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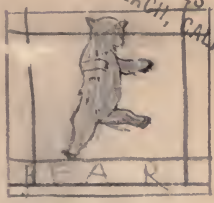

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THE BOY SETTLERS

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

Sure enough, there they were, twenty-five or thirty Indians.

THE BOY SETTLERS

A STORY OF EARLY TIMES IN KANSAS

BY

NOAH BROOKS

ILLUSTRATED BY W. A. ROGERS

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

TO

John Greenleaf Whittier

Whose patriotic songs were the inspiration of the prototypes of

THE BOY SETTLERS

This little book is affectionately inscribed

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THE BOY SETTLERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE SETTLERS, AND WHENCE THEY CAME.

THERE were five of them, all told; three boys and two men. I have mentioned the boys first because there were more of them, and we shall hear most from them before we have got through with this truthful tale. They lived in the town of Dixon, on the Rock River, in Lee County, Illinois. Look on the map, and you will find this place at a point where the Illinois Central Railroad crosses the Rock; for this is a real town with real people. Nearly sixty years ago, when there were Indians all over that region of the country, and the red men were numerous where the flourishing States of Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin are now, John Dixon kept a little ferry at the point of which I am now speaking, and it was known as Dixon's Ferry. Even when he was not an old man, Dixon was noted for his long and flowing white hair, and the Indians called him Na-chu-sa, "the White-haired." In 1832 the Sac

tribe of Indians, with their chief Black Hawk, rose in rebellion against the Government, and then there happened what is now called the Black Hawk war.

In that war many men who afterwards became famous in the history of the United States were engaged in behalf of the government. One of these was Zachary Taylor, afterwards better known as "Rough and Ready," who fought bravely in the Mexican war and subsequently became President of the United States. Another was Robert Anderson, who, at the beginning of the war of the Rebellion, in 1861, commanded the Union forces in Fort Sumter when it was first fired upon. Another was Jefferson Davis, who, in the course of human events, became President of the Southern Confederacy. A fourth man, destined to be more famous than any of the others, was Abraham Lincoln. The first three of these were officers in the army of the United States. Lincoln was at first a private soldier, but was afterwards elected captain of his company, with whom he had come to the rescue of the white settlers from the lower part of the State.

The war did not last long, and there was not much glory gained by anybody in it. Black Hawk was beaten, and that country had peace ever after. For many years, and even unto this day, I make no doubt, the early settlers of the Rock River country loved to tell stories of the Black Hawk war, of their own sufferings, exploits, hardships, and ad-

ventures. Father Dixon, as he was called, did not choose to talk much about himself, for he was a modest old gentleman, and was not given, as they used to say, to "blowing his own horn," but his memory was a treasure-house of delightful anecdotes and reminiscences of those old times; and young and old would sit around the comfortable stove of a country store, during a dull winter evening, drinking in tales of Indian warfare and of the "old settlers" that had been handed down from generation to generation.

It is easy to see how boys brought up in an atmosphere like this, rich in traditions of the long-past in which the early settlement of the country figured, should become imbued with the same spirit of adventure that had brought their fathers from the older States to this new region of the West. Boys played at Indian warfare over the very ground on which they had learned to believe the Sacs and Foxes had skirmished years and years before. They loved to hear of Black Hawk and his brother, the Prophet, as he was called; and I cannot tell you with what reverence they regarded Father Dixon, the white-haired old man who had actually talked and traded with the famous Indians, and whose name had been given him as a title of respect by the great Black Hawk himself.

Among the boys who drank in this sort of lore were Charlie and Alexander Howell and their cousin Oscar Bryant. Charlie, when he had ar-

rived at his eighteenth birthday, esteemed himself a man, ready to put away childish things; and yet, in his heart, he dearly loved the traditions of the Indian occupation of the country, and wished that he had been born earlier, so that he might have had a share in the settlement of the Rock River region, its reclamation from the wilderness, and the chase of the wild Indian. As for Alexander, commonly known as "Sandy," he had worn out a thick volume of Cooper's novels before he was fifteen years old, at which interesting point in his career I propose to introduce him to you. Oscar was almost exactly as many years and days old as his cousin. But two boys more unlike in appearance could not be found anywhere in a long summer day. Sandy was short, stubbed, and stocky in build. His face was florid and freckled, and his hair and complexion, like his name, were sandy. Oscar was tall, slim, wiry, with a long, oval face, black hair, and so lithe in his motions that he was invariably cast for the part of the leading Indian in all games that required an aboriginal character.

Mr. Howell carried on a transportation business, until the railroads came into the country and his occupation was gone. Then he began to consider seriously the notion of going further west with his boys to get for them the same chances of early forestalling the settlement of the country that he had had in Illinois. In the West, at least in those

days, nearly everybody was continually looking for a yet further West to which they might emigrate. Charlie Howell was now a big and willing, good-natured boy; he ought to be striking out for himself and getting ready to earn his own living. At least, so his father thought.

Mr. Bryant was engaged in a profitable business, and he had no idea of going out into another West for himself or his boy. Oscar was likely to be a scholar, a lawyer, or a minister, perhaps. Even at the age of fifteen, he had written "a piece" which the editor of the Dixon *Telegraph* had thought worthy of the immortality of print in his columns.

But about this time, the Northern States were deeply stirred by the struggle in the new Territory of Kansas to decide whether freedom or slavery should be established therein. This was in 1854 and thereabout. The Territory had been left open and unoccupied for a long time. Now settlers were pouring into it from adjacent States, and the question whether freedom should be the rule, or whether slave-holding was to be tolerated, became a very important one. Missouri and Arkansas, being the States nearest to Kansas, and holding slavery to be a necessity, furnished the largest number of emigrants who went to vote in favor of bringing slavery into the new Territory; but others of the same way of thinking came from more distant States, even as far off as South Caro-

lina, all bent on voting for slavery in the laws that were to be made. For the most part, these people from the slave States did not go prepared to make their homes in Kansas or Nebraska; for some went to the adjoining Territory of Nebraska, which was also ready to have slavery voted up or down. The newcomers intended to stay just long enough to vote and then return to their own homes.

The people of the free States of the North heard of all this with much indignation. They had always supposed that the new Territories were to be free from slavery. They saw that if slavery should be allowed there, by and by, when the two Territories would become States, they would be slave States, and then there would be more slave States than free States in the Union. So they held meetings, made speeches, and passed resolutions, denouncing this sort of immigration as wrong and wicked. Then immigrants from Iowa, Illinois, and other Northern States, even as far off as Massachusetts, sold their homes and household goods and started for the Promised Land, as many of them thought it to be. For the men in Kansas who were opposed to slavery wrote and sent far and wide papers and pamphlets, setting forth in glowing colors the advantages of the new and beautiful country beyond the Missouri River, open to the industry and enterprise of everybody. Soon the roads and highways of Iowa were dotted with white-topped wagons of immigrants journeying to

Kansas, and long lines of caravans, with families and with small knots of men, stretched their way across the country nearest to the Territory.

Some of these passed through Dixon, and the boys gazed with wonder at the queer inscriptions that were painted on the canvas covers of the wagons; they longed to go with the immigrants, and taste the sweets of a land which was represented to be full of wild flowers, game in great abundance, and fine streams, and well-wooded hills not far away from the water. They had heard their elders talk of the beauties of Kansas, and of the great outrage that was to be committed on that fair land by carrying slavery into it; and although they did not know much about the politics of the case, they had a vague notion that they would like to have a hand in the exciting business that was going on in Kansas.

Both parties to this contest thought they were right. Men who had been brought up in the slave States believed that slavery was a good thing — good for the country, good for the slave-owner, and even good for the slave. They could not understand how anybody should think differently from them. But, on the other hand, those who had never owned slaves, and who had been born and brought up in the free States, could not be brought to look upon slavery as anything but a very wicked thing. For their part, they were willing (at least, some of them were) to fight rather

than consent that the right of one man to own another man should be recognized in the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska. Some of these started at once for the debatable land; others helped their neighbors to go, and many others stayed at home and talked about it.

Mrs. Bryant, Oscar's mother, said: "Dear me, I am tired and sick of hearing about 'bleeding Kansas.' I do wish, husband, you would find something else to talk about before Oscar. You have got him so worked up that I shouldn't be the least bit surprised if he were to start off with some of those tired-looking immigrants that go traipsing through the town day by day." Mrs. Bryant was growing anxious, now that her husband was so much excited about the Kansas-Nebraska struggle, as it was called, he could think of nothing else.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRE SPREADS.

ONE fine morning in May, Mr. Bryant was standing at his front gate watching for his brother-in-law, Mr. Howell, to come down the street.

He held a newspaper in his hand, and with this, loosely rolled, he was impatiently tapping on the gate as Mr. Howell drew near. Evidently something had happened to disturb him.

"See here, Aleck," he exclaimed, as soon as his brother-in-law was within the sound of his voice, "I can stand this sort of thing no longer. I'm bound to go to Kansas. I've been thinking it over, and I have about made up my mind to go. Brubaker will take my store and the good-will of the concern. Oscar is wild to go, and his mother is perfectly able to take care of the house while I am getting ready for her to come out. What d'ye say? Will you go too?"

"Well," said Mr. Howell, slowly, "you nearly take my breath away! What's happened to stir you up so?"

"Just listen to this!" cried the other, "just listen!" and, unfolding his newspaper, he read,

with glowing cheeks and kindling eyes, an account of an attack made by some of the "pro-slavery men," as they were named, on a party of free-State immigrants who had attempted to cross the river near Kansas City. His voice trembled with excitement, and when he had finished reading, he asked his companion what he thought of that.

Mr. Howell looked pensively down the street, now embowered with the foliage of early summer, noted the peaceful aspect of the village, and the tranquil picture which gardens, cottages, and sauntering groups of school-children presented, and then said slowly, "I never was much of a hand at shooting, Charles, leastways, shooting at folks; and I don't know that I could take steady aim at a man, even if I knew he was a Border Ruffian out gunning for me. But I'm with you, Charles. Charlie and Sandy can do a heap sight better in Kansas, after things get settled, than they can here. This place is too old; there's too much competition, and the boys will not have any show if they stay here. But what does Amanda say?"

Now, Amanda was Mr. Bryant's wife, Mr. Aleck Howell's sister. When Aleck asked this question, the two men looked at each other for a moment, queerly and without speaking.

"Well, she'll hate to part with Oscar; he's the apple of her eye, as it were. But I guess she will listen to reason. When I read this piece in the paper to her this morning, at the breakfast-table,

she was as mad as a wet hen. As for Oscar, he's so fired up about it that he is down in the wood-shed chopping wood to blow off steam. Hear him?" And Mr. Bryant laughed quietly, notwithstanding his rising anger over the news of the day.

At that moment Sandy came whooping around the corner, intent on overtaking a big yellow dog, his constant companion, — Bose by name, — who bounded along far in advance of the boy. "See here, Sandy," said his uncle, "how would you like to go to Kansas with your father, Oscar, Charlie, and myself?"

"To Kansas? shooting buffaloes, deer, Indians, and all that? To Kansas? Oh, come, now, Uncle Charles, you don't mean it."

"But I do mean it, my laddie," said the elder man, affectionately patting the freckled cheek of the lad. "I do mean it, and if you can persuade your father to go along and take you and Charlie with him, we'll make up a party — just we five — that will scare the Border Ruffians 'way into the middle of next year." Then, with a more serious air, he added, "This is a fight for freedom, my boy, and every man and every boy who believes in God and Liberty can find a chance to help. I'm sure *we* can." This he said with a certain sparkle of his eye that may have meant mischief to any Border Ruffian that might have been there to see and hear.

As for Sandy, he turned two or three hand-

springs by way of relieving his feelings, then, having once more assured himself that the two men had serious thoughts of migrating to Kansas, he rushed off to the wood-shed to carry the wonderful news to Oscar. Dropping his axe, the lad listened with widened eyes to the story that Sandy had to tell.

"Do you know, Sandy," he said, with an air of great wisdom, "I thought there was something in the wind. Oh, I never saw father so roused as he was when he read that story in the Chicago *Press and Tribune* this morning. Why, I thought he'd just get up and howl when he had read it out to mother. Jimmini! Do you really suppose that he will go? And take us? And Uncle Aleck? Oh, wouldn't that be too everlastingly bully for anything?" Oscar, as you will see, was given to the use of slang, especially when under great excitement. The two boys rushed back to the gate, where the brothers-in-law were still talking eagerly and in undertones.

"If your mother and Aunt Amanda will consent, I guess we will go," said Mr. Bryant, with a smile on his face as he regarded the flushed cheeks and eager eyes of Sandy and Oscar. Sandy's father added: "And I'll answer for your mother, my son. She and I have talked this thing over many a time, more on your account and Charlie's than for the sake of 'bleeding Kansas,' however. I'm bound to say that. Every man is in honor bound

to do his duty by the country and by the good cause; but I have got to look after my boys first." And the father lovingly laid his hand on Sandy's sturdy shoulder. "Do you think you could fight, if the worst comes to the worst, Sandy, boy?"

Of course the lad protested confidently that he could fight; certainly he could protect his rights and his father's rights, even with a gun, if that should be found necessary. But he admitted that, on the whole, he would rather shoot buffaloes and antelope, both of which species of large game he had already learned were tolerably plentiful in Kansas.

"Just think of it, Oscar, we might have some real Indian-fighting out there, like that Father Dixon and the rest of the old settlers had in the time of the Black Hawk war."

His father assured him, however, that there was no longer any danger from the red man in Kansas. The wild Indians were now far out on the frontier, beyond the region to which emigrants would probably go in search of homestead lands for settlement. Sandy looked relieved at this explanation. He was not anxious for fighting with anybody. Fun was more to his liking.

The two mothers, when they were informed of the decision of the male members of the family, made very little opposition to the emigration scheme. In fact, Mrs. Howell had really felt for some time past that her boys would be better pro-

vided for in a new country. She had been one of the "old settlers" of Dixon, having been brought out from the interior of New York when she and her brother were small children. She had the same spirit of adventure that he had, and, although she remembered very well the privations and the discomforts of those early days, it was more with amusement than sorrow that she recalled them to mind, now that they were among the traditions of long-past years. The two young Howells were never weary of hearing their mother tell of the time when she killed a wildcat with her father's rifle, or of her walking fifteen miles and back to buy herself a bonnet-ribbon to wear to her first ball in the court-house. Now her silent influence made it easier for the Kansas Exodus (as they already called their scheme) to be accepted all around.

The determination of the two families to migrate made some stir in the town. It was yet a small place, and everybody knew every other body's business. The Bryants and Howells were among the "old families," and their momentous step created a little ripple of excitement among their friends and acquaintances. The boys enjoyed the talk and the gossip that arose around them, and already considered themselves heroes in a small way. With envious eyes and eager faces, their comrades surrounded them, wherever they went, asking questions about their outfit, their plans,

and their future movements. Every boy in Dixon looked on the three prospective boy settlers as the most fortunate of all their young playfellows.

"I wish my father would catch the 'Kansas fever,'" said Hiram Fender, excitedly. "Don't you suppose your father could give it to him, Charlie? Do you suppose your uncle would take me along if Dad would let me go? Oh, wouldn't that be just gaudy, if I could go! Then there would be four of us boys. Try it on him."

But the two families resolutely attended to their own business, asking help from nobody, and not even so much as hinting to anybody that it would be a good thing for others to go with them to the Promised Land. The three boys were speedily in the midst of preparations for their migration. It was now well along in the middle of May. If they were to take up land claims in Kansas and get in a crop, they had no time to spare. The delightful excitement of packing, of buying arms and ammunition, and of winding up all the small concerns of their life in Dixon made the days pass swiftly by. There were all the details of tents for camping-out, provisions for the march, and rough clothing and walking gear for the new life beyond to be looked after.

Some of the notions of the boys, in regard to what was needed and what was to be expected from the land beyond, were rather crude. And perhaps their fathers were not in all cases so wise

as they thought themselves. The boys, however, cherished the idea that absolutely everything they should require in Kansas must be carried from Illinois. "Why," said the practical Mr. Howell, "if we cannot buy ploughs, cattle, and seed, cheaper in Missouri than we can here, we can at least save the labor and cost of transportation. We don't want to haul a year's provisions, either. We expect to raise something to eat, don't we?"

Charlie, to whom this remonstrance was addressed, replied, "Well, of course we can raise some garden truck, and I suppose we can buy bacon and flour cheaper in Missouri than here."

"Then there's the game," interrupted Oscar and Sandy, both in one breath. "Governor Robinson's book says that the country is swarming with game," added Sandy, excitedly.

The boys had devoured a little book by Mr. Robinson, the free-State Governor of Kansas, in which the richness of the Promised Land was glowingly set forth.

"Much time we shall have to shoot buffaloes and antelope when we are breaking up the sod and planting corn," Mr. Howell answered with a shade of sarcasm in his voice.

"And we may have to fire at bigger game than either of those," added Mr. Bryant, grimly.

"Border Ruffians?" asked Sandy, with a feeble attempt at a grin. His mother shuddered and hastily went out of the room. The Kansas scheme

seemed no longer pleasant to her, when she read the dreadful stories of violence and bloodshed with which some of the Western newspapers were teeming. But it was settled that most of the tools needed for farming could be bought better in Missouri than in Illinois; the long haul would be saved, and the horses with which they were to start could be exchanged for oxen to good advantage when they reached "the river." They had already adopted the common phrase, "the river," for the Missouri River, then generally used by people emigrating westward.

"But perhaps the Missourians will not sell you anything when they know that you are free-State men," suggested Mrs. Bryant, timidly, for this was a family council.

"Oh, well," answered Mr. Howell, sturdily, "I'll risk that. I never saw a man yet with anything to sell who wouldn't sell it when the money was shaken in his face. The newspapers paint those border men pretty black, I know; but if they stop to ask a man's politics before they make a bargain with him, they must be queer cattle. They are more than human or less than human, not Americans at all, if they do business in that way." In the end they found that Mr. Howell was entirely right.

All was settled at last, and that, too, in some haste, for the season was rapidly advancing when planting must be attended to, if they were to plant

that year for the fall harvest. From the West they heard reports of hosts of people pouring into the new Territory, of land being in great demand, and of the best claims near the Missouri being taken by early emigrants. They must be in a hurry if they were to get a fair chance with the rest and a fair start on their farm, — a farm yet existing only in their imagination.

Their wagon, well stored with clothing and provisions, a few books, Oscar's violin, a medicine chest, powder, shot, and rifle-balls, and an assortment of odds and ends, — the wagon, so long a magical repository of hopes and the most delightful anticipations, was ready at last. It stood at the side gate of Mr. Bryant's home, with a "spike team" (two horses at the pole, and one horse for a leader) harnessed. It was a serious, almost solemn, moment. Now that the final parting had come, the wrench with which the two families were to be broken up seemed harder than any of the members had expected. The two mothers, bravely keeping up smiling faces, went about the final touches of preparations for the lads' departure and the long journey of their husbands.

