to vary the entertainment. I proposed to visit the ruins, and leaving the shop we proceeded in the direction of the "big houses." The *padre's* somewhat high action, the moment that he began to feel the heat of the sun, reminded me a good deal of what Skippy had said about Mac's dancing: namely, that "he only touched on the high places as he went round the room." The successor of the Apostles dipped and soared, and set to every pig, passer-by, or obstruction in our way, with bewitching grace and lightness. It would not have surprised me at any moment to have seen him pause, cover his face in his mantle, and, after an interval of self-communion, burst into a prophetic denunciation of the degenerate inhabitants of the surrounding hovels. He was in that sort of mood. We reached the ruins, however, without this having occurred. To stand amidst such remarkable traces of past industry and civilisation, in company with an inebriated priest, a mouthpiece of the God of the race that expunged the Aztec authors of them from the list of nations, was not altogether without its moral.

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The ruins still visible lie on the top of the artificial mounds on which the Aztecs often built, and extend over a wide surface. Doubtless they would still be in a state of much greater preservation but for the fact that the Mexicans have been accustomed to borrow materials from them, to employ in the construction of their houses and corrals. I am told that Coronado, who took part in the expedition of Cortez, refers to these remains in his history as being "already old;" but I have had no opportunity of consulting his work. The ruins that I saw seemed to be those of a large palace, or of some building of that nature, and were composed of blocks of a species of adobe cement, 18 x 18 x 24 inches in size. The rooms are long and rather narrow; some plaster still adheres to the walls in the interior of one of them. Judging from the elevation to which the walls still standing rise, the building appears to have been two or three storeys high—noteworthy evidence of architectural advance if the supposition be correct.

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It seemed likely that the natives would from time to time have discovered Aztec relics here, but inquiry brought nothing of the kind to light, save some "*oyas de Montezuma*," earthenware pots of more or less fantastic shapes. The designs in black and red on some of them showed considerable finish and skill, and the things themselves were far superior to anything of the kind made in the country at the present time.

To turn from the Casas Grandes of the Aztecs to the modern town which derives its name from them, is to turn from ruined buildings to ruined people. In this instance the ruined people are certainly the more picturesque. Walls of mud, be they never so mighty, and dust, though it be the dust of ages, have not the charm of one of the little groups of loafers that may be seen at every street corner in a Mexican village. Bronze faces, luminous-eyed; hair, beards, and moustaches black as ravens' wings; big *sombreros* covered with tarnished silver braiding; deep-toned, rich-hued *zarapas*, contrasting with white (?) shirts, and perhaps a rose-coloured knot at the wearer's throat; great jangling spurs, braided breeches, a trailing *lariat*, a wreath or two of cigarette smoke, a bit of green foliage, deep shadows, golden sunlight; and all mellowed with dirt and perfect repose as a picture mellows with age. Turn where you will, such scenes may be found.

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There are streets, it is true; but building and rebuilding have rendered their lines extremely vague. Here a householder has trenched upon the road for space for his pig-sty; there a wattled fence encloses a fowl-yard; yonder is a small corral built of old Aztec blocks; elsewhere, a stable-shed abuts upon the right of way. But none of the domestic animals for whom these offices have been built appear to inhabit them. A lean horse, with ribs protruding, stands, looking like a big knot, at one end of a raw-hide lasso, which, trailing loosely on the ground, is lost to sight inside the door of his master's hotel. Cows repose placidly in the thick dust of the path, chewing an apparently inexhaustible cud. Cocks and hens stalk here, there, and everywhere, in search of their precarious livelihood. There is a large floating population of dogs that have neither name nor home; and the pigs of a Mexican town (save in the instances of those obese monstrosities that are tethered out) have evidently a strolling license to go whithersoever they list. There are busy pigs and idle pigs, clean, dirty, blatant, pensive, friendly, and aggressive pigs, cynical pigs with cold, cruel, alligator eyes, pigs that look the very incarnation of sensualism, and pigs that look chaste and pure as matrons of old Rome.

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Few animals have so human an eye as this unjustly despised benefactor of mankind. For my own part, although reluctantly confessing that vulgar prejudice has educated in me a preference for him when he has fallen into his baconage, I can never entirely overlook the debt of gratitude that is his due. Science has greater records than his; there are figures in statecraft, art, theology, and war, to whom it is the custom of giddy historians to assign greater prominence when recounting the world's great names; but of few can it be said that their unaided genius and research has

awakened the taste of civilised humanity to a source of gratification so universally admitted, and so entirely free from alloy, as has the pig. For what, indeed, is the detector of a new planet, the finder or conqueror of a new continent, beside the great discoverer of the truffle? Not for us is the planet, to new continents we are indifferent. These are vanities for our children to reach and cry for. But, as weary and disillusioned we drive "Life's sad post-horses o'er the dreary frontier of age," and Time, great proselytiser, gently turns the mind to solemn thoughts of turtle-fat and beaver-tail, water-rails and canvas-back ducks, caviare, *foie gras*, some fishes, and a few wines, the truffle will be found to be connected with most of our comfortablest dreams and sweetest hopes. Yet, how have we treated its inspired inventor? Have we cherished him, and encouraged his investigations? No! The sensitive, tip-tilted nose to which we owe so much has been ruthlessly pierced and torn. The iron hath entered into poor piggy's snout. The marvellous faculty possessed by him of going to the root of things is wantonly destroyed. He will never electrify us with another discovery, never present the epicurean world with another truffle. When I speak of the truffle, by the way, I no more allude to the usual dry chips of black leather of English dinner-tables than I should be referring to the London orange, if, with the memory of the glorious fruit of the gardens of Chio in my mind, I spoke of oranges.

