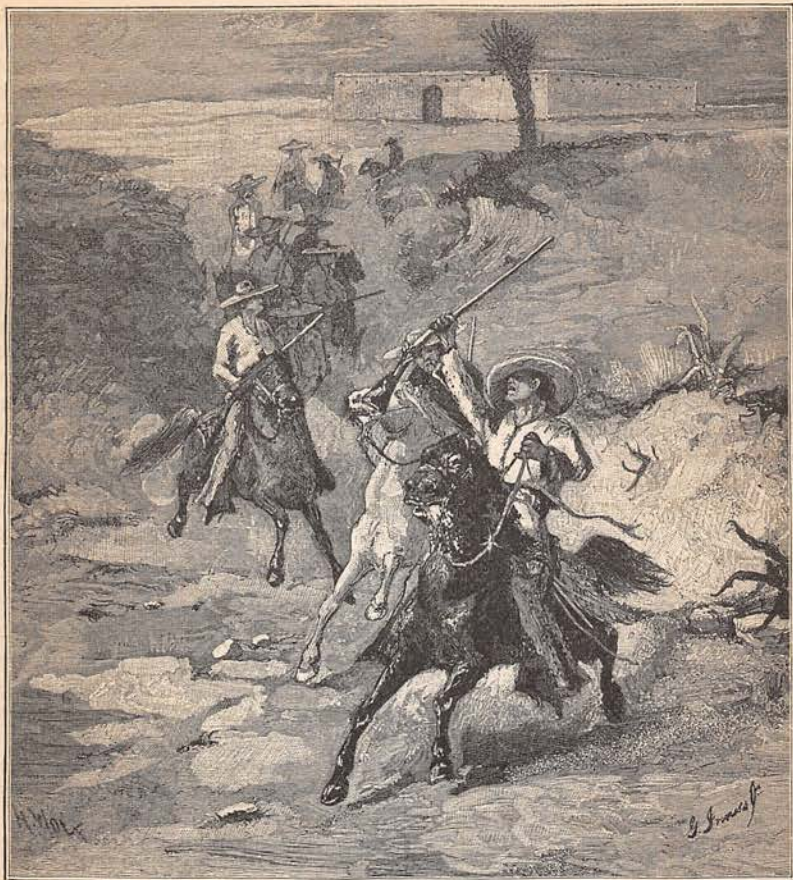


## A BUFFALO HUNT IN NORTHERN MEXICO.



THE START VIVA. (SEE PAGE 717.)

## PART I. GOING TO THE HUNT.

ONE traveling to the far city of Chihuahua by way of Monterey and Saltillo must cross what the Mexicans call El Desierto, which is not to be understood as a region of shifting sand and mud-gray mountains, like the deserts of the Bedawee. It is only a rainless belt—rainless in the summer and fall and part of the winter. More fertile land, speaking of the land itself, is not on the globe. The results of irrigation by the sufficient water-courses are incredible to strangers, while the plateaus and long swales between mountains, and frequently the mountains clear to their crests, are covered with rank grasses which, grown in the brief season of rain, are peculiar in that they cure themselves in the standing stalk.

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Such are the *pasturas* of Durango and Chihuahua, vast enough and rich enough to feed and fatten all the herds of whatever kind owned by men.

The resting-places on the way to the desert are Parras, celebrated for its sweet red wines and the wonderful beauty of its site and surroundings; Alamos, most rural of Mexican towns, dominating the great Laguna district, once so coveted by the dead President of the Latter Day Saints, and Mapimi, whence, off the road right or left, lo, the dreaded wilderness!

The towns named are two and three days apart, with certain ranchos between them, but for which the wayfarer would be compelled to bivouac where the night found him, on the open plain or under some great



rock, and I am not certain but the plain or the rock would furnish preferable lodging. The peon, however, to whom the sunburnt and perishing habitations have fallen, is of simple soul, full of easy content. He and Nature live close neighbors, and what with much borrowing from her, he has few needs ungratified, and no experience of better things to dog him with vain wishes. Of these places of torment—I speak as somewhat used to civilized ways—there rise vividly to mind Seguein, Bocarilla, Tierra Leon, and Salitre. Should my reader be of the class sometimes smitten with a longing for a home in a desert, let me recommend to him a day and night in Salitre. Besides the solitude of the waste place it is squatted in, the flavor of *muscal*, in constant distillation, hangs round it all the year. Superb specimen of a low-down rancho, nothing need be said of it as a hotel.

But these midway stops are not all Bocarillas and Salitres. The hacienda of Patos was the residence of the administrator of the great Carlos Sanchez, who, in Maximilian's day, was monarch of over seven thousand peons, settled on his estate of 8,131,242 acres. With such possessions it is not wonderful that Carlos was overcharmed by the prospect of an empire; and when he accepted the office of Grand Chamberlain to the short-lived emperor, it is not more strange that Juarez, the Lincoln of his country, followed him with a decree by which Patos became the property of the nation, subject to purchase. A more beautiful place will scarcely be found in Mexico. He who has seen the *patio* of the *Casa Grande*, and rested in the coolness of its broad colonnade, may not soon forget Patos, which he comes upon from the hill-country between Saltillo and Parras, an unexpected Paradise on a grim, purgatorial road.

