

A RIDE WITH KIT CARSON
THROUGH THE GREAT AMERICAN DESERT
AND THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

BY GEORGE D. BREWERTON.

IT was some time in the boisterous month of March, 1848, that I found myself on board the good ship Barrington, then lying in the harbor of San Francisco; but only waiting the arrival of passengers to take her departure for Monterey, Santa Barbara, and San Pedro; the last-named port being the place, which I hoped, with the assistance of favoring winds, shortly to reach. I say I found myself on board the Barrington; now be it understood, that my finding myself in so unstable a position as that of a ship's deck, was the result of no particular whim or fancy of mine own, but rather in accordance with the mandate of an authoritative old gentleman, then holding military sway in the Californias: which mandate having come in true official form, duly signed and sealed by order, I, as an humble lieutenant in the service of "Uncle Sam," felt bound to obey its requirements; with (to quote from the document aforesaid) "as little delay as possible."

San Francisco, in those palmy days of the olden time—at least five years ago—was not even a dim foreshadowing of the present capital of our new "El Dorado," and, consequently, the departure of the only vessel boasting three masts then in the harbor, was a kind of epoch, or red-letter day, with the majority of the population. Even the usually deserted beach was enlivened by parties of sauntering Californians, who watched our movements with a sort of idle curiosity, smoking their eternal "cigaritos," or uttering an occasional "caramba," as the strong wind sweeping down the bay, disturbed the sand and dust, and sent its blinding shower against their faces.

But adieu to these discursive observations. Here come our tardy fellow-voyagers—but three in number, it is true—but far too important personages to be left behind. Our anchor rises rapidly to the bows, the seamen singing gayly to the chorus of "Fare you well, California gals; cheerily, oh cheerily." And now, the Yerba Buena hills having given back the last echo, we lose our hold upon the oozy bottom, our white wings are fairly spread and fairly filled, and San Francisco, with its sandy streets, and low adobe houses, becomes a mere speck in the distance.

But as it is my purpose to carry the reader with me to a dry and torrid land; and as I have no desire to toss him upon the long surging swells of the Pacific, I will leave it to his imagination to fill up the hiatus of ten days of alternate ship and shore, storms and sunshire, head winds and fair; with all the weary catalogue of indescribable nothings which while away the hours for the traveler over the trackless roads of ocean; suffice it to say, that on the morning of the eleventh day from our departure we anchored safely in the harbor of San Pedro, some five hundred miles down the coast.

The town of San Pedro, at the time of which I am writing, consisted of only one rancho, or Mexican farm-house, then owned and occupied by an adventurous American, who received us with great hospitality, and very kindly offered my friend Dr. D. and myself, horses to convey us to the Pueblo de los Angeles (City of the Angels), a town some sixteen miles inland; at which place I expected to meet the future companions of my journey, and make the necessary preparations for encountering the perils of a trip through the Great Sahara of North America.

It is difficult for the quiet denizens of a city, whose most memorable experience of life on shipboard is confined to the miseries of a rough night in a steamer off Point Judith, to appreciate the almost ecstatic feelings of delight which stir the heart of a landsman, upon being released from the narrow limits of a ship's deck and cabin. The very earth seems greener, and the sky brighter; in fact, all nature seems to be in holiday-trim, and to have ordered a new suit in honor of his arrival; at least, it so appeared to me when, on the day following our landing, the rising sun saw, or "might have seen" (as a distinguished modern novelist says), my friend and myself mounted upon noble horses, and all prepared to take the road for Los Angeles. As usual in such cases, our host and his family had turned out in force to make their *adios* and see us off; and, considering the number of persons, I do not believe that I ever witnessed a greater scene of noise and confusion. Every discordant sound, of which a California farm-yard is so prolific, seemed present, and doubly magnified to grace the occasion. Donkeys brayed, Mexicans chattered, cocks crew, every horse in the corral, or horse-yard, seemed determined to give us his farewell neigh; and amid the almost stunning din I could with difficulty catch the parting words of our host: "Good-by; never trouble yourselves about the horses—but take good care of my saddles." These latter articles, I would remark, being then, in the almost primitive state of society existing in California, regarded by their owners as more valuable than the animals who carried them.

The whole, or nearly the whole of our road to Los Angeles, traversed a rolling prairie, sometimes dotted with groves of stunted trees, but for the most part presenting long slopes and ridges of grassy fields, rich at that season of the year in flowers of every dye; while here and there appeared a rancho, where the cattle lying lazily in the shade, and the children playing at their favorite game of lassoing each other, gave animation to the scene, and completed the painting of a beautiful and ever-varying picture. Putting our good steeds to their work, they soon took a long and steady gallop, which brought us rapidly over the ground; and ere many hours had elapsed, the white-walled buildings of Los Angeles opened upon our view.

Leaving my friend at the door of his own domicile, I wended my way to the mess-room of the military gentlemen stationed there, and

received from the dragoon and volunteer officers a kind and hospitable welcome. Mr. Christ-



STREET IN THE PUEBLO LOS ANGELES.

opher Carson (or, as he is better known, Kit Carson), the guide and leader of the party which I was to accompany, not being in town, although soon expected, I was obliged to defer my preparations until I could obtain the aid of his advice and experience; in the mean time I amused myself with visiting every point of interest about the town, riding out, smoking, and now and then flirting with some fair "señorita," thus managing, between pleasant friends and dark eyes, to pass the few days prior to Carson's arrival pleasantly, if not profitably.

The Pueblo de Los Angeles has a population of several hundred souls; and boasts a church, a padre, and three or four American shops; the streets are narrow, and the houses generally not over one story high, built of adobes, the roofs flat and covered with a composition of gravel mixed with a sort of mineral pitch, which the inhabitants say they find upon the sea-shore. This mode of roofing gives a perfectly waterproof covering, but has the rather unpleasant disadvantage of melting in warm weather, and in running down, fringes the sides of the buildings with long *pitchicles* (if we may be allowed to coin a word), thus giving to the houses an exceedingly grotesque appearance; when the heat is extreme, pools of pitch are formed upon the ground. The adobe is a brick, made of clay, and baked in the sun. Walls built of this material, from the great thickness necessary to secure strength, are warmer in winter, and cooler in summer, and are therefore better adapted to the climate than either wood or ordinary brick. In most respects, the town differs but little from other Mexican villages.

Just as I was beginning to weary of the comparatively idle life which we were leading, a friend informed me that Carson had arrived, and would shortly join our party at the mess-room. The name of this celebrated mountaineer had become in the ears of Americans residing in California a familiar household word; and I had frequently listened to wild tales of daring feats which he had performed. The narrators being oftentimes men noted for their immense powers of endurance, I had caught, almost in-

sensibly, a portion of their enthusiasm, and loved to dwell upon the theme. It is scarcely wonderful, then, that I should in my mind's eye (a quiet little studio of mine own, where I conjure up all sorts of fancies) not only sketch, but, by degrees, fill up the details of a character which I thought must resemble the guide and companion of the adventurous Frémont. My astonishment therefore may better be conceived than described when I turn both sides of the canvas to the reader, by drawing the picture as I had dreamed it out, and then endeavoring to portray the man as he really is.

The Kit Carson of my *imagination* was over six feet high—a sort of modern Hercules in his build—with an enormous beard, and a voice like a roused lion, whose talk was all of—

"Sturring incidents by flood and field."

The *real* Kit Carson I found to be a plain, simple, unostentatious man; rather below the medium height, with brown, curling hair, little or no beard, and a voice as soft and gentle as a woman's. In fact, the hero of a hundred desperate encounters, whose life had been mostly spent amid wildernesses, where the white man is almost unknown, was one of Dame Nature's gentlemen—a sort of article which she gets up occasionally, but nowhere in better style than among the backwoods of America.

I will not attempt to sketch Kit's earlier life and adventures; Frémont has drawn him with a master's hand, and my inexperienced pen may not improve upon his description.

In making the foregoing remarks, I have only offered my humble testimonial to the sterling worth of a man who, I am proud to say, was my guide, companion, and friend, through some of the wildest regions ever traversed by the foot of man.

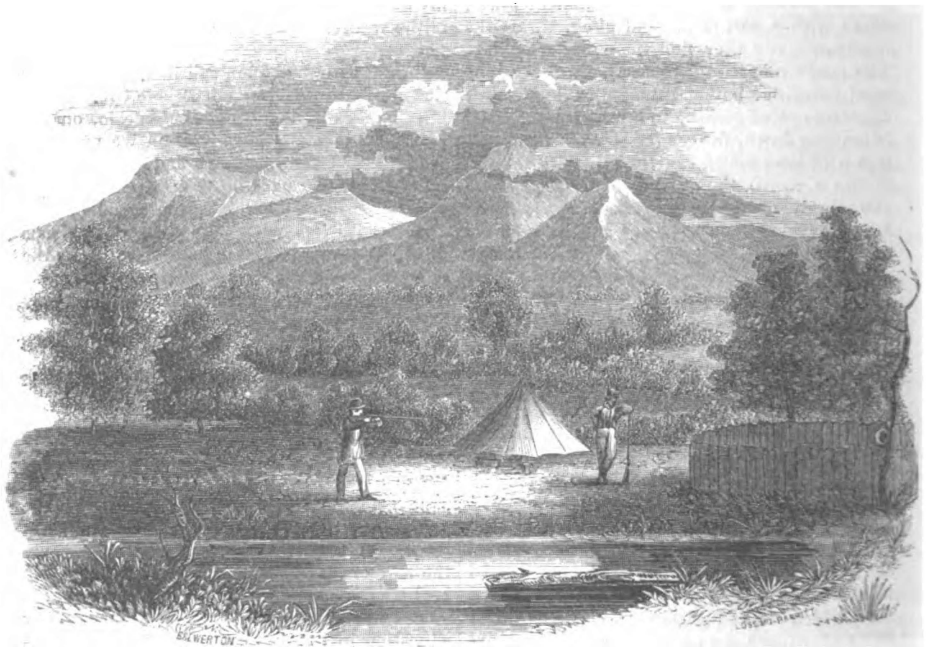
"Kit," as I shall often call him, informed me that he had made camp at Bridge Creek, some fifteen miles distant from the Pueblo, on our road to the Great Pass, by which we purposed crossing the Californian mountains and entering into the solitudes of the Sandy Desert. This camp at Bridge Creek had been established by Carson with the view of preparing our animals (many of whom had seen hard service) for the long and tedious journey before them; and a better locality for our purpose could scarcely have been selected. Bridge Creek is a pretty little stream of clear, sweet water, fringed with trees, which afforded plenty of timber for our *corral*. On the plains, in its vicinity, the wild oats grew in luxuriant abundance, furnishing a rich pasturage. As Kit purposed taking up his residence in camp, a variety of reasons induced me to accompany him. For one thing, I had grown heartily tired of fleas, with which the houses in town are densely populated; and, in the second place, I wished to get an insight into the sort of gipsy-life which I must necessarily lead for some months to come. So, having concluded that an immediate commencement of my education in this respect would render its privations easier when the time of trial came, I

provided myself with a tin-plate, a tin-cup, which might hold about a quart, for no true mountaineer ever drinks less than that amount of coffee at a sitting—if he can get it. To these articles I added a common fork, a large bowie-knife, and a rifle;—and thus, having furnished my table and armory, I turned my attention to the bed-chamber portion of the establishment. Here my preparations were equally simple and unpretending: two Mexican blankets serving me at once for mattress, sheets, and pillow-cases, while my saddle gave a rude, but never-failing pillow. Imagine me, then, fully equipped, and prepared to take up my abode under the first tree, if the good of the service should require it.

Late in the afternoon Carson and myself, mounted upon a couple of stout mules, left the Pueblo behind us, and after three hours' riding, over hills and dales so rich in flowers that it seemed as if nature had contemplated the manufacture of a patch-work quilt upon a grand scale, we reached the spot which was to be our abiding place for nearly a month. Here I found the men, twenty in number, who had been hired for the expedition, all busily employed in taking care of our large *caballada* of mules and horses; many of these men were noted woodsmen, old companions of Carson's in his explorations with Frémont; while others, again, were almost as ignorant of mountain life as myself; knowing nothing of the mysteries of a pack-saddle, and keeping at a most respectful distance from the heels of a kicking mule.

Our daily routine of life while sojourning at

Bridge Creek, was certainly primitive in its simplicity. Shortly after sunrise the camp was awakened, the animals released from their confinement in the *corral*, and driven to water, from thence they were conveyed to the fields of wild oats where each mule being secured by a long *réata* (a kind of strong Mexican rope made by twisting thongs of hide together), to an iron picket-pin driven into the ground, was permitted to graze until sunset, when the drove were again watered and secured in the corral for the night. The habits of the Californian mule are rather peculiar. Though very cautious animals when relying solely upon their own judgment—under which circumstances they generally get along very well—they would appear to have a consciousness of their own inferiority, which induces them to entertain a great regard for the sagacity of the horse, and particularly for that of a white mare. Now why the "gray mare" should be the "better horse" in their estimation, I can not say, but such is certainly the fact; and the wily Californians taking advantage of this amiable weakness, are in the habit of employing a steady old white mare of known gentleness and good character to act as a kind of mother and guide to each drove of unruly mules. This animal is sometimes called the "bell mare" from a large bell which they attach to her neck, to the tinklings of which, sooner or later, every mule in the *caballada* becomes an obedient slave. In conformity with so excellent a custom we had destined for this service an old gray mare belonging to one of our party; and I often amused an idle hour by watching the court paid her by



LIFE AT BRIDGE CREEK

the mulish crowd. To be allowed to graze in her immediate vicinity, was evidently considered a privilege by every long-eared lady and gentleman in the herd; and to obtain this much coveted position many was the quarrel, and many the spiteful bite and kick given and received. But the old mare, like a philosophical beast as she was, looked upon all their attentions with great scorn and indifference; or only noticed them, when annoyed by the tumult around her, by using both teeth and heels with wonderful dexterity, and showering her blows with great impartiality among her four-legged admirers.

For ourselves, we fished, hunted, and practiced rifle-shooting (in which latter accomplishment many of the mountaineers are almost incredibly expert); and when the evening had fairly set in, and the round bright moon, peeped slyly down through the trees, we gathered round our fire in the open air, with the blue heavens and broad spreading branches for our canopy, and with these, with songs and stories not the less interesting for being real, and in many cases the personal adventures of their narrators, we whiled away the hours so pleasantly that it was often midnight, before we spread our blankets, and laid down to sleep more soundly, and dream more sweetly, than many a man who reclines upon a couch of down.