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I could linger for pages in any one of these Mexican towns—now sketching a smallpox-marked, villainous-visaged horse-thief, with the seat of a centaur, engaged in mid-street in breaking in a colt, barebacked, and bridled only with a hackamore; and, whilst the animal bucks and bucks untiringly, exchanging jokes and laughter with the idlers near; now depicting a dark-eyed, black-haired, slatternly *señorita* (not beautiful—that is extremely rare—but picturesque certainly), standing with her pail by the old derrick over the public well, in a cotton skirt of pink, a shawl or veil of similar though lighter colour covering her head and shoulders and falling to her waist, the whole vaguely reminding one of a cloud of apple-blossom; now describing the obscure interior of a cottage, and the group of women crouching round the wide, open hearth, crushing maize in the *matate*, or cooking one of their simple dishes; now picturing—But enough! As it is we proceed much too slowly; and many of the towns, ranches, Mormon camps, and scenes that I saw, will find no record in the limits that I have here assigned myself. For, when the originality of a generation may be registered in few lines, no book can be too short.

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CHAPTER XVII. A CRUISE IN NORTHERN MEXICO.—V.

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"Now, boys! now, boys! now, boys! Who—oop! Up you get, now; up you get! No loafing! — and — —! We ain't going to stop here all day! Come! it'll be sun-up directly! I'll be — — — if some of you chaps wouldn't sleep round the clock!" cried McGrew, turning out of his blankets at Ramos.

Those were busy days at Corralitos, and long before daylight the cattle manager's voice was raised thus. Ramos was one of the outlying ranches on the property, of which there were four. One lay to the north of the *hacienda*, and governed the approaches to the ranch from Janos and Ascension; one to the south afforded an effectual check on the formerly unimpeded and consequently free attentions which the good folks of Casas Grandes had been accustomed to devote to Corralitos beef; Barrancas (the ruins of an old mining village) was situated a few miles from Corralitos, and was used as a dairy ranch; Ramos itself lay to the west, on a stream that issued from springs in the foot-hills of the Sierra Madre, and in the neighbourhood of grazing which would make an imported cow that had once seen it sing, "It was a dream," for ever afterwards. Few cattle ran on the eastern half of the Corralitos property, and those few were worked from the San Pedro mining camp or from the main *hacienda*.

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Ramos, once a village, had been one of the oldest settlements in the district, but, "cleaned out" many years ago by Apaches, had never recovered its former importance. At present it consisted of a few more or less ruined adobes (occupied by the *vaqueros* and their families), which formed with the neighbouring corrals, the old church, and the mill that supplied Corralitos with flour, a large square or *plaza*.

A hurried breakfast of coffee, jerked beef, and corn-cake over, every one repaired to the horse corral, into which the cow ponies, about a hundred and fifty in number, had already been driven. Clouds of dust rose in the air as they careered madly round and round in a band, or checked, confused, and scattered, halted, and with ears pricked and manes and tails flying, shied and dodged nervously amidst a score of whirling lassoes. Here they were kicking and biting one another; here, fighting wildly at the end of hair or raw-hide ropes; here, with wisdom born of experience, following quietly after being captured.

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In the *plaza*, too, the scene was a busy one. Before every door there were signs of preparation. It might be that a *vaquero* was vainly coaxing a colt that backed and backed steadily as he attempted to approach it with saddle or bridle; was taking a last reef in the horse-hair *sincha* or girth; coiling his lasso, or fastening it to the pommel of the saddle; bending to accept a light for his cigarette from the brand that his dark-eyed wife had brought to the door. There were men in every condition of endeavouring to mount restive horses; and horses in every stage of enjoying their morning buck; whilst mingled with such brutes were a few corn-fed favourites, whose manners and appearance were of a different type altogether. Women were standing about amongst the men; and future *vaqueros* clung to their skirts, or, having outgrown this support,

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emulated their fathers and swung little ropes, trying to capture every cock and hen, pig or dog, that came within their reach.

Having "saddled up," the crowd moved towards the big corral. The gate poles were shifted; the great herd of steers already collected streamed slowly out, and pointed in the direction in which it was intended that it should graze during the day, was allowed to string out on the plain. A few men were detached to follow and hold it; and the rest, under McGrew's direction, split up into small parties and scattered over the country to "cut out" and bring in, from amongst the cattle they saw, all the yearling and two-year-old steers. It was not always easy to turn these youngsters, and many a short, sharp burst we had over broken ground where a false step would have occasioned immeasurable grief. Fortunately, however, the nags were sure-footed. Such scenes as these recalled many of poor Gordon's lines, and one verse with but slight alteration absolutely describes such a day's work:

"'Twas merry in the glowing morn among the gleaming grass,
To wander as we wandered many a mile,
And blow the cool tobacco cloud, and watch the white wreaths pass,
Sitting loosely in the saddle all the while.