Then Hornos will not out of mind. First heard of at Alamos, it is finally overtaken at the end of a long day's journey. Its externals are nothing,—four dead faces of cream-white stone, originally softer than the coquina of Florida,—no windows, one door with two mighty valves which look as if they might have once hung in the Joppa gates of Jerusalem.

A hospitable Spaniard told me the story of the house. Señor Don Leonardo Zuloaga was a European by birth and education. He owned a great estate on the edge of the unexplored Bolson, extending quite to Alamos on the south. The fortune was

ducual. There was in his tastes a streak of savagery, and to indulge it he wandered out so far in the desert and built this fortalice. Then he brought pictures, books, wines, guns, dogs, horses; friends followed in swarms, his hospitality was semi-regal; when his guests palled of feasting, drinking, gambling, and hunting deer and wolves, not seldom he led them in long pursuit of the Comanche, or Lipan, or Apache, all quite as untamable as wolves. The Laguneros were of his tenantry—fierce, idle, independent republicans, upon whom not even the French could make an impression, though they plied them with fire and sword. One day, they came up and demanded that he rent them certain lands upon their terms. He refused; war ensued, and regular battles. Zuloaga was driven off, and finally died of sheer mortification, a disease with all over-proud souls. Gonzales Herrera, a brutal ranchero, assumed the estate by right of conquest, and supplanted the unquestioning hospitality of the proprietor with an outlawry strong enough to defy the state, backed by the national government.

To the door of this sadly haunted dwelling in the wilderness we drove, the evening of an October day in the year 1867. The party consisted of Colonel C—, an American, Mr. Roth, a German, myself, and three *mozos*,—that is to say, three native Mexicans, chattels of his excellency Don Andreas Viesca, governor of the state of Coahuila—brave men, true, honest, affectionate, at home on the highways of the desert, and brimful of experience derived from life-long pilotage to and fro on all the beaten marches of Northern Mexico. Juan, Teodora, and Santos,—only their baptisms are given, as in the sister republic nobody troubles about the surname of a peon. Of the trio, the first was our coachman, and the second our rear guard, while the third went always before to spy out the land, for which he had eyes of the far reach of an eagle's, good for the unusual in any form,—dust in the valley, smoke on the mountain, or what not. This half-military order of travel, be it remarked, was not affected by the party as a choice or an eccentricity; it was merely a precaution against the enterprise of ladrones in general, and just then a necessity, as the journey carried across the line of a raid for scalps and plunder, in vigorous execution by a band of Apaches from the region of the Conchas river, of whom more anon.

To the very door we drove without seeing a soul. I pleased myself thinking how dif-



ferent in the day of the romantic Don Leonardo. Then swarthy retainers held the portal in swarms, and, seeing us afar, they would have run to meet us, the effusion of their welcome being but notice in advance of the politer reception in store for us by the generous master himself. Then the great house, so tomb-like in its present silence, would have been noisy as a populous khan in an Orient desert. As it was, we halted outside, while Santos rode in through the half-opened entrance unchallenged, unsaluted. We heard the hoofs of his horse ring the echoes of the arched, but dirty, passage to the patio. Was there no warder—no steward? Did the castle keep itself? Our *mozo* at length appeared with answer—a sleepy-looking wretch in jacket and breeches of rusty leather, under a great *sombrero* of the genuine old style, and withal a swagger so easy-going, yet so perfect as an emphasized insolence, that only the pencil can do it justice.

The man announced himself master of the house, and gave us permission to pass the night within. We would have to find our own beds; his only contribution to our supper would be a mess of warm *frijoles*; he had fodder for our cattle. *Ay de mi, Zuloaga!*

To be sure, there was no barbican defending the entrance, nor portcullis a-swing on creaking chains, nor overshadowed grass-grown ditch; yet as we rolled in I thought of Branksome tower; of the stag-hounds, weary of the chase, and asleep upon a rushy floor; of the kinsmen of the bold Buccleuch—the nine and twenty knights of fame of whom the matchless master sang:

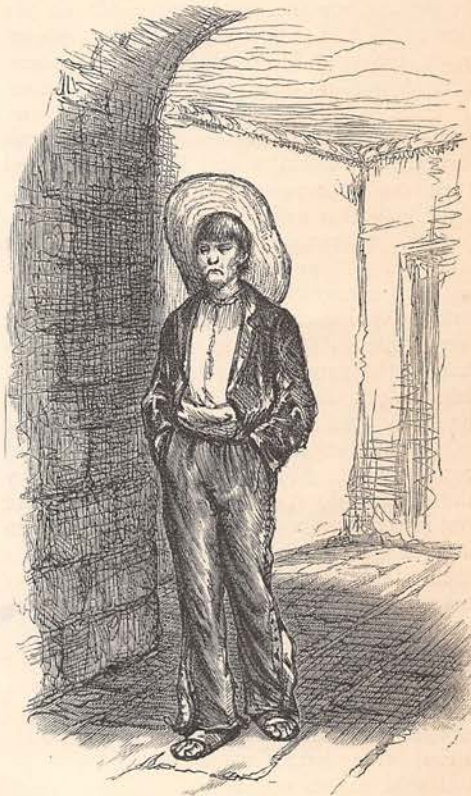
“They carved at the meal  
With gloves of steel,  
And they drank the red wine through the helmet  
barr’d.”