It was finally determined that we should take the road upon the 4th of May; and having procured four stout mules, already experienced in mountain travel, from the Quartermaster at "Los Angeles" (two for riding, and the same number to pack my baggage and provisions), I purchased, after much bargaining, and many serious misgivings that I had been sorely cheated, two additional mules and one horse; which latter proved to be an animal of terrible experiences, being troubled with some painful internal complaint, which induced him to lie down whenever his rider particularly wished him to stand up. I finally thought that he found the hydro-pathic treatment beneficial, as he seldom crossed a stream without rolling himself and rider in the water. Having thus got together seven animals I concluded that so far as horse-flesh was concerned I should do well enough; but where to procure a proper servant, or *arriero* as they are called in Mexico, to pack my mules, and take charge of the cooking, was a problem which seemed more than difficult to solve; at last, just as I was beginning to despair, fortune appeared to favor me and a Mexican presented himself as a candidate for the office of cook, muleteer, and man of all work. A single glance at Señor Jesús García (I will give only two of his half a dozen names), convinced me that whatever other qualifications he might exhibit he was certainly old, ugly, and possessed of a most villainous cast of countenance. But as it was a sort of last chance with me I was fain to receive him graciously, and after asking a few questions to which Señor Jesús replied with all the volubility for which the Mexicans are

famous, I felt fully satisfied that—if one were to believe his own account of his manifold perfections, both as a man and as a muleteer—there had never existed such a paragon of virtue and skill. He could pack a mule in the twinkling of an eye, lasso and ride the wildest horse that ever ran, and as for honesty "El Teniente might load him with bags of uncounted doubloons and he would not steal a single medio."

On the second of May we broke up our camp on the Creek, and returned to Los Angeles, from which point we purposed starting on the morning of the fourth. In the interval we employed ourselves in making our final preparations; drawing rations and ammunition for our men, and dividing our provisions into bags of equal size and weight for the greater convenience of packing. The stores provided for our own mess (which had been increased to four in number by the addition of an old mountain man, a friend of Carson's, and a citizen returning to the States); consisted of pork, coffee, brown sugar, "Penole," and "Atole."

The two articles last named are peculiarly Mexican, and worthy of a description. Atole is a kind of meal which when prepared forms a very nutritious dish not unlike "mush," both in taste and appearance. Penole is made by parching Indian corn; then grinding it, and mixing with cinnamon and sugar. This condiment is almost invaluable to the travelers in the wildernesses of the Far West; as it requires no fire to cook it, being prepared at a moment's warning by simply mixing it with cold water. It has the further advantage of occupying but little space in proportion to its weight; but when prepared for use, it swells so as nearly to double in quantity. A very small portion is therefore sufficient to satisfy the cravings of hunger. In addition to these matters, we carried with us for our private consumption a small quantity of dried meat; this is also obtained from the Mexicans, who cut the beef into long strips, and then hang it upon a line, exposing it to the influence of the sun and wind until it is thoroughly hardened. When they wish to employ a more rapid process, a rude framework is erected, and on this the strings of meat are laid, a slow fire being kept up underneath until the whole becomes smoked and dried. Beef prepared in this way will keep for a long time, and is generally sold by the Mexican *vara* or yard.

The morning of the fourth of May at length dawned upon us; and although we were all up with the sun, nine o'clock found our camp in a state of terrible confusion. I have already stated that some of our party were inexperienced hands; and as packing a mule is not always a thing to be learned by intuition, they certainly made an awkward commencement at their new business. I have since thought that it might have been amusing to an uninterested spectator to watch the quiet look of contempt with which our old stagers regarded some poor greenhorn who succeeded in getting the pack upon his mule's back, only to behold it kicked off by the

indignant animal, who after performing this feat would turn round to the discomfited packer with a look that seemed to say, "Well, you haven't traveled, that's certain."

While others were thus annoyed, I was by no means exempt from my share of vexation; my pattern of a muleteer, Jesus, was nowhere to be found. That paragon of virtue had allowed himself to be seduced by a new pair of boots, and a trifle of clothing which he found in my carpet bag; and if he had not "sloped to Texas" he had at all events migrated to parts unknown; and there was I, at the last moment, with seven animals to be taken care of, packed, saddled, or driven, and not a soul to attend to them. Just as I was about giving up in good earnest, a young Mexican came up to me and requested that he might be allowed to fill the vacancy. Upon questioning him Kit recognized him at once. "A greater rascal," said Carson, "I don't think ever lived than that same young Mexican, but he knows how to take care of a mule."

It seems that Juan, such being the name of my new applicant, had crossed the desert once before as a muleteer to an American trader; and to revenge himself for some ill treatment, real or fancied, he had cut holes in the provision bags; by which means their contents were lost upon the road, and both master and man reduced to the very verge of starvation before reaching the settlements. As I could do no better, I concluded to employ him, at the same time making a mental determination to keep a sharp eye upon Master Juan, and bring him up, nautically speaking, with "a round turn" upon the first occasion of transgression.

Juan being thus duly installed as my muleteer in chief, and cook in general, commenced operations *instantly*, by packing my mules with a celerity which fairly astonished me; for in a few moments the heavy loads were properly arranged, and my mule and his own were fairly saddled and bridled. It was fully ten o'clock before our party finally got off. We numbered twenty hired men, three citizens, and three Mexican servants, besides Carson and myself, all well mounted and armed for the most part with "Whitney's rifle," a weapon which I can not too strongly recommend for every description of frontier service, from its great accuracy and little liability to get out of order—an important point in a country where no gunsmith can be found.

The order of our march, unless altered by circumstances, or some peculiar feature of the ground, was as follows. Kit and myself, with one or more of our party came first, then followed the pack mules and loose animals, and in their rear the remainder of our men, who urged the mules forward by loud cries, and an occasional blow from the ends of their lariats. Our saddles were of the true Mexican pattern, wooden trees covered with leathers called *machecers*. This saddle for service I found far superior to those of American make, being both easier and safer, the great depth of the seat

rendering it almost impossible for the animal to dislodge his rider, a fact which partly accounts for the fearless horsemanship for which Mexicans are so famous. Our bridles, formed of twisted hide or horse hair, were ornamented with pieces of copper, and furnished with strong Spanish bits. As for our spurs, they were sharp and heavy enough to have driven an elephant, not to speak of a Californian mule, which I take to be the more unmanageable beast of the two. To finish the details of our equipments, I will describe my own costume as a fair sample of the style of dress which we wore. I was attired in a check or "hickory" shirt as they are called, a pair of buck-skin pants, a fringed hunting shirt of the same material, gayly lined with red flannel and ornamented with brass buttons (which last I afterward found useful in trading with the Indians). As for my head gear, my hat would scarcely have passed muster among the "Genies" and "Learys" in Broadway—being nothing more than a broad-brimmed straw of very ordinary texture. To go to the other extremity, my feet were cased in a pair of strong cowhide boots, which reached almost to the knee. My weapons I have already noticed; but among my list of sundries I must not forget my water flask, which was a curiosity in its way, and as I have not as yet taken out a patent for the invention, it may give some ingenious Yankee a new idea. It was a bottle made of porous leather which held half a gallon, and suffered just so much of the liquid to soak through as was requisite to keep the outside constantly wet, so that whenever I desired cool water I had only to hang up my flask, or expose it to a free current of air.

As the first day's march was intended as a sort of trial trip, we determined to make the distance a short one, and encamp for the night at our old stand, Bridge Creek, which, as I have before stated, was directly on our way to the Pass; and it was well that we did so; for though our camping ground was but fifteen miles distant from the Pueblo, our march seemed more like a chapter of accidents than a progressive movement. Many of the mules, saddled for the first time in months, got up all sorts of ungainly antics; and were as vicious and obstinate as possible. We had scarcely cleared the town when a tremendous clatter in our rear apprised me that something was coming; and ere I could turn my head, a pack-mule passed me at the top of her speed, with her head stretched out and her heels flying in the air, while at every jump, the beast flung some article of my personal property, right and left, here a frying-pan, and there a bag of sugar, while Juan came thundering in her wake, swearing indifferently in Spanish and English, and threatening all sorts of personal violence to the long-eared offender. And so we jogged along until sunset. I do not believe that a more tired man, or one more keenly sensible of the luxuries of rest and a good cup of coffee, could have been found that night than myself.

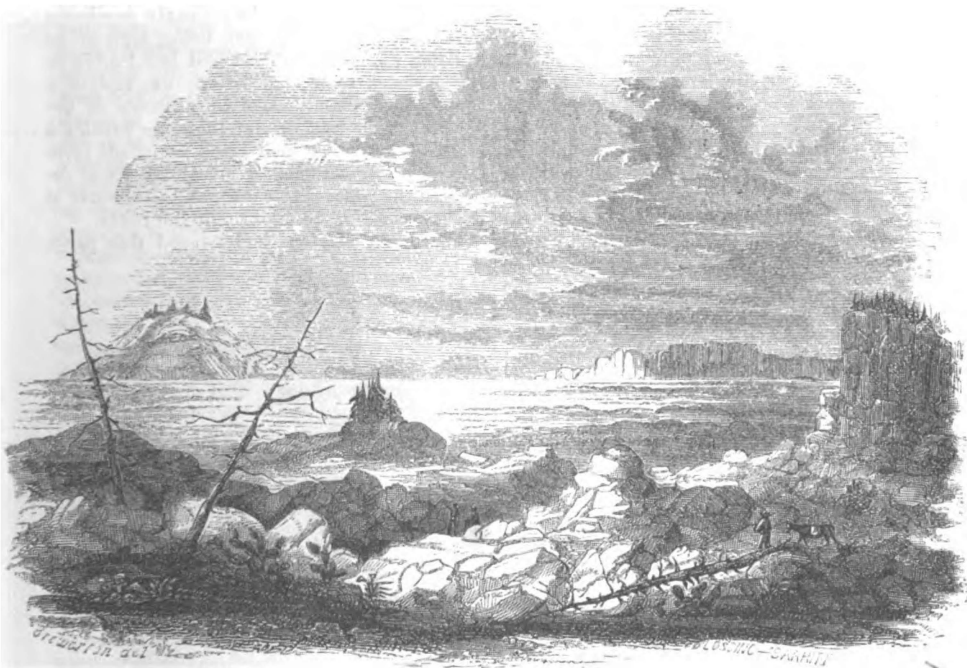
By sunrise the next morning we were on our way to the Pass, and a hard and hot day's ride we had of it. During the day we passed the last house which we were to see until our arrival in the Territory of New Mexico, and I must confess that I turned in my saddle and cast many "a longing, lingering look" behind. Our camp that night was upon a rough, and stony hillside, within the Pass. I remember well that I felt something more substantial than a crumpled rose-leaf under me during the night; to say nothing of awakening in the morning with an accurate impression of divers small geological specimens in my back and sides. But these were minor difficulties and a mere foretaste of the troubles to come.

And now, dear Reader, as I am about entering upon the theatre of our more exciting travel, I will remark that it is not my intention to treat the subject geographically, geologically, or botanically. I have had a horror of the "ologies" ever since my days of schoolboy experience, and as Frémont has described the country, its general features and productions, it would be not only unnecessary, but presumptuous in me to portray it: I shall therefore confine myself to such such scenes of incident and adventure as might prove most interesting; and—thanks to Indians, hard travel and harder fare—I think there will be no lack of incident.

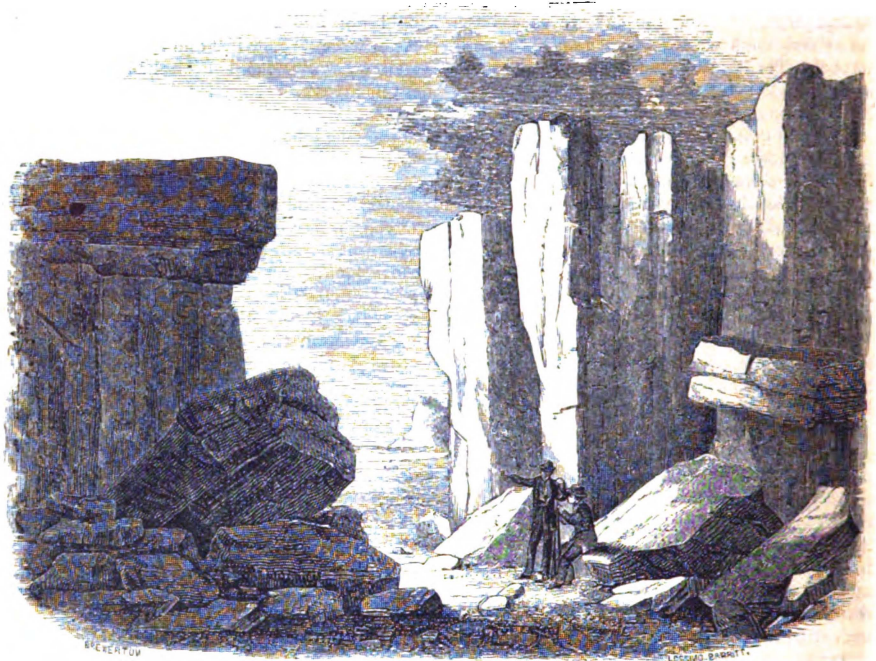
My sensations upon viewing the Great Desert for the first time were certainly peculiar, and I think that they who know the country will acquit me of any unmanly feeling, when I say,

that, as my eye wandered over the vast expanse of hot sand and broken rock, I thought that I should not altogether dislike "backing out." But we were "in for it," and there was no use moralizing. Besides I soon had matters of more moment to occupy me.

Among my seven animals (of whom, to criticize them as a body, I can safely say that they appeared to be about equally made of viciousness, obstinacy, and a strong disposition to laziness) I found a little gray mule which I had reserved for my especial riding. She had her unpleasant peculiarities too, one of which was that it generally required about two men to saddle her, one to throw her down, and one to put the saddle on. Another amiable failing was a trick which on this occasion I learned to my cost; though perfectly gentle with her rider fairly seated, she took advantage of your getting off, to look quietly round, get your exact position and attitude, then let both heels fly, knock you down, and be off like the wind. We had just got to the foot of a long, steep sand hill, when by some ill fortune I found myself half a mile in the rear of our men, who were crossing the summit of the ridge; my saddle slipping at the same time, I dismounted to tighten the girths, when my "gallant gray" at once practiced her favorite manœuvre, leaving me "*hors de combat*," doubled up on a heap of sand in company with about fifty pounds of light luggage, in the way of blankets, gun, and ammunition, from which recumbent position I elevated myself just in time to behold my treacherous



APPROACH TO THE GREAT SANDY DESERT.



SAND ROCKS IN THE DESERT

mule under full sail for the rest of the caballada. Talk about Job's troubles, if you will; it *was* enough to make a minister forget himself. I did swear a little, and once I leveled my rifle at the flying steed; but prudence stepped in and whispered that one live mule was worth ten dead ones—particularly on the road—so I determined to pocket my anger for the present, and shouldering my gun, with a blanket on either arm, I trudged up hill through the deep sands for nearly a mile, when just as I had made up my mind to stop where I was until the Diggers should be pleased to come and take me, Juan galloped up with the truant mule which he had captured with his lasso. I can assure the reader that I was not the only sufferer by the transaction.