"'Twas merry 'mid the *foot-hills* when we spied the *Ramos* roofs,
To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard,
With a running fire of stock-whips, and a fiery run of hoofs;
Oh! the hardest day was never then too hard."

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In and out amongst the foot-hills we wound and reconnoitred, gathering steers. Where it was found difficult to separate from the bunch with which they ran those of the ages that we required, cows, calves, and bulls were driven along with them and turned in with the others, to be dropped one by one as they endeavoured naturally to escape on the way back to Ramos. In the evening, before mingling the new bands with the herd already held, the few cattle of wrong sex or age that remained amongst the steers were cut out and driven off. As soon as the "round up" was completed, the herd was taken down to the *hacienda* where the branding was to take place.

The following was a gala week at Corralitos. Every man or boy who could beg, borrow, or steal a rope presented himself to take part in the proceedings. As their services were in most cases dispensed with, they sat in flocks on the walls of the corral, and added to the din of shouts and bellowing with their cries and applause. Women, in their best attire, mounted the roofs of houses that dominated the arena, and watched the scene with as much interest as if it had been a bull-fight. And truth to tell, it was not always devoid of excitement. These young Mexican cattle were as wild and quick as mustangs, and in the band of between a hundred and a hundred and thirty that occupied the branding corral at a time, there were always four or five, often more, that were as wicked as wild cats. In the old-fashioned and narrow enclosure it was difficult sometimes to escape their rushes. But fortunately, although a good many men were knocked down, no one was seriously hurt, a dozen *vaqueros* being always ready to lasso or draw the "fighting steer's" attention from the prostrate individual.

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At one end of the corral, near the gate, and the fire for the branding-irons, were a couple of "snubbing-posts;" at the other the cattle remained crowded together when not disturbed. When steers were required two or three men would go in amongst them swinging their *lariats*, and endeavouring to separate a bunch of ten or a dozen to drive towards the posts. Generally, however, they divided off thirty or forty head, sometimes many more, and not unfrequently the whole herd would stampede, and thunder round and round the yard. As they passed, a dozen *lariats* would be launched at them. Perhaps one of the foremost steers would be lassoed round the horns, and his captor succeed in bending the other end of his *riata* round one of the posts; sometimes two steers would be noosed at once, and both ropes hitched to the same post, whilst the herd that followed them would rush on and fall over the tense ropes, a writhing, struggling mass of frantic animals. The noise, the dust, and confusion at such a juncture was indescribable. One by one the steers would extricate themselves, and amidst the "swoosh" of whirling ropes, the bellowing of their fellow cattle, and the cries of the *vaqueros*, would make a few false points or feints from side to side, and spring away to the other end of the corral. Kicking and rearing frantically, as they entangled themselves and one another more and more inextricably in the ropes that held them, the two steers that remained would struggle on, until in answer to the shout, "La cola! la cola!" gripped by the tails, they were turned adroitly on their sides, and covered by half-a-dozen fellows holding horns, legs, and tail, and all vociferating, "Hierro! hierro!" With a diamond A iron Murray would hasten from the fire then, and set the Colonel's mark upon the right hip; whilst with a Corralitos brand, similar to that already borne by them on the hip, McGrew would follow and score the opposite shoulder—thus venting, or neutralising the meaning of the brand altogether.

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Not every one who had secured a steer succeeded in attaching his lasso to a snubbing-post. Under these circumstances, leaning back, with his feet set forward, the luckless one was dragged, sliding, after the rest of the herd. Sometimes the steer got away with the rope; sometimes its owner fell, and still clinging to it, was tugged about through dust six inches deep, until, in answer to his agonised cries of "Otra sogá! otra sogá!" his companions came to his assistance, and entangled in a network of *lariats*, the two-year-old was brought to ground, or taken to a snubbing-post.

When three or four were being marked at the same time, the order was, "No las suelten!" until

the last one was finished, lest those who were occupied with steers as yet unbranded should be taken at a disadvantage by those loosed. But at a given signal the men would all rise together, dodge behind the posts, make for the walls, or clinging to the tails of the newly-marked victims, start them fairly towards the rest of the herd. Amongst the better *vaqueros* it was a point of honour not to mount a wall, unless absolutely obliged to do so. But brought up from earliest childhood amongst cattle, as these fellows are, they display a degree of confidence and address in a corral which is the best refuge they can have. I saw one deep-chested, gorilla-built fellow, when charged in mid-corral, wait coolly for the young steer, catch him by the horns with both hands, and giving back a little presently check him altogether. A second later he sprang aside, brought his lasso down on the flanks of the animal, and with a shout started him on again. Frequently, instead of quitting them when they were turned loose, the boys would sit astride of the steers they had been holding, and "stay with them" as they went bucking down the corral towards their fellows, until the proximity of these latter warned the riders to roll off and "dust."

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Throughout the whole proceedings with a running fire of "Carambas! carajos!" etc., the air was filled with the warning shouts, "Cuidado! cuidado! El Prieto! El Pinto! or El Colorado!" as now a black, now a piebald, now a red steer, that "meant business," left the herd and charged some one, amidst the laughter and applause of the onlookers. Some really fast times were made over short distances; Britton Davis and I distinguishing ourselves in this particular occasionally. As for the Colonel and Joe, they sat upon the wall and chaffed us, the former keeping tally of the ages and number of the cattle branded, in conjunction with a representative of the Corralitos Company.