A very martial vision, by the troth of a paladin! But instead, some nomadic children of the desert, going, they knew not where nor for what, were in full possession of the patio, resting happily from their travel of the day.

We alighted from the carriage in a square court-yard,—*patio* in the Spanish,—paved and quite spacious. On the four sides doorways without doors yawned darkly at us. The purposes the chambers served in the golden time I knew not; when we found them they were stables; out of some the long-horned cattle of the nomads looked, bellowing for food; into others our mules were taken.

“There is plenty of room; take your choice,” he of the mild manner said, when we spoke of disposing of ourselves for the night. We set out forthwith to find the cleanest and best aired unoccupied apartment.

Through another arched passage, into another square court; and company, nice-looking people, who actually arose and touched their hats to us, though at the moment of our appearance they were laughing with great gusto. We replied to their courtesy in kind, and stopped to share their sport. Two children—brown-skinned, naked little



THE NEW RÉGIME.

fellows—had opened a school of the lariat, for the entertainment of the strangers. Gaunt goats, exceedingly tall and strong, served them as steeds; a gander answered for game. They rode with the skill of monks and the grace of cupids. The victim fled, hissing and cackling, on wings of fear. When at length the loop hitched around his neck, the exhibition was at an end, and, paying our contribution, we went our way. Next day we found the polite gentry were travelers like ourselves, only



they were going to Parras from Parral, their place of residence.

On into the heart of the castle—another passage and another court,—this latter marked by lingering remains of magnificence—in the center a ruined fountain, and on all sides a continuous colonnade with fluted pillars and chiseled capitals. There were reminders also of a garden, such as sunken beds thinly garnished with flowerless shrubs, and old rose-trees sickly and untended, and other trees, amongst which I recognized a languishing orange and some stunted figs. Half a dozen bananas, their leaves unfurled broad and bright as new banners, arose out of the basin of the fountain in undiminished vigor, relieving the desolation of the place, and filling it with the glory of flame. In this outer banquet hall, deserted, we paused. Here, before the fatal heart-break struck him, Zuloaga and his guests tasted their much pleasure. Under the colonnade yonder it was easy to imagine the hammocks yet swinging, while the gentlefolk smoked, read, or dozed, about them; meanwhile, the largesse of flowers and the cantata of falling waters. There, at the basin, by a table, in the shade of the flaring bananas, the prodigal master used to stand laughing as, dice-box in hand and high over head, he rattled the white tessaræ careless of fortune, so soon and so utterly to turn against him. From that room, marked by the carven door, music flowed stream-like out into the moon-lit court, voices of women in leading, beautiful women taught by the maestros of Durango, may be by their maestros of the capital. Well, into that room we went—in honor of the shade of the departed, I took off my hat; there too were traces of the glory's time, tessellated floor, frescoed ceiling, on the walls frame-marks of pictures and mirrors. *Ay de mi*, Zuloaga! Evil the hour War came in grim-visaged and cruel, and dispersed the waltzers, the singers, and the smokers, and, of all the dainty furniture, left us but one long table on which to spread our

pallets in rest of our weary bones. Needless to say we adopted the table; it was hard, but it lifted us above the range of fleas, and then—ah, if the gallant Spaniard should wake from his sleep, and come to us in dreams! *Viva!*

We returned then to the first patio in search of our *mozos*, and were greatly astonished there. The house, apparently so deserted, had in our absence given up an unexpected tenantry; men, women and children—so many! where did they all come from?—were crowded around a delicate-looking shepherd lad who sat on a tough little jenny telling a story, to which we also gave instant ear.

About noon, he said, while with his flock in the desert, he had seen away across the *pastura* a black mass come slowly toward him, spreading as it came. Indians it was not; he rode toward it, and—*Madre de Dios!* it was a herd of buffaloes. And thereupon every one in the patio listening took fire, and cried, *Madre de Dios!* One of the gentlemen bound down the road to Parras, cooler than the rest, pushed through the excited throng with questions.

"Buffaloes, did you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"How far out were they?"

"From here?"

"Yes."

"About three leagues."

"In what direction were they moving?"

"From the sun."



THE BIVOUAC IN THE PATIO.



The lad meant to say northward.

"Was it a big herd?"

"Very big, sir. I could not count them."

"A thousand?"

"Oh, many more, sir."

We were satisfied, my friends and I, and walked away, leaving the patio all calcitrant with excitement. Soon the strangers followed us. One of them introduced himself as Don Miguel de —, the last of the name has slipped my memory, a merchant of Santa Rosalia, going to Parras for a supply of *manta*—coarse cotton stuff.

"We have about concluded," he said, "to lie over to-morrow, and go hunting. It has been many years since buffalo came so far south; in fact, we cannot any of us remember to have heard of such a visitation in these parts. The opportunity is too rare and good to be lost. Will you go with us, gentlemen? We shall be delighted with your company."

My friend, the colonel, had been a soldier from beginning to end of the great war, and earned his title; now, *en passant*, his name is a familiar one in Brazil and in the far up-country Bolivia, whose land-lock he is about to break. They know him, too, in the tight little isle where to be known argues a merit out of the common. His spirit arose at the suggestion of the courteous Mexican; he spoke to me, then replied that nothing would make us happier, only we had no horses.

Don Miguel smiled.