Our route for several days lay over a dreary waste, where the eye met the same eternal rock and sand. In fact, the whole country looks more like the crater of an immense volcano than any thing else that I can compare it to; or, to use the words of one of our men, he believed "the darned place had been a-fire, and hadn't got quite cool yet." Our general course was by the great Spanish trail, and we made as rapid traveling as possible, with the view of overtaking the large Mexican caravan which was slowly wending its way back to the capital of New Mexico. This caravan consisted of some two or three hundred Mexican traders who go on one year to the Californian coast with a supply of blankets and other articles of New Mexican manufacture; and having dis-

posed of their goods, invest the proceeds in Californian mules and horses, which they drive back across the desert. These people often realize large profits, as the animals purchased for a mere trifle on the coast, bring high prices in Santa Fé. This caravan had left Pueblo de Los Angeles some time before us, and were consequently several days in advance of our party upon the trail—a circumstance which did us great injury, as their large caballada (containing nearly a thousand head) ate up or destroyed the grass and consumed the water at the few camping grounds upon the route.

We finally overtook and passed this party,



NEW-MEXICAN TRADER.

after some eight days' travel in the Desert. Their appearance was grotesque in the extreme. Imagine upward of two hundred Mexicans dressed in every variety of costume, from the embroidered jacket of the wealthy Californian, with its silver bell-shaped buttons, to the scanty habiliments of the skin-clad Indian, and you may form some faint idea of their dress. Their caballada contained not only horses and mules, but here and there a stray *burro* (Mexican jackass) destined to pack wood across the rugged hills of New Mexico. The line of march of this strange cavalcade occupied an extent of more than a mile; and I could not help thinking, while observing their arms and equipments, that a few resolute men might have captured their property, and driven the traders like a flock of sheep. Many of these people had no fire-arms, being only provided with the short bow and arrows usually carried by New Mexican herdsmen. Others were armed with old English muskets, condemned long ago as unserviceable, which had, in all probability, been loaded for years, and now bid fair to do more damage at the stock than at the muzzle. Another description of weapon appeared to be highly prized among them—these were old, worn-out dragoon sabres, dull and rusty, at best a most useless arm in contending with an enemy who fights only from inaccessible rocks and precipices; but when carried under the leathers of the saddle, and tied with all the manifold straps and knots with which the Mexican secures them, perfectly worthless even at close quarters.

Near this motley crowd we sojourned for one night; and passing through their camp after dark, I was struck with its picturesque appearance. Their pack-saddles and bales had been taken off and carefully piled, so as not only to protect them from damp, but to form a sort of barricade or fort for their owner. From one side to the other of these little corrals of goods a Mexican blanket was stretched, under which the trader lay smoking his cigarrito, while his Mexican servant or slave—for they are little better—prepared his coffee and "atole."

Not long after leaving the great caravan I had gone aside from our trail, and found a small quantity of water, which looked clear and tempting, in a deep crevice among the rocks. The noon-day sun shone fiercely upon the burning sand, and my mouth was parched with thirst; but though longing to drink, the water was in so inaccessible a position that, without some vessel in which to draw it from the chasm, my case would have been but little better than that of Tantalus. I looked in vain for my ordinary drinking cup, but Señor Juan, with great forethought for his own comfort, had fastened it to his saddle before starting. As I stood racking my brain to discover some expedient which might overcome the difficulty, I espied a human skeleton near me. A thought struck me. I remembered Byron, and his libations from the skull; and, revolting as it would have been under different circumstances, my strong neces-

sity compelled me to make use of it. So I drank a most grateful draught of water from the bleaching bone, and then sat down to moralize upon the event, and wonder to whom it had belonged, and how its owner died; the result of all of which was, that I felt much obliged to the unknown individual for the use of that which could by no possibility be of any further service to him; and as a committee of one, sitting alone in the desert by the side of the fountain, I voted him my thanks accordingly.

I have heretofore briefly mentioned my Mexican servant Juan, to whom Carson had given so indifferent a character. This scapegrace had for some days shown a disposition to give trouble in various ways; but we had come to no open rupture until one afternoon, when riding in the advance, I looked back and observed the "*réata*" of my pack-mule dragging upon the ground. Calling to Juan to secure it, I rode on, thinking that my orders had been attended to. Now it so happened at that particular moment that Señor Juan was engaged with the assistance of a Mexican friend and his cigarrito in making himself exceedingly comfortable; and upon again turning my head I found my *réata* in a worse way than before. "Now," said Kit, "that fellow is trying which is to be the master, you or he, and I should advise you to give him a lesson which he will remember: if we were nearer the settlements I would not recommend it, for he would certainly desert and carry your animals with him; but as it is, he will not dare to leave the party, for fear of the Indians." As I fully concurred in Carson's opinion, and felt moreover that the period had arrived for bringing up Señor Juan with the "round turn" I had mentally promised him, I simply rode back, and without any particular explanation, knocked the fellow off his mule. It was the first lesson and the last which I found it necessary to read him. Juan gave me, it is true, a most diabolical look upon remounting, which made me careful of my pistols for a night or two afterward; but he was conquered, and in future I had no reason to complain of any negligence.

The only living creatures which inhabit the desert except the prowling Diggers, are a small rabbit which burrows in the ground, existing I can scarce say how, lizards in great quantities, and a small but very venomous description of rattlesnake; with the last named reptile I was destined during my sojourn in this region to have any thing but an agreeable interview.

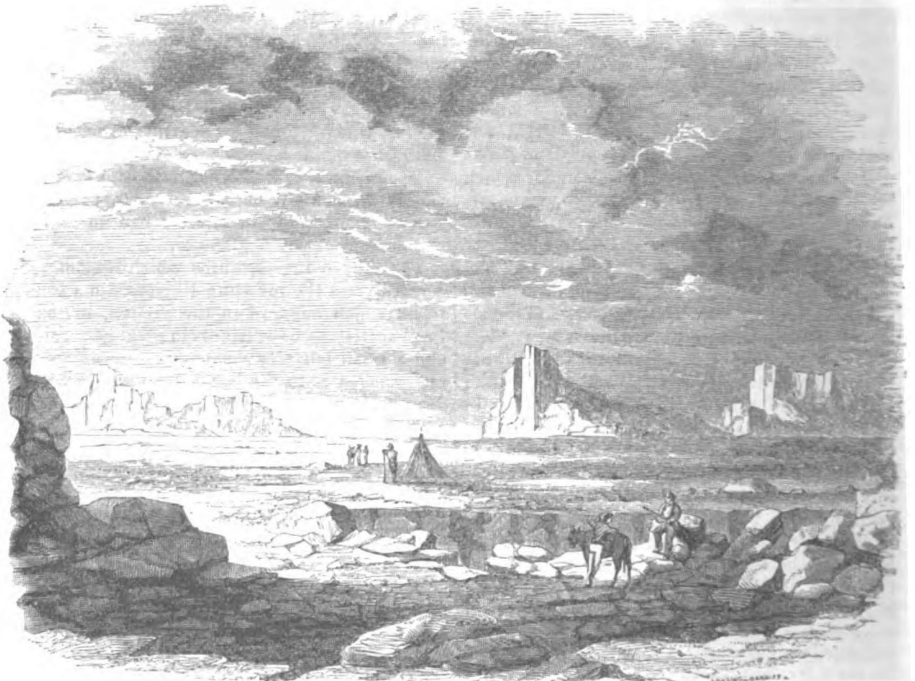
It was a bright moonlight night; I had, as was my custom, spread my saddle leathers for a bed, and drawn my blanket loosely around me. Weary with the day's march I had been sleeping soundly for several hours, when about midnight I awoke suddenly, with an unaccountable feeling of dread: it must have been a sort of instinct which prompted me, for in a moment I was upon my feet, and then upon removing my blanket found a rattlesnake swollen with rage and poison, coiled and ready to strike. I drew away the *machets* which served as a mat-

gress, intending to kill the reptile, when to my astonishment it glided away, making its escape into a small opening in the ground directly beneath my bed. The whole matter was explained at once; I had retired early, and in arranging my couch had spread it directly near the door of his snakeship's domicile. The snake had probably been out to see a neighbor, and getting home after I was asleep, felt a gentlemanly unwillingness to disturb me, and as I had taken possession of his dwelling he took part of my sleeping place, crawling under the blanket where he must have lain quietly by my side, until I rolled over and disturbed him. I can scarcely say that I slept much more that night, and even Carson admitted that it made him a little nervous. Had I been bitten our only remedy would have been some common whisky, which we carried with us in case of such an accident. It is a fact worth knowing, that in the mountains strong liquor is considered a certain preventive to any ill effects from snake-bites; to administer it properly it must be given at once, and in large quantities, until the patient is fully under its influence.

Our daily routine of life in the desert had a sort of terrible sameness about it; we rode from fifteen to fifty miles a day, according to the distance from water; occasionally after a long drive halting for twenty-four hours, if the scanty grass near the camping grounds would permit it, to rest and recruit our weary cattle; among our men there was but little talking and less laughing and joking, even by the camp-fire

while traversing these dreary wastes; the gloomy land by which we were surrounded, scanty food, hard travel, and the consciousness of continual peril, all tended to restrain the exhibition of animal spirits. Carson, while traveling, scarcely spoke; his keen eye was continually examining the country, and his whole manner was that of a man deeply impressed with a sense of responsibility. We ate but twice a day, and then our food was so coarse and scanty, that it was not a pleasure, but a necessity. At night every care was taken to prevent surprise; the men took turns in guarding the animals, while our own mess formed the camp guard of the party. In an Indian country it is worthy of remembrance that a mule is by far the best sentry; they discover either by their keen sense of smell, or of vision, the vicinity of the lurking savage long before the mountaineer, experienced as he is, can perceive him. If thus alarmed, the mule shows its uneasiness by snorting and extending the head and ears toward the object of distrust.

During this journey I often watched with great curiosity Carson's preparations for the night. A braver man than Kit perhaps never lived, in fact I doubt if he ever knew what fear was, but with all this he exercised great caution. While arranging his bed, his saddle, which he always used as a pillow, was disposed in such a manner as to form a barricade for his head; his pistols half cocked, were laid above it, and his trusty rifle reposed beneath the blanket by his side, where it was not only ready for instant



VIEW IN THE GREAT SANDY DESERT.



INDIANS CASTING STONES DOWN UPON THE TRAVELERS.

use, but perfectly protected from the damp. Except now and then to light his pipe, you never caught Kit exposing himself to the full glare of the camp fire. He knew too well the treacherous character of the tribes among whom we were traveling; he had seen men killed at night by an unseen foe, who, veiled in darkness, stood in perfect security while he marked and shot down the mountaineer clearly seen by the fire-light. "No, no, boys," Kit would say, "hang round the fire if you will, it may do for you if you like it, but I don't want to have a Digger slip an arrow into me, when I can't see him."

A rather amusing story is told of Kit's quickness of action in time of danger. Some inexperienced mountaineer had given the alarm of Indians during his tour of guard duty at night, or as Westernmen sometimes express it "stamped the camp;" Kit sprang to his feet in an instant and while yet half asleep seeing some dark object advancing upon him through the long grass, seized one of his unerring pistols and shot, not an Indian, but his own particular riding mule right through the head.

When the hour for our departure from camp had nearly arrived, Kit would rise from his blanket and cry "Catch up;" two words which in mountain parlance mean, Prepare to start; and these words once uttered, the sooner a man got ready the better; in a moment the whole scene would be changed, the men who just before were lounging about the fires, or taking a journey to the land of dreams were now upon

their feet, and actively employed in bringing up refractory mules, who, true to their obstinate nature, and finding that their services were about to be required, declined any forward movement, except upon compulsion. This generally called forth a volley of oaths from their enraged drivers—English, Spanish and Canadian French being all prolific in objurgations; until at length the loads were fairly secured, saddles put on, and the pack-mules having been gathered together were started upon the trail; the old bell-mare leading off with a gravity quite equal to the responsibility of her office. Kit waited for nobody; and woe to the unfortunate tiro in mountain travel who discovered to his sorrow that packs would work, bags fall off, and mules show an utter disregard for the preservation of one's personal property. A man thus circumstanced soon learns to pack a mule as it should be done, at first, put on his saddle as it ought to be put on, and keep his arms in serviceable order; or if he don't, Heaven help him; the sooner he gets back to the settlements the better.

In crossing the Desert it is often necessary to march long distances without water; these dry stretches are called by the Mexicans "jornadas;" the literal meaning of the word being a journey, but in instances like the present it refers to the absence of water upon the route traveled. On the "jornada" of which I am about to speak, which is sometimes called the "Jornada del Muerto" (the journey of death), the distance from one water hole to another can

not be less than eighty miles; and on account of the animals it is highly important that it should be traveled at once; to accomplish this we started about three o'clock in the afternoon and reached the other side of the jornada late in the morning of the following day, the greater part of the distance being gone over by moonlight. I shall never forget the impression which that night's journey left upon my mind. Sometimes the trail led us over large basins of deep sand, where the trampling of the mules' feet gave forth no sound; this added to the almost terrible silence, which ever reigns in the solitudes of the desert, rendered our transit more like the passage of some airy spectacle where the actors were shadows instead of men. Nor is this comparison a constrained one, for our way-worn voyagers with their tangled locks and unshorn beards (rendered white as snow by the fine sand with which the air in these regions is often filled), had a weird and ghost-like look, which the gloomy scene around, with its frowning rocks and moonlit sands tended to enhance and heighten.



BOULDER IN THE GREAT DESERT.

There were other matters, too, to render the view impressive: scattered along our route we found numerous skeletons of horses, who at some former period had dropped down and died by the wayside. The frequent recurrence of these bleaching bones in a road so lonely, induced me to ask some explanation in regard to them of an old trapper belonging to our party. He informed me, that many years before, Billy Williams, a mountaineer almost as distinguished as Carson himself, had, in some interval of catching beaver and killing Indians, found time to gather a band of mountain men, with the view of undertaking a sort of piratical expedition to the coast of Lower California. In this enterprise he succeeded so far as to enter California, help himself to upward of fifteen hundred head of mules and horses, and regain the desert without losing a man. But from this point his troubles began. The Californians, disapproving of this summary mode of treating their property, determined to pursue and retake it by force; and to carry out their design, fol-

lowed closely upon the trail of Williams's party, with nearly two hundred men. Finding himself pursued, the mountaineer, whose men were not over thirty in number, pushed on with all possible speed; and in crossing the great jornada, lost from fatigue and overdriving nearly one thousand head of his ill-gotten booty. Rendered desperate, he encamped at a water-hole, some fifteen miles distant from the termination of the jornada, at which latter point his pursuers had already arrived; Williams remarking to his men, "Well, boys, we have lost the most of our caballada, but we have five hundred animals left; and as we must recruit our stock, we will just stop where we are till we have done so; and, in the mean time, if those Mexicans want to get their animals, let them come and take them, if they can." In accordance with this determination Billy's people waited three days; but so far as the coming of their enemies was concerned, waited in vain; their courage had evidently failed them; and, although they could pursue a retreating foe, they felt no inclination to face the rifles of American hunters, who had turned like a stag at bay. At length, growing tired of inaction, and exasperated by the loss which he had already sustained, Williams proposed to his comrades to visit the Californian camp by night, and steal the horses upon which their pursuers had followed them. To this they assented; and that evening took from their enemies every horse and mule which they had with them, leaving them to return as they best might. This feat having been thus successfully performed, the Americans went on their way rejoicing. But alas for human expectations! as though to mete out a sort of even-handed justice, it was destined that they should be attacked by the Indians, who drove off their whole caballada, leaving them to find their way back to Santa Fé on foot. I will add that it is rumored that Williams curses the Indians heartily whenever he tells the tale. Such is the story; but beyond the dry bones upon the jornada, I can bear no witness to its truth.