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The foregoing proceedings are not mentioned as in any way typical of what would take place on a well-ordered ranch in the States, where things were worked systematically and carefully. No attempt had been made until quite recently to train the Mexican hands employed on the Corralitos ranch, and they were consequently extremely rough in their style of handling cattle. Lassoing steers by the fore-legs when they are running, in order to have the satisfaction of seeing them turn a complete somersault, may commend itself to the mind of the untutored Mexican cow-puncher, but it is dangerous, and as a rule forbidden where broken legs, broken horns, etc., are taken into consideration. The Mexicans in California are amongst the finest cow-hands in the United States, and although they are a better type of men as a rule than those in Sonora, Chihuahua, and Coahuila, there is no reason why in course of time the latter should not become good workmen also.

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During this week work commenced in the corral at day-break, and about a hundred steers were branded before the triangle rang for breakfast. Recommencing shortly after nine, branding was continued until dinner at 12.30. In the afternoons, Lieut. Britton Davis, the manager, and I, generally forsook the corrals and went duck-shooting.

The duck-shooting at Corralitos was very good and extremely easy. Any day—at any rate during winter—a fair shot with two guns could have killed fifty or sixty couple. We never went out until the afternoon, and then, in the course of two or three hours, killed about twenty or twenty-five couple—that, too, in the constantly-disturbed home reaches of the river. The variety of ducks here was scarcely less remarkable than their number.

Accompanied by a retriever in the form of a boy mounted on an old pony, we either walked along the banks under cover of the cotton-woods or willow-trees, or sitting down, directed our attendant to make circuits of a few hundred yards and drive the birds to us. In either case we saw far more than we required.

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I was sitting smoking one afternoon on one of the brick seats outside the offices, in the Calle de los Alamos, when a company of Mexican soldiers marched in from Casas Grandes. They looked so perfectly "fit" after their dusty tramp of twenty-six miles in a hot sun, that I was remarking on it, when half-a-dozen women, some of whom carried infants, and all of whom had children trotting beside them, came literally "sailing" in after them. They were the wives of some of the men, and they and their children had travelled the same distance in the same manner. It would seem that the walking powers of the Mexican are second only to those of the Apache, and if what I heard of them was correct, Mexican soldiers are immeasurably superior in this respect to any other regular soldiers that I know of. It was no unusual thing, I was told, for troops to march in a day from Casas Grandes to a mining camp near the north-east corner of the Corralitos property (the name of which I have forgotten), the distance being forty-five miles over a rough trail. I have heard it asserted two or three times in open company, without question, that during the war between Mexico and the States, 22,000 men under General Santa Ana marched twenty leagues in twenty-four hours, and then fought all day at Buena Vista, doing this extraordinary work on a little parched corn, ground and soaked in water with a little sugar. Averse though he may be, therefore, to continuous labour, the Mexican is able to exert himself to some purpose "upon a compelling occasion."

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Whether it was that the bare discussion of these feats made some of us thirsty, I know not, but an amicable rivalry in the manufacture of milk punches sprang up in the store that afternoon, with the result that one of the manufacturers had to be assisted to bed before supper-time. He vowed of course on the following day, that it was "the milk that did it." It always is the "milk," or the "lemon," or the "sugar," or something of that kind.

À propos of the store, by the way, one of the assistants there, a very handsome and gentlemanly boy, was named Ponce de Leon. It seemed odd to find a namesake of the celebrated Marquess of Cadiz—the light of Andalusian chivalry and pride of Ferdinand and Isabella's court, the captor of Alhama and leading figure in the reconquest of Granada—serving out coffee or sugar for a few

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cents to peasants. But many a name that rings in Spanish history is borne in Mexico by men quite as insignificantly placed as this.

I had drifted out of the noisy store into the cool, quiet Calle de los Alamos, and was standing talking to Joe when an ambulance containing three Americans drove up. As they descended it appeared that one of them was handcuffed and manacled. The prisoner was Sam Rider, who had been captured by Mexican soldiers in a small village further south, after a desperate struggle in a little wine-shop, and was now returning in charge of the Marshal of Georgetown to be tried for killing the Deputy there. It is not easy to swagger under the embarrassment of handcuffs and irons, but Sam made a desperate effort to appear unconcerned. Before he left next morning I took the opportunity of giving him Squito's message.

"'He knows!' I know? What do I know?" and the man's bold, dark, prominent, and rather glassy eyes looked perplexedly in mine. Suddenly a light of intelligence grew in them, and I could see that he had caught the girl's meaning. He shrugged his shoulders irritably, and was silent for a moment. "Oh, ——! D—n Squito! It seems like she'd coppered[40] me. Ever since she—since I seen that gal, luck's gone dead against me. If you see Squito, tell her I don't 'know' nothing—and don't want. Blast Squito!"

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Poor little Squito! It was hardly worth while that her first love should have been wasted thus. What wonder that

"—our frothed out life's commotion
Settles down to Ennui's ocean"

as often as it does!