Mr. Howell mounted the wagon with Sandy by his side; Mr. Bryant took his seat with the other two boys in an open buggy, which they were to drive to "the river" and there trade for a part of their outfit. Fond and tearful kisses had been exchanged and farewells spoken. They drove off

into the West. The two women stood at the gate, gazing after them with tear-dimmed eyes as long as they were in sight; and when the little train disappeared behind the first swale of the prairie, they burst into tears and went into the house which was now left unto them desolate.

It was a quiet party that drove over the prairie that bright and beautiful morning. The two boys in the buggy spoke occasionally in far-off-sounding voices about indifferent things that attracted their attention as they drove along. Mr. Howell held the reins, with a certain stern sense of duty on his dark and handsome face. Sandy sat silently by his side, the big tears coursing down his freckled cheeks.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE DISPUTED TERRITORY.

THE straggling, unkempt, and forlorn town of Parkville, Missouri, was crowded with strangers when the emigrants arrived there after a long and toilsome drive through Iowa. They had crossed the Mississippi from Illinois into Iowa, at Fulton, on the eastern shore, and after stopping to rest for a day or two in Clinton, a pretty village on the opposite bank, had pushed on, their faces ever set westward. Then, turning in a southwesterly direction, they travelled across the lower part of the State, and almost before they knew it they were on the sacred soil of Missouri, the dangers of entering which had been pictured to them all along the route. They had been warned by the friendly settlers in Iowa to avoid St. Joseph, one of the crossings from Missouri into Kansas; it was a nest of Border Ruffians, so they were told, and they would surely have trouble. They must also steer clear of Leavenworth; for that town was the head-quarters of a number of Missourians whose names were already terrible all over the Northern States, from Kansas to Massachusetts Bay.

"But there is the military at Fort Leavenworth," replied Mr. Bryant. "Surely they will protect the citizens of the United States who are peaceful and well-behaved. We are only peaceable immigrants."

"Pshaw!" answered an Iowa man. "All the army officers in this part of the country are pro-slavery men. They are in sympathy with the pro-slavery men, anyhow, and if they had been sent here to keep free-State men out of the Territory, they couldn't do any different from what they are doing. It's an infernal shame, that's what it is."

Bryant said nothing in reply, but as they trudged along, for the roads were very bad, and they could not often ride in their vehicles now, his face grew dark and red by turns. Finally he broke out,—

"See here, Aleck," he cried, "I don't want to sneak into the Territory. If these people think they can scare law-abiding and peaceable citizens of a free country from going upon the land of these United States, we might just as well fight first as last. For one, I will not be driven out of a country that I have got just as much right to as any of these hot-headed Missouri fellows."

His brother-in-law looked troubled, but before he could speak the impetuous and fiery Sandy said: "That's the talk, Uncle Charlie! Let's go in by the shortest way, and tackle the Border Ruffians if they tackle us. Who's afraid?" And the lad bravely handled his "pepper-box," as his

old-fashioned five-barrelled revolver was sportively called by the men of those days; for the modern revolver with one barrel for all the chambers of the weapon had not then come into use. "Who's afraid?" he repeated fiercely, looking around. Everybody burst out laughing, and the valorous Sandy looked rather crestfallen.

"I am afraid, for one," said his father. "I want no fighting, no bloodshed. I want to get into the Territory and get to work on our claim, just as soon as possible; but if we can't get there without a fight, why then, I'll fight. But I ain't seeking for no fight." When Aleck Howell was excited, his grammar went to the four winds. His view of the situation commended itself to the approval of Oscar, who said he had promised his mother that he would avoid every appearance of hostile intention, keep a civil tongue in his head, have his weapons out of sight and his powder always dry.

The emigrants decided to go into Kansas by way of Parkville.

At Claybank, half-way between the Iowa line and the Missouri River, they encountered a drover with a herd of cattle. He was eager to dicker with the Kansas emigrants, and offered them what they considered to be a very good bargain in exchanging oxen for their horses. They were now near the Territory, and the rising prices of almost everything that immigrants required warned them that they were not far from the point where an

outfit could no longer be bought at any reasonable price. The boys were loth to part with their buggy; for, although they had been often compelled to go afoot through some of the worst roads in the States of Iowa and Missouri, they had clung to the notion that they might have a pair of horses to take into the Territory, and, while the buggy was left to them, they had a refuge in times of weariness with walking; and these were rather frequent. The wagon was exchanged for another, suitable for oxen.

The immigrants drove gayly into Parkville. They were in sight of the Promised Land. The Big Muddy, as Missourians affectionately call the turbid stream that gives name to their State, rolled sluggishly between the Parkville shore and the low banks fringed with cottonwoods that were the eastern boundary of Kansas. Looking across, they could see long lines of white-covered wagons, level plains dotted with tents, and the rising smoke of many fires, where people who had gone in ahead of them were cooking their suppers; for they entered Parkville late in the afternoon. It was a commonplace-looking view of Kansas, after all, and not at all like what the lads had fancied it would be. Sandy very emphatically expressed his disappointment.

"What would you have, Sandy?" asked his uncle, with some amusement. "Did you expect to see wild honey dripping out of the cottonwoods

and sycamores, buffaloes and deer standing up and waiting to be shot at, and a farm ready to be tilled?"

"Well," replied the boy, a little shamefacedly, "I didn't exactly expect to see all those things; but somehow the country looks awful flat and dull. Don't you think so?"

For answer, Mr. Bryant pointed out a line of blue slopes in the distance. "Those are not very high hills, my boy, to be sure, but they are on the rolling prairie beyond, and as soon as we get away from the river we shall find a bluffy and diversified country, I'll warrant you."

"Yes; don't you remember," broke in Oscar, eagerly, "Governor Robinson's book told all about the rolling and undulating country of the Territory, and the streams that run under high bluffs in some places?"

Sandy admitted that this was true of the book; but he added, "Some books do lie, though."

"Not Governor Robinson's book," commented his brother Charlie, with a slight show of resentment. For Charlie had made a study of the reports from the Promised Land.

But a more pressing matter was the attitude of the border-State men toward the free-State emigrants, and the question of making the necessary purchases for their farming scheme. Parkville was all alive with people, and there were many border-State men among them. Some of these

regarded the newcomers with unmistakable hostility, noting which, Sandy and Oscar took good care to keep near their two grown-up protectors; and the two men always went about with their weapons within easy reaching distance. All of the Borderers were opposed to any more free-State men going into the Territory; and many of them were disposed to stop this by force, if necessary. At one time, the situation looked very serious, and Sandy got his "pepper-box" into position. But the trouble passed away, and the arrival of fifteen or twenty teams, accompanied by a full complement of men, checked a rising storm of wrath.

From Platte City, a short distance up the river, however, came doleful and distressing stories of the ill-treatment of the free-State men who had gone that way. They were harassed and hindered, and, in some cases, their teams were deliberately turned about and driven back on the road by which they had come. It was useless to remonstrate when the rifles of a dozen men were levelled at the would-be immigrants. But our travellers in Parkville heard a good story of the bravery of one free-State man who had been refused transportation across the ferry at Platte City, kept by an ardent pro-slavery man. The intending immigrant, unconscious of any hindrance to his crossing, was calmly driving down to the ferry-boat, a flat-bottomed craft propelled by long oars, or sweeps, when the ferryman stopped him with the question, "What hev ye got into yer waggin?"

"Oxen," sententiously replied the newcomer.

"And what's them thar cattle follering on behind?" he asked, pointing to a drove of milch-cattle in the rear.

"Caouws," answered the immigrant, in the broad pronunciation peculiar to provincial people of the New England States.

"All right," was the rejoinder; "a man that says 'caouws' can't go over this yere ferry withouten he's got the tickets." No argument would induce the ferryman to explain what the tickets were and where they could be procured. Finally, his patience exhausted, the free-State man suddenly drew from the big pockets of his frock a pair of tremendous pistols, ready cocked, and, holding them full in the face of the surprised ferryman, he said,—

"Here are my tickets, and I'm going across this ferry right off, caouws or no caouws!" And he went.

Even at Parkville, where there was very little difficulty in crossing, as compared with what there had been earlier in the struggle for Kansas, they were advised by discreet friends and sympathizers to be on the lookout for opposition. Every fresh arrival of free-State men angered yet more the Borderers who were gathered there to hinder and, if possible, prevent further immigration. Mr. Bryant chafed under the necessity of keeping his voice hushed on the topic that engaged all his thoughts; and Oscar and Sandy were ready to

fight their way across the river; at least they said so.

They did find, however, that the buying of provisions and farming-tools required for their future use, was out of the question in Parkville. Whether it was the unexpected demand, or a refusal of the Missourians to sell to free-State men, they could not determine. But the prices of everything they wanted were very high. What should they do? These articles they must have. But their cost here was far beyond their most extravagant estimates. When Mr. Howell was reminded by his brother-in-law how he had said that no politics could interfere with trade and prices, he was amused.

"Of course," he said, "it does look as if these Missourians would not sell at fair prices because they want to hinder us; but don't you see that the demand is greater than the supply? I know these folks are bitterly hostile to us; but the reason why they have so small a stock of goods on hand is that they have sold out to other free-State men that have come before us to buy the same things. Isn't that so?"

Mr. Bryant was obliged to admit that this was a reasonable explanation; but as he had begun by thinking that every Borderer hated a free-State man and would do him an injury if he could, he did not give up that notion willingly. He was certain that there was a plot in the high prices of bacon, flour, corn-meal, and ploughs.

In this serious dilemma, Charlie came to the relief of the party with the information that a free-State man, whose team had just recrossed the river for a load of supplies sent him by a wagon that was to return to Iowa, brought news that a large trading-post had been opened at a new Kansas town called Quindaro. He said that the Iowa man told him that prices were just now lower in Quindaro than they had ever been in Parkville.

"Quindaro?" said Oscar, musingly; — "why, that must be an Indian name, — feminine Indian name, too, unless I miss my guess."

Mr. Bryant had heard of Quindaro. It was a brand-new town, a few miles down the river, settled by free-State men and named for a young, full-blooded Indian girl of the Delaware tribe. The town was on the borders of the Delaware reservation, which in those days came close to the Missouri River. Charlie, also, had gathered some facts about the town, and he added that Quindaro was a good place to start from, going westward. The party had laid in a stock of groceries — coffee, tea, and other articles of that description — before leaving home. Now they needed staple provisions, a few farming tools, a breaking-plough, and some seed corn. Few thought of planting anything but corn; but the thrifty settlers from Illinois knew the value of fresh vegetables, and they were resolved to have "garden truck" just as soon as seeds could be planted and brought to maturity.

"And side-meat?" asked Sandy, wonderingly, as he heard his father inquiring the price of that article of food. Side-meat, in the South and West, is the thin flank of a porker, salted and smoked after the fashion of hams, and in those parts of the Southwest it was (and probably is) the staple article of food among the people. It is sold in long, unattractive-looking slabs; and when Sandy heard its name mentioned, his disgust as well as his wonder was kindled.

"Side-meat?" he repeated, with a rising inflection. "Why, I thought we were going to live on game, — birds and buffalo and the like! Side-meat? Well, that makes me sick!"

The two men laughed, and Mr. Howell said, —

"Why, Sandy, you are bent on hunting and not on buckling down to farm work. How do you suppose we are going to live if we have nothing to eat but wild game that we kill, and breadstuffs and vegetables that we buy?"

Sandy had thought that they might be able to step out into the woods or prairie, between times, as it were, and knock down a few head of game when the day's work was done, or had not begun. When he said as much, the two heads of the party laughed again, and even Charlie joined in the glee.

"My dear infant," said his father, seriously, but with a twinkle in his eye, "game is not so plenty anywhere as that; and if it were, we should soon

tire of it. Now side-meat 'sticks to the ribs,' as the people hereabouts will tell you, and it is the best thing to fall back upon when fresh meat fails. We can't get along without it, and that is a fact; hey, Charlie?"

The rest of the party saw the wisdom of this suggestion, and Sandy was obliged to give up, then and there, his glowing views of a land so teeming with game that one had only to go out with a rifle, or even a club, and knock it over. But he mischievously insisted that if side-meat did "stick to the ribs," as the Missourians declared, they did not eat much of it, for, as a rule, the people whom they met were a very lank and slab-sided lot. "Clay-eaters," their new acquaintance from Quindaro said they were.

"Clay-eaters?" asked Charlie, with a puzzled look. "They are clayey-looking in the face. But it can't be possible that they actually eat clay?"

"Well, they do, and I have seen them chewing it. There is a fine, soft clay found in these parts, and more especially south of here; it has a greasy feeling, as if it was a fatty substance, and the natives eat it just as they would candy. Why, I should think that it would form a sand-bar inside of a man, after awhile; but they take to it just as naturally!"

"If I have got to choose between side-meat and clay for a regular diet," said Sandy, "give me side-meat every time."

That night, having made their plans to avoid the prying eyes of the border-State men, who in great numbers were now coming in, well-armed and looking somewhat grimly at the free-State men, the little party crossed the river. Ten dollars, good United States money, was demanded by the ferryman as the price of their passage; it looked like robbery, but there was no other way of getting over the river and into the Promised Land; so it was paid, with many a wrench of the patience of the indignant immigrants; and they pitched their tent that night under the stars and slept soundly on the soil of "bleeding Kansas."

Bright and early next morning, the boys were up and stirring, for now was to begin their camp life. Hitherto, they had slept in their tent, but had taken their meals at the farm-houses and small taverns of the country through which they had passed. They would find few such conveniences in the new country into which they had come, and they had been warned that in Kansas the rule was "every man for himself."

They made sad work with their first breakfast in camp. Oscar had taken a few lessons in cooking from his mother, before leaving home, and the two men had had some experience in that line of duty when out on hunting expeditions in Illinois, years before. So they managed to make coffee, fry slices of side-meat, and bake a hoe-cake of Indian-corn meal. "Hog and hominy," said Sandy's

father. "That's the diet of the country, and that is what we shall come to, and we might as well take it first as last."

"There's worse provender than this, where there's none," said Mr. Bryant, cheerfully; "and before we get through we shall be hungry more than once for hog and hominy."

It was an enlivening sight that greeted the eyes of the newcomers as they looked around upon the flat prairie that stretched along the river-side. The tents of the immigrants glistened in the rising sun. The smoke of many camp-fires arose on the summer air. Groups of men were busily making preparations for their long tramp westward, and, here and there, women and children were gathered around the white-topped wagons, taking their early breakfast or getting ready for the day's march. Here, too, could now be seen the rough and surly-looking border men who were on the way to points along the route that were to be occupied by them before too many free-State men should come in. An election of some sort, the newcomers could not exactly make out what, was to take place in a day or two, and the Missourians whom they had seen flocking into Parkville were ready to vote as soon as they got into the Territory.

Breakfast over, the boys sauntered around through the camps, viewing the novel sights with vast amusement. It was like a militia muster at home, except that the only soldier element they

saw was the band of rough-looking and rough-talking men who were bound to vote and fight for slavery. They swaggered about with big pistols girt at their hips and rifles over their shoulders, full-bearded and swarthy, each one a captain apparently, all without much organization, but very serious in their intention to vote and to fight. It really seemed as if they had reached the fighting-ground at last.

"See here, daddy," said Oscar, as he came in from the camps when the Dixon caravan was ready to move; "see what I found in this newspaper. It is a piece of poetry, and a mighty fine piece, too"; and the boy began to read some lines beginning thus, —

> "We cross the prairie as of old
> The pilgrims crossed the sea,
> To make the West, as they the East,
> The homestead of the free!"

"Oh, well; I can't bother about poetry, now," said the father, hastily. "I have some prose work on hand, just about this time. I'm trying to drive these pesky cattle, and I don't make a very good fist at it. Your Uncle Aleck has gone on ahead, and left me to manage the team; but it's new business to me."

"John G. Whittier is the name at the top of these verses. I've heard of him. He's a regular-built poet, — lives somewhere down East."

"I can't help that, sonny; get on the other side

of those steers, and see if you can't gee them around. Dear, dear, they're dreadful obstinate creatures!"

That night, however, when they were comfortably and safely camped in Quindaro, amid the live-oaks and the tall sycamores that embowered the pretty little town, Oscar again brought the newspaper to his father, and, with kindling eyes, said, —

"Read it out, daddy; read the piece. Why, it was written just for us, I do declare. It is called 'The Kansas Emigrants.' We are Kansas Emigrants, aren't we?"

The father smiled kindly as he looked at the flushed face and bright eyes of his boy, and took from him the paper folded to show the verses. As he read, his eyes, too, flashed and his lip trembled.

"Listen to this!" he cried. "Listen to this! It is like a trumpet call!" And with a voice quivering with emotion, he began the poem, —

> "We cross the prairie as of old
> The pilgrims crossed the sea,
> To make the West, as they the East,
> The homestead of the free!"

"Something has got into my eyes," said Mr. Howell, as the last stanza was read. "Great Scott! though, how that does stir a man's blood!" And he furtively wiped the moisture from his eyes. It was time to put out the light and go to sleep,

for the night now was well advanced. But Mr. Bryant, thoroughly aroused, read and re-read the lines aloud.

"Sing 'em," said his brother-in-law, jokingly. Bryant was a good singer, and he at once tuned up with a fine baritone voice, recalling a familiar tune that fitted the measure of the poem.

"Oh, come now, Uncle Charlie," cried Sandy, from his blankets in the corner of the tent, "that's 'Old Dundee.' Can't you give us something lively? Something not quite so solemn?"

"Not so solemn, my laddie? Don't you know that this is a solemn age we are in, and a very solemn business we are on? You'll think so before we get out of this Territory, or I am greatly mistaken."

"Sandy'll think it's solemn, when he has to trot over a piece of newly broken prairie, carrying a pouchful of seed corn, dropping five grains in each sod," said his father, laughing, as he blew out the candle.

"It's a good song; a bully good song," murmured the boy, turning over to sleep. "But it ought to be sung to something with more of a rig-a-jig-jig to it." So saying, he was off to the land of dreams.

CHAPTER IV.

AMONG THE DELAWARES.

QUINDARO was a straggling but pretty little town built among the groves of the west bank of the Missouri. Here the emigrants found a store or trading-post, well supplied with the goods they needed, staple articles of food and the heavier farming-tools being the first required. The boys looked curiously at the big breaking-plough that was to be of so much consequence to them in their new life and labors. The prairies around their Illinois home had been long broken up when they were old enough to take notice of such things; and as they were town boys, they had never had their attention called to the implements of a prairie farm.

