

The Pioneer Trail

19 This day, within the hour, I took from its place of concealment "An Old Sketch-Book." It lies before me now, I turn its leaves and live once more a past experience. Well, well! How vividly this book brings to me again those stirring days! Why, these are days gone by this quarter, yes, nearer this half century! How unexpectedly we sometimes come upon the past--turn it up, as it were, from the mold of time as with the plow one might bring to light from out the earth some lost and forgotten thing. This book, with its buckskin covers, revivifies dead hours, makes me live again those times when life for me was new; or, if not exactly that, brings them back in memory as reminders of times and conditions now passed away forever.

20 The book is a reminder, old, battered, dusty, yet truthful, of what an ox-team journey across the western plains and over the Rockies was in the years that are gone.

The book so long neglected, now so full of interest, received hard usage in those former days. Before it lay at rest so long, gathering dust and cobwebs about it, like a true pioneer it was made to rough it in this world. It learned to withstand the brunt of many a hard encounter. Master and book were companions on a long and toilsome journey.

21 Inside and out; yes, the leaves and the covers all tell tales. This buckskin was drenched many a time by the thunderstorms of Nebraska and Wyoming; by the sleet and snow that fell upon the mountains. Between these sheets of various-toned gray paper, close to the binding, are little waves of red, gritty stuff, contributions, on some windy day, from the sand hills of the Platte Valley, or the Big Sandy Creek (the peptic Glis-
tening Gravel Water of the Indians), or from "The Three Crossings" of the Sweetwater, or the wearisome piece of road leading from Platte to Platte--North and South--over the ridge and down into Ash Hollow. One end of the book has been submerged in water, a reminiscence, no doubt, of the fording of either the Platte, the Sweetwater, the Big or Little Laramie or the Green River farther on. O, there are many emotions revived within me by a sight of the book; they crowd upon me thick and fast! These crisp, gray leaves of sage, where did they get between the leaves? It was, I believe, on one cool September night, at Quaking Asp Hollow. I remember that then great bonfires were blazing around our camp, and the red tongues of flames showed by their light, wild groups of dancers--the ox-punchers performing strange antics; a fantastic dancing supposed to be under the patronage of Terpsichore; or, at least, some more western muse; a something, as I recall it now, between that of our modern ball-room and the Apache Ghost-Dance.

22 Remarkable that those sketches can suggest to me so much! Yet it is that which is unseen that fills me with amaze. Turning over the leaves it all comes back. "The Journey" is no longer a dream; it becomes again a reality; I go over the long, long plodding the slow progress of seemingly endless days. Not only do I look upon the scenes which were transferred to the book, but, through sympathy, on others also that, for want of time, were left unsketched. Incidents of many kinds thrust their memories upon me. Sometimes the experiences recalled were pleasurable; sometimes they were sad. But mirthful or tragic, pathetic or terrible, I go over them again, and the twelve hundred miles, nay, the fifteen hundred, considering the circuitous route that we were compelled to follow, pass before me like a moving panorama. Prairies, hills, streams, mountains, canons, follow each other in quick succession--all the ever-changing prospect between the banks of the Missouri River and the Inland Sea.

23 How rapidly we have grown! What was once but dreams of the future first changed to reality, and then sank away until now they are but dreams of the past. No more the long train of dus-covered wagons, drawn by the slow and patient oxen, winds across the level plains or passes through the deep

defile. No more the Pony Express or the lumbering stage-coach bring the quickest-word or forms the fastest transport between the inter-mountain region and "The States." How hard it is to understand the briefness of time that has passed since this great interior country was practically a howling wilderness, inhabited by bands of savage Indians and penetrated only by intrepid trappers or hunters! As we are now whirled along over the Laramie Plains, the Humboldt Desert, or through the Echo or Weber Canons, reclining on luxuriously cushioned seats, and but a few hours away from the Atlantic or Pacific seaboard, we can scarcely realize it. Surely the locomotive plays a wondrous part in the destiny of modern nations. Without its aid the country through which we are about to pass might have become as was sur-
 24 mised by Irving, the cradle of a race inimical to the higher civilization to the East and West. Now we behold it a land giving promise of future greatness, where peace, wealth and happiness shall go hand in hand, and where already it is well-nigh impossible for ^{the} youth of today to fully comprehend the struggles and privations of its pioneer fathers.