Full of regret at leaving so delightful a place, and of gratitude for the exceeding kindness and hospitality that we received at the hands of Lieut. Britton Davis and his associates, we took our departure from Corralitos as soon as we had seen the herd of steers started. We almost had to leave Joe behind. As usual, he wore us out waiting whilst he looked about for some more old women and children to tip. On the return journey, we made a detour by a couple of extremely pretty ranches belonging to Mr. Scobell, and Lord Deleval Beresford and Mr. Corbet, but finally arrived again at Ascension, where we were received effusively by Don Juan Carrion.

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FOOTNOTE:

[40] To "copper" a stake at faro, is to cover it with a small check, which signifies that the card selected is backed to lose, not win.

CHAPTER XVIII. A CRUISE IN NORTHERN MEXICO.—VI.

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On this occasion we encountered in his shop a character well known in this part of the world, one "Apache Bill" by name, who was at present residing in Ascension, but had been absent when we previously passed through the town. "Apache" was a ragged, six-foot, dark-eyed, dark-haired, bottle-nosed, bibulous-looking, able-bodied "loafer," who wore mocassins *in town*, and whose hands were never out of his pockets save for the purpose of lifting a glass, rolling a cigarette, or making an elaborate bow. He had a glib tongue, and spoke Spanish admirably, with the language having picked up something of the flowery politeness, though not the dignity, of the better class of native. It is odd how often good linguists lack common sense and stability. I have noticed this frequently all the world over. A trim tongue and a ragged coat is always a suspicious combination anyhow, and this instance was no exception to the rule. Bill was a fine, candid, unaffected liar. I have encountered many men celebrated for their address in the ways of untruthfulness, who, to keep him in sight, would have been forced to take a long pull at the bottle, and launch out very recklessly indeed. His artless style reminded me a good deal of a Levantine servant that I once had, who had a great gift in this way, and who, upon my remonstrating energetically with him one day for so constantly abusing it, said plaintively: "Mais, Monsieur, c'est mon habitude."

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Apache had worked once on a ranch of the Colonel's, but finding that cattle were not to be handled by the simple exercise of eloquence, nor posts set and pastures fenced in by the profession of virtuous convictions, had not remained long in his service. When I say "worked," I believe I do him an injustice. It is not on record that he ever did that, save on one occasion, and this was when the authorities at Ascension condemned him to provide a dollar a day to keep and cure a Mexican whom he had wounded in a drunken brawl. Dollars were not easily earned there, for labour was cheap, and a dollar a day for lying in bed was the best billet that that Mexican had ever had. As may be supposed, he was in no hurry to get well, and the matter (over which Bill waxed positively tearful when he alluded to it) was long the subject of amusement and laughter in the neighbourhood.

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At one time he had been chief of scouts in an Apache war, his knowledge of the country in Northern Mexico being really considerable. In this capacity he had been brought into contact with Navajo Bill. The patronising style in which he talked of this personage was delicious.

"Navajo Willy?" he said; "oh, yes, I know Willy—a good boy, sir, a good boy!—ignorant, of course—no education, you know, sir; but he means well—he does what he can. He served under me once, but I found him quite useless. If I sent him out anywhere, he only got lost. However, I wasn't hard on him. We were down at Lake Palomas once, and General Bewel wanted a messenger to take a note over to a detachment of troops camped about ten miles off. So I started Willy off. I showed him the way myself. But it was no good—not a bit. In two hours he came back; *he* couldn't find it. I sent a Mexican then, and when he brought the answer, I gave it to Willy. 'Here, Willy,' said I, 'take it to Bewel and say that you fetched it.'"

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In point of age there was but little to choose between the two Bills, both being men of about five-and-forty. In conversational talents there was also some resemblance between them, although, in all other particulars, Navajo was an immeasurably better man than his former chief.

Apache's anxiety in behalf of his children was very touching. Paternal solicitude was a fine theme for him, and he often enlarged upon it. "There's the boys," he would say, "they're growing up, sir, and down here I can't give them the education they ought to have. I want to take 'em back to do their schooling in the States. If I could only get some regular work there—I shouldn't care how hard it was, or how poor the pay was—I would slave like a nigger to get my children well educated. And there's the girls; this ain't any place to raise girls; they don't get any virtue into 'em here. It ain't right. I do what I can, of course; I try to teach 'em what's right, and I set 'em a good example. 'Be good to your mother, boys,' I always say; 'think of your mother, and be kind to her. If you get any money, give her half. And be honest! No matter how poor a man is, let him be honest.' My honour—my honour is what I look at! And I try to bring the boys up the same way. Am I right, gentlemen?—I leave it to you." We naturally applauded these noble sentiments. "Well, then, let's take a drink on it—let's hit her a lick;" and reaching for the bottle, he would proceed to fill all our glasses, and his own too.

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He formally introduced us to every other man who entered the shop, usually concluding the introduction with some such remark as: "This is a good man, gentlemen; he used to be *presidente* of the town. Treat him, gentlemen; he may be useful to you some day." Treating the new acquaintance necessitated treating Bill as well. I merely note this as a coincidence, and do not in the least degree wish to insinuate that any base thought of self influenced his interest in our welfare.