"It looks like a plough that has been sat down on and flattened out," was Oscar's remark, after they had looked the thing over very critically. It had a long and massive beam, or body, and big, strong handles, suggestive of hard work to be done with it. "The nose," as Sandy called the point of the share, was long, flat, and as sharp as a knife. It was this thin and knife-like point that was to cut into the virgin turf of the prairie, and, as the sod

was cut, the share was to turn it over, bottom side up, while the great, heavy implement was drawn along by the oxen.

"But the sod is so thick and tough," said Oscar, "I don't see how the oxen can drag the thing through. Will our three yoke of cattle do it?"

The two men looked at each other and smiled. This had been a subject of much anxious thought with them. They had been told that they would have difficulty in breaking up the prairie with three yoke of oxen; they should have four yoke, certainly. So when Mr. Howell explained that they must get another yoke and then rely on their being able to "change work" with some of their neighbors who might have cattle, the boys laughed outright.

"Neighbors!" cried Sandy. "Why, I didn't suppose we should have any neighbors within five or ten miles. Did you, Oscar? I was in hopes we wouldn't have neighbors to plague us with their pigs and chickens, and their running in to borrow a cupful of molasses, or last week's newspaper. Neighbors!" and the boy's brown face wore an expression of disgust.

"Don't you worry about neighbors, Sandy," said his uncle. "Even if we have any within five miles of us, we shall do well. But if there is to be any fighting, we shall want neighbors to join forces with us, and we shall find them handy, anyhow, in case of sickness or trouble. We cannot get along

in a new country like this without neighbors, and you bear that in mind, Master Sandy."

The two leaders of this little flock had been asking about the prospects for taking up claims along the Kansas River, or the Kaw, as that stream was then generally called. To their great dismay, they had found that there was very little vacant land to be had anywhere near the river. They would have to push on still further westward if they wished to find good land ready for the pre-emptor. Rumors of fighting and violence came from the new city of Lawrence, the chief settlement of the free-State men, on the Kaw; and at Grasshopper Falls, still further to the west, the most desirable land was already taken up, and there were wild stories of a raid on that locality being planned by bands of Border Ruffians. They were in a state of doubt and uncertainty.

"There she is! There she is!" said Charlie, in a loud whisper, looking in the direction of a tall, unpainted building that stood among the trees that embowered the little settlement. Every one looked and saw a young lady tripping along through the hazel brush that still covered the ground. She was rather stylishly dressed, "citified," Oscar said; she swung a beaded work-bag as she walked.

"Who is it? Who is it?" asked Oscar, breathlessly. She was the first well-dressed young lady he had seen since leaving Iowa.

"Sh-h-h-h!" whispered Charlie. "That's Quindaro. A young fellow pointed her out to me last night, just after we drove into the settlement. She lives with her folks in that tall, thin house up there. I have been looking for her to come out. See, she's just going into the post-office now."

"Quindaro!" exclaimed Sandy. "Why, I thought Quindaro was a squaw."

"She's a full-blooded Delaware Indian girl, that's what she is, and she was educated somewhere East in the States; and this town is named for her. She owns all the land around here, and is the belle of the place."

"She's got on hoop-skirts, too," said Oscar. "Just think of an Indian girl — a squaw — wearing hoops, will you?" For all this happened, my young reader must remember, when women's fashions were very different from what they now are. Quindaro — that is to say, the young Indian lady of that time — was dressed in the height of fashion, but not in any way obtrusively. Charlie, following with his eyes the young girl's figure, as she came out of the post-office and went across the ravine that divided the settlement into two equal parts, mirthfully said, "And only think! That is a full-blooded Delaware Indian girl!"

But, their curiosity satisfied, the boys were evidently disappointed with their first view of Indian civilization. There were no blanketed Indians loafing around in the sun and sleeping under the

shelter of the underbrush, as they had been taught to expect to see them. Outside of the settlement, men were ploughing and planting, breaking prairie, and building cabins; and while our party were looking about them, a party of Delawares drove into town with several ox-carts to carry away the purchases that one of their number had already made. It was bewildering to boys who had been brought up on stories of Black Hawk, the Prophet, and the Sacs and Foxes of Illinois and Wisconsin. A Delaware Indian, clad in the ordinary garb of a Western farmer and driving a yoke of oxen, and employing the same curious lingo used by the white farmers, was not a picturesque object.

"I allow that sixty dollars is a big price to pay for a yoke of cattle," said Mr. Howell, anxiously. He was greatly concerned about the new purchase that must be made here, according to the latest information. "We might have got them for two-thirds of that money back in Illinois. And you know that Iowa chap only reckoned the price of these at forty-five, when we traded with him at Jonesville."

"It's no use worrying about that now, Aleck," said his brother-in-law. "I know you thought then that we should need four yoke for breaking the prairie; but, then, you weren't certain about it, and none of the rest of us ever had any sod-ploughing to do."

"No, none of us," said Sandy, with delightful

gravity; at which everybody smiled. One would have thought that Sandy was a veteran in everything but farming.

"I met a man this morning, while I was prowling around the settlement," said Charlie, "who said that there was plenty of vacant land, of first-rate quality, up around Manhattan. Where's that, father — do you know? *He* didn't, but some other man, one of the New England Society fellows, told him so."

But nobody knew where Manhattan was. This was the first time they had ever heard of the place. The cattle question was first to be disposed of, however, and as soon as the party had finished their breakfast, the two men and Charlie sallied out through the settlement to look up a bargain. Oscar and Sandy were left in the camp to wash the dishes and "clean up," a duty which both of them despised with a hearty hatred.

"If there's anything I just fairly abominate, it's washing dishes," said Sandy, seating himself on the wagon-tongue and discontentedly eyeing a huge tin pan filled with tin plates and cups, steaming in the hot water that Oscar had poured over them from the camp-kettle.

"Well, that's part of the play," answered Oscar, pleasantly. "It isn't boy's work, let alone man's work, to be cooking and washing dishes. I wonder what mother would think to see us at it?" And a suspicious moisture gathered in the lad's eyes,

as a vision of his mother's tidy kitchen in far-off Illinois rose before his mind. Sandy looked very solemn.

"But, as daddy says, it's no use worrying about things you can't help," continued the cheerful Oscar; "so here goes, Sandy. You wash, and I'll dry 'em." And the two boys went on with their disagreeable work so heartily that they soon had it out of the way; Sandy remarking as they finished it, that, for his part, he did not like the business at all, but he did not think it fair that they two, who could not do the heavy work, should grumble over that they could do. "The worst of it is," he added, "we've got to look forward to months and months of this sort of thing. Father and Uncle Charlie say that we cannot have the rest of the family come out until we have a house to put them in — a log-cabin, they mean, of course; and Uncle Charlie says that we may not get them out until another spring. I don't believe he will be willing for them to come out until he knows whether the Territory is to be slave or free. Do you, Oscar?"

"No, indeed," said Oscar. "Between you and me, Sandy, I don't want to go back to Illinois again, for anything; but I guess father will make up his mind about staying only when we find out if there is to be a free-State government or not. Dear me, why can't the Missourians keep out of here and let us alone?"

"It's a free country," answered Sandy, senten-

tiously. "That's what Uncle Charlie is always saying. The Missourians have just as good a right here as we have."

"But they have no right to be bringing in their slavery with 'em," replied the other. "That wouldn't be a free country, would it, with one man owning another man? Not much."

"That's beyond me, Oscar. I suppose it's a free country only for the white man to come to. But I haven't any politics in me. Hullo! there comes the rest of us driving a yoke of oxen. Well, on my word, they have been quick about it. Uncle Charlie is a master hand at hurrying things, I will say," added Sandy, admiringly. "He's done all the trading, I'll be bound!"

"Fifty-five dollars," replied Bryant, to the boys' eager inquiry as to the price paid for the yoke of oxen. "Fifty-five dollars, and not so very dear, after all, considering that there are more people who want to buy than there are who want to sell."

"And now we are about ready to start; only a few more provisions to lay in. Suppose we get away by to-morrow morning?"

"Oh, that's out of the question, Uncle Aleck," said Oscar. "What makes you in such a hurry? Why, you have all along said we need not get away from here for a week yet, if we did not want to; the grass hasn't fairly started yet, and we cannot drive far without feed for the cattle. Four yoke, too," he added proudly.

"The fact is, Oscar," said his father, lowering his voice and looking around as if to see whether anybody was within hearing distance, "we have heard this morning that there was a raid on this place threatened from Kansas City, over the border. This is the free-State headquarters in this part of the country, and it has got about that the store here is owned and run by the New England Emigrant Aid Society. So they are threatening to raid the place, burn the settlement, run off the stock, and loot the settlers. I should like to have a company of resolute men to defend the place," and Mr. Bryant's eyes flashed; "but this is not our home, nor our fight, and I'm willing to 'light out' right off, or as soon as we get ready."

"Will they come to-night, do you think?" asked Sandy, and his big blue eyes looked very big indeed. "Because we can't get off until we have loaded the wagon and fixed the wheels; you said they must be greased before we travelled another mile, you know."

It was agreed, however, that there was no immediate danger of the raid — certainly not that night; but all felt that it was the part of prudence to be ready to start at once; the sooner, the better. When the boys went to their blankets that night, they whispered to each other that the camp might be raided and so they should be ready for any assault that might come. Sandy put his "pepper-box" under his pillow, and Charlie had his trusty

rifle within reach. Oscar carried a double-barrelled shot-gun of which he was very proud, and that weapon, loaded with buckshot, was laid carefully by the side of his blankets. The two elders of the party "slept with one eye open," as they phrased it. But there was no alarm through the night, except once when Mr. Howell got up and went out to see how the cattle were getting on. He found that one of the sentinels who had been set by the Quindaro Company in consequence of the scare, had dropped asleep on the wagon-tongue of the Dixon party. Shaking him gently, he awoke the sleeping sentinel, who at once bawled, "Don't shoot!" to the great consternation of the nearest campers, who came flying out of their blankets to see what was the matter. When explanations had been made, all laughed, stretched themselves, and then went to bed again to dream of Missouri raiders.

The sun was well up in the sky next day, when the emigrants, having completed their purchases, yoked their oxen and drove up through the settlement and ascended the rolling swale of land that lay beyond the groves skirting the river. Here were camps of other emigrants who had moved out of Quindaro before them, or had come down from the point on the Missouri opposite Parkville, in order to get on to the road that led westward and south of the Kaw. It was a beautifully wooded country. When the lads admired the trees, Mr.

Howell somewhat contemptuously said: "Not much good, chiefly black-jacks and scrub-oaks"; but the woods were pleasant to drive through, and when they came upon scattered farms and plantations with comfortable log-cabins set in the midst of cultivated fields, the admiration of the party was excited.

"Only look, Uncle Charlie," cried Sandy, "there's a real flower-garden full of hollyhocks and marigolds; and there's a rose-bush climbing over that log-cabin!" It was too early to distinguish one flower from another by its blooms, but Sandy's sharp eyes had detected the leaves of the old-fashioned flowers that he loved so well, which he knew were only just planted in the farther northern air of their home in Illinois. It was a pleasant-looking Kansas home, and Sandy wondered how it happened that this cosey living-place had grown up so quickly in this new Territory. It looked as if it were many years old, he said.

"We are still on the Delaware Indian reservation," replied his uncle. "The Government has given the tribe a big tract of land here and away up to the Kaw. They've been here for years, and they are good farmers, I should say, judging from the looks of things hereabouts."

Just then, as if to explain matters, a decent-looking man, dressed in the rude fashion of the frontier, but in civilized clothes, came out of the cabin, and, pipe in mouth, stared not unkindly at the passing wagon and its party.

"Howdy," he civilly replied to a friendly greeting from Mr. Howell. The boys knew that "How" was a customary salutation among Indians, but "Howdy" struck them as being comic; Sandy laughed as he turned away his face. Mr. Bryant lingered while the slow-moving oxen plodded their way along the road, and the boys, too, halted to hear what the dark-skinned man had to say. But the Indian — for he was a "civilized" Delaware — was a man of very few words. In answer to Mr. Bryant's questions, he said he was one of the chiefs of the tribe; he had been to Washington to settle the terms of an agreement with the Government; and he had lived in that cabin six years, and on the present reservation ever since it was established.

All this information came out reluctantly, and with as little use of vital breath as possible. When they had moved on out of earshot, Oscar expressed his decided opinion that that settler was no more like James Fenimore Cooper's Indians than the lovely Quindaro appeared to be. "Why, did you notice, father," he continued, "that he actually had on high-heeled boots? Think of that! An Indian with high-heeled boots! Why, in Cooper's novels they wear moccasins, and some of them go barefoot. These Indians are not worthy of the name."

"You will see more of the same sort before we get to the river," said his father. "They have a

meeting-house up yonder, by the fork of the road, I am told. And, seeing that this is our first day out of camp on the last stage of our journey, suppose we stop for dinner at Indian John's, Aleck? It will be a change from camp-fare, and they say that John keeps a good table."

To the delight of the lads, it was agreed that they should make the halt as suggested, and noon found them at a very large and comfortable "double cabin," as these peculiar structures are called. Two log-cabins are built, end to end, with one roof covering the two. The passage between them is floored over, and affords an open shelter from rain and sun, and in hot weather is the pleasantest place about the establishment. Indian John's cabin was built of hewn logs, nicely chinked in with slivers, and daubed with clay to keep out the wintry blasts. As is the manner of the country, one of the cabins was used for the rooms of the family, while the dining-room and kitchen were in the other end of the structure. Indian John regularly furnished dinner to the stage passengers going westward from Quindaro; for a public conveyance, a "mud-wagon," as it was called, had been put on this part of the road.

"What a tuck-out I had!" said Sandy, after a very bountiful and well-cooked dinner had been disposed of by the party. "And who would have supposed we should ever sit down to an Indian's table and eat fried chicken, ham and eggs, and

corn-dodger, from a regular set of blue-and-white plates, and drink good coffee from crockery cups? It just beats Father Dixon's Indian stories all to pieces."

Oscar and Charlie, however, were disposed to think very lightly of this sort of Indian civilization. Oscar said: "If these red men were either one thing or the other, I wouldn't mind it. But they have shed the gaudy trappings of the wild Indian, and their new clothes do not fit very well. As Grandfather Bryant used to say, they are neither fish nor flesh, nor good red herring. They are a mighty uninteresting lot."

"Well, they are on the way to a better state of things than they have known, anyhow," said Charlie. "The next generation will see them higher up, I guess. But I must say that these farms don't look very thrifty, somehow. Indians are a lazy lot; they don't like work. Did you notice how all those big fellows at dinner sat down with us and the stage passengers, and the poor women had to wait on everybody? That's Indian."

Uncle Charlie laughed, and said that the boys had expected to find civilized Indians waiting on the table, decked out with paint and feathers, and wearing deerskin leggings and such like.

"Wait until we get out on the frontier," said he, "and then you will see wild Indians, perhaps, or 'blanket Indians,' anyhow."

"Blanket Indians?" said Sandy, with an interrogation point in his face.

"Yes; that's what the roving and unsettled bands are called by white folks. Those that are on reservations and earning their own living, or a part of it, — for the Government helps them out considerably, — are called town Indians; those that live in wigwams, or tepees, and rove from place to place, subsisting on what they can catch, are blanket Indians. They tell me that there are wild Indians out on the western frontier. But they are not hostile; at least, they were not, at last accounts. The Cheyennes have been rather uneasy, they say, since the white settlers began to pour into the country. Just now I am more concerned about the white Missourians than I am about the red aborigines."

They were still on the Delaware reservation when they camped that evening, and the boys went into the woods to gather fuel for their fire.

They had not gone far, when Sandy gave a wild whoop of alarm, jumping about six feet backward as he yelled, "A rattlesnake!" Sure enough, an immense snake was sliding out from under a mass of brush that the boy had disturbed as he gathered an armful of dry branches and twigs. Dropping his burden, Sandy shouted, "Kill him! Kill him, quick!"

The reptile was about five feet long, very thick, and of a dark mottled color. Instantly, each lad had armed himself with a big stick and had attacked him. The snake, stopped in his attempt to get

away, turned, and opening his ugly-looking mouth, made a curious blowing noise, half a hiss and half a cough, as Charlie afterward described it.

"Take care, Sandy! He'll spring at you, and bite you in the face! See! He's getting ready to spring!"

And, indeed, the creature, frightened, and surrounded by the agile, jumping boys, each armed with a club, seemed ready to defend his life with the best weapons at his command. The boys, excited and alarmed, were afraid to come near the snake, and were dancing about, waiting for a chance to strike, when they were startled by a shot from behind them, and the snake, making one more effort to turn on himself, shuddered and fell dead.

Mr. Howell, hearing the shouting of the boys, had run out of the camp, and with a well-directed rifle shot had laid low the reptile.

"It's only a blow-snake," he said, taking the creature by the tail and holding it up to view. "He's harmless. Well! Of course a dead snake is harmless, but when he was alive he was not the sort of critter to be afraid of. I thought you had encountered a bear, at the very least, by the racket you made."

"He's a big fellow, anyhow," said Oscar, giving the snake a kick, "and Sandy said he was a rattlesnake. I saw a rattler once when we lived in Dixon. Billy Everett and I found him down on the bluff below the railroad; and he was spotted all over. Besides, this fellow hasn't any rattles."

"The boys have been having a lesson in natural history, Charlie," said Mr. Howell to his brother-in-law, as they returned with him to camp, loaded with firewood; Sandy, boy-like, dragging the dead blow-snake after him.

CHAPTER V.

TIDINGS FROM THE FRONT.

SUPPER was over, a camp-fire built (for the emigrants did their cooking by a small camp-stove, and sat by the light of a fire on the ground), when out of the darkness came sounds of advancing teams. Oscar was playing his violin, trying to pick out a tune for the better singing of Whittier's song of the Kansas Emigrants. His father raised his hand to command silence. "That's a Yankee teamster, I'll be bound," he said, as the "Woh-hysh! Woh-haw!" of the coming party fell on his ear. "No Missourian ever talks to his cattle like that."

As he spoke, a long, low emigrant wagon, or "prairie schooner," drawn by three yoke of dun-colored oxen, toiled up the road. In the wagon was a faded-looking woman with two small children clinging to her. Odds and ends of household furniture showed themselves over her head from within the wagon, and strapped on behind was a coop of fowls, from which came a melancholy cackle, as if the hens and chickens were weary of their long journey. A man dressed in butternut-colored homespun drove the oxen, and a boy about

ten years old trudged behind the driver. In the darkness behind these tramped a small herd of cows and oxen driven by two other men, and a lad about the age of Oscar Bryant. The new arrivals paused in the road, surveyed our friends from Illinois, stopped the herd of cattle, and then the man who was driving the wagon said, with an unmistakable New England twang, "Friends?"

"Friends, most assuredly," said Mr. Bryant, with a smile. "I guess you have been having hard luck, you appear to be so suspicious."