I was not permitted to pass this portion of the desert without meeting with an adventure, which even now makes my heart beat quicker when I think of it.

When almost midway in the jornada, we entered upon what appeared, by the uncertain light, to be an immense circular basin of sand, surrounded by a range of mountains so distant that the eye could barely make out their dim outlines against the moonlit sky. This sand plain must have been fully eighteen miles in diameter; and we had barely got into it when one of my pack-mules kicked off her load; and by so doing, rendered it necessary for Juan and myself to dismount, collect the bags, and repack the animal; an operation which, as the mule was extremely restive, occupied some time to perform. When we were ready to start, I directed Juan to go ahead with the pack-mule, while I followed slowly in his rear. Now, among other imperfections, it is my misfortune

to be very absent-minded; and having fallen into some train of thought which I wished to ravel out, I threw the reins upon the neck of my mule, and jogged along slowly, until a sudden stumble warned me that we were getting into rocky ground again; and upon looking round to discover the whereabouts of our party, I found that they were not only out of sight, but out of hearing. Now as this had happened to me before, I did not give myself any particular uneasiness; but alighted, thinking that I could easily retrace my road by the track of the mules' hoofs in the sand, and thus return until I struck the back trail of our caballada, when it would be an easy matter to rejoin them; but my horror can scarcely be conceived, when I discovered that the strong wind which was blowing had filled the hoof tracks almost as fast as they had been made, so that all trace of my route was gone. My situation was certainly one to appall the stoutest heart; in the depths of an almost trackless wilderness, five hundred miles from the nearest settlements, and perfectly ignorant as I was, not only of the locality of the water hole, but even of the general course which Kit intended taking, I saw no prospect before me but a lingering death from starvation, with none to witness my sufferings—or, at best, to be murdered by the Indians, who were continually lurking about the Spanish trail. My very mule seemed to sympathize with my uneasiness, by snorting wildly, tossing her head in the air, and beating the ground with her hoofs. At length, a hope dawned upon me. I had often heard of the great sagacity of the Mexican mules, and the astonishing distances at which they will scent water; and I felt that if I was to be saved, the mule's instinct must be my preservation. So springing upon her back, I gave her the spur, at the same time uttering the cry used by Mexican muleteers to encourage their animals; then flinging the reins loosely upon her back, I left her to take whatever course she pleased. For a moment, the animal faltered and seemed uncertain, then bounded madly forward, snuffed the air, and put her head to the ground. A moment more, and with a wild cry and a shake of the head, she was off at a rapid gallop, never halting, save now and then to snuff the sand, until she had carried me safely into the very midst of our party. I need scarcely say that I felt very much like a man who had been badly scared, and had only just begun to get over it. I remember, too, making a resolution never to be left behind again—which I kept, at least, a week.

The Pau-Eutaw or Digger Indians (so called from the roots which they dig from the ground and on which they depend for the greater portion of their miserable subsistence), first made their appearance shortly after we had crossed the great jornada. Our camp was then situated upon the borders of a little stream, where a few scanty patches of grass afforded some refreshment to our tired beasts; and our party, with few exceptions, besides the watchful horse-

guard, were stretched upon the ground resting wearily after the long night's ride, which we had just accomplished. Carson, who was lying beside me, suddenly raised himself upon his elbow, and turning to me, asked: "Do you see those Indians?" at the same time pointing to the crest of one of the gravelly, bluff-like hills with which we were surrounded. After a careful examination of the locality, I was obliged to reply in the negative. "Well," said Kit, "I saw an Indian's head there just now, and there are a party of at least a dozen more, or I am much mistaken." Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when a savage rose to his full height, as if he had grown from the rocks which fringed the hill top: this fellow commenced yelling in a strange guttural tongue, at the same time gesticulating violently with his hands; this he intended as a declaration of friendship: and Kit rising up, answered him in his own language, "Tigabu, tigabu" (friend, friend). After a little delay, and an evident consultation with his people, the old Digger (for such he proved to be), came, at first rapidly and then more slowly toward us, descending the steep hillside with an agility astonishing in so aged a being. Carson advanced a short distance to meet him, and again renewed his assurance of our friendship; but it was not until the old man had been presented with some trifling gift that he seemed fully at his ease, and yelled to his companions to join him. This they did with evident caution, coming into our camp two or three at a time until they numbered upward of a dozen. The old man had evidently been sent as a sort of a forlorn hope, to fall a victim, should we be inclined to hostility. Our Indian visitors soon gave us to understand that they were hungry; to meet this demand upon our hospitality we ordered more coffee put upon the fire, and presented them with what little remained of our dried beef, which having got wet was now both spoiled and mouldy. This, disgusting as it was, they ate voraciously; but in regard to the coffee, they seemed somewhat doubtful, until we had ourselves drank of it, when they followed our example without further hesitation, and soon emptied the kettle. In fact, had we been disposed to furnish the material, they would have devoured our whole stock of provisions; as it was, seeing that no more was to be had, they expressed their satisfaction by rubbing down their stomachs, and grunting in a manner which would have done credit to a herd of well-fed swine.

We were just arranging ourselves on the ground in a circle for the purpose of smoking and having a talk, "à la Indian," when a new party, with a large drove of horses and mules made their appearance. These new-comers proved to be a small band of Americans, who were driving their cattle into the Eutaw country with the view of trading with that tribe of Indians. The owner of the animals and leader of the party was a Mr. Walker, an old acquaintance of Carson's. After securing his caballada,

and making camp in our vicinity, Mr. Walker joined our party, and the interrupted council was resumed.

Though this was a state occasion, and one which required due gravity of countenance, I found it rather difficult to control my risibles at the singular scene which we presented.

Imagine us seated in a circle on the ground, checkered red and white, with here a half naked Indian, and there a mountaineer, almost as uncouth, in his own peculiar garb. The arms of both parties, though not ostentatiously displayed (which might have interfered with our negotiation) being placed where they could be reached at a moment's warning: a pipe (Carson's own particular "dudheen") being put in requisition for the occasion, was duly filled with tobacco, lighted, and a short smoke having been taken by Carson, Walker and myself, it was then passed to the oldest man among our Indian guests, who took two or three long whiffs, retaining the smoke in his mouth, until his distorted face bore so strong a resemblance to an antiquated monkey's under trying circumstances, that I had all but disturbed the gravity of the assembly by bursting into a roar of laughter. The old warrior, having first reduced himself to the very verge of suffocation in his anxiety to make the most of the fragrant weed, then proceeded to utter a chorus of grunts, which were intended to signify his satisfaction either in meeting us, or, what is quite as likely, in the flavor of our tobacco. The pipe having finally gone the rounds of our parti-colored circle, found its way back into the hands of the old Indian, who having placed it securely in his mouth, seemed to continue smoking in a fit of absence of mind, which not only induced him to refill it, but rendered him perfectly insensible to the reproving grunts of his brethren. I have since thought that the old warrior may have been a deep politician in his way, and therefore retained the pipe to obviate the necessity of his talking, which might have obliged him to commit himself disadvantageously upon some diplomatic question.

The talk then commenced. Kit told as much of his route and future intentions as he thought necessary, though I doubt whether they gained much *real* information; and concluded by charging divers murders and outrages upon the members of the tribe to which our visitors belonged. The Diggers answered to the effect that there were bad Indians living among the hills who did such things, but that for themselves they were perfectly innocent, never did any thing wrong in their lives, entertained a great regard for the whites in general, and ourselves in particular; and wound up, diplomatically speaking, by "renewing to us the assurances of their distinguished consideration," coupled with a strong hint that a present (a horse, or some such trifle) would not be unacceptable as an evidence of our esteem.

These Digger Indians are by far the most degraded and miserable beings who inhabit this

continent; their bag-like covering is of the very scantiest description, their food revolting; the puppies and rats of the Celestials being almost Epicurean when compared with a Pau-Eutaw bill of fare. Some of the parties which I have been mentioning brought lizards with them into our camp, and ate them raw, or with no further preparation than jerking off the reptile's tail. To obtain this description of food more readily, many of them carried with their arms a sort of hooked stick, not unlike a long cane, which they use in capturing them. The hair of these savages is long, reaching nearly to their middle, and almost as coarse as the mane of a mule. Their faces seem perfectly devoid of any intellectual expression, and—save the eye, which is exceedingly keen—their features are in nowise remarkable. The traveler can not but notice a strong similarity to a wild beast, both in their manners and appearance. I have repeatedly observed them turning the head from right to left quickly, while walking, in the manner of a prairie wolf. In voracity, they bear a greater resemblance to an anaconda than to a human being. I have been told, by those who know them well, that five or six of these Indians will sit round a dead horse, and eat until nothing but the bones remain. Unlike the tribes of the Rocky Mountains, they steal your animals, not to ride, but to slaughter for food, and a loss of this kind is rendered doubly provoking to the trapper from the fact that they invariably pick out your fattest and best conditioned stock. I am informed, and I have no reason to disbelieve the story, that they will even sell their own children to the Californians, to obtain some addition to their scanty supplies. It can not be denied that there is some excuse for their failings in these respects; the miserable country which they inhabit is incapable of supporting them, and the surrounding tribes, who occupy the more fertile portions of this region, look upon these outcasts with a suspicious eye, and are unrelenting in driving them from their hunting grounds.

The arms of this degraded people consist of a bow of uncommon length, and arrows headed with stone; these last they are said to poison. In regard to their mode of obtaining the venom for this purpose, I have been told the following story, which, without attempting to endorse, I shall relate as it was told to me. The liquid which renders their shafts so deadly is a combination of the rattle-snake's poison with an extract which they distill from some plant known only to themselves. This plant would appear to possess the qualities of the fabled Upas-tree, as the noisome vapors exhaled by distillation act so powerfully upon the procurer as to destroy life. It becomes therefore a matter of some moment to decide upon the individual who is to prepare the yearly stock of poison for his tribe. Now it would naturally be supposed that so dangerous an office would be shunned by all; but, on the contrary (says my narrator), a yearly contest takes place among the oldest squaws as to which shall receive the distinguished honor of

sacrificing her life in the cause, and the conflict ends in the appointment of the successful competitor, who does the work and pays the penalty.

Our Indian visitors remained with us all day, hoping probably that some present would be given them; an expectation which was never destined to be fulfilled. About sunset, Kit's usual cry of "Catch up!" warned us to prepare for the road; and while most of the men were engaged in packing the animals, a young Indian (who, by the way, had been among the loudest in his protestations of good-will), seized the opportunity to abstract from the luggage of an old mountaineer a tin cup, which he tossed across the creek into the long rushes fringing its banks. Now this act, although certainly a gross violation of the laws of hospitality, was, under the circumstances of the case, a most ingenious mode of stealing, as the cup, even if it had been missed amid the hurry of our departure, would have been supposed to be accidentally lost; and the almost naked savages, who had evidently no means of concealing it about their persons, relieved from any suspicion of dishonesty. As it happened, I was the only one who perceived the manœuvre, and calling the man to whom the cup belonged, I informed him of his loss, at the same time pointing out the offender. He was, as I have already remarked, an old mountaineer, and long experience among the Indians had taught him the best course to pursue; so without wasting time and words in expostulation, he grasped the dishonest warrior by the hair with one hand and round the leg with the other, and then plunged him, head first, into the creek, at the same time ordering him, under penalty of death, to swim across, find the cup, and return it. This the savage did, though with evident reluctance; and as he stood dripping upon the bank, I thought that I had never seen a more forlorn or crest-fallen looking creature. As for his companions, so far from expressing any indignation at his treatment, they seemed to look upon the whole affair as a good joke, and laughed heartily.

Shortly after our departure from this encampment, we perceived smoke rising from prominent hills in our vicinity;—these smokes were repeated at various points along our route, showing that the Diggers, for some purpose best known to themselves, thought fit to apprise their tribe of our passage through the country. During the following day, parties of these Indians showed themselves occasionally upon the crests of inaccessible hills, but seemed unwilling to come within gun-shot: nor was it until we had gone two days' journey from the camp where they had attempted to steal, that a few of their people mustered courage to visit us. And when they did so, the actions of the party were so suspicious, that Kit concluded to retain one of their number (a young warrior about eighteen years of age), as a sort of hostage for their good behavior during the night. Our so doing appeared to give much greater uneasiness to the tribe than to the object of their solicitude, who either from a feeling of security, or by a strong

exercise of that power of self-control for which the North American Indian is famous, exhibited no signs of timidity, but made himself perfectly at home after his own fashion. Sitting beside us on the ground, he conversed freely with Carson in the low, guttural accents of his native tongue, which he eked out with gestures and figures rudely drawn upon the ground. After partaking of our supper, he stretched himself quietly upon a blanket which we had lent him for his bed, and was about composing himself to sleep when his companions set up a most dismal howling from the adjoining hills. This yelling—sounding more like a chorus of screech-owls, or a troop of hungry wolves, than any thing else I can compare it to—was rendered doubly mournful by the gloomy shades of evening, and the otherwise total silence of the hour. This disturbance was finally quieted by Kit's replying in the Pau-Eutaw tongue, aided by the assurances of the young man himself, who yelled back an answer to the effect, that he was still in the land of the living. We knew too well the treacherous character of these people to permit this Indian to sleep in our very midst without some guard over his movements during the night; so our own mess divided this duty among them. It fell to my lot to keep the first watch until midnight; and I remember well standing beside our temporary captive with my rifle in my hand, almost envying the calmness with which he slumbered, although separated from his friends, and surrounded by those whom he must have considered the natural enemies of his race. I must not forget to say that, while arranging his bed,



DIGGER INDIAN.

he asked for his bow and arrows, which I handed him; these he placed carefully beneath the blanket by his side, explaining to me, by signs, that the damp might impair their efficacy by relaxing the bowstring, which was composed of twisted sinews.

The night passed quietly away; and in the morning we allowed our hostage to depart, making him a few trifling presents as a recompense for his involuntary detention. Among these matters, an old pair of pantaloons, worn and tattered from long service, seemed most valued by their new possessor. So much was he elated by this acquisition, that it seemed difficult for him to restrain the expression of his joy. In fact, no city dandy, faultlessly arrayed for the fashionable side of Broadway, could have exhibited more perfect satisfaction in his strut and air than our untutored Digger. I doubt not that his new costume made him the wonder and envy of his comrades, whose principal garb was the dress with which Dame Nature had provided them.