To pass the time in the evening we had him into our room to talk to us; and, as he had never seen Joe before, represented the latter as being a "tender-foot," or new-comer on the frontier. Since Joe was much better dressed than the rest of us, and, talking but little, did not betray his familiarity with frontier life, Apache believed us, and anxious to astonish "a gentleman from New York," surpassed himself. We had provided a bottle of *mascal* to prime him with, but maliciously delayed producing it. By degrees, as he talked, his throat got drier and drier; he coughed and expectorated, and expectorated and coughed, and crossed first one leg and then the other, shifting in his seat, and fidgeting to such an extent that finally Don Cabeza could bear the exhibition of so much torture no longer, and told Navajo to hand him the bottle. With a look of gratitude that would have softened the heart of a Thug, Bill raised it to his lips. When he set it down again he had almost exchanged conditions with it. Now he was another man, and for the benefit of the "tender-foot," he "spread himself."

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"Tracks! Well, when it came to tracking, he believed that he 'took the cake.' Tracks! —! Why, he could tell whether they were made by a horse or a mare, and there was a slight difference, too, in geldings' tracks, which he would be only too glad to show the gentleman any day. He could tell whether the horse that he was tracking ran loose, or was ridden, packed, or led, and whether it belonged to a white man or an Indian. He could tell from the 'sign,' what part of the country, even what particular ranch it had fed on. It was a fact, that when he had handled cattle in Colorado, and in a part, too, where half-a-dozen herds ran together, and ranged over the same country, he had never wasted time in following up strays belonging to his neighbours, because he knew the track of every hoof in his own herd!"

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But enough of Bill! He was fairly started now, and he did himself credit. *In vino veritas*, they say. But in Apache there was no *veritas*, and so the *mascal* could not affect him in this way. I have often thought that this proverb would have made an excellent text for one of Charles Lamb's "Popular Fallacies."

One of the horses fell sick during the night, and it became necessary to purchase a substitute before we set out next morning. This delayed us for some time. When finally we started with the invalid in tow, the Colonel discovered an ambition to invent a short cut, which took us three or four miles astray. Returning, we had proceeded a mile or more along the road that we did know, when it was found that the grain-sack had been left behind, and consequently we were forced to go back to Ascension. We had started a little "on edge" that morning, and we reappeared at Don Juan's in the severest silence. Unconscious of his danger, that worthy taunted us with our oversight and made merry at our expense.

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"He's taking big chances if he only knew it, ain't he?" said Navajo grimly, jerking his thumb towards Juan.

"Don't you feel, Joe, like getting down and beating him up a little, eh?" drawled the Colonel. "Couldn't you swing him around by the heels some—dust the side-walk, and knock a few flies off the wall with him?"

"No," replied Joe sturdily; "I haven't got any kick against Don Juan. He has treated us like a gentleman. *He* didn't leave the grain behind, and *he* didn't take us any short cut. Quite right, Don Juan, 'No valle nada,' these chaps, eh?—They can't remember anything."

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But long before we pitched camp in the evening, we had had a hearty laugh over the morning clouds.

The Boca Grande was an "Indian place," and strategically speaking there was no point in it that was fit to camp in, no point where, aided by cotton-woods, willow-bushes, cane-brake, long grass, broken ground, or the river bed, a band of Indians might not have approached unobserved within a few yards of a traveller. We trusted to luck, therefore, and chose a site without reference to the Apaches. The odds, of course, were always long against their showing at any given place, but there was never any certainty about it; and this was one of their haunts.

"Indians!" said the Colonel when some one alluded to them. "Well, if I kill four I shall be satisfied. If they come we can't help it; but they'd better not!—they won't. They know more in a day than we could tell them in a week. What a battle it would be, though, if they did come! Gettysburg and those kind would be just flirtations to it. There'd be you charging 'em; and Navajo, he'd get around behind them, and take them in rear, and scare the quill feathers out of them. And there'd be Joe raking them fore and aft, and enfilading them, and out-mancœuvring them, and reconnoitring and changing his front, and just a-sousing it to them red-hot all the time. And as for me, I'd sit right here on this stone, under the bank, and sing to them, just to lure them on, like the Lorelei, and let you boys have all the glory of killing them. Or, maybe, I'd get on one of the six-shooter horses—a six-shooter horse is a heap better than a six-shooting gun in these cases—I'd get on one of them and go right back to Ascension to fetch up some help for you. I'm not wanting to put myself forward, anyhow; there isn't anything mean about me."

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"That'd be all right, Colonel," said Navajo; "we should know where to find you when there was any fighting to be done. The boys do say that you're on hand *then*—sure!"

"How do you want these potatoes cut up?" irrelevantly inquired Joe, who was phlegmatically attending to business, and peeling some potatoes for supper.

"Cut them up just as you'd cut up the Apaches, Joe," said the Colonel.

"Well, how are they going to be cooked?"

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"Saratoga chips are good enough for me," suggested the modest Navajo.

"Saratoga chips go then. Joe, you hear what the gentleman says," observed Don Cabeza. He was "bossing" the cooking himself that evening, and at that moment was engaged in stirring some beans that he was frying in the Mexican style, bacon-fat being substituted for lard. Cook-like he tasted them now. "Well, there!" he ejaculated admiringly—"there! When I get through with this, it will make you laugh. You boys won't know whether you are here, or sitting at the corner table at Delmonico's."