"Well, we have, and that's a fact. But we're main glad to be able to camp among friends. Jotham, unyoke the cattle after you have driven them into the timber a piece." He assisted the woman and children to get down from the wagon, and one of the cattle-drivers coming up, drove the team into the woods a short distance, and the tired oxen were soon lying down among the underbrush.

"Well, yes, we *have* had a pretty hard time getting here. We are the last free-State men allowed over the ferry at Parkville. Where be you from?"

"We are from Lee County, Illinois," replied Mr. Bryant. "We came in by the way of Parkville, too, a day or two ago; but we stopped at Quindaro. Did you come direct from Parkville?"

"Yes," replied the man. "We came up the river in the first place, on the steamboat 'Black Eagle,' and when we got to Leavenworth, a big crowd of Borderers, seeing us and another lot of

free-State men on the boat, refused to let us land. We had to go down the river again. The captain of the boat kicked up a great fuss about it, and wanted to put us ashore on the other side of the river; but the Missouri men wouldn't have it. They put a 'committee,' as they called the two men, on board the steamboat, and they made the skipper take us down the river."

"How far down did you go?" asked Bryant, his face reddening with anger.

"Well, we told the committee that we came through Ioway, and that to Ioway we must go; so they rather let up on us, and set us ashore just opposite Wyandotte. I was mighty 'fraid they'd make us swear we wouldn't go back into Kansas some other way; but they didn't, and so we stivered along the road eastwards after they set us ashore, and then we fetched a half-circle around and got into Parkville."

"I shouldn't wonder if you bought those clothes that you have got on at Parkville," said Mr. Howell, with a smile.

"You guess about right," said the sad-colored stranger. "A very nice sort of a man we met at the fork of the road, as you turn off to go to Parkville from the river road, told me that my clothes were too Yankee. I wore 'em all the way from Woburn, Massachusetts, where we came from, and I hated to give 'em up. But discretion is better than valor, I have heern tell; so I made the trade, and here I am."

"We had no difficulty getting across at Parkville," said Mr. Bryant, "except that we did have to go over in the night in a sneaking fashion that I did not like."

"Well," answered the stranger, "as a special favor, they let us across, seeing that we had had such hard luck. That's a nice-looking fiddle you've got there, sonny," he abruptly interjected, as he took Oscar's violin from his unwilling hand. "I used to play the fiddle once, myself," he added. Then, drawing the bow over the strings in a light and artistic manner, he began to play "Bonnie Doon."

"Come, John," his wife said wearily, "it's time the children were under cover. Let go the fiddle until we've had supper."

John reluctantly handed back the violin, and the newcomers were soon in the midst of their preparations for the night's rest. Later on in the evening, John Clark, as the head of the party introduced himself, came over to the Dixon camp, and gave them all the news. Clark was one of those who had been helped by the New England Emigrant Aid Society, an organization with headquarters in the Eastern States, and with agents in the West. He had been fitted out at Council Bluffs, Iowa, but for some unexplained reason had wandered down as far south as Kansas City, and there had boarded the "Black Eagle" with his family and outfit. One of the two men with him

was his brother; the other was a neighbor who had cast in his lot with him. The tall lad was John Clark's nephew.

In one way or another, Clark had managed to pick up much gossip about the country and what was going on. At Tecumseh, where they would be due in a day or two if they continued on this road, an election for county officers was to be held soon, and the Missourians were bound to get in there and carry the election. Clark thought they had better not go straight forward into danger. They could turn off, and go west by way of Topeka.

"Why, that would be worse than going to Tecumseh," interjected Charlie, who had modestly kept out of the discussion. "Topeka is the free-State capital, and they say that there is sure to be a big battle there, sooner or later."

But Mr. Bryant resolved that he would go west by the way of Tecumseh, no matter if fifty thousand Borderers were encamped there. He asked the stranger if he had in view any definite point; to which Clark replied that he had been thinking of going up the Little Blue; he had heard that there was plenty of good vacant land there, and the land office would open soon. He had intended, he said, to go to Manhattan, and start from there; but since they had been so cowardly as to change the name of the place, he had "rather soured on it."

"Manhattan?" exclaimed Charlie, eagerly. "Where is that place? We have asked a good many people, but nobody can tell us."

"Good reason why; they've gone and changed the name. It used to be Boston, but the settlers around there were largely from Missouri. The company were Eastern men, and when they settled on the name of Boston, it got around that they were all abolitionists; and so they changed it to Manhattan. Why they didn't call it New York, and be done with it, is more than I can tell. But it was Boston, and it is Manhattan; and that's all I want to know about *that* place."

Mr. Bryant was equally sure that he did not want to have anything to do with a place that had changed its name through fear of anybody or anything.

Next day there was a general changing of minds, however. It was Sunday, and the emigrants, a God-fearing and reverent lot of people, did not move out of camp. Others had come in during the night, for this was a famous camping-place, well known throughout all the region. Here were wood, water, and grass, the three requisites for campers, as they had already found. The country was undulating, interlaced with creeks; and groves of black-jack, oak, and cottonwood were here and there broken by open glades that would be smiling fields some day, but were now wild native grasses.

There was a preacher in the camp, a good man

from New England, who preached about the Pilgrim's Progress through the world, and the trials he meets by the way. Oscar pulled his father's sleeve, and asked why he did not ask the preacher to give out "The Kansas Emigrant's Song" as a hymn. Mr. Bryant smiled, and whispered that it was hardly likely that the lines would be considered just the thing for a religious service. But after the preaching was over, and the little company was breaking up, he told the preacher what Oscar had said. The minister's eyes sparkled, and he replied, "What? Have you that beautiful hymn? Let us have it now and here. Nothing could be better for this day and this time."

Oscar, blushing with excitement and native modesty, was put up high on the stump of a tree, and, violin in hand, "raised the tune." It was grand old "Dundee." Almost everybody seemed to know the words of Whittier's poem, and beneath the blue Kansas sky, amid the groves of Kansas trees, the sturdy, hardy men and the few pale women joyfully, almost tearfully, sang, —

We crossed the prairie, as of old
The pilgrims crossed the sea,
To make the West, as they the East,
The homestead of the free!

We go to rear a wall of men
On freedom's Southern line,
And plant beside the cotton-tree
The rugged Northern pine!

We're flowing from our native hills
As our free rivers flow;
The blessing of our Mother-land
Is on us as we go.

We go to plant her common schools
On distant prairie swells,
And give the Sabbaths of the wild
The music of her bells.

Upbearing, like the Ark of old,
The Bible in our van,
We go to test the truth of God
Against the fraud of man.

No pause, nor rest, save where the streams
That feed the Kansas run,
Save where our pilgrim gonfalon
Shall flout the setting sun!

We'll tread the prairie as of old
Our fathers sailed the sea,
And make the West, as they the East,
The homestead of the free!

"It was good to be there," said Alexander Howell, his hand resting lovingly on Oscar's shoulder, as they went back to camp. But Oscar's father said never a word. His face was turned to the westward, where the sunlight was fading behind the hills of the far-off frontier of the Promised Land.

The general opinion gathered that day was that they who wanted to fight for freedom might better go to Lawrence, or to Topeka. Those who were

bent on finding homes for themselves and little ones should press on further to the west, where there was land in plenty to be had for the asking, or, rather, for the pre-empting. So, when Monday morning came, wet, murky, and depressing, Bryant surrendered to the counsels of his brother-in-law and the unspoken wish of the boys, and agreed to go on to the newly-surveyed lands on the tributaries of the Kaw. They had heard good reports of the region lying westward of Manhattan and Fort Riley. The town that had changed its name was laid out at the confluence of the Kaw and the Big Blue. Fort Riley was some eighteen or twenty miles to the westward, near the junction of the streams that form the Kaw, known as Smoky Hill Fork and the Republican Fork. On one or the other of these forks, the valleys of which were said to be fertile and beautiful beyond description, the emigrants would find a home. So, braced and inspired by the consciousness of having a definite and settled plan, the Dixon party set forth on Monday morning, through the rain and mist, with faces to the westward.

CHAPTER VI.

WESTWARD HO!

THE following two or three days were wet and uncomfortable. Rain fell in torrents at times, and when it did not rain the ground was steamy, and the emigrants had a hard time to find spots dry enough on which to make up their beds at night. This was no holiday journey, and the boys, too proud to murmur, exchanged significant nods and winks when they found themselves overtaken by the discomforts of camping and travelling in the storm. For the most part, they kept in camp during the heaviest of the rain. They found that the yokes of the oxen chafed the poor animals' necks when wet.

And then the mud! Nobody had ever seen such mud, they thought, not even on the black and greasy fat lands of an Illinois prairie. Sometimes the wagon sunk in the road, cut up by innumerable wheels, so that the hubs of their wheels were almost even with the surface, and it was with the greatest difficulty that their four yoke of oxen dragged the wagon from its oozy bed. At times, too, they were obliged to unhitch their team and

help out of a mud-hole some other less fortunate brother wayfarer, whose team was not so powerful as their own.

One unlucky day, fording a narrow creek with steep banks, they had safely got across, when they encountered a slippery incline up which the oxen could not climb; it was "as slippery as a glare of ice," Charlie said, and the struggling cattle sank nearly to their knees in their frantic efforts to reach the top of the bank. The wagon had been "blocked up," that is to say, the wagon-box raised in its frame or bed above the axles, with blocks driven underneath, to lift it above the level of the stream. As the vehicle was dragged out of the creek, the leading yoke of cattle struggling up the bank and then slipping back again, the whole team of oxen suddenly became panic-stricken, as it were, and rushed back to the creek in wild confusion. The wagon twisted upon itself, and cramped together, creaked, groaned, toppled, and fell over in a heap, its contents being shot out before and behind into the mud and water.

"Great Scott!" yelled Sandy. "Let me stop those cattle!" Whereupon the boy dashed through the water, and, running around the hinder end of the wagon, he attempted to head off the cattle. But the animals, having gone as far as they could without breaking their chains or the wagon-tongue, which fortunately held, stood sullenly by the side of the wreck they had made, panting with their exertions.

"Here is a mess!" said his father; but, without more words, he unhitched the oxen and drove them up the bank. The rest of the party hastily picked up the articles that were drifting about, or were lodged in the mud of the creek. It was a sorry sight, and the boys forgot, in the excitement of the moment, the discomforts and annoyances of their previous experiences. This was a real misfortune.

But while Oscar and Sandy were excitedly discussing what was next to be done, Mr. Howell took charge of things; the wagon was righted, and a party of emigrants, camped in a grove of cottonwoods just above the ford, came down with ready offers of help. Eight yoke of cattle instead of four were now hitched to the wagon, and, to use the expressive language of the West, the outfit was "snaked" out of the hole in double-quick time.

"Ho, ho, ho! Uncle Charlie," laughed Sandy, "you look as if you had been dragged through a slough. You are just painted with mud from top to toe. Well, I never did see such a looking scarecrow!"

"It's lucky you haven't any looking-glass here, young Impudence. If you could see your mother's boy now, you wouldn't know him. Talk about looks! Take a look at the youngster, mates," said Uncle Charlie, bursting into a laugh. A general roar followed the look, for Sandy's appearance

was indescribable. In his wild rush through the waters of the creek, he had covered himself from head to foot, and the mud from the wagon had painted his face a brilliant brown; for there is more or less of red oxide of iron in the mud of Kansas creeks.

It was a doleful party that pitched its tent that night on the banks of Soldier Creek and attempted to dry clothes and provisions by the feeble heat of a little sheet-iron stove. Only Sandy, the irrepressible and unconquerable Sandy, preserved his good temper through the trying experience. "It is a part of the play," he said, "and anybody who thinks that crossing the prairie, 'as of old the pilgrims crossed the sea,' is a Sunday-school picnic, might better try it with the Dixon emigrants; that's all."

But, after a very moist and disagreeable night, the sky cleared in the morning. Oscar was out early, looking at the sky; and when he shouted "Westward ho!" with a stentorian voice, everybody came tumbling out to see what was the matter. A long line of white-topped wagons with four yoke of oxen to each, eleven teams all told, was stringing its way along the muddy road in which the red sun was reflected in pools of red liquid mud. The wagons were overflowing with small children; coops of fowls swung from behind, and a general air of thriftiness seemed to be characteristic of the company.

"Which way are you bound?" asked Oscar, cheerily.

"Up the Smoky Hill Fork," replied one of the ox-drivers. "Solomon's Fork, perhaps, but somewhere in that region, anyway."

One of the company lingered behind to see what manner of people these were who were so comfortably camped out in a wall-tent. When he had satisfied his curiosity, he explained that his companions had come from northern Ohio, and were bound to lay out a town of their own in the Smoky Hill region. Oscar, who listened while his father drew this information from the stranger, recalled the fact that the Smoky Hill and the Republican Forks were the branches of the Kaw. Solomon's Fork, he now learned, was one of the tributaries of the Smoky Hill, nearer to the Republican Fork than to the main stream. So he said to his father, when the Ohio man had passed on: "If they settle on Solomon's Fork, won't they be neighbors of ours, daddy?"

Mr. Bryant took out a little map of the Territory that he had in his knapsack, and, after some study, made up his mind that the newcomers would not be "neighbors enough to hurt," if they came no nearer the Republican than Solomon's Fork. About thirty-five miles west and south of Fort Riley, which is at the junction of the Smoky Hill and the Republican, Solomon's Fork branches off to the northwest. Settlers anywhere along

that line would not be nearer the other fork than eighteen or twenty miles at the nearest. Charlie and Sandy agreed with Oscar that it was quite as near as desirable neighbors should be. The lads were already learning something of the spirit of the West. They had heard of the man who had moved westward when another settler drove his stakes twenty miles from his claim, because the country was "gettin' too crowded."

That day, passing through the ragged log village of Tecumseh, they got their first letters from home. When they left Illinois, they had not known just where they would strike, in the Territory, but they had resolved that they would not go further west than Tecumseh; and here they were, with their eyes still fixed toward the west. No matter; just now, news from home was to be devoured before anybody could talk of the possible Kansas home that yet loomed before them in the dim distance. How good it was to learn all about the dear ones left at home; to find that Bose was keeping guard around the house as if he knew that he was the protector of the two mothers left to themselves in one home; to hear that the brindle calf had grown very large, and that a circus was coming to town the very next day after the letter was written!

"That circus has come and gone without our seeing it," said Sandy, solemnly.

"Sandy is as good as a circus, any day," said his uncle, fondly. "The greatest show in the country

would have been willing to hire you for a night, fixed out as you were last night, after we had that upset in the creek." The boys agreed that it was lucky for all hands that the only looking-glass in camp was the little bit of one hidden away in Uncle Charlie's shaving-case.

The next day, to their great discomfiture, they blundered upon a county election. Trudging into Libertyville, one of the new mushroom towns springing up along the military road that leads from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley, they found a great crowd of people gathered around a log-house, in which the polls were open. Country officers were to be chosen, and the pro-slavery men, as the Borderers were now called in this part of the country, had rallied in great numbers to carry the election for their men. All was confusion and tumult. Rough-looking men, well armed and generally loud voiced, with slouched hats and long beards, were galloping about, shouting and making all the noise possible, for no purpose that could be discovered. "Hooray for Cap'n Pate!" was the only intelligible cry that the newcomers could hear; but who Captain Pate was, and why he should be hurrahed for, nobody seemed to know. He was not a candidate for anything.

"Hullo!" there's our Woburn friend, John Clark," said Mr. Howell. Sure enough, there he was with a vote in his hand going up to the cabin where the polls were open. A lane was formed

through the crowd of men who lounged about the cabin, so that a man going up to the door to vote was obliged to run the gauntlet, as it were, of one hundred men, or more, before he reached the door, the lower half of which was boarded up and the upper half left open for the election officers to take and deposit the ballots.

"I don't believe that man has any right to vote here," said Charlie, with an expression of disgust on his face. "Why, he came into the Territory with us, only the other day, and he said he was going up on the Big Blue to settle, and here he is trying to vote!"

"Well," said Uncle Charlie, "I allow he has just as good a right to vote as any of these men who are running the election. I saw some of these very men come riding in from Missouri, when we were one day out of Quindaro." As he spoke, John Clark had reached the voting-place, pursued by many rough epithets flung after him.

He paused before the half-barricaded door and presented his ballot. "Let's see yer ticket!" shouted one of the men who stood guard, one either side of the cabin-door. He snatched it from Clark's hand, looked at it, and simply said, "H'ist!" The man on the other side of the would-be voter grinned; then both men seized the Woburn man by his arms and waist, and, before he could realize what was happening, he was flung up to the edge of the roof that projected over the low door. Two

other men sitting there grabbed the newcomer by the shoulders and passed him up the roof to two others, who, straddling the ridge-pole, were waiting for him. Then the unfortunate Clark disappeared over the top of the cabin, sliding down out of sight on the farther side. The mob set up a wild cheer, and some of them shouted, "We don't want any Yankee votes in this yer 'lection!"

"Shameful! Shameful!" burst forth from Mr. Bryant. "I have heard of such things before now, but I must say I never thought I should see it." He turned angrily to his brother-in-law as Mr. Howell joined the boys in their laugh.

"How can you laugh at such a shameful sight, Aleck Howell? I'm sure it's something to cry over, rather than to laugh at — a spectacle like that! A free American citizen hustled away from the polls in that disgraceful fashion!"

"But, Charlie," said Uncle Aleck, "you'll admit that it was funny to see the Woburn man hoisted over that cabin. Besides, I don't believe he has any right to vote here; do you?"

"He would have been allowed to vote fast enough if he had had the sort of ballot that those fellows want to go into the box. They looked at his ballot, and as soon as they saw what it was, they threw him over the cabin."

Just then, John Clark came back from the ravine into which he had slid from the roof of the log-house, looking very much crestfallen. He ex-

THE POLLS AT LIBERTYVILLE. THE WOBURN MAN IS "HOISTED" OVER THE CABIN.

plained that he had met some pro-slavery men on the road that morning, and they had told him he could vote, if he chose, and they had furnished him with the necessary ballot.

"They took in my clothes at a glance," said Clark. "and they seemed to suppose that a man with butternut homespun was true-blue; so they didn't ask any questions. I got a free-State ballot from another man and was a-goin' to plump it in; but they were too smart for me, and over I went. No, don't you worry; I ain't a-goin' up there to try it ag'in," he said, angrily, to an insolent horseman, who, riding up, told him not to venture near the polls again if he "did not want to be kicked out like a dog."

"Come on, neighbor; let's be goin'," he said to Uncle Aleck. "I've had enough voting for to-day. Let's light out of this town." Then the men, taking up their ox-goads, drove out of town. They had had their first sight of the struggle for freedom.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE DIVIDING OF THE WAYS.