At the Archilette, a well-known camping-ground in the desert, we passed a day and night. This dreary spot has obtained a mournful notoriety among the few travelers through these sandy wastes, from its having been the theatre of a tragedy which, though I have heard the tale from the lips of Carson himself, and witnessed the bleaching bones of the victims, I will relate in the words of Frémont, who has given in his journal full details of the outrage. The Colonel first mentions it under date of April 24th, 1844, when he says:

"In the afternoon we were surprised by the sudden appearance in the camp of two Mexicans—a man and a boy. The name of the man was Andreas Fuentes; and that of the boy (a handsome lad, eleven years old) Pablo Hernandez. They belonged to a party consisting of six persons, the remaining four being the wife of Fuentes, the father and mother of Pablo, and Santiago Giacomo, a resident of New Mexico, with a cavalcade of about thirty horses; they had come out from Puebla de Los Angeles, near the coast, to travel more at leisure, and obtain better grass. Having advanced as far into the desert as was considered consistent with their safety, they halted at the Archilette, one of the customary camping grounds, about eighty miles from our encampment, where there is a spring of good water, with sufficient grass, and concluded to await there the arrival of the great caravan. Several Indians were soon discovered lurking about the camp, who, in a day or two after, came in, and after behaving in a very friendly manner, took their leave, without awakening any suspicions. Their departure begat a security which proved fatal. In a few days afterward, suddenly a party of about one hundred Indians appeared in sight, advancing toward the camp. It was too late, or they seemed not to have presence of mind to take proper measures of safety; and the Indians charged down into their camp, shouting as they ad-

vanced, and discharging flights of arrows. Pablo and Fuentes were on horse-guard at the time, and mounted according to the custom of the country. One of the principal objects of the Indians was to get possession of the horses, and part of them immediately surrounded the band; but in obedience to the shouts of Giacomo, Fuentes drove the animals over and through the assailants, in spite of their arrows; and, abandoning the rest to their fate, carried them off at speed across the plain. Knowing that they would be pursued by the Indians, without making any halt, except to shift their saddles to other horses, they drove them on for about sixty miles, and this morning left them at a watering-place upon the trail called Agua de Tomaso. Without giving themselves any time for rest, they hurried on, hoping to meet the Spanish caravan, when they discovered my camp. I received them kindly, taking them into my own mess, and promised them such aid as circumstances might put it in my power to give."

Under date of April 25th Colonel Frémont again alludes to the subject, in the following extract from his journal:

"After traveling about twenty-five miles we arrived at the Agua de Tomaso—the spring where the horses had been left; but as we expected, they were gone. A brief examination of the ground convinced us that they had been driven off by the Indians. Carson and Godey volunteered with the Mexican to pursue them; and, well mounted, the three set off on the trail. In the evening Fuentes returned, his horse having failed; but Carson and Godey had continued the pursuit. In the afternoon of the next day, a war-whoop was heard, such as Indians make when returning from a victorious enterprise; and soon Carson and Godey appeared, driving before them a band of horses, recognized by Fuentes to be part of those they had lost. Two bloody scalps dangling from the end of Godey's gun, announced that they had overtaken the Indians as well as the horses. They informed us that, after Fuentes left them from the failure of his horse, they continued the pursuit alone, and toward nightfall entered the mountains, into which the trail led. After sunset the moon gave light, and they followed the trail by moonshine until late in the night, when it entered a narrow defile, and was difficult to follow. Afraid of losing it in the darkness of the defile, they tied up their horses, struck no fire, and lay down to sleep in silence and in darkness. Here they lay from midnight till morning. At daylight they resumed the pursuit, and about sunrise discovered the horses; and immediately dismounting and tying up their own, they crept cautiously to a rising ground which intervened, from the crest of which they perceived the encampment of four lodges close by. They proceeded quietly and had got within thirty or forty yards of their object, when a movement among the horses discovered them to the Indians. Giving the war-shout, they instantly charged into the camp, regardless of the num-

ber which the four lodges would imply. The Indians received them with a flight of arrows shot from their long bows, one of which passed through Godey's shirt collar barely missing his neck; our men fired their rifles upon a steady aim, and rushed in. Two Indians were stretched upon the ground, fatally pierced with bullets; the rest fled, except a lad that was captured. The scalps of the fallen were instantly stripped off; but in the process, one of them, who had two balls through his body, sprang to his feet, the blood streaming from his skinned head, and uttered a hideous howl. An old squaw, possibly his mother, stopped and looked back from the mountain side she was climbing, threatening and lamenting. The frightful spectacle appalled the stout hearts of our men; but they did what humanity required, and quickly terminated the agonies of the gory savage. They were now masters of the camp, which was a pretty little recess in the mountain, with a fine spring, and apparently safe from all invasion. Great preparations had been made to feast a large party, for it was a very proper place for a rendezvous, and for the celebration of such orgies as robbers of the desert would delight in. Several of the best horses had been killed, skinned, and cut up; for the Indians, living in mountains, and only coming into the plains to rob and murder, make no other use of horses than to eat them. Large earthen vessels were on the fire, boiling and stewing the horse-beef; and several baskets, containing fifty or sixty pairs of moccasins, indicated the presence, or expectation, of a considerable party. They released the boy who had given strong evidence of the stoicism, or something else, of the savage character, in commencing his breakfast upon a horse's head, as soon as he found he was not to be killed, but only tied as a prisoner. Their object accomplished, our men gathered up all the surviving horses, fifteen in number, returned upon their trail, and rejoined us at our camp in the afternoon of the same day. They had rode about one hundred miles in the pursuit and return, and all in thirty hours. The time, place, object, and numbers considered, this expedition of Carson and Godey may be considered among the boldest and most disinterested which the annals of Western adventure, so full of daring deeds, can present. Two men, in a savage desert, pursue day and night an unknown body of Indians, into the defiles of an unknown mountain—attack them on sight, without counting numbers—and defeat them in an instant, and for what? To punish the robbers of the desert, and to avenge the wrongs of Mexicans whom they did not know. I repeat, it was Carson and Godey who did this—the former an American born in the Boon's Lick county of Missouri; the latter a Frenchman, born in St. Louis; and both trained to Western enterprise from early life."

Under date of April 20th the same writer adds:

"To-day we had to reach the Archilette, dis-

tant seven miles, where the Mexican party had been attacked; and leaving our encampment, we traversed a part of the desert, the most sterile and repulsive that we had yet seen. Our course was generally north; and after crossing an intervening ridge, we descended into a sandy plain, or basin, in the middle of which was the grassy spot, with its springs and willow bushes, which constitutes a camping place in the desert, and is called the Archilette. The dead silence of the place was ominous; and galloping rapidly up, we found only the corpses of the two men; every thing else was gone. They were naked, mutilated, and pierced with arrows. Hernandez had evidently fought, and with desperation. He lay in advance of the willow, half facing the tent which sheltered his family, as if he had come out to meet danger, and to repulse it from that asylum. One of his hands, and both his legs, had been cut off. Giacome, who was a large and strong-looking man, was lying in one of the willow shelters, pierced with arrows. Of the women no trace could be found, and it was evident they had been carried off captive. A little lap-dog, which had belonged to Pablo's mother, remained with the dead bodies, and was frantic with joy at seeing Pablo: he, poor child, was frantic with grief; and filled the air with lamentations for his father and mother. "*Mi padre! mi madre!*" was his incessant cry. When we beheld this pitiable sight, and pictured to ourselves the fate of the two women, carried off by savages so brutal and so loathsome, all compunction for the scalped-alive Indians ceased; and we rejoiced that Carson and Godey had been able to give so useful a lesson to these American Arabs, who lie in wait to murder and plunder the innocent traveler. We were all too much affected by the sad feelings which the place inspired, to remain an unnecessary moment. The night we were obliged to pass there. Early in the morning we left it, having first written a brief account of what had happened, and put it in the cleft of a pole planted at the spring, that the approaching caravan might learn the fate of their friends. In commemoration of the event we called the place *Agua de Hernandez*—Hernandez's Spring."

As I have remarked, the foregoing details were narrated to me by Carson, one of the principal actors in the affair, while we were encamped upon the ground where the murders were committed. I remember that during our visit, the dreariness of the scene was enhanced by a coming storm, which rendered the sides of the naked *sierras* still darker, and muttered solemnly among the hills. The bones of the unfortunate men still whitened on the sand, and one of the skulls which the Indians had thrust upon a pole planted in the ground, betokened the recent presence of their murderers.

Upon reaching the banks of the Rio Virgin (Virgin's River), we found the "Indian Sign," as it is called by the trappers, growing every where more plentiful. The signal fires, too, were still continued; and furnished additional

evidence that our presence in this region was regarded with suspicion and distrust. Among



SKULL OF A MEXICAN.

our halts near the Virgen, we stopped at the point where Frémont, in the spring of 1844, lost one of his best men, an old mountaineer, who fell a victim to the hostility of these same Indians. The intrepid explorer has thus described his murder in his official report; from which valuable document I have already taken the liberty of quoting.

Under date of May 9th, 1844, he writes:

"I had been engaged in arranging plants; and, fatigued with the heat of the day, I fell asleep in the afternoon, and did not awake until sundown. Presently Carson came to me, and reported that Tabeau, who early in the day had left his post, and, without my knowledge, rode back to the camp we had left, in search of a lame mule, had not returned. While we were speaking, a smoke rose suddenly from the cotton-wood grove below, which plainly told us what had befallen him; it was raised to inform the surrounding Indians that a blow had been struck, and to tell them to be on their guard. Carson, with several men, well mounted, was instantly sent down the river, but returned in the night, without tidings of the missing man. They went to the camp we had left, but neither he nor the mule was there. Searching down the river, they found the tracks of the mule, evidently driven along by Indians, whose tracks were on each side of those made by the animal. After going several miles, they came to the mule itself, standing in some bushes, mortally wounded in the side by an arrow, and left to die, that it might be afterward butchered for food. They also found, in another place, as they were hunting about on the ground for Tabeau's tracks, something that looked like a little puddle of blood, but which the darkness prevented them from verifying. With these details, they returned to our camp, and their report saddened all our hearts."

"May 10th.—This morning, as soon as there was light enough to follow tracks, I set out myself, with Mr. Fitzpatrick and several men, in search of Tabeau. We went to the spot where

the appearance of puddled blood had been seen; and this, we saw at once, had been the place where he fell and died. Blood upon the leaves, and beaten-down bushes, showed that he had got his wound about twenty paces from where he fell, and that he had struggled for his life. He had probably been shot through the lungs with an arrow. From the place where he lay and bled, it could be seen that he had been dragged to the river's bank and thrown into it. No vestige of what had belonged to him could be found, except a fragment of his horse equipment. Horse, gun, clothes—all became the prey of these Arabs of the New World. Tabeau had been one of our best men, and his unhappy death spread a gloom over our party. Men who have gone through such dangers and sufferings as we had seen, become like brothers, and feel each other's loss. To defend and avenge each other, is the deep feeling of all."

As an apology for this long quotation, I may state that many of our party had been friends and companions of the unfortunate Tabeau; and the exciting sensations called up by revisiting the scene of his tragic end, found vent in the deep and general feelings of indignation expressed by our mountaineers against the tribe who had committed the murder.

We had scarcely been encamped two hours, when one of the horse-guard reported that he discovered fresh Indian tracks near our caballada, and expressed the opinion that they had just been made by some Digger spy, who had reconnoitred our position with the view of stealing the animals. With the associations connected with the spot, it will hardly seem wonderful that our line of conduct was soon determined upon. Carson, two old hunters named Auchambeau and Lewis, and myself, took our guns, and started upon the freshly-made trail. The foot-tracks at first, led us through the winding paths, along the river bottom, where we were obliged to travel in Indian file; and then turned suddenly aside, ascending one of the steep sand hills which bordered upon the stream. There we lost some time from the obscurity of the trail, but finally recovered it upon the crest of the bluff. A moment after, I heard Kit shouting, "there he goes;" and looking in the direction to which he pointed, I saw a Digger with his bow and arrows at his back, evidently badly frightened, and running for his life. Such traveling through deep sand I never saw before. The fellow bounded like a deer, swinging himself from side to side, so as to furnish a very uncertain mark for our rifles. Once, he seemed inclined to tarry, and take a shot at us; but after an attempt to draw his bow, he concluded that he had no time to waste, and hurried on. Kit fired first, and, for a wonder, missed him; but it was a long shot, and on the wing to boot. I tried him next with a musket, sending two balls and six buck-shot after him, with like success. Auchambeau followed me, with no better fortune; and we had begun to think the savage bore a charmed life, when

Lewis, who carried a long Missouri rifle, dropped upon one knee, exclaiming, "I'll bring him, boys." By this time, the Indian was nearly two hundred yards distant, and approaching the edge of a steep cañon (as it is called) of rocks and sand. The thing was now getting exciting, and we watched the man with almost breathless care, as Lewis fired; at the crack of his rifle the Digger bounded forward, and his arm, which had been raised in the air, fell suddenly to his side. He had evidently been hit through or near the shoulder; yet, strange to say, such is their knowledge of the country, and so great their power of endurance, that he succeeded in making his escape. In running, this warrior (who may have been an inferior chief), dropped his head-dress of fur; which, as he did not stop to get it, I thought might fairly come under the head of captured property, and took it away accordingly. From this time forward we had no more trouble with the Diggers.

Our adventures in the desert were eventually terminated by our arrival at "*Las Vegas de Santa Clara*;" and a pleasant thing it was to look once more upon green grass and sweet water, and to reflect that the dreariest portion of our journey lay behind us, so that the sands and jornadas of the great basin would weary our tired animals no more. But with all this, dangers, hardships, and privations were yet to be encountered and overcome; the craggy steeps and drifted snows of the Wah-Satch and Rocky Mountains, with many a turbid stream and rapid river, presented obstacles of no small magnitude to our onward progress. But with a better country before us, and the cool mountain breezes to fan our fevered limbs, we looked forward with stout hearts to the future, doubting not that we should yet attain our journey's end.

"*Las Vegas de Santa Clara*," to the traveler going eastward, must always appear beautiful by comparison. The noise of running water, the large grassy meadows, from which the spot takes its name, and the green hills which circle it round—all tend to captivate the eye and please the senses of the way-worn "*voyageur*."