"You cannot have been long in these parts," he said. "Horses here are to be had for the asking. We will see you supplied."

The offer was accepted, and the arrangements settled in a short time. The party was to start at five o'clock next morning, under guidance of the shepherd.



THE SCHOOL OF THE LARIAT.

#### PART II. THE HUNT.

We did not get started till day, though we breakfasted by candle-light. The sally from the patio in which, midst the confusion and the seethe and boil of several tempests in an unclean tea-pot, the final preparations were made, was like a charge of untrained cavalry; nor might one have said which were most excited, the horses or the men. For a mile or more, after the exit, there was furious racing through a dense cloud of dust. When at last we drew together and halted to let the guide front, we found the party about twenty in number, all Mexicans but the colonel and myself. Mr. Roth had declined the sport.

"Who are these people?" I asked.

Don Miguel glanced over the motley crowd.



"*Quien sabe, señor?*" ("Who knows, sir?")

I called Santos and asked him the question. The good fellow rode here and there amongst them, and returned with his answer:

"*Hay rancheros—todos.*" ("They are all rancheros.")

A *ranchero* is an independent son of the Mexican soil, generally a renter of lands, always owner of a horse, on which he may be said to live and have his being. To-day a cattle-herder (*vaquero*), to-morrow a soldier, this week a gambler, next week a robber,—with all his sins, and they are as his hairs in number, he has one supreme excellence: you may not match him the world over as a rider, not though you set against him the most peerless of the turbaned knights of the jereed. Once it was my fortune to see a thousand *rancheros*, in holiday garb and mounted, sweep down at a run to meet President Juarez, then en route to begin his final campaign against the hapless Hapsburger. They literally glistened with silver—silver on saddle and bridle, silver on jacket and trowsers, silver on hats, silver on heels; and, as with *vivas* long and shrilly intoned, and stabs of rowel merciless and maddening, they drove their mustangs—the choicest of the wild herds—headlong forward, the spectacle was stirring enough to have made the oldest hetman of the Cossacks young again. No wonder Kleber never ceased admiration of the Mamelukes who charged his squares over the yellow sands under the Pyramids. These, my *compañeros* of the hunt, were not in holiday attire. Their clothes were plain tan-colored leather, yet they rode like the thousand, and when I looked in their faces there was no mistaking the tribal relation. The *rancheros* of the desert of Durango are lineally akin to the *rancheros* of Tamaulipas and their brothers of Sonora.

My friend and I were well mounted,—Don Miguel had dealt fairly by us,—yet we could not ride like the Mexicans. Their system is essentially different from ours; whereas we use the rein for every movement of the horse,—forward, right, left, backward, check,—they will ride all day keeping it loose over the little finger; a pressure of the knee, an inclination of the body, a wave of the bridle hand, in extreme cases a plunge of the spur, are their resorts. A pull on one of their bits, one pull such as our jockeys are accustomed to at the end of a race, would drive the beasts mad, if it did not make fine splinters of their jaws.

In connection with the excellences of my

comrades, it may be well to add that their arms were of every variety from a Sharpe's repeater to an *escopeta*, some of the latter being identical with the bell-mouthed blunderbusses of good Queen Bess. I noticed one which had on it a stamp of the Tower; it was smit with a devouring leprosy of rust, and looked as if Raleigh or one of the later buccaneers had taken it from the old arsenal and dropped it overboard, as he sailed and sailed. Verily, I had rather been a buffalo fired at with such a piece, than the hunter to do the firing.

We moved rapidly along a plain road; after a league or more, the road faded into a dim path; another league, and we were in the mid-desert. Moved by the novelty of the situation, I let the party pass me, that I might be alone.

*Mira!* A world of grass, each blade brown or yellowing on the stalk, not dying so much as curing itself,—just far enough gone to rustle at the touches of the winnowing winds; a world of grass without a flower, not even a wee anemone. The trees are few in number and variety. Off yonder is a solitary cabbage-palm, tall, shaggy, crowned with a shock of green bayonets; it stands motionless, the image of a listening watchman. Here and there groves thinly fleck the broad brown face on which they endure, in the distance wearing the air of neglected apple-orchards. They are of mesquite trees, for which I confess partiality, not for their beauty, but their *courage*. The idea and the word, as applied, may startle the reader; yet I sometimes please myself thinking that in the kingdom of plants there is a degree of the royal quality. The lichen, up in the realm of the reindeer, and the willow, which survives longburial by the snows everlastingly whitening the echoless shores of Lincoln Sea, must be braver than the palm on the Nile or the red-wood on the Amazon. So with the mesquite of the desert. Ah, here is one of them close by,—knotted, gnarled, dwarfed, brittle, black of bark, vaster of root than top, yet with a certain grace derived from its small, emerald green leaves, so delicately set on trembling fronds. I have only to look at it once to recognize a hero, not of many tilts with storms, but of an endless battle with drought and burning sun, living sometimes years on nothing but faintest dews. Is it wonderful that it grew branching from the ground so low as to be trunkless? Or that its limbs separated in the beginning, and did their feeble climbing wider and wider apart each day of life, as hateful of



each other and the humble stem which generated them? Or that at last, when full grown, yet comparatively a shrub of low degree, thin and wan of foliage, its shade ill suffices to cool the gophers nestling down deep amongst its sprawling roots, or the crickets, panting as they sing in the gray mosses of uncertain life stitched like prickly patches on its weather side?