The sketches, the greater number, are roughly made. There was little time to labor by the wayside. Some of them are hardly more than hasty outlines, filled in, perhaps, when the camping-ground was reached. Some show an impression dashed off of a morning or evening, or, sometimes, of a noonday. Once in a while there is a subject more carefully finished, telling of an early camp or of a half-day's rest. Some are in white and black merely, others in color.

What a new delight it was to one young and city-bred, to mingle in the freedom of camp life such as we enjoyed near that spot. How sweet it was to pass the days and nights under the blue canopy of heaven! Three weeks we remained
 25 there; three weeks elapsed ere our train was ready to start. There was nothing very beautiful, it may be, in the scenery bordering upon "The Mad Waters," but it was wild and sylvan at the time, and we were excited by the prospect of those months of travel that lay before us.

Between the high bank on which our wagons stood and the main course where the Missouri's waters flowed, was "The Slough." There, under the high branches of primeval trees, the river back-waters lay clear and still; there the wild grape vine ran riot; there hung the green clusters of berries that would swell as we journeyed on, and that would be ripe ere we reached our journey's end. There the young, and the old, too, resorted for their bath. Many the fair girl who made her toilet there, often, indeed, that some bright face was reflected in a silent pool, a nature's mirror, while its owner arranged anew her disheveled hair. The daughters of dusky savages, of painted chiefs—the Tappas, the Pawnee or the Omaha—had, no doubt, used that place for the same purpose in other years. Little thought
 26 they of the white-faced maidens from distant lands beyond the great seas, perhaps of which they never heard, who should some day usurp their place.

During our days of waiting ere we had started westward, often, indeed, our eyes were turned toward the sunset horizon. From there would come the train of wagons in which the greater number of emigrants would make "the journey." Often there was a false alarm. Each waiting emigrant, impatient of delay, would take some far-off cloud of dust to be that made by the expected wagons. But often it was only bands of frontiersmen, Indians, or perhaps a band of antelope. Would the train never come? How long this wait! At length, well I remember the morning, the word was passed! It was the wagons for the emigrants. The half-cooked breakfast and the campfires were left deserted. Each and every one went forward to see the wagons that for so many weeks would be their homes. Some there were who had lover or relative who had preceded them the years before and

27 now their lover or relative returned for those whom they loved. All dust-covered and torn were the teamsters' clothes. Some were bare-headed. Yes, they had raced on the road. Two captains, our own, John D. Holladay, and another equally eager, had made a wager. Each one was positive that he would reach the banks of the Missouri first. In

order to gain the wager our captain had aroused his men at the hour of midnight, and in the darkness had forded the deep Elkhorn River, and continued the journey eastward while the members of the other company were enjoying their needed rest.

A daring deed! But those pioneers of the west knew no fear. They were in earnest, too. Captain and teamsters alike shared both the joy and the pride in the winning of the wager.

28 Then on the afternoon of the same day the other train arrived. O what a shouting and yelling then rent the air. Yet the rival captain and his teamsters took their defeat good naturedly. They had started eastward better equipped than was our captain, and yet the latter had won the race. Of this achievement of course we were proud.

A supper and a ball were given by the losing company. And what a ball-room--the Wyoming Hotel. It was a long, low house of logs and the dance-room was lighted by a row of tallow candles, and the music was furnished by the teamsters from the west, and yet what a time of enjoyment it was! What a contrast between the refined young girls from across the seas, and those roughly clad men from the west. Yet in the future their lives were to be linked in one and their children in turn be builders of the western empire.

29 Well do I remember, the afternoon, when our captain, that was to be, came to our portion of the Wyoming camp and listed those who were to journey as Independents, of which my father was one. That was the first time that I had beheld a typical captain of the western plains. And still I remember his massive form, his keen eye, his commanding voice and gestures. But his true southern accent plainly told that he had not long lived in the west, but was from the land of the sunny south.

There should be a sketch of "The Slough," I remember such was made. Indeed, it should be the first in the book. But careless hands have torn it away. The first is one looking eastward over the river toward the Council Bluffs. For eastward lay the Missouri River. We saw the steamer Welcome, which had brought us up stream, the Red Wing, and other olden time boats passing occasionally up or down the stream. But westward the level horizon attracted our eyes and made us long for the time when we should start to follow the setting sun.