If I remember rightly, it was not far from the Little Salt Lake that we first met with the Eutaw Indians. At this point we found one of their principal chiefs, "Wacarra," or Walker, as he is commonly called by the Americans. His encampment consisted of four lodges, inhabited by his wives, children, and suite of inferior warriors and chiefs. This party was awaiting the coming of the great Spanish caravan, from whom they intended taking the yearly tribute which the tribe exact as the price of a safe-conduct through their country. I found a vast difference in all respects between these Indians and the miserable beings whom we had hitherto seen. The Eutaws are perhaps the most powerful and warlike tribe now remaining upon this continent. They appear well provided with fire-arms, which they are said to use with the precision of veteran riflemen. I remember they expressed

their surprise that the white men should use so much powder in firing at a mark, while to them every load brought a piece of game or the scalp of an enemy. Wacarra (or Walker, as I shall call him) received our party very graciously; in fact, their attentions, so far at least as my humble self was concerned, became rather overpowering, as the sequel will show.

We had been riding hard, and, as I have before stated, our rations were both poor and scanty. But to eat is a necessity; and when food is prepared, to secure your own individual share, even under such circumstances, becomes a duty of considerable importance. As our encampment was not over a hundred yards distant from the lodges of our Indian neighbors, we had scarcely sat down to take breakfast—it ought to have been called dinner, as it was then near noon, and we had eaten nothing since the day before—when Walker's warriors joined us. Now it is a difficult matter for me to eat a meal in comfort when even a dog looks wistfully in my face; and I sat gazing in some perplexity, first upon the tin platter which contained my share of the *atole*, and then at the capacious mouth of a burly chieftain who stood evidently waiting for an invitation to sit down. At length I mustered my courage, and by various signs, which he appeared to have no difficulty in comprehending, tendered a gracious invitation to my red-skinned friend to join me, and taste the *atole*. Now before inviting my guest I had fully determined upon the line of conduct which it would be necessary for me to pursue, to obtain any thing like a fair proportion of the meal. My plan was this: I intended to try my pewter teaspoon, with which I hoped to consume the *atole* faster than my copper-colored friend, should he eat with the long sharp knife which I had destined for his use, fondly trusting that he would cut his mouth if he attempted to handle it rapidly. I have since thought that Mr. Eutaw saw through the whole design, for, as he commenced operations, he favored me with an indescribable look and grunt, at the same time turning the knife in his hand so as to manage it with its back toward him. I saw in a moment that my chances were small, and quickness of execution every thing. But it was no use; as the Western men say, I was "no whar." I worked away with my teaspoon until the perspiration fairly streamed from my forehead, bolting the hot *atole* like a salamander, but all would not do; the Indian, with his broad-bladed knife, took three mouthfuls to my one, and, hang the fellow! even condescended to look at me occasionally in a patronizing sort of way, and nod his head encouragingly. The solid portion of my repast soon grew "beautifully less," but before it had entirely disappeared, the Eutaw grasped the plate, and passed it to a friend of his, who stood directly behind him. This fellow literally *licked* the plate clean, and without any relaxation of his almost stoical gravity, turned it upside down, at the same time uttering a significant grunt, as an intimation that a further supply would be acceptable. I

looked ruefully at the empty dish, but the dark eyes of my guest were intently regarding me, and I had no time for meditation. So with a desperate determination to do nothing by halves, I handed my large coffee cup, with its precious contents, to the chief, at the same time smiling as amiably as my experiences would permit. Now this cup of coffee was my last and greatest dependence, as I knew that nothing was to be had in the way of eatables until the following day, and a long ride lay before us. So it was with something more than nervous trepidation that I watched the savage put the cup to his lips. Here, too, I was buoyed up by a delusive hope: certainly, thought I, he can not like coffee; the sugar is almost gone, and the beverage so bitter, that I hardly fancy it myself, and this fellow ought to spit it out in abhorrence. I watch his movements with breathless anxiety—he tastes—gives a grunt of uncertainty, and without lowering the cup, turns his eye to me, to ask if it is good. I shake my head negatively—could I have spoken his guttural jargon, I would have made a most impressive speech, to the effect that coffee was a great medicine, harmless to the pale face, but certain death to Indians in general and Eutaws in particular. But, alas! my sign was either unheeded or misunderstood. I sat in speechless agony, while the bottom of the cup was gradually elevated in the air, till—just as I was about commencing an expostulation, my guest uttered a satisfied sigh, and passed the cup to the same person who had cleared the platter. It was all gone—I felt it. Yes; “before you could say Jack Robinson” the second Indian had finished it, grounds and all, and placed the cup, bottom up, upon the ground. My meal for the day was gone; and I felt that to ask sympathy would only call forth a laugh against myself. So I kept my sorrows within my own breast until some days afterward, when Kit thought it one of the best jokes he had ever heard.

I have fancied that we must have reached Little Salt Lake upon one of my unlucky days, for it seems that I was destined to be cheated in a horse-trade by the same Indian who had consumed my breakfast.

The reader will probably remember my description of the horse which I purchased in California, and which I have alluded to as an animal of terrible experiences. I had found him so worthless upon the route that he had scarcely been ridden; and now the sharp stones of the desert had injured his hoofs so seriously, that I knew it would be impossible to bring him over the rugged country which remained to be crossed. Accordingly, I had the miserable beast duly paraded, and having got him in such a position that a rock at his back prevented him from lying down, a thing not to be desired until the negotiation for his transfer was ended, I proceeded, by means of signs and the few words of Eutaw which I had learned, to open a treaty for his exchange. My Indian friends, after carefully examining the animal, sent a boy for the horse which they wished to give for him.

Pending the return of their messenger, they employed the time in destroying what little of good character my poor steed had ever possessed, shook their heads despondingly over his battered hoofs, and grunted hideously in token of their strong disapprobation.

The perfection of horse-flesh (which, alas! was soon to come into my stock), now made his appearance in the shape of a rough-looking Indian pony, who might have been twenty years of age or upward; his Eutaw groom led him by a hair rope, which he had twisted round his nose; but upon a signal from the chief the lad scrambled upon the animal's back, and began putting the old veteran through his paces, which seemed limited to a one-sided walk, and a gallop which would have done credit to a wounded buffalo bull. As a last inducement they exhibited his hoofs, which certainly looked *hard* enough, in all conscience. After considerable hesitation I was about making the trade upon equal terms, when to my great disgust the chief informed me that he could not think of parting with so valuable an animal, unless I gave him some present to boot. This new demand I was fain to comply with, and parted not only with my broken down horse, but with one of my two Mexican blankets; and many was the time while chilled by the cold breezes of the Rocky Mountains that I thought, with a shiver, of my horse-trade by the Little Salt Lake.

Before leaving this encampment, I was invited by Walker to visit his lodge, and accompanied him accordingly. These lodges are made of skins sewed together, with an opening at the top which serves as a chimney for the smoke, the fire being built on the ground in the centre of the lodge. Upon entering the lodge the children crowded round me, admiring the gaudy scarlet cloth with which my leathern hunting-shirt was lined; most of these young people were armed with small bows and arrows which they amused themselves by aiming at me. Walker's wife, or wives, for I think he had several, were busied in their domestic avocations about the lodge, and one of them (a good-looking squaw of some eighteen or twenty years, who seemed to be the favorite), was kind enough to spread a deer-skin for my accommodation. Wishing to repay her courtesy, I called my servant Juan, and directed him to get a brass breast-plate with the letters “U.S.” conspicuously displayed, which I had among my traps, polish it up, and bring it to me. This he did, and I shall never forget the joy of this belle of the wilderness, upon receiving the shining metal. With the aid of a small mirror, which had probably been obtained from some passing trader, she arranged the breast-plate (fully two inches square) upon her raven locks, and then, with the air of a tragedy queen, marched up and down in front of the lodge, looking with great contempt upon her envious companions. It was certainly an amusing scene, and goes to prove that vanity may exist as strongly in the character of a Eutaw squaw, as in the breast of



CAMP AMONG THE WAH-SATCH MOUNTAINS.

a city belle ; with this difference perhaps, that it is exhibited with much less taste among those whose education should have taught them better things.

it by their riders. Upon the mountain tops we sometimes encamped upon snow heaps many feet in depth, and while thus situated my mode of protecting myself from the cold during the night, was as follows. I made a small excavation in the side of some drift least exposed to the wind, and then wrapping myself closely in my solitary blanket, I spread my saddle cloths beneath me, and rolled myself into the hole, where I managed to sleep pretty comfortably, even amid the snows of the Wah-Satch Mountains.

In this same section of country, we encamped



UTAH LODGE.

After leaving the Little Salt Lake, we traveled over or near the Wah-Satch Mountains for several days, meeting with few adventures worthy of note until we reached the mountain snows, which even in the month of June we found several feet in depth. Some of our mules, who had never seen snow before—having been reared among the sunny plains of California—showed great uneasiness upon first approaching it, they would stop, try the depth of the drift with their hoofs, and hesitate until fairly spurred into



SLEEPING IN THE SNOW.

one evening upon a beautiful little lake situated in a hollow among the mountains, but at so great



ENCAMPMENT IN THE SNOW.

an elevation that it was, even in summer, surrounded by snow, and partially covered with ice. There we were again visited by the Eutaw Indians, who, as usual, behaved in a very friendly manner. Our provisions had now become so scanty that it was necessary to add to our stock by purchasing what we could from the Indians. From the party who here visited us, we managed to obtain a portion of a Rocky-Mountain sheep, or "big-horn," as it is often called;—and, upon Kit's asking for fish, one of the Indians departed, but in a few minutes returned with a fine trout, which we bought for a couple of charges of powder. Our bargain had hardly been placed upon the fire when we discovered that the fish had been killed by an arrow-wound in the back. While we were wondering at this novel mode of taking trout, two of our men came into camp with as many fish as they could carry, and told us that they had caught as many more, but left them upon the banks of the lake. It seemed that in wandering about, they had discovered a little stream, a tributary to the lake, but quite shallow; this stream they represented as swarming with fish, so that they had gone in and killed them with sticks. To our hungry people this was *more* than good news; and that evening was devoted to the composition of a chowder, which was literally fish "*au naturel*."

Our supper ended, it was unanimously decided that we should move our camp next day no further than the stream, where we contemplated spending the day in fishing. With this pleasant expectation I betook myself to bed, where I was soon lulled to sleep by a low, monotonous strain which one of our Indian guests amused himself by singing.

By sunrise next morning we were not only settled in our new camp, but up to our knees in the icy water in pursuit of its frightened tenants. If fish keep chronicles, I fancy that those in the waters of Trout Lake will not soon forget us; for such a slaughter of the finny tribe I have rarely seen. For my own part, with an old

bayonet fastened to a stick, I caught five dozen—and a twinge of rheumatism, which reminds me of the circumstance even now.

With our former experiences of scanty rations and hard travel, it will scarcely be thought surprising that after a day's rest and our famous feast of chowder, we should feel as if we could have faced not only a whole legion of "Diggers," but the "Old Boy" himself (always supposing that the "Evil One" could haunt so cold a region as the Wah-Satch Mountains). Our course was now for the most part upward; sometimes crossing snowy ridges, where the icy winds made us fairly crouch in our saddles; and then descending into valleys where the pine-forests afforded a grateful shelter from the sun.

While traversing one of these gorges, we came suddenly upon seven human skeletons, six of which, bleached by the elements, lay scattered here and there, where the bones had been dragged by hungry wolves along a space of some yards in extent; the seventh, which, from its less accessible position, being sheltered by rocks and, in part, by a fallen tree, had remained undisturbed by beasts of prey, seemed extended where its owner died. Upon a further examination of the ground, we concluded that these mournful relics were the remains of some unfortunate party of whites or Mexicans who had been cut off by the Indians. The skeleton which lay alone appeared, from the arrow heads and bullets yet marking the tree which guarded it, to have belonged to an individual of the party who had fought from this shelter until overcome by superior numbers.



SKELETON.—TREE PIERCED WITH ARROWS.

These surmises afterward proved but too true, as we learned from a band of friendly Eutaws, who reported that the bones which we had discovered were those of a party of Americans from Arkansas, who had been surprised by hostile Indians while resting at noon, and instantly killed, with the exception of one of their number, who snatched up his rifle, retreated to the nearest cover, and there battled with all the energy of despair, killing two of the savages before being dispatched by the arrows of his assailants. It was a sad sight for us to gaze upon these mouldering fragments. None of us

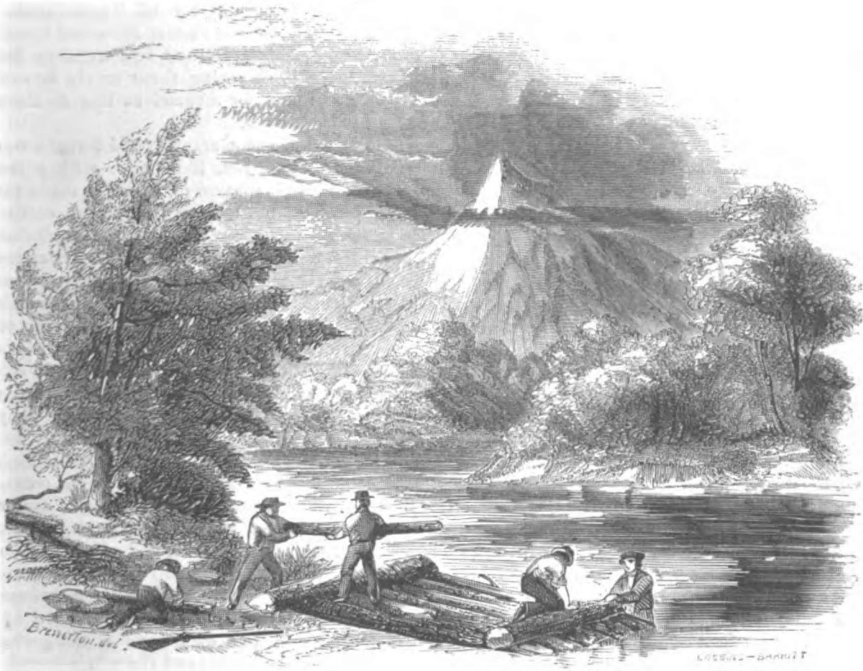
could say at what moment their fate might be ours—to die amid the wilderness, far from friends and home, with the wolf to howl over us, and the wild mountain breezes to chant our requiem, as they roared through the sombre branches of the pines. How many sad hearts may have yearned, and how many bright eyes, filled with tears, of the sufferers from "hope deferred," who were yet looking for the brothers and husbands whose fate we had been the first to learn!

I remember celebrating my birth-day, which comes in June (the precise date I will leave the reader to guess, if he be a Yankee), by standing upon the banks of Grand River, and looking with a most rueful countenance and many 'secret forebodings upon the turbid current of the swollen stream. And well I might. I have said it was in June; and one might suppose that a cold-bath in early summer was no great hardship; but in this case, I found that the association of the month with summer ended with its name; for the strong wind felt more like a December blast as it went rushing by, and the angry torrent at my feet, fed by the melting snows, was many degrees colder than the water of a mountain spring. But this formidable obstacle was to be passed, and how to overcome the difficulty I scarcely knew. Kit, however, solved the problem, by proposing a raft, and accordingly all hands went to work with a will to collect the necessary material from the neighboring woods. Kit, in his shirt-sleeves, working hard himself—instructing here

and directing there, and as usual, proving himself the master-spirit of the party. After much labor, a few logs were properly cut, notched, and rolled into the water, where they were carefully fastened together by binding them with our *réatas*, until this rude expedient furnished a very passable mode of conveyance for a light load of luggage.