THE military road, of which I have just spoken, was constructed by the United States Government to connect the military posts of the Far West with one another. Beginning at Fort Leavenworth, on the Missouri River, it passed through Fort Riley at the junction of the forks of the Kaw, and then, still keeping up the north side of the Republican Fork, went on to Fort Kearney, still farther west, then to Fort Laramie, which in those days was so far on the frontier of our country that few people ever saw it except military men and the emigrants to California. At the time of which I am writing, there had been a very heavy emigration to California, and companies of emigrants, bound to the Golden Land, still occasionally passed along the great military road.

Interlacing this highway were innumerable trails and wagon-tracks, the traces of the great migration to the Eldorado of the Pacific; and here and there were the narrow trails made by Indians on their hunting expeditions and warlike excursions. Roads, such as our emigrants had been accustomed to in

Illinois, there were none. First came the faint traces of human feet and of unshod horses and ponies; then the well-defined trail of hunters, trappers, and Indians; then the wagon-track of the military trains, which, in course of time, were smoothed and formed into the military road kept in repair by the United States Government.

Following this road, the Dixon emigrants came upon the broad, bright, and shallow stream of the Big Blue. Fording this, they drove into the rough, new settlement of Manhattan, lately built at the junction of the Blue and the Kaw rivers.

It was a beautiful May day when the travellers entered Manhattan. It was an active and a promising town. Some attempt at the laying out of streets had been made. A long, low building, occupied as a hotel, was actually painted, and on some of the shanties and rude huts of the newly arrived settlers were signs giving notice of hardware, groceries, and other commodities for sale within. On one structure, partly made of sawed boards and partly of canvas, was painted in sprawling letters, "Counsellor at Law."

"You'll find those fellows out in the Indian country," grimly remarked one of the settlers, as the party surveyed this evidence of an advancing civilization.

There was a big steam saw-mill hard by the town, and the chief industry of Manhattan seemed to be the buying and selling of lumber and hard-

ware, and the surveying of land. Mounted men, carrying the tools and instruments of the surveyor, galloped about. Few wheeled vehicles except the ox-carts of emigrants were to be seen anywhere, and the general aspect of the place was that of feverish activity. Along the banks of the two streams were camped parties of the latest comers, many of whom had brought their wives and children with them. Parties made up of men only seldom came as far west as this. They pitched their tents nearer the Missouri, where the fight for freedom raged most hotly. A few companies of men did reach the westernmost edge of the new settlements, and the Manhattan Company was one of these.

The three boys from Illinois were absorbed with wonder as they strolled around the new town, taking in the novel sights, as they would if they had been in a great city, instead of a mushroom town that had arisen in a night. During their journey from Libertyville to Manhattan, the Dixon emigrants had lost sight of John Clark, of Woburn; he had hurried on ahead after his rough experience with the election guardians of Libertyville. The boys were wondering if he had reached Manhattan.

"Hullo! There he is now, with all his family around him," said Charlie. "He's got here before us, and can tell all about the lay of the land to the rest of us, I dare say."

"I have about made up my mind to squat on

Hunter's Creek," said Clark, when the boys had saluted him. "Pretty good land on Hunter's, so I am told; no neighbors, and the land has been surveyed off by the Government surveyors. Hunter's Creek? Well, that's about six miles above the fort. It makes into the Republican, and, so they tell me, there's plenty of wood along the creek, and a good lot of oak and hickory not far off. Timber is what we all want, you know."

As for Bartlett, who had come out from New England with the Clarks, he was inclined to go to the lower side of the Republican Fork, taking to the Smoky Hill country. That was the destination of the Jenness party, who had passed the Dixon boys when they were camped after their upset in the creek, several days before. This would leave the Clarks — John and his wife and two children, and his brother Jotham, and Jotham's boy, Pelatiah — to make a settlement by themselves on Hunter's Creek.

Which way were the Dixon boys going? Charlie, the spokesman of the party because he was the eldest, did not know. His father and uncle were out prospecting among the campers now. Sandy was sure that they would go up the Republican Fork. His father had met one of the settlers from that region, and had been very favorably impressed with his report. This Republican Fork man was an Arkansas man, but "a good fellow," so Sandy said. To be a good fellow, according to Sandy's

way of putting things, was to be worthy of all confidence and esteem.

Mr. Bryant thought that as there were growing rumors of troublesome Indians, it would be better to take the southern or Smoky Hill route; the bulk of the settlers were going that way, and where there were large numbers there would be safety. While the lads were talking with the Clarks, Bryant and his brother-in-law came up, and, after greeting their former acquaintance and ascertaining whither he was bound, Mr. Howell told the boys that they had been discussing the advantages of the two routes with Younkins, the settler from Republican Fork, and had decided to go on to "the post," as Fort Riley was generally called, and there decide which way they should go — to the right or to the left.

As to the Clarks, they were determined to take the trail for Hunter's Creek that very day. Bartlett decided to go to the Smoky Hill country. He cast in his lot with a party of Western men, who had heard glowing reports of the fertility and beauty of the region lying along Solomon's Fork, a tributary of the Smoky Hill. It was in this way that parties split up after they had entered the Promised Land.

Leaving the Clarks to hitch up their teams and part company with Bartlett, the Dixon party returned to their camp, left temporarily in the care of Younkins, who had come to Manhattan for a

few supplies, and who had offered to guide the others to a desirable place for settlement which he told them he had in mind for them. Younkins was a kindly and pleasant-faced man, simple in his speech and frontier-like in his manners. Sandy conceived a strong liking for him as soon as they met. The boy and the man were friends at once.

"Well, you see," said Younkins, sitting down on the wagon-tongue, when the party had returned to their camp, "I have been thinking over-like the matter that we were talking about, and I have made up my mind-like that I sha'n't move back to my claim on the south side of the Republican. I'm on the north side, you know, and my old claim on the south side will do just right for my brother Ben; he's coming out in the fall. Now if you want to go up our way, you can have the cabin on that claim. There's nobody living in it. It's no great of a cabin, but it's built of hewed timber, well chinked and comfortable-like. You can have it till Ben comes out, and I'm just a-keeping it for Ben, you know. P'raps he won't want it, and if he doesn't, why, then you and he can make some kind of a dicker-like, and you might stay on till you could do better."

"That's a very generous offer of Mr. Younkins's, Charles," said Mr. Howell to Bryant. "I don't believe we could do better than take it up."

"No, indeed," burst in the impetuous Sandy. "Why, just think of it! A house already built!"

"Little boys should be seen, not heard," said his elder brother, reprovingly. "Suppose you and I wait to see what the old folks have to say before we chip in with any remarks."

"Oh, I know what Uncle Charlie will say," replied the lad, undismayed. "He'll say that the Smoky Hill road is the road to take. Say, Uncle Charlie, you see that Mr. Younkins here is willing to live all alone on the bank of the Republican Fork, without any neighbors at all. He isn't afraid of Indians."

Mr. Bryant smiled, and said that he was not afraid of Indians, but he thought that there might come a time when it would be desirable for a community to stand together as one man. "Are you a free-State man?" he asked Younkins. This was a home-thrust. Younkins came from a slave State; he was probably a pro-slavery man.

"I'm neither a free-State man nor yet a pro-slavery man," he said, slowly, and with great deliberation. "I'm just for Younkins all the time. Fact is," he continued. "where I came from most of us are pore whites. I never owned but one darky, and I had him from my grandfather. Ben and me, we sorter quarrelled-like over that darky. Ben, he thought he oughter had him, and I knowed my grandfather left him to me. So I sold him off, and the neighbors didn't seem to like it. I don't justly know why they didn't like it; but they didn't. Then Ben, he allowed that I had

better light out. So I lit out, and here I am. No, I'm no free-State man, and then ag'in, I'm no man for slavery. I'm just for Younkins. Solomon Younkins is my name."

Bryant was very clearly prejudiced in favor of the settler from the Republican Fcrk by this speech; and yet he thought it best to move on to the fort that day and take the matter into consideration.

So he said that if Younkins would accept the hospitality of their tent, the Dixon party would be glad to have him pass the night with them. Younkins had a horse on which he had ridden down from his place, and with which he had intended to reach home that night. But, for the sake of inducing the new arrivals to go up into his part of the country, he was willing to stay.

"I should think you would be afraid to leave your wife and baby all alone there in the wilderness," said Sandy, regarding his new friend with evident admiration. "No neighbor nearer than Hunter's Creek, did you say? How far off is that?"

"Well, a matter of six miles-like," replied Younkins. "It isn't often that I do leave them alone over night; but then I have to once in a while. My old woman, she doesn't mind it. She was sort of skeary-like when she first came into the country; but she's got used to it. We don't want any neighbors. If you folks come up to settle, you'll

be on the other side of the river," he said, with unsmiling candor. "That's near enough — three or four miles, anyway."

Fort Riley is about ten miles from Manhattan, at the forks of the Kaw. It was a long drive for one afternoon, but the settlers from Illinois camped on the edge of the military reservation that night. When the boys, curious to see what the fort was like, looked over the premises next morning, they were somewhat disappointed to find that the post was merely a quadrangle of buildings constructed of rough-hammered stone. A few frame houses were scattered about. One of these was the sutler's store, just on the edge of the reservation. But, for the most part, the post consisted of two- or three-story buildings arranged in the form of a hollow square. These were barracks, officers' quarters, and depots for the storage of military supplies and army equipments.

"Why, this is no fort!" said Oscar, contemptuously. "There isn't even a stockade. What's to prevent a band of Indians raiding through the whole place? I could take it myself, if I had men enough."

His cousin Charlie laughed, and said: "Forts are not built out here nowadays to defend a garrison. The army men don't propose to let the Indians get near enough to the post to threaten it. The fact is, I guess, this fort is only a depot-like, as our friend Younkins would say, for the

soldiers and for military stores. They don't expect ever to be besieged here; but if there should happen to be trouble anywhere along the frontier, then the soldiers would be here, ready to fly out to the rescue, don't you see?"

"Yes," answered Sandy; "and when a part of the garrison had gone to the rescue, as you call it, another party of redskins would swoop down and gobble up the remnant left at the post."

"If I were you, Master Sandy," said his brother, "I wouldn't worry about the soldiers. Uncle Sam built this fort, and there are lots of others like it. I don't know for sure, but my impression is that Uncle Sam knows what is best for the use of the military and for the defence of the frontier. So let's go and take a look at the sutler's store. I want to buy some letter-paper."

The sutler, in those days, was a very important person in the estimation of the soldiers of a frontier post. Under a license from the War Department of the Government, he kept a store in which was everything that the people at the post could possibly need. Crowded into the long building of the Fort Riley sutler were dry-goods, groceries, hardware, boots and shoes, window-glass, rope and twine, and even candy of a very poor sort. Hanging from the ceiling of this queer warehouse were sides of smoked meat, strings of onions, oil-cloth suits, and other things that were designed for the comfort or convenience of the officers and

soldiers, and were not provided by the Government.

"I wonder what soldiers want of calico and ribbons," whispered Sandy, with a suppressed giggle, as the three lads went prying about.

"Officers and soldiers have their wives and children here, you greeny," said his brother, sharply. "Look out there and see 'em."

And, sure enough, as Sandy's eyes followed the direction of his brother's, he saw two prettily dressed ladies and a group of children walking over the smooth turf that filled the square in the midst of the fort. It gave Sandy a homesick feeling, this sight of a home in the wilderness. Here were families of grown people and children, living apart from the rest of the world. They had been here long before the echo of civil strife in Kansas had reached the Eastern States, and before the first wave of emigration had touched the head-waters of the Kaw. Here they were, a community by themselves, uncaring, apparently, whether slavery was voted up or down. At least, some such thought as this flitted through Sandy's mind as he looked out upon the leisurely life of the fort, just beginning to stir.

All along the outer margin of the reservation were grouped the camps of emigrants; not many of them, but enough to present a curious and picturesque sight. There were a few tents, but most of the emigrants slept in or under their

wagons. There were no women or children in these camps, and the hardy men had been so well seasoned by their past experiences, journeying to this far western part of the Territory, that they did not mind the exposure of sleeping on the ground and under the open skies. Soldiers from the fort, off duty and curious to hear the news from the outer world, came lounging around the camps and chatted with the emigrants in that cool, superior manner that marks the private soldier when he meets a civilian on equal footing, away from the haunts of men.

The boys regarded these uniformed military servants of the Government of the United States with great respect, and even with some awe. These, they thought to themselves, were the men who were there to fight Indians, to protect the border, and to keep back the rising tide of wild hostilities that might, if it were not for them, sweep down upon the feeble Territory and even inundate the whole Western country.

"Perhaps some of Black Hawk's descendants are among the Indians on this very frontier," said Oscar, impressively. "And these gold-laced chaps, with shoulder-straps on, are the Zack Taylors and the Robert Andersons who do the fighting," added Charlie, with a laugh.

Making a few small purchases from the surly sutler of Fort Riley, and then canvassing with the emigrants around the reservation the question of

routes and locations, our friends passed the forenoon. The elders of the party had anxiously discussed the comparative merits of the Smoky Hill and the Republican Fork country and had finally yielded to the attractions of a cabin ready-built in Younkins's neighborhood, with a garden patch attached, and had decided to go in that direction.

"This is simply bully!" said Sandy Howell, as the little caravan turned to the right and drove up the north bank of the Republican Fork.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SETTLERS AT HOME.

A WIDE, shallow river, whose turbid waters were yellow with the freshets of early summer, shadowed by tall and sweeping cottonwoods and water-maples; shores gently sloping to the current, save where a tall and rocky bluff broke the prospect up stream; thickets of oaks, alders, sycamores, and persimmons — this was the scene on which the Illinois emigrants arrived, as they journeyed to their new home in the far West. On the north bank of the river, only a few hundred rods from the stream, was the log-cabin of Younkins. It was built on the edge of a fine bit of timber-land, in which oaks and hickories were mingled with less valuable trees. Near by the cabin, and hugging closely up to it, was a thrifty field of corn and other garden stuff, just beginning to look promising of good things to come; and it was a refreshing sight here in the wilderness, for all around was the virgin forest and the unbroken prairie.

Younkins's wife, a pale, sallow, and anxious-looking woman, and Younkins's baby boy, chubby and open-eyed, welcomed the strangers without

much show of feeling other than a natural curiosity. With Western hospitality, the little cabin was found large enough to receive all the party, and the floor was covered with blankets and buffalo-skins when they lay down to sleep their first night near their future home in the country of the Republican Fork. The boys were very happy that their journey was at an end. They had listened with delight while Younkins told stories of buffalo and antelope hunting, of Indian "scares," and of the many queer adventures of settlers on this distant frontier.

"What is there west of this?" asked Charlie, as the party were dividing the floor and the shallow loft among themselves for the night.

"Nothing but Indians and buffalo," said Younkins, sententiously.

"No settlers anywhere?" cried Sandy, eagerly.

"The next settlement west of here, if you can call it a settlement, is Fort Kearney, on the other side of the Platte. From here to there, there isn't so much as a hunter's camp, so far as I know." This was Younkins's last word, as he tumbled, half dressed, into his bunk in one corner of the cabin. Sandy hugged his brother Charlie before he dropped off to sleep, and whispered in his ear, "We're on the frontier at last! It's just splendid!"

Next day, leaving their cattle and wagon at the Younkins homestead, the party, piloted by their

good-natured future neighbor, forded the Fork and went over into the Promised Land. The river was rather high as yet; for the snow, melting in the far-off Rocky Mountains as the summer advanced, had swollen all the tributaries of the Republican Fork, and the effects of the rise were to be seen far down on the Kaw. The newcomers were initiated into the fashion of the country by Younkins, who directed each one to take off all clothes but his shirt and hat. Then their garments were rolled up in bundles, each man and boy taking his own on his head, and wading deliberately into the water, the sedate Younkins being the leader.

It seemed a little dangerous. The stream was about one hundred rods wide, and the current was tolerably swift, swollen by the inrush of smaller streams above. The water was cold, and made an ominous swishing and gurgling among the underbrush that leaned into the margin of the river. In Indian file, Mr. Howell bringing up the rear, and keeping his eyes anxiously upon the lads before him, they all crossed in safety, Sandy, the shortest of the party, being unable to keep dry the only garment he had worn, for the water came well up under his arms.

"Well, that was funny, anyhow," he blithely remarked, as he wrung the water out of his shirt, and, drying himself as well as he could, dressed and joined the rest of the party in the trip toward their future home.

Along the lower bank of the Republican Fork, where the new settlers now found themselves, the country is gently undulating. Bordering the stream they saw a dense growth of sycamores, cottonwoods, and birches. Some of these trees were tall and handsome, and the general effect on the minds of the newcomers was delightful. After they had emerged from the woods that skirted the river, they were in the midst of a lovely rolling prairie, the forest on the right; on their left was a thick growth of wood that marked the winding course of a creek which, rising far to the west, emptied into the Republican Fork at a point just below where the party had forded the stream. The land rose gradually from the point nearest the ford, breaking into a low, rocky bluff beyond at their right and nearest the river, a mile away, and rolling off to the southwest in folds and swales.

Just at the foot of the little bluff ahead, with a background of trees, was a log-cabin of hewn timber, weather-stained and gray in the summer sun, absolutely alone, and looking as if lost in this untrodden wild. Pointing to it, Younkins said, "That's your house so long as you want it."

The emigrants tramped through the tall, lush grass that covered every foot of the new Kansas soil, their eyes fixed eagerly on the log-cabin before them. The latch-string hung out hospitably from the door of split "shakes," and the party entered without ado. Everything was just as Younkins

had last left it. Two or three gophers, disturbed in their foraging about the premises, fled swiftly at the entrance of the visitors, and a flock of blackbirds, settled around the rear of the house, flew noisily across the creek that wound its way down to the Fork.

The floor was of puncheons split from oak logs, and laid loosely on rough-hewn joists. These rattled as the visitors walked over them. At one end of the cabin a huge fireplace of stone laid in clay yawned for the future comfort of the new tenants. Near by, a rude set of shelves suggested a pantry, and a table, home-made and equally rude, stood in the middle of the floor. In one corner was built a bedstead, two sides of the house furnishing two sides of the work, and the other two being made by driving a stake into the floor, and connecting that by string-pieces to the sides of the cabin. Thongs of buffalo-hide formed the bottom of this novel bedstead. A few stools and short benches were scattered about. Near the fireplace long and strong pegs, driven into the logs, served as a ladder, on which one could climb to the low loft overhead. Two windows, each of twelve small panes of glass, let in the light, one from the end of the cabin, and one from the back opposite the door, which was in the middle of the front. Outside, a frail shanty of shakes leaned against the cabin, affording a sort of outdoor kitchen for summer use.

"So this is home," said Charlie, gazing about. "What will mother say to this — if she ever gets here?"

"Well, we've taken a heap of comfort here, my old woman and me," said Younkins, looking around quickly, and with an air of surprise. "It's a mighty comfortable house; leastways we think so."