"No," said Joe, with a twinkle of dry humour in his kindly eyes, "we shan't know the difference. I always have beans and bacon-fat at Delmonico's—when there's enough to go round, that is."

"If we had only got into camp earlier, we might have shot some ducks," regretted Bill.

"There isn't anybody here that could have made a duck stew," remarked Joe gravely.

"Can you make a duck stew, Colonel?" I asked laughingly—for this was his *chef-d'œuvre* in culinary art.

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"Can I make a duck stew! Can I make a *duck* stew!" he echoed rapturously. "Well, you may talk about your chickabiddies, and you chickaweewees, and your Smart Alicks, and your Joe-dandies and daisies, but when it comes to making a duck stew, I'm a darling! I can show you a trick with a hole in it. I don't want to make any boast about it, though; I can't help cooking well any more than Joe can help cooking badly. It's a gift. But duck stews! Lord! I can make a stew with ducks, and teal, and snipe, and potatoes, and chilies, and—and things of that kind, that will make a rheumatic man go out after dinner, and begin jumping backwards and forwards over the house, he'll feel so good."

Joe grunted disparagingly. "If it weren't any better than this coffee, he wouldn't jump far before he lay down and died," he observed, grimly.

"The coffee is bad," assented the *chef*; "it's bad coffee. But all that you have to do, Joe, is to step right down to the store, close by here, and get some more. There is no reason why you should put up with anything bad when you're camping out in the middle of a big city like this." And he proceeded to prove conclusively, that the fact that the coffee was of inferior quality, was entirely the fault of the Deming store-keeper.

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"When we get back, then, we must just drive up and shoot the handle off his door," said Joe cheerfully.

"Why, cer'nly," chimed in Navajo; "like those chaps used to up to Lone Mountain."

The particular incident to which he referred had taken place at a little mining village in New Mexico. It had become a custom amongst certain of the miners, when they came into town on Sunday "to have a time," sooner or later in the day to indulge in revolver practice at the handle of

the door of Platt's saloon. Platt could not be said exactly to have encouraged this; but since it brought him custom, and opposition might have transferred the attentions of his clients from the door-handle to himself, he submitted to it with more or less grace. One day he engaged a quiet and industrious youth—a Dutch boy—to assist him in his business, and as he intended to be absent from home on the following Sunday, he informed him of the above circumstance. The good youth evinced a disposition to resist the ungodly miners. Upon the whole, Platt counselled him not to do so, but at his request left a Winchester and six-shooter with him, and gave him free permission to exercise his own discretion in the matter. On Saturday evening the young bartender removed an adobe brick from the wall beside the door, and commending himself to Heaven, slept peacefully, confident of the justice of his cause. The following morning the miners appeared as usual in town, and drank freely. But when the boy demanded payment for what he supplied them with, they took advantage of his youth, and replied that "There was no hurry about it, for he was still young; they thought that they might perhaps pay him some day. He might ask them again when his moustache had grown a little mite." Things got lively, and finally they repaired to the street and commenced shooting at the door-handle. This was where the real trouble originated. But it was soon over. Putting the muzzle of his Winchester through the loophole, the bar-tender began to shoot, too. When he had finished, five of his late customers lay stretched out on the road, four of whom died immediately, and the fifth shortly afterwards. It is recorded that so pleased was Mr. Platt with his assistant's devotion that he advanced him rapidly in his service, and subsequently took him into partnership with him. I suppose that he married his master's daughter eventually, and lived happily ever afterwards.

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The history is, probably, the American version of the everlasting tale of that artful young clerk who dropped a pin unnoticed in the presence of his master, the great merchant, and when the latter was looking, ostentatiously picked it up again and set it in the collar of his coat.

A rather amusing yarn followed this, detailing an incident that had taken place at the little neighbouring village of Eureka. Mr. McKees, the superintendent of a mine there, had nailed up a board notice outside the office, forbidding revolver practice on the premises. News of this was brought by some one who had seen it to a saloon hard by, where Black Jack, Russian Bill, Broncho Billy, and some other well-known "rustlers" were drinking.

"How's that for high, boys?" concluded the narrator, when he had told his tale.

"That's on top," declared Black Jack; "that takes the cake. It's coming to something, if a chap can't shoot his gun off where he likes in a free country."

"It's a perfect outrage," said Broncho.

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"Let's go right down and attend to it at once," proposed Russian Bill.

Black Jack assented, suggesting that Russian Bill, who was a scholar, should read the notice aloud, and he himself then shoot it off.

They started, two or three of their associates, armed with Winchesters, going with them, to occupy a position behind the "dump," near the mouth of the shaft, and see fair play. Russian Bill having read the notice, Black Jack drew a long six-shooter, and opened fire. The office was constructed of boards, and afforded but little protection, therefore, to its inmates. The first shot spoiled the leg of the chair in which the superintendent of the mine was seated; the second lodged in his desk. But Mr. McKees had already left the room, and gone to "take the air" upon the hill-side, nor did he return until the nobility and gentry who were visiting him had shot the board off, and carried the splinters away in triumph.

Black Jack was a fine shot, and remarkably quick. He prided himself upon his ability as a hair-cutter, and was jealous of any rivalry in this line. A friend of his once had the temerity to advance his own claims to distinction as a barber.

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"Oh, pshaw, Jack!" he said, "I can cut hair every durned bit as good as you."