30 Persistently, and with eager curiosity, the guide-book was scanned. For weeks ahead we studied the meagre information of "The Route." We learned the names, suggestively odd or quaintly poetic, and we pictured in the mind the places themselves to which they belonged. We formed conclusions to be realized later on or to be dispelled by the actualities. The imagination, heated to the utmost by traveler's tales--half true, half false--looked forward to a region of wonder and romance. Already I had met that "boss of the frontier," the western tough, who had kindly offered with the help of his bowie-knife, to slit or cut off my youthful ears. I had looked upon the frontier log-cabin, half store, half bar, decorated with the skins of ^{the}beaver and the wolf, and seen the selling by the moccasined fur-traders of buffalo robes. Before us was the land of Kit Carson, we should pass through the domains of the Cheyenne, the Sioux, the Crow and the Ute. We would see the Bad Lands; the burial trees of the Arapahoe; the lands of the Medicine and the Scalp-Dance. In our path were the villages of the Prairie Dog, the home of the Coyote and the rattlesnake; of the antelope, of the buffalo, the big-horn and the grizzly bear. Prairie Creek, Loup Fork, Fort John, South Pass, Wind River Mountains--O many a name seized upon imagination and held it fast.

And the names of Chiefs--Mad Wolf, Spotted Eagle, Two Axe, Rain-in-the-Face--they were as from some unwritten western Iliad.

31 But I return to the sketch-book. Indeed it has made imagination wander.

The second sketch in the book is a view near the Missouri River. It is looking westward and shows a Nebraska landscape with a prairie fire. The scene is, indeed, a very different one from what the place would present today. A great prairie fire is sweeping across the plain and the dense whirling mass of smoke, driven before the wind, and the principal feature of the sketch, overshadows with its darkness a far-reaching landscape of low, rolling hills, clumps of trees and a winding stream, in which, however, there is not a sign of human life visible. The stream is a small one, probably the Blue Creek, or it may be the Vermillion, or, perhaps the Shell. Which one of these I have really forgotten. And the margin, too, is unmarked. Now that region is covered with villages and farms and the smoke is from the chimneys of homes where prosperity and modern comforts are to be found. The sketch shows a wilderness, so great is the change wrought since that day it was made.

32 "The O'Fallen's Bluffs." The third sketch is a hasty one. The sky and the river—the slow-flowing Platte, are responsive to the light of a golden sunset. The brilliant rays come from behind the huge, square, sedimentary cliffs, and which throw a shadow across the foreground. The main interest in the scene, however, is not that given by nature, but in the presence of man. It shows our long train of wagons—how slightly sketched—coming down from the bluffs, and winding toward the radiance along the dusty road.

And so we had made a start! We had unraveled, a few at least, of the mysteries attendant upon the management of cattle; we could yoke and unyoke; we knew the effects of "gee" and "haw," and could then throw four yards of blacksnake whip with a skill and force that made its buckskin "cracker" explode with a noise like the report of a pistol. We knew, with tolerable accuracy, the moment when to apply, to let off the brake, the degree of modulation in the voice that would enable the intelligent oxen to understand

33 just how much to swerve to the right or the left. We were fast becoming teamsters, "bull-whackers;" theory had given place to practical knowledge, and, moreover, we were not only becoming experts upon the road, but also in those many bits of untellable knowledge needed to make bearable the discomforts of camp-life.

34 Dearly we learned to love the Platte! Dearly we learned to love the wide and shallow stream. Even if the way was dreary at times, we forgot it when passing along the river banks. "Egypt, O Commander of the Faithful, is a compound of black earth and green plants, between a pulverized mountain and a red sand." So wrote Amron, conqueror of Egypt, to his master, the Khalif Omar. And so might have been said of the Valley of the Platte. Day after day we trudged along, and day after day the red hills of sandstone looked down upon us, or the prairie, like the desert, stretched out its illimitable distance. The days grew into weeks, the weeks became a month, and still the cattle, freed from the yoke, hastened to slake their thirst at the well-loved stream. During that month, surely, we ate, each one of us, the peck of dirt—if sand may be classed as dirt—which every man is said to eat in his life time. It filled our eyes, too, and our ears, our nostrils. It was in the food; it sprinkled the pan-cakes; it was in the syrup that we poured over them. Half suffocated were we by it, during some night-wind, as we lay beneath our wagons. O, ye sand hills of the Platte—indeed we have cause to remember.