Charlie apologized for having seemed to cast any discredit on the establishment. Only he said that he did not suppose that his mother knew much about log-cabins. As for himself, he would like nothing better than this for a home for a long time to come. "For," he added, roguishly, "you know we have come to make the West, 'as they the East, the homestead of the free.'"

Mr. Younkins looked puzzled, but made no remark. The younger boys, after taking in the situation and fondly inspecting every detail of the premises, enthusiastically agreed that nothing could be finer than this. They darted out of doors, and saw a corral, or pound, in which the cattle could be penned up, in case of need. There was a small patch of fallow ground, that needed only to be spaded up to become a promising garden-spot. Then, swiftly running to the top of the little bluff beyond, they gazed over the smiling panorama of emerald prairie, laced with woody creeks, level fields, as yet undisturbed by the ploughshare, blue, distant woods and yet more distant hills, among which, to the northwest, the broad river wound

and disappeared. Westward, nothing was to be seen but the green and rolling swales of the virgin prairie, broken here and there by an outcropping of rock. And as they looked, a tawny, yellowish creature trotted out from behind a roll of the prairie, sniffed in the direction of the boys, and then stealthily disappeared in the wildness of the vast expanse.

"A coyote," said Sandy, briefly. "I've seen them in Illinois. But I wish I had my gun now." His wiser brother laughed as he told him that it would be a long day before a coyote could be got near enough to be knocked over with any shotgun. The coyote, or prairie-wolf, is the slyest animal that walks on four legs.

The three men and Charlie returned to the further side of the Fork, and made immediate preparations to move all their goods and effects to the new home of the emigrants. Sandy and Oscar, being rather too small to wade the stream without discomfort, while it was so high, were left on the south bank to receive the returning party.

There the boys sat, hugely enjoying the situation, while the others were loading the wagon and yoking the oxen on the other side. The lads could hear the cheery sounds of the men talking, although they could not see them through the trees that lined the farther bank of the river. The flow of the stream made a ceaseless lapping against the brink of the shore. A party of catbirds quar-

elled sharply in the thicket hard by; quail whistled in the underbrush of the adjacent creek, and overhead a solitary eagle circled slowly around as if looking down to watch these rude invaders of the privacy of the dominion that had existed ever since the world began.

Hugging his knees in measureless content, as they sat in the grass by the river, Sandy asked, almost in a whisper, "Have you ever been homesick since we left Dixon, Oscar?"

"Just once, Sandy; and that was yesterday when I saw those nice-looking ladies at the fort out walking in the morning with their children. That was the first sight that looked like home since we crossed the Missouri."

"Me, too," answered Sandy, soberly. "But this is just about as fine as anything can be. Only think of it, Oscar! There are buffalo and antelopes within ten or fifteen miles of here. I know, for Younkins told me so. And Indians, — not wild Indians, but tame ones that are at peace with the whites. It seems too good to have happened to us; doesn't it, Oscar?"

Once more the wagon was blocked up for a difficult ford, the lighter and more perishable articles of its load being packed into a dugout, or canoe hollowed from a sycamore log, which was the property of Younkins, and used only at high stages of the water. The three men guided the wagon and oxen across while Charlie, stripped to his

shirt, pushed the loaded dugout carefully over, and the two boys on the other bank, full of the importance of the event, received the solitary voyager, unloaded the canoe, and then transferred the little cargo to the wagon. The caravan took its way up the rolling ground of the prairie to the log-cabin. Willing hands unloaded and took into the house the tools, provisions, and clothes that constituted their all, and, before the sun went down, the settlers were at home.

While in Manhattan, they had supplied themselves with potatoes; at Fort Riley they had bought fresh beef from the sutler. Sandy made a glorious fire in the long-disused fireplace. His father soon had a batch of biscuits baking in the covered kettle, or Dutch oven, that they had brought with them from home. Charlie's contribution to the repast was a pot of excellent coffee, the milk for which, an unaccustomed luxury, was supplied by the thoughtfulness of Mrs. Younkins. So, with thankful hearts, they gathered around their frugal board and took their first meal in their new home.

When supper was done and the cabin, now lighted by the scanty rays of two tallow candles, had been made tidy for the night, Oscar took out his violin, and, after much needed tuning, struck into the measure of wild, warbling "Dundee." All hands took the hint, and all voices were raised once more to the words of Whittier's song of the

"Kansas Emigrants." Perhaps it was with new spirit and new tenderness that they sang, —

> "No pause, nor rest, save where the streams
> That feed the Kansas run,
> Save where the pilgrim gonfalon
> Shall flout the setting sun!"

"I don't know what the pilgrim's gonfalon is," said Sandy, sleepily, "but I guess it's all right." The emigrants had crossed the prairies as of old their fathers had crossed the sea. They were now at home in the New West. The night fell dark and still about their lonely cabin as, with hope and trust, they laid them down to peaceful dreams.

CHAPTER IX.

SETTING THE STAKES.

"We mustn't let any grass grow under our feet, boys," was Mr. Aleck Howell's energetic remark, next morning, when the little party had finished their first breakfast in their new home.

"That means work, I s'pose," replied Oscar, turning a longing glance to his violin hanging on the side of the cabin, with a broken string crying for repairs.

"Yes, and hard work, too," said his father, noting the lad's look. "Luckily for us, Brother Aleck," he continued, "our boys are not afraid of work. They have been brought up to it, and although I am thinking they don't know much about the sort of work that we shall have to put in on these beautiful prairies, I guess they will buckle down to it. Eh?" and the loving father turned his look from the grassy and rolling plain to his son's face.

Sandy answered for him. "Oh, yes, Uncle Charlie, we all like work! Afraid of work? Why, Oscar and I are so used to it that we would be willing to lie right down by the side of it, and

sleep as securely as if it were as harmless as a kitten! Afraid of work? Never you fear 'the Dixon boys who fear no noise'—what's the rest of that song?"

Nobody knew, and, in the laugh that followed, Mr. Howell suggested that as Younkins was coming over the river to show them the stakes of their new claims, the boys might better set an extra plate at dinner-time. It was very good of Younkins to take so much trouble on their account, and the least they could do was to show him proper hospitality.

"What is all this about stakes and quarter-sections, anyway, father?" asked Sandy. "I'm sure I don't know."

"He doesn't know what quarter-sections are!" shouted Charlie. "Oh, my! what an ignoramus!"

"Well, what is a quarter-section, as you are so knowing?" demanded Sandy. "I don't believe you know yourself."

"It is a quarter of a section of public land," answered the lad. "Every man or single woman of mature age—I think that is what the books say—who doesn't own several hundred acres of land elsewhere (I don't know just how many) is entitled to enter on and take up a quarter of a section of unoccupied public land, and have it for a homestead. That's all," and Charlie looked to his father for approval.

"Pretty good, Charlie," said his uncle. "How many acres are there in a quarter-section of land?"

"Yes, how many acres in a quarter of a section?" shouted Sandy, who saw that his brother hesitated. "Speak up, my little man, and don't be afraid!"

"I don't know," replied the lad, frankly.

"Good for you!" said his father. "Never be afraid of saying that you don't know when you do *not* know. The fear of confessing ignorance is what has wrecked many a young fellow's chances for finding out things he should know."

"Well, boys," said Mr. Bryant, addressing himself to the three lads, "all the land of the United States Government that is open to settlement is laid off in townships six miles square. These, in turn, are laid off into sections of six hundred and forty acres each. Now, then, how much land should there be in a quarter-section?"

"One hundred and sixty acres!" shouted all three boys at once, breathlessly.

"Correct. The Government allows every man, or single woman of mature age, widow or unmarried, to go upon a plot of land, not more than one hundred and sixty acres nor less than forty acres, and to improve it, and live upon it. If he stays there, or 'maintains a continuous residence,' as the lawyers say, for a certain length of time, the Government gives him a title-deed at the end of that time, and he owns the land."

"What? — free, gratis, and for nothing?" cried Sandy.

"Certainly," said his uncle. "The homestead law was passed by Congress to encourage the settlement of the lands belonging to the Government. You see there is an abundance of these lands, — so much, in fact, that they have not yet been all laid off into townships and sections and quarter-sections. If a large number of homestead claims are taken up, then other settlers will be certain to come in and buy the lands that the Government has to sell; and that will make settlements grow throughout that locality."

"Why should they buy when they can get land for nothing by entering and taking possession, just as we are going to do?" interrupted Oscar.

"Because, my son, many of the men cannot make oath that they have not taken up Government land somewhere else; and then, again, many men are going into land speculations, and they don't care to wait five years to prove up a homestead claim. So they go upon the land, stake out their claim, and the Government sells it to them outright at the rate of a dollar and a quarter an acre."

"Cash down?" asked Charlie.

"No, they need not pay cash down unless they choose. The Government allows them a year to pay up in. But land speculators who make a business of this sort of thing generally pay up just as soon as they are allowed to, and then, if they get a good offer to sell out, they sell and

move off somewhere else, and do the same thing over again."

"People have to pay fees, don't they, Uncle Charlie?" said Sandy. "I know they used to talk about land-office fees, in Dixon. How much does it cost in fees to enter a piece of Government land?"

"I think it is about twenty-five dollars — twenty-six, to be exact," replied Mr. Bryant. "There comes Younkins," he added, looking down the trail to the river bank below.

The boys had been washing and putting away the breakfast things while this conversation was going on, and Sandy, balancing in the air a big tin pan on his fingers, asked: "How much land can we fellows enter, all told?" The two men laughed.

"Well, Alexander," said his father, ceremoniously, "We two 'fellows,' that is to say, your Uncle Charlie and myself, can enter one hundred and sixty acres apiece. Charlie will be able to enter the same quantity three years from now, when he will be twenty-one; and as for you and Oscar, if you each add to your present years as many as will make you twenty-one, you can tell when you will be able to enter and own the same amount of land; provided it is not all gone by that time. Good morning, Mr. Younkins." Sandy's pan came down with a crash on the puncheon floor.

The land around that region of the Repub-

lican Fork had been surveyed into sections of six hundred and forty acres each; but it would be necessary to secure the services of a local surveyor to find out just where the boundaries of each quarter-section were. The stakes were set at the corner of each section, and Younkins thought that by pacing off the distance between two corners they could get at the point that would mark the middle of the section; then, by running lines across from side to side, thus:  they could get at the quarter-sections nearly enough to be able to tell about where their boundaries were.

"But suppose you should build a house, or plough a field, on some other man's quarter-section," suggested Charlie, "wouldn't you feel cheap when the final survey showed that you had all along been improving your neighbor's property?"

"There isn't any danger of that," answered Younkins, "if you are smart enough to keep well away from your boundary line when you are putting in your improvements. Some men are not smart enough, though. There was a man over on Chapman's Creek who wanted to have his log-cabin on a pretty rise of ground-like, that was on the upper end of his claim. He knew that the line ran somewhere about there; but he took chances-like, and when the line was run, a year after that, lo, and behold! his house and garden-like were both clean over into the next man's claim."

"What did he do?" asked Charlie. "Skip out of the place?"

"Sho! No, indeed! His neighbor was a white man-like, and they just took down the cabin and carried it across the boundary line and set it up again on the man's own land. He's livin' there yet; but he lost his garden-like; couldn't move that, you see"; and Younkins laughed one of his infrequent laughs.

The land open to the settlers on the south side of the Republican Fork was all before them. Nothing had been taken up within a distance as far as they could see. Chapman's Creek, just referred to by Younkins, was eighteen or twenty miles away. From the point at which they stood and toward Chapman's, the land was surveyed; but to the westward the surveys ran only just across the creek, which, curving from the north and west, made a complete circuit around the land and emptied into the Fork, just below the fording-place. Inside of that circuit, the land, undulating, and lying with a southern exposure, was destitute of trees. It was rich, fat land, but there was not a tree on it except where it crossed the creek, the banks of which were heavily wooded. Inside of that circuit somewhere, the two men must stake out their claim. There was nothing but rich, unshaded land, with a meandering woody creek flowing through the bottom of the two claims, provided they were laid out side by side. The corner stakes

were found, and the men prepared to pace off the distance between the corners so as to find the centre.

"It is a pity there is no timber anywhere," said Howell, discontentedly. "We shall have to go several miles for timber enough to build our cabins. We don't want to cut down right away what little there is along the creek."

"Timber?" said Younkins, reflectively. "Timber? Well, if one of you would put up with a quarter-section of farming land, then the other can enter some of the timber land up on the North Branch."

Now, the North Branch was two miles and a half from the cabin in which the Dixon party were camped; and that cabin was two miles from the beautiful slopes on which the intending settlers were now looking for an opportunity to lay out their two claims. The two men looked at each other. Could they divide and settle thus far apart for the sake of getting a timber lot?

It was Sandy who solved the problem. "I'll tell you what to do, father!" he cried, eagerly: "you take up the timber claim on the North Branch, and we boys can live there; then you and Uncle Charlie can keep one of the claims here. We can build two cabins, and you old folks can live in one, and we in another."

The fathers exchanged glances, and Mr. Howell said, "I don't see how I could live without Sandy and Charlie."

Younkins brightened up at Sandy's suggestion, and he added that the two men might take up two farming claims, side by side, and let the boys try and hold the timber claim on the North Branch. Thus far, there was no rush of emigration to the south side of the Republican Fork. Most of the settlers went further to the south; or they halted further east, and fixed their stakes along the line of the Big Blue and other more accessible regions.

"We'll chance it, won't we, Aleck?" said Mr. Bryant.

Mr. Howell looked vaguely off over the rolling slope on which they were standing, and said: "We will chance it with the boys on the timber land, but I am not in favor of taking up two claims here. Let the timber claim be in my name or yours, and the boys can live on it. But we can't take up two claims here and the timber besides — three in all — with only two full-grown men among the whole of us. That stands to reason."

Younkins was a little puzzled by the strictness with which the two newcomers were disposed to regard their rights and duties as actual settlers. He argued that settlers were entitled to all they could get and hold; and he was in favor of the party's trying to hold three claims of one hundred and sixty acres each, even if there were only two men legally entitled to enter homesteads. Wouldn't Charlie be of age before the time came to take out a patent for the land?

"But he is not of age to enter upon and hold the land now," said his father, stiffly.

So it was settled that the two men should enter upon the quarter-section of farming land, and build a cabin as soon as convenient, and that the claim on the North Fork, which had a fine grove of timber on it, should be set apart for the boys, and a cabin built there, too. The cabin in the timber need not be built until late in the autumn; that claim could be taken up by Mr. Howell, or by Mr. Bryant; by and by they would draw lots to decide which. Before sundown that night, they had staked out the corners of the one hundred and sixty acre lot of farming land, on which the party had arrived in the morning.

It was dark before they returned from looking over the timber land in the bend of the North Fork of the Republican.

CHAPTER X.

DRAWING THE FIRST FURROW.

THE good-natured Younkins was on hand bright and early the next morning, to show the new settlers where to cut the first furrow on the land which they had determined to plough. Having decided to take the northwest corner of the quarter section selected, it was easy to find the stake set at the corner. Then, having drawn an imaginary line from the stake to that which was set in the southwest corner, the tall Charlie standing where he could be used as a sign for said landmark, his father and his uncle, assisted by Younkins, and followed by the two other boys, set the big breaking-plough as near that line as possible. The four yoke of oxen stood obediently in line. Mr. Howell firmly held the plough-handles; Younkins drove the two forward yoke of cattle, and Mr. Bryant the second two; and the two younger boys stood ready to hurrah as soon as the word was given to start. It was an impressive moment to the youngsters.

"Gee up!" shouted Younkins, as mildly as if the oxen were petted children. The long train moved; the sharp nose of the plough cut into the

virgin turf, turning over a broad sod, about five inches thick; and then the plough swept onward toward the point where Charlie stood waving his red handkerchief in the air. Sandy seized a huge piece of the freshly-turned sod, and swinging it over his head with his strong young arms, he cried, "Three cheers for the first sod of Bleeding Kansas! 'Rah! 'Rah! 'Rah!" The farming of the boy settlers had begun.

Charlie, at his distant post on the other side of the creek, saw the beginning of things, and sent back an answering cheer to the two boys who were dancing around the massive and slow-moving team of cattle. The men smiled at the enthusiasm of the youngsters, but in their hearts the two new settlers felt that this was, after all, an event of much significance. The green turf now being turned over was disturbed by ploughshare for the first time since the creation of the world. Scarcely ever had this soil felt the pressure of the foot of a white man. For ages unnumbered it had been the feeding-ground of the buffalo and the deer. The American savage had chased his game over it, and possibly the sod had been wet with the blood of contending tribes. Now all was to be changed. As the black, loamy soil was turned for the first time to the light of day, so for the first time the long-neglected plain was being made useful for the support of civilized man.

No wonder the boys cheered and cheered again.

"We go to plant her common schools,
On distant prairie swells,
And give the Sabbaths of the wild
The music of her bells."

This is what was in Mr. Charles Bryant's mind as he wielded the ox-goad over the backs of the animals that drew the great plough along the first furrow cut on the farm of the emigrants. The day was bright and fair; the sun shone down on the flower-gemmed sod; no sound broke on the still air but the slow treading of the oxen, the chirrup of the drivers, the ripping of the sod as it was turned in the furrow, and the gay shouts of the light-hearted boys.

In a line of marvellous straightness, Younkins guided the leading yoke of cattle directly toward the creek on the other side of which Charlie yet stood, a tall, but animated landmark. When, after descending the gradual slope on which the land lay, the trees that bordered the stream hid the lad from view, it was decided that the furrow was long enough to mark the westerly boundary line of the forty acres which it was intended to break up for the first corn-field on the farm. Then the oxen were turned, with some difficulty, at right angles with the line just drawn, and were driven easterly until the southern boundary of the patch was marked out. Turning, now, at right angles, and tracing another line at the north, then again to the west to the point of original departure, they

had accurately defined the outer boundaries of the field on which so much in the future depended; for here was to be planted the first crop of the newcomers.

Younkins, having started the settlers in their first farming, returned across the river to his own plough, first having sat down with the Dixon party to a substantial dinner. For the boys, after the first few furrows were satisfactorily turned, had gone back to the cabin and made ready the noon meal. The ploughmen, when they came to the cabin in answer to Sandy's whoop from the roof, had made a considerable beginning in the field. They had gone around within the outer edge of the plantation that was to be, leaving with each circuit a broader band of black and shining loam over which a flock of birds hopped and swept with eager movements, snapping up the insects and worms which, astonished at the great upheaval, wriggled in the overturned turf.

"Looks sorter homelike here," said Younkins, with a pleased smile, as he drew his bench to the well-spread board and glanced around at the walls of the cabin, where the boys had already hung their fishing-tackle, guns, Oscar's violin, and a few odds and ends that gave a picturesque look to the long-deserted cabin.