Having freighted it as heavily as we dared with our packs and riding saddles, and placed the bags containing the California mails upon the securest portion, we next proceeded to determine who of our party should be the first to swim the stream. Five men were at length selected, and as I was a good swimmer I concluded to join the expedition as captain. So taking Auchambeau as my first mate, we two plunged into the stream; and having arranged our men at their appointed stations, only waited Kit's final orders, to trust ourselves to the waters. These instructions were soon briefly given in the following words, "All you men who can't swim may hang on to the corners of the raft, but don't any of you try to get upon it except Auchambeau, who has the pole to guide it with; those of you who can swim, are to get hold of the tow-line, and pull it along; keep a good lookout for rocks and floating timber; and whatever you do, don't lose the mail bags." And now with one sturdy shove, our frail support was fairly launched, and with a farewell cheer from our comrades upon the shore we consigned ourselves to the mercy of the tide.

I have remarked that I went as captain; but



BUILDING A RAFT

once under way, I found that we were all captains; if indeed giving orders did any good where half one's words were lost amid the roaring of the rapids. In fact we mismanaged the business altogether, until at length I fancy that the poor stream, already vexed beyond endurance, determined to take the matter under its own guidance, out of pity for the nautical ignorance which we had displayed; and finally settled the thing by abandoning us in disgust upon the same side from whence we had started, but more than a mile further down. Ere this operation was concluded, however, it favored me, doubtless in consideration of my captainship, with a parting token; which but for the ready aid of Auchambeau must have finished my adventures upon the spot. I had swam out with a lariat to secure the unfortunate raft to a tree, when the current brought the heavy mass of timber into violent contact with my breast, throwing me back senseless into the channel. Just as I was performing a final feat, in the way of going down, Auchambeau got hold of my hair, which I luckily wore long, and dragged me out upon the bank, where I came to in due course of time.

Our situation was now far from pleasant, the only article of dress which we wore being our hats, the rest of our clothing having been left behind to come by another raft. To go up the rapids against the stream was out of the question; and to cross from where we were, with a considerable fall and jagged rocks just below us, equally impossible. So we had no resource but to shoulder our baggage and travel back on foot, following, as nearly as the thickets would permit, the windings of the river; and uttering more than one anathema upon the thorny plants, which wounded our unprotected feet at every step. It was high noon before we reached camp; and nearly four o'clock ere we were again prepared, and once more summoned up our resolution for a new trial.

This second attempt, after an infinite deal of trouble, proved successful, and we landed upon the opposite bank in a state of almost utter exhaustion; indeed Auchambeau, from over-exertion, and long exposure to the chilling snow water, was taken, upon reaching the shore, with cramps which convulsed him so terribly that we feared they might even destroy life itself. Our first care was, therefore, for him; and by dint of violent friction and rolling in the sand we succeeded in restoring our patient; and then turned our attention to unloading the raft, which had been partly drawn out of the river, and secured to the trunk of a fallen cotton-wood. In this labor we were assisted by a party of Eutaw Indians who had come down to meet us. In fact these fellows did the greater portion of the work, as our weary crew were as yet incapable of much exertion. I have since thought that while thus employed we must have looked like Robinson Crusoe, and his man Friday, supposing those distinguished individuals to have been multiplied by five; the wild scenery, tho

dashing waters, and our own singular costumes (for we were by this time dressed in buffalo robes borrowed from our Indian friends), all combining to carry out the delusion.

Having seen our baggage safely landed, and beheld the raft (bad luck to it for in this instance I could not "speak well of the bridge which carried me over") go down the rapids, to be dashed against the rocky cliffs below; we ascended the stream, hallooing to our companions to notify them of our safe arrival; the receipt of which information they acknowledged by a hearty cheer. Both parties, with the assistance of the Indians, then prepared to cross our caballada, who were expected to swim the river. With this view we selected a point upon our side, considerably below the position occupied by the opposite party, where the bank shelved gradually, and afforded a better footing than elsewhere. Here we took our station to attract the attention of the swimming animals by shouting and whistling. Upon our signifying our readiness to receive them, one of the opposite party rode into the water upon the old bell-mare, and the frightened mules were forced to follow, urged on by the yells and blows of their drivers. In a few moments the whole caballada was under way; the old bell-mare, striking out and breasting the waves gallantly, while the mules, with only their heads and long ears visible above the water, came puffing like small high-pressure steamboats in her wake. The yelling on our side now commenced, in which concert the Indians took the thorough base, performing to admiration; while our Mexican muleteers rent the air with their favorite cry of "*anda mula*," "*hupar mula*." The animals, attracted by the noise, made straight for us; and we soon had the gratification of seeing them safely landed, dripping and shaking themselves like so many Newfoundland dogs.

At this point, however, our good fortune was destined to end. Kit, it is true, with a few men, and a small portion of luggage, made the passage safely; but a large raft, which carried the greater share of our provisions, was dashed against a sawyer in the stream, which separated the logs, leaving the men to save themselves as they best could; this they did with considerable difficulty: but six rifles, three saddles, much of the ammunition, and nearly all our provisions were totally lost. Under these depressing circumstances, our camp that night was any thing but a lively one; the Eutaws being the only persons who seemed to feel like laughing. Indeed, I half think that our loss put them in high good-humor, as they had some prospect of recovering the rifles, when a lower stage of water should enable them to explore the bed of the stream. The little that remained of our private mess stores, was now the only certain dependence left to us in the way of food for our whole party. These stores were equally divided by Carson himself; our own portion being the same as that of our men, and the whole would, with economy in using, furnish but three days'



SWIMMING THE RIVER.

scanty rations for each individual. Some of our men had lost their riding-saddles, and were fain to spread their blankets upon a mule's back, and jog along as they best might—a mode of travel which, when the animal's bones are highly developed, I take to be "bad at the best," for the rider. Others of the party had lost their clothing; and I am sorry to say that the number of pairs of "nether integuments" was two less than that of the people who ought to have worn them. But this was a trifle compared with our other difficulties, for there was nobody in those regions who knew enough of the fashions to criticise our dress; and as for ourselves we were in no mood to smile at our own strange costumes. Personally, I had been more lucky than the majority of my companions, having saved my precious suit of deer-skins, my rifle, and a few rounds of ammunition; but, alas! the waters of Grand River had swallowed up my note-book, my geological and botanical specimens, and many of my sketches, a most serious and vexatious loss, after the labor of collecting and preparing them.

Two days' travel brought us to Green River, where we underwent much of the same difficulty in crossing which we had encountered in the passage of Grand River; but we had now learned wisdom from experience, and had, moreover, little left to lose.

The dreaded "third day" which was to see us provisionless at length arrived, and, instead of breakfast, I tried to fill the "aching void" by drawing my belt a hole or two tighter; a great

relief, as I can testify, for the cravings of an empty stomach.

As I rode along, reflecting, rather gloomily, I must confess, upon the position of our affairs, and considering where or in what form a supply might best be obtained, I discovered that the same feelings were occupying the minds of most of the party; and before we halted for the night it was moved, resolved, and finally determined, that the fattest of our way-worn steeds should be killed, dressed, and eaten. This idea furnished ample material for contemplation. Eat horse-meat! The very thought was revolting. I had heard of such a thing. Dana tells some story of the kind, I believe; and I remember the chorus of a nautical melody, deservedly popular among seamen, which begins:

"Old horse, old horse, what brought you here?
From Saracen's Head to Portland pier,
I've carted stone this many a year;
Till killed by blows and sore abuse,
They've salted me down for sailor's use."

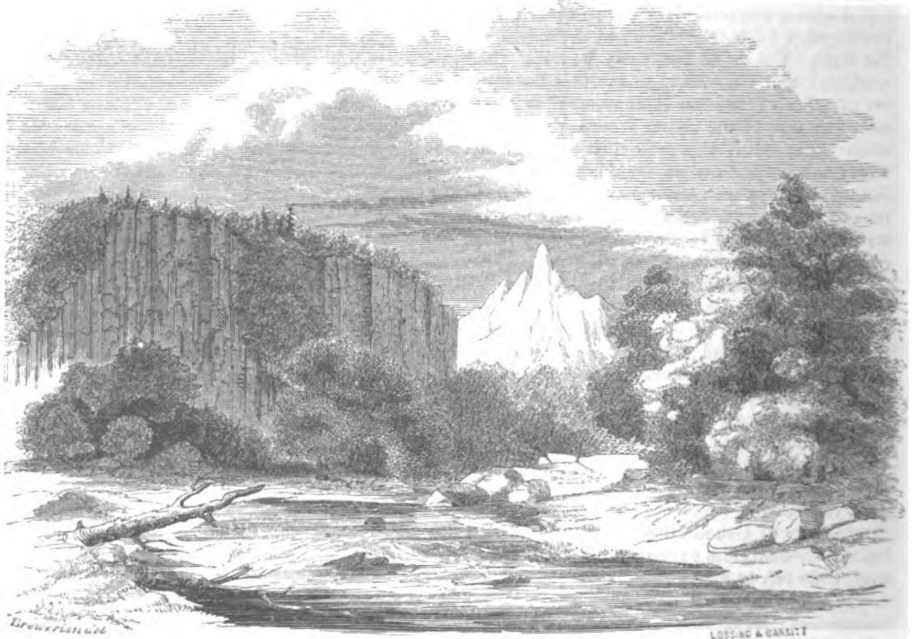
And so on, through forty lines of doggerel. But then the contemplation of horse-meat, as an edible, had been with me but an abstract idea, which I had never contemplated putting into practice. Now, however, the thing was tangible. To eat, or not to eat, became "the question;" and, after due consideration, Hunger arguing the case on one side, with strong Necessity for an advocate—and Fastidiousness taking the opposite, with Prejudice for her backer, I came to the conclusion that I would not and could not eat horse-flesh. In accordance with this valorous decis-

ion, although upon our arrival at camp, a horse (lean, old, and decidedly tough) was actually killed, cut up, and freely eaten of, I alone stood aloof, and went supperless to bed. But it was all in vain; for Starvation is a weighty reasoner, and Hunger gained the day at last. I stood out like a Trojan for eight-and-forty hours, and then "gave in" with as good a grace as possible, and for more than a week ate horseflesh regularly. Perhaps the reader would like to know how it tasted. I can only say that it was an old animal, a tough animal, and a sore-backed animal—and, upon the whole—I *prefer beef*.

During this period of scarcity, we met with several parties of Indians; but found their condition little better than our own; indeed, I believe that it would have nauseated even a frequenter of a sixpenny "restaurant," to have seen the horrible messes which their women were concocting. But I had got bravely over my squeamishness by this time, and would have dined with a Mandarin, without ever inquiring into the contents of the dishes. Really, I blush to confess it—but I actually tried to buy a fat puppy, which, truly and conscientiously, I intended to have eaten. I enticed the brute (which, by the way, was a short-haired animal, with a stumpy tail, and a decidedly mangy look) into the lodge of its owner, and then by means of signs, opened a negotiation for its purchase. I offered the extent of my available capital—three cartridges and five brass buttons. I said, "bow-wow," pointing first to the dog, and then

to my mouth, which already watered in anticipation of the dainty; but though my proposition was comprehended, and the savage looked upon the buttons with a longing eye, he seemed unwilling to trade; and, finally, explained his reluctance, by pointing with one hand to the puppy, while he gently patted his capacious stomach with the other: thereby giving me to understand that the beast was intended for his own private eating. Finding that the dog was not to be obtained by fair means, and urged by necessity to secure him, at all hazards, I returned to camp, and dispatched "Juan" as a foraging party of one, to invade the enemy's camp and carry off the puppy, "*nolens, volens*." But he found the animal (who may have suspected something from the intentness with which I had regarded him) safely housed, and abandoned the enterprise in despair.

Upon reaching the borders of the Rocky Mountains, our situation, so far as food was concerned, became somewhat improved. We found this portion of the country to be by far the most pleasing and interesting which we had yet seen—every turning of the trail disclosing some new beauty of its grand and majestic scenery. Our course, except while crossing a dividing ridge, lay mostly along the mountain passes, where huge cliffs reared their rocky barriers, upon either hand crowned with various trees, the pine and a species of aspen being the most prominent. These valleys abounded in game, among which I noticed the black-tailed



ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCENERY.

deer, elk, antelope, and the Rocky Mountain sheep or "big-horn," as they are sometimes called. This abundance, however, proved rather a matter of vexation than a real benefit; for the animals were so wild and unapproachable that our hunters were often disappointed in obtaining meat; so that but for the Indians, who were here better provided, we should have been obliged to return to the horseflesh.



ROCKY MOUNTAIN BROOK.

I shall not soon forget accompanying Carson, about this time, on one of our many excursions to procure venison. We had discovered a doe with her fawn in a little grassy nook, where the surrounding rocks would partially screen us from their view, while we crawled within gunshot. Dismounting with as little noise as possible, I remained stationary, holding our horses, while Kit endeavored to approach the unsuspecting deer. We were both somewhat nervous, for our supper and breakfast depended on our success; and we knew well from former experiences that if the doe heard but the crackling of a bush she would be off like the wind. Kit, therefore, advanced with somewhat more than ordinary care, using every caution which a hunter's education could suggest, and at length gained a point within rifle-shot of his prey. My nervousness was now at its height; why don't he fire! thought I. But Kit was cooler, and calculated more closely than myself. At last I saw him bring his rifle to his eye, at the same time showing himself sufficiently to attract the attention of the doe, who raised her head a little to get a look at the object of alarm, thus offering a better mark for his rifle; a moment more, and at the report of the piece, the doe made one convulsive bound, and then rolled upon the sward. To tie our horses, cut up the deer, and attach its quarters to our saddles was the work of twenty minutes more; and then remounting, we pursued our way, making quite a triumphal entry into camp, where Kit's good luck rejoiced the hearts and stomachs of every man in the party: it was really a great event to us in those days, and we had that night a right jolly time of it.

As the events here recorded took place when I was several years younger than I now am, I trust that the following incident will be regard-

ed leniently by the readers of this off-hand, but strictly veracious narrative. I relate it for the benefit of all romantic young ladies; and I may add, that although I consider the thing original in my own case, I have not the slightest objection to any young gentleman's doing likewise, if placed in a similar position.