To the Overland traveller of today, the Platte is almost unknown. But from the time we first discovered the stream, yellowed by the close of a July day, and overhung by ancient cottonwood trees, until we bade it farewell at Red Rocks, within view of Laramie Peak, it seemed, was, indeed, a friend. As on the edge of the Nile, the verdure on its banks was often the only greenness in all the landscape round.

35 "What possible enjoyment is there in the long and dreary ride over the yellow plains," Riding, in his "Scenery of the Pacific Railway," asks that question. "The infinite space and air does not redeem the dismal prospect of dried-up seas. The pleasures of the transcontinental journey," he goes on to say, "may be divided into ten parts, five of which consists of anticipation, one of realization, and four of retrospect." With us, at least, it was different. From the railway one is but a beholder of the scenery; but in "The Old Journey" we were partakers therein. We became acquainted with the individualities, as it were, of the way. And then how we crept from one oasis of verdure to another. In the simple scenic combines, too, of the river, rock and trees, what change! But the railway did not follow our devious course.

36 One there was in our company who, like Phil Robinson, of travel fame, remembered the principal places along the road by the game he had shot there. Here he had dropped a mallard or a red-head; there, upon that hillside he had made havoc among a covey of rock-partridge, in that grove secured the wild turkey, or, on the banks of that stream, he had brought down a deer, and on that plain had ridden down a buffalo. A good way this, no doubt, to remember the leading features, and special places through which our journey lay; but, unlike my fellow traveller, I recall now all the good spots for bathing. O, what joy it was, after a half, or full day's experience of dust and toil to plunge into the cooling, cleansing waters of spring or stream. O, the Platte! But I must not omit my pleasure in other waters. Now I see the waves of the Elkhorn, now those of the Big and the "ittle Laramie; and, now, through a fringe of long-leaved arrow-wood, the cold, deep waters of Horse Shoe Creek. One day as I bathed, Spotted Tail, the famous Sioux Chieftain, and his band of five hundred braves, passed along the banks of the Platte. Open mouth I stared at the wild cavalcade, and while wading ashore, I struck my foot against, as it proved to be upon examination, a great stone battleaxe. Perhaps it once belong^{ed}, at some remote period of time, to another great chief in that famed and haughty warrior's ancestry.

37 "A Gathering Storm"--the unbroken prairies! We are brought by this subject to grand phenomena. Heavens what piles of cloud, what solemn loneliness! The clouds--no wonder that the Indian of the Plain has many a legend about them.

"Gloomy and dark art thou, O chief of the mighty Omahas;
Gloomy and dark as the driving cloud whose name
thou hast taken."

"Billowy bays of grasses ever rolling in shadow and sunshine."

Magnificent! But this imperfect little sketch cannot reveal the truth, can only suggest. Nowhere are the clouds more wonderful than when over, never is solitude more impressive than in the open prairies.

38 The clouds, the clouds! Yes, through many a twilight hour, I watched, lying upon the tufted prairie as the camp-fires died away, the clouds. Weird was the hectic flushing, the glow of the sheet lightning among the July and August cumuli. But these clouds in the sketch are filled with portent. Not only is the prairie darkened with the approach of night, but with the coming storm.

Here are two famous objects; famous, at least, in those days, not far apart, and following each other in the book--"The Court House," and "The Chimney Rock." Distinctly I remember the day on which we first sighted the latter--a pale blue shaft above the plain. We had just formed the last semi-circle of our noon corral and through its western opening was seen the Chimney, wavy through the haze that arose from the heated ground. It was my father who pointed it out to me. It afterwards seemed to us that

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the slow-going oxen would never reach it; or, rather, that they would never arrive at the point in the road opposite that natural curiosity; for the emigrant trail passed several miles to the northward of the low range of bluffs of which "the Chimney Rock" is a part. One evening several of our company tried to walk from our nearest camp to the terraced hills that formed the Chimney's base, but the distance proved too great. [Picture of "Morning at Chimney Rock" - between pages 38 and 39.] That was one of our first lessons in the deceptiveness of space--the distance to hills and mountains.

From the banks of Lawrence Creek, from where the sketch was made, the bluffs, and the Half-Way-Post, the name by which the Chimney is sometimes suggestively referred to, are most picturesque. Strings of wild ducks arose from the rushes of the creek side as our train approached.