"Yes," said Mr. Bryant, as he filled Younkins's tin cup with hot coffee, "our boys have all got the knack of making themselves at home, — runs in

the blood, I guess, — and if you come over here again in a day or two, you will probably find us with rugs on the floor and pictures on the walls. Sandy is a master-hand at hunting; and he intends to get a dozen buffalo-skins out of hand, so to speak, right away." And he looked fondly at his freckled nephew as he spoke.

"A dibble and a corn-dropper will be more in his way than the rifle, for some weeks to come," said Mr. Howell.

"What's a dibble?" asked both of the youngsters at once.

The elder man smiled and looked at Younkins as he said, "A dibble, my lambs, is an instrument for the planting of corn. With it in one hand you punch a hole in the sod that has been turned over, and then, with the other hand, you drop in three or four grains of corn from the corn-dropper, cover it with your heel, and there you are, — planted."

"Why, I supposed we were going to plant corn with a hoe; and we've got the hoes, too!" cried Oscar.

"No, my son," said his father; "if we were to plant corn with a hoe, we shouldn't get through planting before next fall, I am afraid. After dinner, we will make some dibbles for you boys, for you must begin to drop corn to-morrow. What ploughing we have done to-day, you can easily catch up with when you begin. And the three of you can all be on the furrow at once, if that seems worth while."

The boys very soon understood fully what a dibble was, and what a corn-dropper was, strange though those implements were to them at first. Before the end of planting-time, they fervently wished they had never seen either of these instruments of the corn-planter.

With the aid of a few rude tools, there was fashioned a staff from the tough hickory that grew near at hand, the lower part of the stick being thick and pointed at the end. The staff was about as high as would come up to a boy's shoulder, so that as he grasped it near the upper end, his arm being bent, the lower end was on the ground.

The upper end was whittled so as to make a convenient handle for the user. The lower end was shaped carefully into something like the convex sides of two spoons put together by their bowls, and the lower edge of this part was shaved down to a sharpness that was increased by slightly hardening it in the fire. Just above the thickest part of the dibble, a hole was bored at right angles through the wood, and into this a peg was driven so that several inches stuck out on both sides of the instrument. This completed the dibble.

"So that is a dibble, is it?" said Oscar, when the first one was shown him. "A dibble. Now let's see how you use it."

Thereupon his Uncle Aleck stood up, grasped the staff by the upper end, pressed his foot on the peg at the lower end of the tool, and so forced the

sharp point of the dibble downward into the earth. Then, drawing it out, a convex slit was shown in the elastic turf. Shaking an imaginary grain of corn into the hole, he closed it with a stamp of his heel, stepped on and repeated the motion a few times, and then said, "That's how they plant corn on the sod in Kansas."

"Uncle Aleck, what a lot you know!" said Oscar, with undisguised admiration.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bryant, taking a pair of old boots, cut off the legs just above the ankles, and, fastening in the lower end of each a round bit of wood, by means of small nails, quickly made a pair of corn-droppers. Sandy's belt, being passed through the loop-strap of one of these, was fastened around his waist. The dropper was to be filled with corn, and, thus accoutred, he was ready for doing duty in the newly ploughed field. When the lad expressed his impatience for another day to come so that he could begin corn-planting, the two elders of the family laughed outright.

"Sandy, boy, you will be glad when to-morrow night comes, so that you can rest from your labors. You remember what I tell you!" said his father.

Nevertheless, when the two boys stepped bravely out, next morning, in the wake of the breaking-team, they were not in the least dismayed by the prospect of working all day in the heavy furrows of the plough. Bryant drove the leading yoke of oxen, Charlie tried his 'prentice hand with the second yoke, and Howell held the plough.

"'He that by the plough would thrive,
Must either hold the plough or drive,'"

commented Oscar, filling his corn-dropper and eyeing his father's rather awkward handling of the ox-goad. Uncle Aleck had usually driven the cattle, but his hand was now required in the more difficult business of holding the plough.

"'Plough deep while sluggards sleep,'" replied his father; "and if you don't manage better with dropping corn than I do with driving these oxen, we shall have a short crop."

"How many grains of corn to a hole, Uncle Aleck? and how many bushels to the acre?" asked Oscar.

"Not more than five grains nor less than three is the rule, my boy. Now then, step out lively."

And the big team swept down the slope, leaving a broad and shining furrow behind it. The two boys followed, one about twenty feet behind the other, and when the hindermost had come up to the work of him who was ahead, he skipped the planted part and went on ahead of his comrade twenty feet, thus alternating each with the other. They were cheerily at work when, apparently from under the feet of the forward yoke of oxen, a bird somewhat bigger than a robin flew up with shrieks of alarm and went fluttering off along the ground, tumbling in the grass as if desperately wounded and unable to fly. Sandy made a rush for the bird, which barely eluded his clutches once

or twice, and drew him on and on in a fruitless chase; for the timid creature soon recovered the use of its wings, and soaring aloft, disappeared in the depths of the sky.

"That's the deceivingest bird I ever saw," panted Sandy, out of breath with running, and looking shamefacedly at the corn that he had spilled in his haste to catch his prey. "Why, it acted just as if its right wing was broken, and then it flew off as sound as a nut, for all I could see."

When the ploughmen met them, on the next turn of the team, Uncle Aleck said, "Did you catch the lapwing, you silly boy? That fellow fooled you nicely."

"Lapwing?" said Sandy, puzzled. "What's a lapwing?" But the ploughmen were already out of earshot.

"Oh, I know now," said Oscar. "I've read of the lapwing; it is a bird so devoted to its young, or its nest, that when it fancies either in danger, it assumes all the distress of a wounded thing, and, fluttering along the ground, draws the sportsman away from the locality."

"Right out of a book, Oscar!" cried Sandy. "And here's its nest, as sure as I'm alive!" So saying, the lad stooped, and, parting the grass with his hands, disclosed a pretty nest sunk in the ground, holding five finely speckled eggs. The bird, so lately playing the cripple, cried and circled around the heads of the boys as they peered into the home of the lapwing.

"Well, here's an actual settler that we must disturb, Sandy," said Oscar; "for the plough will smash right through this nest on the very next turn. Suppose we take it up and put it somewhere else, out of harm's way?"

"I'm willing," assented Sandy; and the two boys, carefully extracting the nest from its place, carried it well over into the ploughed ground, where under the lee of a thick turf it was left in safety. But, as might have been expected, the parent lapwing never went near that nest again. The fright had been too great.

"What in the world are you two boys up to now?" shouted Uncle Aleck from the other side of the ploughing. "Do you call that dropping corn? Hurry and catch up with the team; you are 'way behind."

"Great Scott!" cried Sandy; "I had clean forgotten the corn-dropping. A nice pair of farmers we are, Oscar!" and the lad, with might and main, began to close rapidly the long gap between him and the steadily moving ox-team.

"Leg-weary work, isn't it, Sandy?" said his father, when they stopped at noon to take the luncheon they had brought out into the field with them.

"Yes, and I'm terribly hungry," returned the boy, biting into a huge piece of cold corn-bread. "I shouldn't eat this if I were at home, and I shouldn't eat it now if I weren't as hungry as a

bear. Say, daddy, you cannot think how tired my leg is with the punching of that dibble into the sod; seems as if I couldn't hold out till sundown; but I suppose I shall. First, I punch a hole by jamming down the dibble with my foot, and then I kick the hole again with the same foot, after I have dropped in the grains of corn. These two motions are dreadfully tiresome."

"Yes," said his uncle, with a short laugh, "and while I was watching you and Oscar, this forenoon, I couldn't help thinking that you did not yet know how to make your muscles bear an equal strain. Suppose you try changing legs?"

"Changing legs?" exclaimed both boys at once. "Why, how could we exchange legs?"

"I know what Uncle Aleck means. I saw you always used the right leg to jam down the dibble with, and then you kicked the hole full with the right heel. No wonder your right legs are tired. Change hands and legs, once in a while, and use the dibble on the left side of you," said Charlie, whose driving had tired him quite as thoroughly.

"Isn't Charlie too awfully knowing for anything, Oscar?" said Sandy, with some sarcasm. Nevertheless, the lad got up, tried the dibble with his left hand, and saying, "Thanks, Charlie," dropped down upon the fragrant sod and was speedily asleep, for a generous nooning was allowed the industrious lads.

CHAPTER XI.

AN INDIAN TRAIL.

THE next day was Sunday, and, true to their New England training, the settlers refrained from labor on the day of rest. Mr. Bryant took his pocket Bible and wandered off into the wild waste of lands somewhere. The others lounged about the cabin, indoors and out, a trifle sore and stiff from the effects of work so much harder than that to which they had been accustomed, and glad of an opportunity to rest their limbs. The younger of the boy settlers complained that they had worn their legs out with punching holes in the sod while planting corn. The soles of their feet were sore with the pressure needed to jam the dibble through the tough turf. In the afternoon, they all wandered off through the sweet and silent wilderness of rolling prairie into the woods in which they proposed to lay off another claim for pre-emption. At a short distance above their present home, cutting sharply through the sod, and crossing the Republican Fork a mile or so above their own ford, was an old Indian trail, which the boys had before noticed but could not understand. As Charlie

and Oscar, pressing on ahead of their elders, came upon the old trail, they loitered about until the rest of the party came up, and then they asked what could have cut that narrow track in the turf, so deep and so narrow.

"That's an Injun trail," said Younkins, who, with an uncomfortably new suit of Sunday clothes and a smooth-shaven face, had come over to visit his new neighbors. "Didn't you ever see an Injun trail before?" he asked, noting the look of eager curiosity on the faces of the boys. They assured him that they never had, and he continued: "This yere trail has been here for years and years, long and long before any white folks came into the country. Up north and east of yer, on the head-waters of the Big Blue, the Cheyennes used to live," — Younkins pronounced it Shyans, — "and as soon as the grass began to start in the spring, so as to give feed to their ponies and to the buffalo, they would come down this yere way for game. They crossed the Fork just above yere-like, and then they struck down to the head-waters of the Smoky Hill and so off to the westwards. Big game was plenty in those days, and now the Injuns off to the north of yere come down in just the same way — hunting for game."

The boys got down on their knees and scanned the trail with new interest. It was not more than nine or ten inches across, and was so worn down that it made a narrow trench, as it were, in the

deep sod, its lower surface being as smooth as a rolled wagon-track. Over this well-worn track, for ages past, the hurrying feet of wild tribes had passed so many times that even the wiry grass-roots had been killed down.

"Did war parties ever go out on this trail, do you suppose?" asked Sandy, sitting up in the grass.

"Sakes alive, yes!" replied Younkins. "Why, the Cheyennes and the Comanches used to roam over all these plains, in the old times, and they were mostly at war."

"Where are the Cheyennes and the Comanches now, Mr. Younkins?" asked Uncle Aleck.

"I reckon the Comanches are off to the south-like somewhere. It appears to me that I heard they were down off the Texas border, somewheres; the Cheyennes are to the westwards, somewhere near Fort Laramie."

"And what Indians are there who use this trail now?" inquired Oscar, whose eyes were sparkling with excitement as he studied the well-worn path of the Indian tribes.

Younkins explained that the Pottawottomies and the Pawnees, now located to the north, were the only ones who used the trail. "Blanket Indians," he said they were, peaceable creatures enough, but not good neighbors; he did not want any Indians of any sort near him. When one of the boys asked what blanket Indians were, Younkins explained, —

"There's three kinds of Injuns, none on 'em good, — town Injuns, blanket Injuns, and wild Injuns. You saw some of the town Injuns when you came up through the Delaware reserve — great lazy fellows, lyin' round the house all day and lettin' the squaws do all the work. Then there's the blankets; they live out in the woods and on the prairie, in teepees, or lodges, of skins and canvas-like, moving round from place to place, hunting over the plains in summer, and living off'n the Gov'ment in winter. They are mostly at peace with the whites, but they will steal whenever they get a chance. The other kind, and the worst, is the wild ones. They have nothing to do with the Government, and they make war on the whites whenever they feel like it. Just now, I don't know of any wild Injuns that are at war with Uncle Sam; but the Arapahoes, Comanches, and Cheyennes are all likely to break loose any time. I give 'm all a plenty of elbow room."

As the boys reluctantly ceased contemplating the fascinating Indian trail, and moved on behind the rest of the party, Charlie said: "I suppose we must make allowance for Younkins's prejudices. He is like most of the border men, who believe that all the good Indians are dead. If the Cheyennes and the Comanches could only tell their story in the books and newspapers, we might hear the other side."

The idea of a wild Indian's writing a book or a

letter to the newspapers tickled Sandy so much that he laughed loud and long.

Some two miles above the point where the settlers' ford crossed the Republican Fork, the stream swept around a bluffy promontory, and on a curve just above this was the tract of timber land which they now proposed to enter upon for their second claim. The trees were oak, hickory, and beech, with a slight undergrowth of young cottonwoods and hazel. The land lay prettily, the stream at this point flowing in a southerly direction, with the timber claim on its northwesterly bank. The sunny exposure of the grove, the open glades that diversified its dense growth, and the babbling brook that wound its way through it to the river, all combined to make it very desirable for a timber claim. At a short distance from the river the land rose gradually to a high ridge, and on the top of this grew a thick wood of spruce and fir.

"That's what you want for your next cabin," said Younkins, pointing his finger in the direction of the pines. "Best kind of stuff for building there is in these parts." Then he explained to the boys the process of cutting down the trees, splitting them up into shakes, or into lengths suitable for cabin-building, and he gave them an entertaining account of all the ways and means of finishing up a log-cabin, — a process, by the way, which they found then more entertaining in description than they afterward found it in the reality.

That night when Sandy lay down to refreshing sleep it was to dream of picturesque Indian fights, witnessed at a safe distance from afar. Accordingly, he was not very much surprised next morning, while he was helping Charlie to get ready the breakfast, when Oscar ran in breathless, with the one word, "Indians!"

"Come out on the hill back of the cabin," panted Oscar. "There's a lot of 'em coming out on the trail we saw yesterday, all in Indian file. Hurry up!" and away he darted, Sandy hastening with him to see the wonderful sight.

Sure enough, there they were, twenty-five or thirty Indians, — blanket Indians, as Younkins would have said, — strung along in the narrow trail, all in Indian file. It amazed the lads to see how the little Indian ponies managed to keep their feet in the narrow path. But they seemed to trot leisurely along with one foot before the other, just as the Indians did. Behind the mounted men were men and boys on foot, nearly as many as had passed on horseback. These kept up with the others, silently but swiftly maintaining the same pace that the mounted fellows did. It was a picturesque and novel sight to the young settlers. The Indians were dressed in the true frontier style, with hunting-shirt and leggings of dressed deerskin, a blanket slung loosely over the shoulder, all bareheaded, and with coarse black hair flowing in the morning breeze, except for the loose

knot in which it was twisted behind. Some of them carried their guns slung on their backs; and others of them had the weapons in their hands, ready for firing on the instant.

"There they go, over the divide," said Oscar, as the little cavalcade reached the last roll of the prairie, and began to disappear on the other side. Not one of the party deigned even to look in the direction of the wondering boys; and if they saw them, as they probably did, they made no sign.

"There they go, hunting buffalo, I suppose," said Sandy, with a sigh, as the last Indian of the file disappeared down the horizon. "Dear me! don't I wish I was going out after buffalo, instead of having to dibble corn into the sod all day! Waugh! Don't I hate it!" And the boy turned disconsolately back to the cabin. But he rallied with his natural good-humor when he had his tale to tell at the breakfast-table. He eagerly told how they had seen the Indians passing over the old trail, and had gazed on the redskins as they went "on the warpath."

"Warpath, indeed!" laughed Charlie. "Pot-hunters, that's what they are. All the warfare they are up to is waged on the poor innocent buffalo that Younkins says they are killing off and making scarcer every year."

"If nobody but Indians killed buffalo," said Mr. Bryant, "there would be no danger of their ever being all killed off. But, in course of time,

I suppose this country will all be settled up, and then there will be railroads, and after that the buffalo will have to go. Just now, any white man that can't saddle his horse and go out and kill a buffalo before breakfast thinks they are getting scarce. But I have heard some of the soldiers say that away up north of here, a little later in the season, the settlers cannot keep their crops, the buffalo roam all over everything so."

"For my part," put in Charlie, "I am not in the least afraid that the buffalo will be so plenty around these parts that they will hurt our crops; and I'd just like to see a herd come within shooting distance." And here he raised his arms, and took aim along an imaginary rifle.

Later in the forenoon, when the two younger boys had reached the end of the two rows in which they had been planting, Sandy straightened himself up with an effort, and said, "This *is* leg-weary work, isn't it, Oscar? I hate work, anyhow," he added, discontentedly, leaning on the top of his dibble, and looking off over the wide and green prairie that stretched toward the setting sun. "I wish I was an Indian."

Oscar burst into a laugh, and said, "Wish you were an Indian!—so you could go hunting when you like, and not have any work to do? Why, Sandy, I didn't think that of you."

Sandy colored faintly, and said, "Well, I do hate work, honestly; and it is only because I

know that I ought, and that father expects me to do my share, that I do it, and never grumble about it. Say, I never do grumble, do I, Oscar?" he asked earnestly.

"Only once in a while, when you can't help it, Sandy. I don't like work any better than you do; but it's no use talking about it, we've got to do it."

"I always feel so in the spring," said Sandy, very gravely and with a little sigh, as he went pegging away down another furrow.

Forty acres of land was all that the settlers intended to plant with corn, for the first year. Forty acres does not seem a very large tract of land to speak of, but when one sees the area marked out with a black furrow, and realizes that every foot of it must be covered with the corn-planter, it looks formidable. The boys thought it was a very big piece of land when they regarded it in that way. But the days soon flew by; and even while the young workers were stumping over the field, they consoled themselves with visions of gigantic ripe watermelons and mammoth pumpkins and squashes that would regale their eyes before long. For, following the example of most Kansas farmers, they had stuck into many of the furrows with the corn the seeds of these easily grown vines.

"Keep the melons a good way from the pumpkins, and the squashes a good way from both, if you don't want a bad mixture," said Uncle Aleck to

the boy settlers. Then he explained that if the pollen of the squash-blossoms should happen to fall on the melon-blossoms, the fruit would be neither good melon nor yet good squash, but a poor mixture of both. This piece of practical farming was not lost on Charlie; and when he undertook the planting of the garden spot which they found near the cabin, he took pains to separate the cucumber-beds as far as possible from the hills in which he planted his cantaloupe seeds. The boys were learning while they worked, even if they did grumble occasionally over their tasks.

CHAPTER XII.

HOUSE-BUILDING.

THERE was a change in the programme of daily labor, when the corn was in the ground. At odd times the settlers had gone over to the wood-lot and had laid out their plans for the future home on that claim. There was more variety to be expected in house-building than in planting, and the boys had looked forward with impatience to the beginning of that part of their enterprise. Logs for the house were cut from the pines and firs of the hill beyond the river bluff. From these, too, were to be riven, or split, the "shakes" for the roof-covering and for the odd jobs of work to be done about the premises.