Nevertheless, the tree was disposed to serve me: as I looked at it thinking of its struggle for life, I was conscious of a warning,—what if I should get lost?

I glanced at the sun, that first compass of the first hunters, and rose in stirrup essaying to single out the direction to the house of Zuloaga. To point the locality of the Spaniard's Fountain of Youth had been as easy. Oh, you say, the path of coming was plain! Yes, but—as I found before the day was done—that path was one of millions winding in and out, never a skein of silk so hopelessly tangled—in and out as impossible of straightening by a novice like me as some sad lives we all have known—paths worn by wolves galloping in howling packs through the South moonlight—deer paths—and paths known only to the unlovely red children of Uncle Samuel who perennially tear down that way for scalps of women and children and the loot of undefended ranchos; paths now along the prairie, now through the chaparral, devious and past following and past finding when once lost as the flight of swallows. Oh, if I did know the right *one* amongst the multiplied zig-zag many, and could keep it in shade and shine—keep it truly against the tempting promises of this and that other so friendly and familiar-looking, then doubtless I could make the house. Not caring to make the trial, or to be put to the necessity of making it, I snatched the rein, and gave spur to my willing horse.

The gallop was over a great *pastura*, one of the sheep-ranges of our little guide. I did not like the life of the lad—following the flock as he does day after day, without other companionship except of his dog and donkey, must be lonesome—yet it is not altogether void of charm. The glories of the enchanter Distance are about him everywhere. If from grasses crinkling under foot, and dwarfed trees scarce vigorous enough to cover their nakedness with the suggestion of foliage, he gazes off over them all, whoever saw a horizon with a span so very, very wide? If higher to the sky—nay into it; how the blue inverted bowl

widens and deepens as the clear eye shears on, on, through depths to other depths immeasurable! And looking, lo! out of them, by some deft magic—out of the remove of horizon or the added depths of sky—illusions most likely of atmosphere absolutely purified—or out of them all, it may be, the Enchanter evolves for me all the effects of space. Did it the same for him? And did he feel them as I did?

We came at length to a body of water, in the Mexican an *estanque*, in English a pond. Off a little way a herd of sheep and goats, thousands in number, having slaked their thirst, were wending slowly to fresh feeding-grounds. A man, joint keeper with our guide, sat by the shore preparing his humble breakfast. Then I knew how the pond made life possible out so far in the afflicted land. The radius of the migration of herd and herdsman might be wide enough to take in the mountain showing off to our right, like a dab of purple pigment. Whatever its boundary, however, this was its center—this rippling sheet, clear and bright enough to live in my memory another Diamond of the Desert.

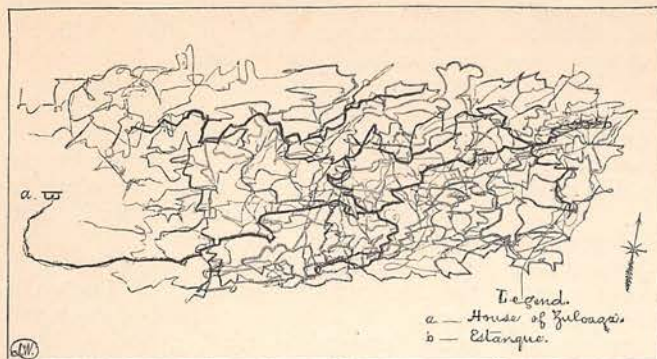
While the horses drank, and some of the more careful *rancheros* re-filled the water-gourds they habitually carried at their saddles, Don Miguel and the Colonel interviewed the herdsman, whose replies were very satisfactory. Our game had spent the night in the vicinity; the water the other side of the pond was muddy with their wading; he had even made fires to drive them away, and they left about sun-up, going toward the mountains.

"You see the trees yonder," he said; "well, two bulls were there not an hour ago, fighting; they may be there now. *Quien sabe, señores?*"

"It is but a minute's ride—shall we go?" said Don Miguel to the colonel. The latter called to me; next moment we were off, leaving the party to follow as they severally made ready.

I remember yet the excitement of that ride, the eagerness and expectancy with which we neared the knot of trees, our dash through, pistol in hand. In quiet hours I hear the shout with which the colonel brought us together. In an opening scarce twenty yards square lay a dying bull. He was of prodigious girth, and covered head and shoulders with a coat of sunburnt hair to shame a lion. Long, tangled locks, matted with mud and burrs, swathed his forelegs down to the hoofs. The ponder-





THE TANGLE OF PATHS.

ous head of the brute rested helplessly upon the rotting trunk of a palm-tree; the tongue hung from his bloody lips; his eyes were dim, and his breath came and went in mighty gasps. The death-wound was in his flank, a horrible sickening rent. The earth all about bore witness to the fury of the duel. Long time he confronted his foe, and held him with locked horns; at last he slipped his guard—that broad forehead with its crown of Jove-like curls—and was lost. Who could doubt that the victor was worth pursuit?