"Scotts' Bluffs" make a very different picture from those of the O'Fallen's. The sedimentary heights of the former, with their strong resemblance to walls and towers, are shown in the sketch rosy with the light of the rising sun. In the middle distance, in a little swale of the picture, is a train corralled, the still blue smoke rising in many a straight column from the morning camp-fires. In the foreground are sun-flowers, a buffalo-skull among them.

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Ah! here is a sad, dark sketch--"Left by the Roadside." A tall rank growth, and a low, half-sunken headboard are seen against the sky in which lingers yet a red flush of the twilight. Two or three stars shed their pale rays from afar, and one feels that the silence, is unbroken by even the faintest sigh of wind. But certainly there will come one soon, a long, shivering, almost moanlike sound, as the night wind begins to steal across the waste and gently stirs the prairie grass and flowers.

Yes, after those years it is the Human Comedy; it is the never-ending drama! It is the wonder of that which grows upon one. It is the desires, hopes, trials, pleasures, sorrows of the race! It is the remembered action that interests me in these sketches. The book is filled with the transcripts of once noted places, but my mind, as I look upon them, is filled with thoughts of men and women. It is those who passed among the scenes who are of interest now. I recall the Pioneers themselves. I think of them, filled with hope, yet anxious, eager to begin the new life that lay before them.

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The action! The search for the Fountain of Youth, the desire for knowledge, the thirst for gold, these have led men into the wilds; it has taken them to brave unknown dangers in unknown lands. Yes, these, the Propaganda and the love of Freedom, but neither is stronger than the desire for Religious Liberty. Ponce de Leon in the Land of Flowers; Lewis and Clark making their way along the Oregon, the Catholic Fathers, the gold-seekers of California, and the Puritans of New England--these are our examples. And like the latter were the Pioneers who preceded us along our way. And our company, too, such it was that led them. Near the frontier I had looked into a deserted cabin--it revealed the ending of a drama. He who would have found the magic waters, the home and the gold-seeker left behind them many a lonely grave. The Propagandist, the Lover of Freedom left their bones in many an unknown spot. And the Pioneers? They, too, must leave their dead. He who built that deserted cabin had met with failure,--death was the end. But the seekers of Religious Liberty? Surely they must have found the greater

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consolation in the hour of trial; to them must have come more quickly the thought of peace.

Action! It is true; one might have become easily wearied of the monotonous trip. The shifting panorama might have become monotonous in its shifting. Monotonous, I mean, were it not for, I repeat the word--the action. The plains, the streams, the rocks, the hills, all became important because these led the way. Ever my thought is of the road.

Countless in numbers almost were the graves, on plain and mountain, those silent witnesses of death by the way. The mounds were to be seen in all imaginable places. Each day we passed them, singly or in groups, and sometimes, nay, often, one of our own company was left behind to swell the number. By the banks of streams, on grassy hillocks, in the sands, beneath groves of trees, or among piles of rock, the graves were made. We left the new mounds to be scorched by the sun, beaten upon by the tempests, or for beauty or desolation to gather around as it had about many of the older ones. Sometimes when

43 we camped the old graves would be directly alongside the wagons. I recall sitting by one that was thickly covered with grass and without a headboard while I ate my evening meal, and of sleeping by it at night. One remains in my mind as a very soothing little picture, a child's grave; and it was screened around with a thicket of wild rose that leaned lovingly over it, while the mound itself was overgrown with bright, green moss. I fancied then that the parents of that child were they yet living, the mother, who, no doubt, had left that grave with such agony of heart, such blinding or tearless grief, would have liked, indeed, to have heard the sweet singing of the wild birds in the rose thicket, and have seen how daintily nature had decked that last bed of the loved one.

How painful were the circumstances attending the first burial in our train. A woman died one evening, we were about ten days out, just as the moon had risen over the prairies, and swiftly the tidings spread through the camp. Next morning, it was the Sabbath Day, she was buried, laid

44 to rest on a low, grassy hill top near the banks of a stream. Never can I forget the grief of her children as the body of their mother was lowered into the ground. I can hear their cries yet, those cries that they gave, as they were led away, and their wagon departed with the rest. A network of stakes was placed across the grave to keep away the robber wolves; a short, short sermon was preached, a hymn was then sung, accompanied by the plaintive wailing of a clarinet, and prayer made to the services a solemn close.

That first death made a sad impression upon us. But after a while the burials from our company had become so frequent, that they lost much of their saddening power; or, rather, we refused to retain so deeply the sadness, throwing it off in self defense.