To begin my story at the proper point, I must confess that in bidding farewell to the Atlantic coast, I left the object of a boyish flame behind me. A noble-hearted woman she was, with a very witching pair of eyes (at least, I thought so then—but, a plague upon such descriptions, say I. I never yet attempted to get through a lover's catalogue of lips and teeth, Grecian noses and ivory necks, and all that, without breaking down, so I will leave it to my lady readers to imagine all "my fancy painted her.") Suffice it to say, that she was a sensible woman withal, believing firmly in the old adage, "that a rolling stone gathered no moss;" and with such excellent principles it is hardly wonderful that she liked neither soldiers nor soldiering. But yet it was *one* of my first loves; a fancy of sweet sixteen; and campaigning had not altogether jolted her image out of my head. So one evening, as I stood upon a commanding height just above our camp, I thought of home and absent friends; until yielding to the duplex influences of a poetical temperament, and the solemn twilight hour, I fell into a train of romantic musings which ended in my cutting the name of my fair friend upon the barkless trunk of a gigantic pine, where it is doubtless legible at the present time, and may, for aught I know to the contrary, furnish some future traveler with a fair subject for wonderment and mystery.

The spot, moreover, had an interest about it beyond the mere fact of its lying amid the depths of a mighty wilderness, as it is said to be upon the line which divides the waters of this vast continent, those on the right hand flowing into the Gulf of Mexico, while those on the left mingle with the calmer waves of the Pacific. Were I in that region now, I think that I could almost find the identical tree, from the vicinity of a huge pair of antlers which I recollect to have seen lying near its base. If any man believes that the achievement was simply a "labor of love" unattended by any exertion, hardship, or danger on my part, I can only say that if he will stand upon the summit of an airy cliff, at the rather chilly hour of sunset, and cut three large capitals into the trunk of a very knotty pine with no better tools than a rusty jack-knife, I will give him a certificate for any amount of chivalry and devotion, and—call him a fool to boot.

From these rugged mountain paths we at length emerged, descending into the beautiful plains known as Taos Valley. Here we had scarcely gone a day's journey, before we discovered a great increase in the amount of "Indian sign," and also a change in its appearance, which, though hardly perceptible to an inex-

perienced eye, was too surely read by Carson's not to beget great uneasiness.

"Look here," said Kit, as he dismounted from his mule, and stooped to examine the trail; "The Indians have passed across our road since sun-up, and they are a war party too; no sign of lodge poles, and no colt tracks; they are no friends neither: here's a feather that some of them has dropped. We'll have trouble yet, if we don't keep a bright look-out."

Our camp that night was upon the borders of a stream which had been swollen by the melting of the snows, until the neighboring prairies had been overflowed to a considerable extent. This deposit of water, now grown partially stagnant, had given birth to myriads of mosquitoes, who at evening arose like a mighty cloud from their marshy beds to precipitate themselves upon our devoted camp. Talk about the plagues of Egypt! I will compromise for any amount of frogs and locusts, or even take fleas, by way of variety; but defend me from those winged torments, called mosquitoes. These fellows, too, were of the regular gallinipper tribe, of which old officers who have seen service in the everglades of Florida tell such wondrous tales. To repulse this army of invasion we made smokes, and hovered over them until our eyes were literally "a fountain of water;" but though whole battalions were suffocated, and perished in the flames, millions rushed in to fill their places and renew the fight. Our poor mules, equally annoyed with ourselves, showed more sagacity than I gave them credit for, by getting together in a body, and standing in pairs, side by side, so that the tail of one was kept in motion near the head of the other, thus establishing an association for mutual protection, which kept the insects in some measure at a distance. But it certainly was a ludicrous sight to watch the long-eared crowd with their tails going like the sails of an assembly of windmills, and to observe their look of patient resignation when some mosquito, more daring than his fellows, broke through their barrier, biting keenly in defiance of their precautions. Finding it impossible to remain by the camp fires, I at length rolled myself up in a Mexican blanket, covering my head so completely that I excluded not only the mosquitoes but the air, and thus remained in a state of partial suffocation, listening to the shrill war song of our assailants, until the cooler winds of midnight forced them to leave the field, and take refuge in the cozy swamps.

We were up before the sun upon the following day, and continued on down the valley. Near noon Carson discovered a number of what appeared to be Indians some distance ahead, in a hollow, where a few stunted trees partially concealed them from our view. A little beyond their camp we perceived a large number of animals grazing, which betokened the presence of a party as large, or nearly as large, as our own. As these people were evidently unaware of our proximity, we called a halt, and after a moment's consultation, determined to make a charge, and

as we seemed pretty equally matched in regard to numbers, to take, if necessary, the offensive line of conduct. With this view, we selected ten of our best men, and having arrayed our forces, came down, so far as determination was concerned, in very gallant style, each man with his rifle in his hand, firmly resolved to "do or die." But, alas, for the poetry of the affair, we could boast but little of the

"Pomp, pride, and circumstance of glorious war," either in our dress or accoutrements. "Falstaff's ragged regiment," so often quoted as the *ac plus ultra* of volunteerism, were regular troops when compared with our dashing cavaliers. We looked ragged enough and dirty enough in all conscience, without any extra attempt at effect, but, as if to complete the picture, the two unfortunate individuals who wanted "unmentionables" were front-rank men, and your very humble servant, the author, had a portion of an under-garment which shall be nameless tied round his head in lieu of a hat. Take us all in all, we certainly did not neglect the advice of one of Shakespeare's heroes, who bids his followers "hang out their banners on the outer wall." The mules, too—confound their stupidity!—ruined the affair, so far as it might be considered in the light of a secret expedition, by stretching out their heads, protruding their long ears, and yelling most vociferously. "Confound your stumbling body!" said one old mountaineer to his steed (a wall-eyed *marcho*), "maybe you'll have something to make a noise for, when you get an Apache arrow slipped into you." But our famous charge on mule-back was brought to an abrupt and inglorious close upon reaching the camp of our supposed enemies, by the discovery that they were nothing more nor less than Mexican traders, who had penetrated thus far into the wilderness for the purpose of trafficking with the Indians.

From these fellows we obtained some useful, but not particularly encouraging information, to the effect that a party of mountaineers, larger than our own, and better supplied with arms, had been attacked by the Indians near the point at which we expected to encamp that night, defeated, and despoiled of their property. There was nothing before us, however, but to push ahead, and that evening found few in our camp who cared to sleep soundly. With a view to greater watchfulness, our guard was doubled, the sentries crawling to and from their posts; and all making as little disturbance as possible. The fires of an Indian camp—probably a part of the same band who had defeated the mountaineers—shone brightly from a hillside about half a mile distant; and having nothing to cook, we deemed it most prudent to extinguish our own, which had been lighted to drive away the mosquitoes. During the night great uneasiness among the animals betokened the presence or close vicinity of lurking Indians; and Kit, whose long acquaintance with the savages had taught him a perfect knowledge of their modes of warfare, believing that they would attack us about daybreak, determined to steal a march upon the

enemy. In pursuance of this object, we saddled our beasts at midnight, and departed as noiselessly as possible, traveling by starlight until the first glimmer of the dawn, when we paused for a few moments to breathe our tired animals, and then continued on.

We had, upon leaving our last night's camp, nearly one hundred miles to travel before reaching the first settlements in New Mexico, the nearest place of safety; and it was now determined to make the distance without delay. Accordingly we pressed on as rapidly as the condition of our cattle would permit, stopping only to shift our saddles to one of the loose animals when those we rode showed signs of giving out. Late in the afternoon we had, by the free use of whip and spur, reached a point some eighteen miles distant from the first Mexican habitations.

I was just beginning to feel a little relieved from the anxious watchfulness of the last few days, and had even beguiled the weariness of the way by picturing to myself the glorious dinner I would order upon reaching Santa Fé, when Carson, who had been looking keenly ahead, interrupted my musings, by exclaiming: "Look at that Indian village; we have stumbled upon the rascals, after all!" It was but too true—a sudden turning of the trail had brought us full in view of nearly two hundred lodges, which were located upon a rising ground some half a mile distant to the right of our trail. At this particular point the valley grew narrower, and hemmed in as we were upon either hand by a chain of hills and mountains, we had no resource but to keep straight forward on our course, in the expectation that by keeping, as sailors say, "well under the land," we might possibly slip by unperceived. But our hope was a vain one; we had already been observed, and ere we had gone a hundred yards, a warrior came dashing out from their town, and, putting his horse to its speed, rode rapidly up to Carson and myself: he was a finely formed savage, mounted upon a noble horse, and his fresh paint and gaudy equipments looked any thing but peaceful. This fellow continued his headlong career until almost at our side, and then, checking his steed so suddenly as to throw the animal back upon its haunches, he inquired for the "capitan" (a Spanish word generally used by the Indians to signify chief); in answer to which, I pointed first to Carson, and then to myself. Kit, who had been regarding him intently, but without speaking, now turned to me, and said: "I will speak to this warrior in Eutaw, and if he understands me it will prove that he belongs to a friendly tribe; but if he does not, we may know the contrary, and must do the best we can: but from his paint and manner I expect it will end in a fight anyway."

Kit then turned to the Indian, who, to judge from his expression, was engaged in taking mental, but highly satisfactory notes of our way-worn party with their insufficient arms and

scanty equipments; and asked him in the Eutaw tongue, "Who are you?" The savage stared at us for a moment; and then, putting a finger into either ear, shook his head slowly from side to side. "I knew it," said Kit; "it is just as I thought, and we are in for it at last. Look here, Thomas!" added he (calling to an old mountain man)—"get the mules together, and drive them up to that little patch of chapparral, while we follow with the Indian." Carson then requested me in a whisper to drop behind the savage (who appeared determined to accompany us), and be ready to shoot him at a minute's warning, if necessity required. Having taken up a position accordingly, I managed to cock my rifle, which I habitually carried upon the saddle, without exciting suspicion.

Kit rode ahead to superintend the movements of the party who, under the guidance of Thomas, had by this time got the pack and loose animals together, and were driving them toward a grove about two hundred yards further from the village. We had advanced thus but a short distance, when Carson (who from time to time had been glancing backward over his shoulder) reined in his mule until we again rode side-by-side. While stooping, as if to adjust his saddle, he said, in too low a tone to reach any ears but mine: "Look back, but express no surprise." I did so, and beheld a sight which, though highly picturesque, and furnishing a striking subject for a painting, was, under existing circumstances, rather calculated to destroy the equilibrium of the nerves. In short, I saw about a hundred and fifty warriors, finely mounted, and painted for war, with their long hair streaming in the wind, charging down upon us, shaking their lances and brandishing their spears as they came on.

By this time we had reached the timber, if a few stunted trees could be dignified with the name; and Kit, springing from his mule called out to the men, "Now boys, dismount, tie up your riding mules; those of you who have guns, get round the caballada, and look out for the Indians; and you who have none, get inside, and hold some of the animals. Take care, Thomas, and shoot down the mule with the mail bags on her pack, if they try to stampee the animals."

We had scarcely made these hurried preparations for the reception of such unwelcome visitors, before the whole horde were upon us, and had surrounded our position. For the next fifteen minutes a scene of confusion and excitement ensued which baffles all my powers of description. On the one hand the Indians pressed closely in; yelling, aiming their spears, and drawing their bows, while their chiefs, conspicuous from their activity, dashed here and there among the crowd, commanding and directing their followers. On the other side, our little band, with the exception of those who had lost their rifles in Grand River, stood firmly round the caballada; Carson, a few paces in advance, giving orders to his men, and haranguing the Indians. His whole demeanor, was now so

entirely changed, that he looked like a different man; his eye fairly flashed, and his rifle was grasped with all the energy of an iron will.

"There," cried he, addressing the savages, "is our line, cross it if you dare, and we begin to shoot. You ask us to let you in, but you won't come unless you ride over us. You say you are friends, but you don't act like it. No you don't deceive us so, we know you too well; so stand back, or your lives are in danger."

It was a bold thing in him to talk thus to these blood-thirsty rascals; but a crisis had arrived in which, boldness alone could save us, and he knew it. They had five men to our one; our ammunition was reduced to three rounds per man, and resistance could have been but momentary; but among our band the Indians must have recognized mountain men, who would have fought to the last, and they knew from sad experience that the trapper's rifle rarely missed its aim. Our animals, moreover, worn out as they were, would have been scarcely worth fighting for, and our scalps a dear bargain.

Our assailants were evidently undecided, and this indecision saved us; for just as they seemed preparing for open hostilities, as rifles were cocked and bows drawn, a runner, mounted upon a weary and foam-specked steed came galloping in from the direction of the settlements; bringing information of evident importance. After a moment's consultation with this new arrival, the chief whistled shrilly, and the warriors fell back. Carson's quick eye had already detected their confusion, and turning to his men, he called out, "Now boys, we have a chance, jump into your saddles, get the loose animals before you, and then handle your rifles, and if these fellows interfere with us we'll make a running fight of it."

In an instant each man was in his saddle, and with the caballada in front we retired slowly; facing about from time to time, to observe the movements of our enemies, who followed on, but finally left us and disappeared in the direction of their village, leaving our people to pursue their way undisturbed. We rode hard, and about midnight reached the first Mexican dwellings which we had seen since our departure from the Pacific coast. This town being nothing more than a collection of shepherds' huts, we did not enter, but made camp near it. Here also we learned the secret of our almost miraculous escape from the Indians, in the fact that a party of two hundred American volunteers were on their way to punish the perpetrators of the recent Indian outrages in that vicinity; this then was the intelligence which had so opportunely been brought by their runner, who must have discovered the horsemen while upon the march.

It is almost needless to say that we slept the sleep of tired men that night. I for one did not awake with the dawn. Our tired animals too appeared to require some repose ere they renewed

their labors; and it was therefore decided that we should take a holiday of rest before departing for Taos, now distant but one day's journey. I remember celebrating this occasion by visiting one of the Mexican huts, where I ordered the most magnificent dinner that the place afforded, eggs and goat's milk, at discretion—if discretion had any thing to do with the terrible havoc we made among the eatables, a thing which on reflection appears to me more than doubtful.

Early upon the following day we resumed our march, and that evening terminated our journeyings for a season, by bringing us to the Mexican village of Taos, where I was hospitably entertained by Carson and his amiable wife, a Spanish lady, and a relative, I believe, of some former Governor of New Mexico.



THE AUTHOR ON REACHING TAOS.

And now, as our good parsons say, "a few words more and I have done;" and I most sincerely hope that these farewell lines may not bring the sensation of weariness to the reader which I have sometimes felt upon hearing the foregoing announcement from the pulpit. What I have written is simply a plain, unvarnished statement of facts as they occurred. While I grant that the capital "I" has come in more frequently than I could have wished, I must disclaim all title to the hero-ship of my story. I was but a looker-on, "a chiel," who, though "takin' notes," did not then mean to "prent 'em."

Since writing a portion of the foregoing narrative, Mr. Christopher Carson has been nominated by our President to the Indian Agency of the Territory of New Mexico, a highly responsible office, requiring great tact, much common sense, and a fair amount of judgment. This excellent selection has been ratified and confirmed by the Senate, and I am free to say, that Kit Carson has no friend, among the many who claim that honor both east and west of the Rocky Mountains, who congratulates him more sincerely than myself. He is eminently fitted for the office; and all who know him will agree with me when I declare that I believe him to be

"An honest man, the noblest work of God."