We helped the unfortunate to a speedier death, and lingered to observe him. His travels had been far, beginning doubtless up

“In the land of the Dakotah,”

whence winter drove him with all his herd down the murky Missouri. On the Platte somewhere he passed the second summer; then, from the hunting of the Sioux and their fierce kinsmen, he escaped into Colorado; after a year of rest, in search of better pastures, he pushed southward again, lingering in the fields about the head-waters of the Arkansas; there the bold riders of the Comanche found him; breaking from them, he disappeared for a time in the bleak wilderness called The Staked Plains; thence to the Rio Grande, and across into Chihuahua, the pursuer still at his heels; and now there was an end of travel and persecution. As we returned from the chase, I saw him again, lying where we found him, a banquet for the whimpering wolves. Already he was despoiled of his tongue.

The incident, as may be thought, whetted the ardor of the party to the sharpest edge. A wide interval stretched between us and the mountain toward which the game had disappeared; in some of the long swales ahead we knew they were feeding; possibly

we might strike them before noon; nobody felt tired. Santos rode forward at a canter; we followed in a body, saying little, but never so observant. Two more miles were put behind. Suddenly, as the *mozo* was making the ascent of a long up-grade, he stopped, and, turning in his saddle and pointing forward, shouted:

“*Ola, los bufalos!*”

Not a man but felt a great heart-beat and a thrill which shocked him from head to

foot. As at command, we raised the guns, lying across the saddles before us. As at command, too, we all broke into a gallop. Santos, like a sensible fellow, came back to meet us.

“Where are they?” everybody asked in a breath.

“Just over the hill,” he answered, suppressing his excitement.

“Are there many of them?” I asked.

“*Caramba, señor!* We cannot kill them all before night.”

We gained the top of the grade, and there they were—not a quarter of a mile away, grazing slowly onward—*los demonios del Norte*.

To the left, under a well-grown tree, I caught sight of one, solemn, sedate, magnificent in proportion, magnificently draped in flying fur. He alone kept his place motionless and with full front toward us, the perfect picture of confidence, self-collection and power of toughened thews in wakeful repose. In every flock of living things there is a sentinel who watches, a philosopher who thinks, a law-maker who ordains, a king who governs; and there they were all in one—and more, he was the victor of the morning’s duel. I knew it all with the certainty of intuition.

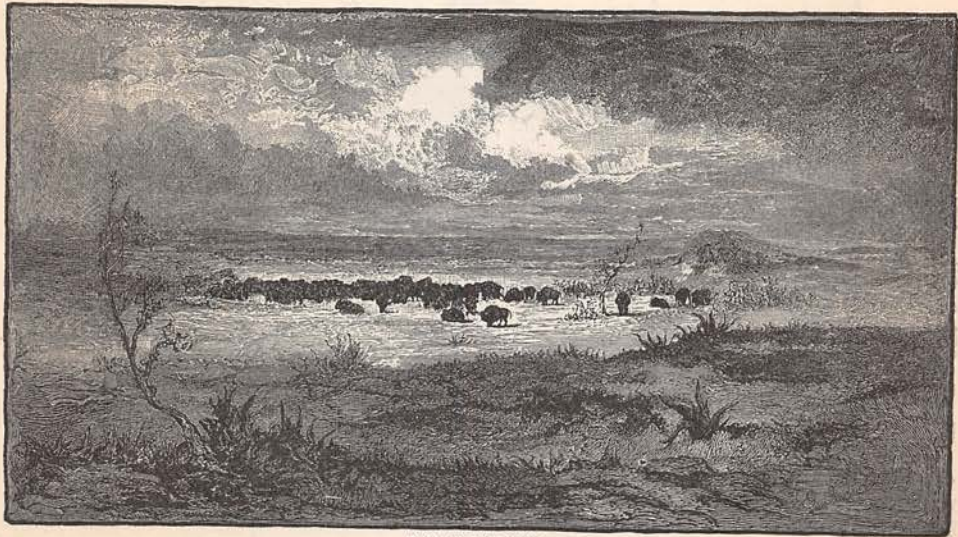
The exceeding peacefulness of the scene was not lost on me, and the monitor of the low voice did some whispering; but—my blood was running races. The heart was beating in my throat, and the hot parch of the hunter’s fever was on my tongue. Pity there is no gauge for the measurement of a man’s excitement of spirit; something of the kind should be our next great gift from the wisecracks; and then, if the invention should happily be simple of reference and easy of portage like a pencil or a knife, we could have with us always a doctor to save us from



apoplexies, and a guardian to say stop at that point in our pleasures where conscience is in the habit of obtruding, like the ghost at the banquet.

We had no thought of strategy—scattering, flanking, heading off had no places in our heads, and without an inquiry from us the wind continued to blow as it listed. A common impulse seized every man and communicated to every horse. A shout, some fierce gouging with rowels, and away we dashed pell-mell, guns in hand, Don Miguel in the lead. The startled herd, executing a volt to the rear, stood a moment at bay. The king under the tree shook his crowned head, and viewed us askance. Ha! ha! was he scared? Or, like a vet-

into a machine and make study of his locomotive capacities, it will be seen he was not made for speed. He is too weak in the hind-quarters, too ponderous in the fore; and as if the fatted hump on his shoulder were not a sufficient handicap of the poor brute, Nature fashioned his head after the model of a pork-barrel, and hung it so low as to be directly in the way of his fore feet—the very reverse of a horse or a deer. *A fortiori*, as the lawyers are so fond of saying, he does not leap when in flight, but rolls and plunges, like a porpoise at play. In short, there would have been shame everlasting in the house of Zuloaga if our mustangs, out-flyers of the desert winds, had failed to overtake the lumbering