45 The outline which follows brings up a different train of thought—"Camp material abandoned after an attack by Indians." The ground is littered with all sorts of indescribable things. Panic is evident in the reckless tossing away of every kind of articles; anything to lighten the loads, so that the fear-struck emigrants could hurry forward. This was the train immediately preceding ours, and a couple of days later we passed one of those prairie letters—an ox-shoulder blade or skull—on which was written:

"Captain Chipman's train passed here August 14th, 1866. 8 deaths,
90 head of cattle driven away by the Indians.
Great scare in camp."

Apropos of alarms from Indians there is a rapidly executed subject, from memory the next day, that brings back a night of peril and sorrow. It was on the western slope of the Black Hills, and there were four wagons of us belated from the general train. We were the last five on the right-wing, and the right-wing was the latter half of the train that night, so, practically, we were alone. There was a dead woman in the wagon next to ours, and to hear the weeping and sobbing of her little children, in the dark beside the corpse, was heart chilling. The poor husband trudged along on foot hurrying his single yoke of footsore cattle. Still we were far behind; liable at any moment to be cut-off by the prowling Sioux. That was a night to remember.

Here are two scenes among the Black Hills themselves, one is a very suggestive

sketch showing rocks, timber-clad bluffs, and ragged peaks with the wagons of our train coming down a deep declivity into a dry torrent bed. Wild clouds are coming over the peaks threatening a stormy night. It appears that the wagons must topple over, end over end, so abrupt is the descent they are making. In the second sketch, made on the evening of the following day, the train is seen winding like a serpent over the hills. In the middle distance is a valley, partly obscured by mists, and beyond it Laramie Peak, purple against the sunset clouds and sky.

The night drives were among the most trying experiences upon the Overland Journey. Usually they were made necessary to us from the drying up of some spring or stream where we had ex-

47 [Between pages 46 and 47 - Picture - "Camp at Scott's Bluffs."] pected to make our evening camp, and the consequent lack of water for the people as well as cattle, so that we must move forward. Our worst drive of this kind was to reach the La Poudre River after leaving Fort Laramie, Saint John's, on the night which followed the making of the first of the two sketches just mentioned. Wildly the lightnings glared, their livid tongues licked the ground beside us. The road was deluged in the downpour of rain; and what with the sudden flashes of light, the crashing of thunder, the poor cattle were quite panic-stricken. It was hard work to make the poor brutes face the storm. Yet, after all, their sagacity was greater than ours. Several times we would have driven them over the edge of a precipice had not their keener senses warned them back. We would have shuddered, so our Captain afterwards told us, could we have seen where the tracks of our wagon wheels were made that night.

48 Yes, to the emigrant company of those days, the drying up of a stream was often of serious import. Water enough might have been carried to quench the thirst of human beings, but what of the many cattle? The ox that suffers too much from thirst becomes a dangerous animal. Let him scent in the distance the coveted water, and who shall curb his strength? How nearly we met with disaster from this same cause. Almost useless were the brakes; how fiercely the thirst tortured animals strained at their yokes. It was a pitiful sight, and as we approached the broken, boulder-strewn edge of the stream, our position was somewhat dangerous. No less dangerous was the task of removing the yokes from the impatient creatures, and of unloosing the chains.

49 I try to recall my diary, for I did keep a diary. I did not find it among the old relics where was hidden the sketch-book, and the chances are that long since it has been destroyed, perhaps fed to the flames. In spite of slightness it must have contained many an interesting fact about "The Journey." But I cannot recall a word. The events which gave rise to its entries grew fresh in my mind, but the wording of the matter itself is gone. I know it contained the data which would give the exact number of hours in which we were upon the road, and that I would like to know. I remember writing about Scott's Bluffs, and how they received their name. One fancied that he could see the wounded trapper, abandoned and dying alone, and wondered if he crawled down from the bluffs, and along the way we were travelling. And which was the spot, too, where, at last, his bones were found. There was something, too, about the gathering of buffalo chips, and the seeking of fire wood. On the latter quest, what lonely spots we did visit! One comes to my mind at this moment. How weirdly the wind choired in the ancient cedars, and how very old appeared the boulders with their mottling of lichens, and with what a dismal yelp a ragged coyote leaped from his lair and scampered down a rock-strewn gully! It was tantalizing at times to keep to the road. How could one resist the temptation to throw off restraint, and, putting all prudence aside, wander or go gallaping on horseback over hill and through dale? What if the redman did lie in the path? He could be a brother. O, but to be like the Indian; to live wild and free, to be "iron-jointed, supple-sinewed, to hurl our lances in the sun!"