But the words had scarcely left his lips when there was a report, and a bullet ploughed through his locks, just grazing the skin, and leaving a bald track.

"I guess you can't," rejoined Black Jack. "Look at that!"

Such tales as these are current coin out West, and the number of them in circulation is countless. How far they are true no one can pretend to say, nor does it matter much.

We sought the blankets early, and were up again before it was light; indeed, by the time that

"Night was flung off like a mourning suit,
Worn for a husband or some other brute,"

we had almost finished breakfast.

The gray was worse to-day. As we proceeded he grew weaker and weaker, and less and less disposed to follow, until, ten miles from Smith's Wells, we were obliged to leave him. The halter was removed, and the tried, but now tired out servant, that had been our companion on many a long trip, was left alone in the midst of an arid plain. The breeze had subsided; the afternoon was growing mellow and still; on the summit of a rise, with the blue sky and sun behind him, the old nag stood still, in mid trail, looking stupidly after us as we receded. Without changing his

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position, he turned his head from side to side, to gaze around him at the desert once. Then, seeming to have realised that we had deserted him, and in that one brief survey of the ground to have recognised that his position was hopeless, his glance followed us again. There was something touching in the immovability with which he accepted the situation.

It was easy to imagine a world of pathos in his heavy attitude and lowered crest, to picture immeasurable reproach in his great swimming eyes—eyes that had never looked viciously at any one. Poor beast! He could not even ask: "Did I ever abandon you when you were sick?" Again and again I looked back. The wheel-ruts and trail led my glance straight to him. The black shadow cast before him on the ground seemed like a thing of evil omen. He looked so forlorn. However simple the illustration may be, there is always a fascination in the old, cruel tale—Deserted. And to desert even a horse in extremity seems cowardly. However, we yet expected to see him again.

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"Has the old pillar of salt started after us?" inquired the Colonel prosaically.

"No." Nor did he move as long as we remained in sight.

"He'll be along directly—just as soon as he has rested. You can't leave those old cusses behind when they know the road."

Don Cabeza was right. Before we had finished supper at Smith's Wells, the horse appeared at the drinking-trough there.

It was the last typical evening that I expected to spend on the frontier, after nine months of almost uninterrupted life amongst rancheros and miners, cow-boys and teamsters, gamblers and traders, and all the nondescript flotsam and jetsam of humanity that drift "out West" from the cradles of mankind, and find rough rest upon the shores of unskilled labour. A curious kaleidoscopic field of character lies here. Men grow as chance will have them. No rules of etiquette or fashions trim and compress them into stereotyped moulds. At least they retain some originality, and are not wholly copyists. Rough characters may be found amongst the many fine fellows that one meets, and to spare—men who are narrow-minded, bigoted, and intolerant to a degree that is extraordinary. But since they make no pretence to be what they are not, at least they are not vulgar or snobbish. However marked the faults in any nature may be, if in the main it is natural, it can never be wholly repulsive. The roughest cow-boy is a gentleman by comparison with the effeminate New York dude, who copies his very soul from a flash model in London, or the "society man" of San Francisco who in turn imitates the dude. The one, at any rate, is true metal of its kind, the others are of the poorest kind of pinchbeck.

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There is a great charm in the climate "out West." The sun gilds everything. It matters little how poor a cabin be, if the owner live almost entirely outside it. Old Sol sheds a halo of contentment everywhere. A scarcely minor attraction exists in the sense of freedom and independence—of empire, in fact, that the vast stretches of open country which occupy most of the West beget in the native of a land where walls and hedges, gates, fences, and trespass notices bristle at every turn, and create a constant and irritable impulse to lift the elbows and draw deep breaths.

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Supper was over, and news of the old gray's reappearance had taken us out into the open air.

"The sun was gone now, the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf—."

A certain clear obscurity was gathering upon the *vega*; the outlines of things were unnaturally distinct, but their shading was becoming confused. Where the sun had set, still glowed a luminous field of amber light. And in the vault thus formed hung tiny isolated clouds of various tints like crushed blossoms from an Indian garden. Hills above hills and long cloud-reefs were mingled together on the near horizon, and stretched farther and farther away until the former resembled silhouettes of tissue paper, the latter something even more delicate still.

Sixty, seventy, eighty, a hundred miles of country lay before us. And over all the twilight deepened, slowly invading even the mountain-tops, where still some light clung tenderly. Once more the impalpable canopy of darkness drooped over the quiet plains—tissues of gray dusk and soft blue sky, shot with a silver thread of moonlight, all tasselled by dim stars, and crossed by the filmy figure of a bat. With an amnesty of sweet repose Night had begun her reign, but her dream subjects flocked to her sable standard swiftly; the haunted air became filled with the vague population of fancy, and Silence was revealed in all its eternal nakedness, that for once Sound had lost the power to hide. It was a strange night—a night when the spirits of Destiny seemed to hover near, and Mystery to be half-indifferent even if her veil were lifted, and her secrets penetrated—a night that inspired odd speculation. But the voice of the coyote, baying unceasingly in the silence—fit symbol of human interest in the world—kept calling us back, calling us back to earth, and let no thought escape and fairly rise above the dust and ashes of this life.

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THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SADDLE AND MOCASSIN ***

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