THE FIRST VIEW.

eran general, was he coolly counting the odds before resolving on battle? If, at a signal, his army had closed *en masse* and charged us horns down, what a hurry-scurrying rearward there would have been on our part! But no—he had heard the whoop of assault before, and knew all its significance. The pause was from curiosity, as natural to his kind as to a high-bred lady. We heard his bellow, ragged as the mot of a Mexican trumpet; then he went right-about; whereat there was a general stampede—a blind *saute qui peut*, which, interpreted literally, means, may the devil take the hindmost. Away they went, all alike, the king forgetful of his dignity, and all the queens for once at least self-dependent.

Now, if the reader will resolve a buffalo

fugitives, and we did overtake them, and that in less than a half mile.

I do not know what my companions did—a quick concentrating of self seized me, inasmuch that I became to the world else the merest husk of a purpose; the circumstances of the charge, those the eye catches and those the ear hears, looks, actions, words, yells, even the stirring rataplan of the horses' drumming hoofs and the deep bass earth-rumble of the game in multitudinous flight—all failed my perception; for as we drew near the chase one straggler claimed my attention—a heifer, clean built and clean of hide. She was running freely, and could have made better speed but for the slower hulks in her way. I had a thought that she might make better meat than the bigger specimens, and yet another, she might be



more easily killed; and to kill her I bent every faculty.

The mustang caught the spur; forward—close—closer—by bending in the saddle I

Upon coming to,—observe all the words imply,—I was dismounted, and in the act of picking up my gun. The conduct of man was never more purely instinctive than



"NOW, FIRE!"

could have laid hand on my prey; then, fully conscious that she was singled out, how she struggled to get away! How the muscles of her flanks swelled and knotted, in desperate exertion! The time came to use my Winchester. I selected the place to shoot at,—just behind the shoulder,—and brought the rifle down. Goodness! I was left of the game when, being right-handed, I should have gone to the right. Three times I tried to get aim, but in vain. I laid the gun across the saddle, and drew pistol—a Smith & Wesson, the best of revolvers then, yet not near as good as now; for that I was in place. Forward again, and closer in—closer—now, fire! The bullet lodged in the shoulder. Again, and in the heart; hurrah! My horse shied; the rifle fell to the ground; I barely escaped tumbling after; the victim moaned, staggered, stumbled, fell. Aye, count me *one*; and, better yet, count me the **FIRST ONE!**

mine had been throughout. I make the confession without shame, for I am not of those who believe thought must govern and direct what all we do, otherwise there is no credit. In cases of peril bullet-swift, to wait on reflection is to die. Instinct moves us; we obey, and live. Thought implies conditions, and a final judgment upon them; instinct implies instant action—something dull men are incapable of.

Let me pass the pride and happiness of that triumphant moment. The fisherman who has landed the traditional trout of a famous brook, or a ten-pound golden salmon from the golden beds of the Kankakee, can tell you my feelings; and to enable a hunter to interpret for me, it is only required that he should have bagged a wild goose, flying full-quilled from the Arctic.

The mustang was at last reduced to quiet; then I looked about. The huntsmen and the herd were out of sight in a trough of the



land ahead; yells and frequent shots signaled their whereabouts. Not another carcass was to be seen; I had made the first capture; what if it should be the only one? While so thinking,—the faintest semblance of a selfish wish lurking under the reflection,—suddenly the noise ceased. Strange! Something had certainly occurred. I swung into the saddle; then up from the hollow rode a *ranchero*, coming to speak to me, I supposed; he went by like a ricocheting shot. Others appeared; the same haste possessed them, only they shouted: "*Priésa, señor! Los Indios, los Indios!*" ("Make haste, sir! Indians, Indians!")

Ah, the cursed Apaches!

The interruption was not an agreeable one; in fact, the effect was decidedly chilling; yet I managed to control myself, and ride forward. The last of the *rancheros* passed in flight; only the colonel, Don Miguel, his friends, and the *mozos*, Santos and Teodora, remained. I met them rising out of the hollow.

"What's up now?"

The colonel answered coolly.

"The fellows say they came upon Indians in the grass down yonder. I think they are lying."

Don Miguel shrugged his shoulders nearly to the top of his head, and fairly hissed:

"It is nothing, sir," with an expression of contempt without an equivalent in English.

Santos touched his hat, indicating a wish to speak.

"What is it?" I asked him.

"There are no Indians there."

"No?"

"I stopped one of the men long enough to have him show me where the ambush was, and——" he laughed heartily.

"Well?" I said impatiently.

"And the buffaloes had run right over the place."

We looked at each other curiously. Don Miguel suggested we go see for ourselves, and the colonel supported him with a round declaration that they had taken eight or ten good fat cows, and he didn't like to run away from them to accommodate anybody, much less a thieving Apache. A reconnaissance was determined upon.

We rode into the hollow and up it, cautiously following the trail of the herd.

"Hist!" cried Santos, a little in advance.

"Look there!"

We looked, and were startled. Not twenty yards away stood a sorrel pony

rudely housed in Indian style. At sight of us it raised its head and whinnied piteously. Santos went to it, and stooped to catch the lariat about its neck.