This, of course, was on those days when, having taken "the winds and sunshine into our veins," we felt stirred within us the instincts of primal man. At other times we were sober-minded enough. The romance of being out in the wilds was terribly chilled by an inclement sky. A few days of drizzling rain tried the most ardent spirit. Then it was that the disagreeableness of the time made the true metal of the emigrant show itself. Whatever traits of character he possessed--selfishness, senseless fault-finding, or those rare qualities of kindness, cheerful content, and ready helpfulness--all come out. In Mark Tapley's own phrase, it was all very well to "come out stony" when by the warm glow of the flames or when moving along with the bright blue sky above us, but it was quite another task to remain cheerful when the incessant rain made im-

51 even the smallest or most sheltered of campfires, and one crept into his bed upon the ground with wet clothes and with flesh chilled to the bone, without even the solace of a cup of hot tea or coffee.

Hardly less trying were the days of dust-storms. What misery it was when the wind blew from the front and the whole cloud of dust raised by over three hundred yoke of cattle, and the motion of sixty-five wagons drove in our faces! How intolerably our eyes and our nostrils burned, and how quickly our ears filled with the flying sand or alkali!

I should like to read once more, those diary entries. Was there anything written, I wonder, about those silhouettes upon the hills? What did it tell, if anything, about the alarm that was spread through our Company? Had we--the unlearned--known more about the ways of the Indian we would have realized that they--those shadows--were no Sioux. Yet it was disturbing to the unknowing to see those figures, those mysteriously moving horsemen of the night.

Thank heaven! It was but our own scouting herdsmen. But for once, to those assembled within the corral centre, O, how long seemed the hymn, and even the prayer! How impatient we were to know the truth.

In "The Cedar Bluffs" the wagons that are sketched corralled are not our own. They comprised a small freight train, and right glad would they have been to, and most likely they did, creep along, as it were, in our wake. There were no women or children in that train, its members were all of the daring "freighter." These were men willing to meet with any danger. Perhaps there might be among them men inexperienced, but they must have possessed intrepid hearts. Rough of the rough, but daring they certainly were. Woe to that little band if later they met the Sioux. It would mean, for them, annihilation. What rude pranks the Indian did sometimes play! The Sioux or Cheyenne, he would take bales of bright stuffs which he sometimes found in the freighters' wagons, fasten one end of it to his pony and let the hundred yards un-

53 ravel and flaunt on the winds as wildly he dashed across the plain. There was a hurt-

ally comic side to the character of the western Indian.

A brutal side! Yes, and there was often a comic side to the white man's fear. Well, indeed, a friend of mine has told it. Twelve young men comprised a company; two wagons and six yoke of oxen made up their outfit. That certainly was taking their risks in those perilous times! Yet they were unarmored. Once, indeed, they thought themselves at the mercy of the Sioux; as truly, in another way they were. Death and the scalping-knife appeared their lot. But it was all a hoax. What had been taken for the painted savage was but a party of whites with blankets over their heads to keep away the rain. Taking into consideration the really dangerous position of the little band, there was a tragic-farcical touch in their list of arms. My friend's sole means of defense was a butcher-knife some six inches long.

But in a later adventure, so he told me, the farcical part was left out. That was an experi-

54 ence in which, if the tragedy was also wanting, there was a most severe test upon his

nerve. He had left the camp, taking a fowling piece with him, and he wandered along a stream. He had just taken sight upon a skein of wild fowl, and was about to fire, when suddenly a band of Indians came from behind a bank, and in another instant the shot would have been among them. But luckily he had not pulled the trigger. However, his attitude, the pointed gun made him an object of suspicion. The Indians were upon the war-path, but not with the whites just then. My friend was surrounded, and he must explain to the satisfaction of the savages who he was, and why he was there. He was finally released, however, upon proof that he was from a camp of whites near by. But all the same it was an ordeal to stand surrounded by those painted savages, scalps dangling from their pony saddles. And it was one that the actor therein would not have cared to repeat. . . .

[Between pages 54 and 55, Picture - "Laramie Peak from the Black Hills."]