"*Jesu Christo!*" he yelled as if shot. I thought he would roll out of his saddle.

"For love of God, gentlemen, come and see," he next exclaimed.

We stood not upon the order of going.

"*Caramba!*" said Don Miguel, reining back.

Then the colonel blew a long whistle of disgust, as well he might. An Indian warrior was lying face downward in the grass at the fore-feet of the pony—*dead!* The stampede of the *rancheros* was explained.

A worn knife, butcher's pattern; a hatchet, such as plasterers use; a red-wood bow,



LO!

short but broad, and variously painted on the back; a quiver of arrows; a lance, of the Mexican sort; a dirty clay-pipe, in a dirty bag of raw tobacco, were the assets of the dead man.

In the division of spoils, my friend the Colonel took two feathers found in the scalp-lock, indicative, as he was pleased to believe, of the high rank of the deceased. A pair of moccasins, taken from the saddle, fell to me; they were unworn, and soft as a castor glove. I have them yet, and keep them because they were beaded by the warrior's love, the daughter of an arrow-maker who



lives in a painted tepee off over the Sierras, by the loud-singing, but lonely, Gila. A visitor now and then comes and casts a doubt upon the tale of the moccasins; but he always leaves me in disfavor.

We agreed to attribute the end of the savage to ugliness, complicated with original sin. When the shepherds were told about him, they turned pale, and crossed themselves. They knew why he was in wait where death found him, mercifully for them.

It remains to say the discovery finished the hunt. We sent back, and succeeded in

bringing the *rancheros* to the front again; but the ardor was dead in them, even if the game had not been too far away.

The Indian's pony, seven superb buffalo hides, and any amount of meat, were our trophies. The bivouac by the *estrange* that night was savory with the smell of roasting joints, and next day, when we bade adieu to Don Miguel and his friends at the door of the house of Zuloaga, all the patios were beautiful with festoonery which, at the end of a week, was taken down, weighed, and divided. No one ever tasted better *carne seca*.

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HEART OF SORROWS.

HER path breaks off; she strikes some jutting wall,  
Night-hidden, thrust across; thereby a rock,  
Light-shaken, rolls: the tumult of its fall,  
The long, long silence and the far down shock,  
Take all her breath.

"For certain I have found" (so in her heart she saith)

"The very haunts of Death."

The mountain air, that should be blithe and loud,  
Blown dense with dripping vapor, doth not stir.  
She feels it cling as if it were a shroud:

From earth and hell and heaven it covers her.

If, fain to guide,

Some torch-upholding Seraph tread the spaces wide,  
Yet will these shades abide.

Howbeit she, groping, finds a stony bed—

Not strewn upon with cones of cedar sweet,  
But ragged, sharp to hurt; there rests her head,  
And will not shrink nor gather up her feet.

"If this may be,

And Death, through these abysmal gates, reach  
after me,

All may be well" (saith she).

So waits on sleep: but still some tempest-thought,  
Flame-winged, sweeps back that billow's soft  
advance:

"And is this net-work of the flesh for naught"  
(She sighs), "but to be torn at every chance?"

Or doth it keep

Some desert-creature—ready for the outward leap,  
The rush, the tireless sweep?

"O, Soul (and if there be a soul!) unmeet

For pastures green and rivers of delight!  
For thou wert cavern-born and fierce and fleet;

A thing unclean, a prowler of the night:

Lo, fettered fast!

What Power, moved by thy moans will set thee  
free, at last,

To rove Saharas vast?

"No doubt the Solitudes befit thee well:

But how if One come shining o'er the sands,  
With tranquil eyes that evermore compel,

And strange, converting touch of holy hands;  
In still accord  
(Upbraiding not), full gently leading thee toward  
The gardens of the Lord?—

"Deep set among the fair, eternal hills:

With entrances of balsam-dropping fir  
And date-sustaining palm; where (since He wills)  
Thou shalt perceive, far off, the murmurous stir,  
The vestments white

Of those melodious ones; and—shadowed safe from  
sight—

Shalt dream thy dreams of light.

"Musing how wondrous are the heights of fire!

What cool and fruitful vales their spurs secrete!  
Awaiting, through hushed æons of desire,

Till thou shalt hear His voice, so loud, so sweet  
With words that rule:

'Arise, and enter in, thou who art white as wool,  
And let thy joy be full!'

"And oh, the many streams from Lebanon!

The pleasant winds that flow out East and West,  
From myrrh and frankincense and cinnamon!  
And oh, the beds of spice whereon to rest!

And oh, the King!

Lilies and clustering flowers and vines behold  
Him bring,

About thy feet to cling!

"Ah, me! the anguish, the devouring haste

Of this, my soul, to touch the hands that save!  
But if there be no gardens—if the Waste

Stretch boundless on from empty grave to grave,  
If shriek and curse

And wail of farthest voices, through the universe,  
An infinite woe rehearse,—

"Thou Soul, who rendest so the fleshy net,

Set free and to the desert-sweeps out-cast—  
With all thy noon-tide thirst upon thee yet—

Shalt load, with desolate cries, the arid blast:  
Or crouch and wait

Beside the bitter springs, whose waters will not  
sate

Thine everlasting hate!