Now, for the first time, the boys learned the use of some of the strange tools that they had brought with them. They had wondered over the frow, an iron instrument about fourteen inches long, for splitting logs. At right angles with the blade, and fixed in an eye at one end, was a handle of hard-wood. A section of wood was stood up endwise on a firm foundation of some sort, and the thin end

of the frow was hammered down into the grain of the wood, making a lengthwise split.

In the same way, the section of wood so riven was split again and again until each split was thin enough. The final result was called a "shake." Shakes were used for shingles, and even — when nailed on frames — for doors. Sawed lumber was very dear; and, except the sashes in the windows, every bit of the log-cabin must be got out of the primitive forest.

The boys were proud of the ample supply which their elders had brought with them; for even the knowing Younkins, scrutinizing the tools for wood-craft with a critical eye, remarked, "That's a good outfit, for a party of green settlers." Six stout wedges of chilled iron, and a heavy maul to hammer them with, were to be used for the splitting up of the big trees into smaller sections. Wooden wedges met the wants of many people in those primitive parts, at times, and the man who had a good set of iron wedges and a powerful maul was regarded with envy.

"What are these clumsy rings for?" Oscar had asked when he saw the maul-rings taken out of the wagon on their arrival and unloading.

His uncle smiled, and said, "You will find out what these are for, my lad, when you undertake to swing the maul. Did you never hear of splitting rails? Well, these are to split rails and such things from the log. We chop off a length of a

tree, about eight inches thick, taking the toughest and densest wood we can find. Trim off the bark from a bit of the trunk, which must be twelve or fourteen inches long; drive your rings on each end of the block to keep it from splitting; fit a handle to one end, or into one side of the block; and there you have your maul."

"Why, that's only a beetle, after all," cried Sandy, who, sitting on a stump near by, had been a deeply interested listener to his father's descriptoin of the maul.

"Certainly, my son; a maul is what people in the Eastern States would call a beetle; but you ask Younkins, some day, if he has a beetle over at his place. He, I am sure, would never use the name beetle."

Log-cabin building was great fun to the boys, although they did not find it easy work. There was a certain novelty about the raising of the structure that was to be a home, and an interest in learning the use of rude tools that lasted until the cabin was finished. The maul and the wedges, the frow and the little maul intended for it, and all the other means and appliances of the building, were all new and strange to these bright lads.

First, the size of the cabin, twelve feet wide and twenty feet long, was marked out on the site on which it was to rise, and four logs were laid to define the foundation. These were the sills of the new house. At each end of every log two

notches were cut, one on the under side and one on the upper, to fit into similar notches cut in the log below, and in that which was to be placed on top. So each corner was formed by these interlacing and overlapping ends. The logs were piled up, one above another, just as children build "cob-houses," from odds and ends of playthings. Cabin-builders do not say that a cabin is a certain number of feet high; they usually say that it is ten logs high, or twelve logs high, as the case may be. When the structure is as high as the eaves are intended to be, the top logs are bound together, from side to side, with smaller logs fitted upon the upper logs of each side and laid across as if they were to be the supports of a floor for another story. Then the gable-ends are built up of logs, shorter and shorter as the peak of the gable is approached, and kept in place by other small logs laid across, endwise of the cabin, and locked into the end of each log in the gable until all are in place. On these transverse logs, or rafters, the roof is laid. Holes are cut or sawed through the logs for the door and windows, and the house begins to look habitable.

The settlers on the Republican Fork cut the holes for doors and windows before they put on the roof, and when the layer of split shakes that made the roof was in place, and the boys bounded inside to see how things looked, they were greatly amused to notice how light it was. The spaces

between the logs were almost wide enough to crawl through, Oscar said. But they had studied log-cabin building enough to know that these wide cracks were to be "chinked" with thin strips of wood, the refuse of shakes, driven in tightly, and then daubed over with clay, a fine bed of which was fortunately near at hand. The provident Younkins had laid away in his own cabin the sashes and glass for two small windows; and these he had agreed to sell to the newcomers. Partly hewn logs for floor-joists were placed upon the ground inside the cabin, previously levelled off for the purpose. On these were laid thick slabs of oak and hickory, riven out of logs drawn from the grove near by. These slabs of hard-wood were "puncheons," and fortunate as was the man who could have a floor of sawed lumber to his cabin, he who was obliged to use puncheons was better off than those with whom timber was so scarce that the natural surface on the ground was their only floor.

"My! how it rattles!" was Sandy's remark when he had first taken a few steps on the new puncheon floor of their cabin. "It sounds like a tread-mill going its rounds. Can't you nail these down, daddy?"

His father explained that the unseasoned lumber of the puncheons would so shrink in the drying that no fastening could hold them. They must lie loosely on the floor-joists until they were thor-

oughly seasoned; then they might be fastened down with wooden pins driven through holes bored for that purpose; nails and spikes cost too much to be wasted on a puncheon floor. In fact, very little hardware was wasted on any part of that cabin. Even the door was made by fastening with wooden pegs a number of short pieces of shakes to a frame fitted to the doorway cut in the side of the cabin. The hinges were strong bits of leather, the soles of the boots whose legs had been used for corn-droppers. The clumsy wooden latch was hung inside to a wooden pin driven into one of the crosspieces of the door, and it played in a loop of deerskin at the other end. A string of deerskin fastened to the end of the latch-bar nearest the jamb of the doorway was passed outside through a hole cut in the door, serving to lift the latch from without when a visitor would enter.

"Our latch-string hangs out!" exclaimed Charlie, triumphantly, when this piece of work was done. "I must say I never knew before what it meant to have the 'latch-string hanging out' for all comers. See, Oscar, when we shut up the house for the night, all we have to do is to pull in the latch-string, and the door is barred."

"Likewise, when you have dropped your jack-knife through a crack in the floor into the cellar beneath, all you have to do is to turn over a puncheon or two and get down and find it," said Sandy, coolly, as he took up two slabs and hunted for

his knife. The boys soon found that although their home was rude and not very elegant as to its furniture, it had many conveniences that more elaborate and handsomer houses did not have. There were no floors to wash, hardly to sweep. As their surroundings were simple, their wants were few. It was a free and easy life that they were gradually drifting into, here in the wilderness.

Charlie declared that the cabin ought to have a name. As yet, the land on which they had settled had no name except that of the river by which it lay. The boys thought it would give some sort of distinction to their home if they gave it a title. "Liberty Hall," they thought would be a good name to put on the roof of their log-cabin. Something out of Cooper's novels, Oscar proposed, would be the best for the locality.

"'Hog-and-hominy,' how would that suit?" asked Sandy, with a laugh. "Unless we get some buffalo or antelope meat pretty soon, it will be hog and hominy to the end of the chapter."

"Why not call it the John G. Whittier cabin?" said Uncle Aleck, looking up from his work of shaping an ox-yoke.

"The very thing, daddy!" shouted Sandy, clapping his hands. "Only don't you think that's a very long name to say in a hurry? Whittier would be shorter, you know. But, then," he added, doubtfully, "it isn't everybody that would know which Whittier was meant by that, would they?"

"Sandy seems to think that the entire population of Kansas will be coming here, some day, to read that name, if we ever have it. We have been here two months now, and no living soul but ourselves and Younkins has ever been in these diggings; not one. Oh, I say, let's put up just nothing but 'Whittier' over the door there. We'll know what that means, and if anybody comes in the course of time, I'll warrant he'll soon find out which Whittier it means." This was Oscar's view of the case.

"Good for you, Oscar!" said his uncle. "Whittier let it be."

Before sundown, that day, a straight-grained shake of pine, free from knot or blemish, had been well smoothed down with the draw-shave, and on its fair surface, writ large, was the beloved name of the New England poet, thus: WHITTIER.

This was fastened securely over the entrance of the new log-cabin, and the Boy Settlers, satisfied with their work, stood off at a little distance and gave it three cheers. The new home was named.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOST!

"We must have some board-nails and some lead," remarked Uncle Aleck, one fine morning, as the party were putting the finishing touches to the Whittier cabin. "Who will go down to the post and get them?"

"I," "I," "I," shouted all three of the boys at once.

"Oh, you will all go, will you?" said he, with a smile. "Well, you can't all go, for we can borrow only one horse, and it's ten miles down there and ten miles back; and you will none of you care to walk, I am very sure."

The boys looked at each other and laughed. Who should be the lucky one to take that delightful horseback ride down to the post, as Fort Riley was called, and get a glimpse of civilization?

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Sandy, after some good-natured discussion. "Let's draw cuts to see who shall go. Here they are. You draw first, Charlie, you being the eldest man. Now, then, Oscar. Why, hooray! it's my cut! I've drawn the longest, and so I am to go. Oh, it was

a fair and square deal, daddy," he added, seeing his father look sharply at him.

The matter was settled, and next morning, bright and early, Sandy was fitted out with his commissions and the money to buy them with. Younkins had agreed to let him have his horse, saddle, and bridle. Work on the farm was now practically over until time for harvesting was come. So the other two boys accompanied Sandy over to the Younkins side of the river and saw him safely off down the river road leading to the post. A meal-sack in which to bring back his few purchases was snugly rolled up and tied to the crupper of his saddle, and feeling in his pocket for the hundredth time to make sure of the ten-dollar gold piece therein bestowed, Sandy trotted gayly down the road. The two other boys gazed enviously after him, and then went home, wondering, as they strolled along, how long Sandy would be away. He would be back by dark at the latest, for the days were now at about their longest, and the long summer day was just begun.

At Younkins's cabin they met Hiram Battles, a neighbor who lived beyond the divide to the eastward, and who had just ridden over in search of some of his cattle that had strayed away, during the night before. Mr. Battles said he was "powerful worrited." Indians had been seen prowling around on his side of the divide: but he had seen

no signs of a camp, and he had traced the tracks of his cattle, three head in all, over this way as far as Lone Tree Creek, a small stream just this side of the divide; but there he had unaccountably lost all trace of them.

"Well, as for the Indians," said Charlie, modestly, "we have seen them passing out on the trail. But they were going hunting, and they kept right on to the southward and westward; and we have not seen them go back since."

"The lad's right," said Younkins, slowly, "but still I don't like the stories I hear down the road a piece. They do say that the Shians have riz."

"The Cheyennes have risen!" exclaimed Charlie. "And we have let Sandy go down to the post alone!"

Both of the men laughed — a little unpleasantly, it seemed to the boys, although Younkins was the soul of amiability and mildness. But Charlie thought it was unkind in them to laugh at his very natural apprehensions; and he said as much, as he and Oscar, with their clothes on their heads, waded the Republican Fork on the way home.

"Well, Charlie," was Oscar's comforting remark, as they scrambled up the opposite bank, "I guess the reason why they laughed at us was that if the Cheyennes have gone on the warpath, the danger is out in the west; whereas, Sandy has gone eastward to-day, and that is right in the way of safety, isn't it? He's gone to the post; and you know

that the people down at Soldier Creek told us that this was a good place to settle, because the post would be our protection in case of an Indian rising."

Meanwhile, Sandy was blissfully and peacefully jogging along in the direction of the military post. Only one house stood between Younkins's and the fort; and that was Mullett's. They all had occasion to think pleasantly of Mullett's; for whenever an opportunity came for the mail to be forwarded from the fort up to Mullett's, it was sent there; then Sparkins, who was the next neighbor above, but who lived off the road a bit, would go down to Mullett's and bring the mail up to his cabin; when he did this, he left a red flannel flag flying on the roof of his house, and Younkins, if passing along the trail, saw the signal and went out of his way a little to take the mail up to his cabin. Somehow, word was sent across the river to the Whittier boys, as the good Younkins soon learned to call the Boy Settlers, and they went gladly over to Younkins's and got the precious letters and papers from home. That was the primitive way in which the mail for the settlers on the Republican Fork went up the road from Fort Riley, in those days; and all letters and papers designed for the settlers along there were addressed simply to Fort Riley, which was their nearest post-office.

So Sandy, when he reached Mullett's, was not

disappointed to be told that there were no letters for anybody up the river. There had been nobody down to the post very lately. Sandy knew that, and he was confident that he would have the pleasure of bringing up a good-sized budget when he returned. So he whipped up his somewhat lazy steed and cantered down toward the fort.

Soon after leaving Mullett's he met a drove of sheep. The drivers were two men and a boy of his own age, mounted on horseback and carrying their provisions, apparently, strapped behind them. When he asked them where they were going, they surlily replied that they were going to California. That would take them right up the road that he had come down, Sandy thought to himself. And he wondered if the boys at home would see the interesting sight of five hundred sheep going up the Republican Fork, bound for California.

He reached the fort before noon · and, with a heart beating high with pleasure, he rode into the grounds and made his way to the well-remembered sutler's store where he had bought the candy, months before. He had a few pennies of his own, and he mentally resolved to spend these for raisins. Sandy had a "sweet tooth," but, except for sugar and molasses, he had eaten nothing sweet since they were last at Fort Riley on their way westward.

It was with a feeling of considerable importance that Sandy surveyed the interior of the sutler's

store. The proprietor looked curiously at him, as if wondering why so small a boy should turn up alone in that wilderness; and when the lad asked for letters for the families up the river, Mullett's, Sparkins's, Battles's, Younkins's, and his own people, the sutler said: "Be you one of them Abolitioners that have named your place after that man Whittier, the Abolition poet? I've hearn tell of you, and I've hearn tell of him. And he ain't no good. Do you hear me?" Sandy replied that he heard him, and to himself he wondered greatly how anybody, away down here, ten miles from the new home, could possibly have heard about the name they had given to their cabin.

Several soldiers who had been lounging around the place now went out at the door. The sutler, looking cautiously about as if to be sure that nobody heard him, said: "Never you mind what I said just now, sonny. Right you are, and that man Whittier writes the right sort of stuff. Bet yer life! I'm no Abolitioner; but I'm a free-State man, I am, every time."

"Then what made you talk like that, just now?" asked Sandy, his honest, freckled face glowing with righteous indignation. "If you like Mr. John G. Whittier's poetry, why did you say he wasn't any good?"

"Policy, policy, my little man. This yere's a pro-slavery guv'ment, and this yere is a pro-slav-

ery post. I couldn't keep this place one single day if they thought I was a free-State man. See? But I tell you right here, and don't you fergit it, this yere country is going to be free State. Kansas is no good for slavery; and slavery can't get in here. Stick a pin there, and keep your eye on it."

With some wonder and much disgust at the man's cowardice, Sandy packed his precious letters in the bosom of his shirt. Into one end of his meal-sack he put a pound of soda-biscuit for which his Uncle Charlie had longed, a half-pound of ground ginger with which Charlie desired to make some "molasses gingerbread, like mother's," and a half-pound of smoking-tobacco for his dear father. It seemed a long way off to his father now, Sandy thought, as he tied up that end of the bag. Then into the other end, having tied the bag firmly around, about a foot and a half from the mouth, he put the package of nails and a roll of sheet lead. It had been agreed that if they were to go buffalo-hunting, they must have rifle-balls and bullets for their shot-guns.

The sutler, who had become very friendly, looked on with an amused smile, and said, "'Pears to me, sonny, you got all the weight at one end, haven't you?"

Sandy did not like to be called "sonny," but he good-naturedly agreed that he had made a mistake; so he began all over again and shifted his

cargo so that the nails and a box of yeast-powder occupied one end of the meal-sack, and the other articles balanced the other. The load was then tied closely to the crupper of the saddle and the boy was ready to start on his homeward trip. His eyes roved longingly over the stock of goodies which the sutler kept for the children, young and old, of the garrison, and he asked, "How much for raisins?"

"Two bits a pound for box, and fifteen cents for cask," replied the man, sententiously.

"Give me half a pound of cask raisins," said the boy, with some hesitation. He had only a few cents to spare for his own purchases.

The sutler weighed out a half-pound of box raisins, did them up, and handed them across the counter, saying, "No pay; them's for Whittier."

Sandy took the package, shoved it into his shirt-bosom, and, wondering if his "Thank you" were sufficient payment for the gift, mounted his steed, rode slowly up the road to a spring that he had noticed bubbling out of the side of a ravine, and with a thankful heart, turning out the horse to graze, sat down to eat his frugal lunch, now graced with the dry but to him delicious raisins. So the sutler at Fort Riley was a free-State man! Wasn't that funny!

It was a beautifully bright afternoon, and Sandy, gathering his belongings together, started up the river road on a brisk canter. The old

horse was a hard trotter, and when he slackened down from a canter, poor Sandy shook in every muscle, and his teeth chattered as if he had a fit of ague. But whenever the lad contrived to urge his steed into an easier gait he got on famously. The scenery along the Republican Fork is (or was) very agreeable to the eye. Long slopes of vivid green stretched off in every direction, their rolling sides dropping into deep ravines through which creeks, bordered with dense growths of alder, birch, and young cottonwood, meandered. The sky was blue and cloudless, and, as the boy sped along the breezy uplands, the soft and balmy air fanning his face, he sung and whistled to express the fervor of his buoyant spirits. He was a hearty and a happy boy.

Suddenly he came to a fork in the road which he had not noticed when he came down that way in the morning. For a moment he was puzzled by the sight. Both were broad and smooth tracks over the grassy prairie, and both rose and fell over the rolling ground; only, one led to the left and somewhat southerly, and the other to the right. "Pshaw!" muttered Sandy, and he paused and rubbed his head for an idea. "That left-hand road must strike off to some ford lower down on the Fork than I have ever been. But I never heard of any ford below ours."

With that, his keen eyes noticed that the right-hand road was cut and marked with the many

hoof-tracks of a flock of sheep. He argued to himself that the sheep-drivers had told him that they were going to California. The California road led up the bank of the Republican Fork close to the trail that led him from Younkins's to the ford across the river. The way was plain; so, striking his spur into the old sorrel's side, he dashed on up the right-hand road, singing gayly as he went.

Absorbed in the mental calculation as to the number of days that it would take that flock of sheep to reach California, the boy rode on, hardly noticing the landmarks by the way, or taking in anything but the general beauty of the broad and smiling landscape over which the yellow light of the afternoon sun, sinking in the west, poured a flood of splendor. Slackening his speed as he passed a low and sunken little round valley filled with brush and alders, he heard a queer sound like the playful squealing of some wild animal. Slipping off his saddle and leading his horse by the bridle over the thick turf, Sandy cautiously approached the edge of the valley, the margin of which was steep and well sheltered by a growth of cottonwoods. After peering about for some time, the lad caught a glimpse of a beautiful sight. A young doe and her fawn were playing together in the open meadow below, absolutely unconscious of the nearness of any living thing besides themselves. The mother-deer was browsing, now and

again, and at times the fawn, playful as a young kitten, would kick its heels, or butt its head against its mother's side, and both would squeal in a comical way.

Sandy had never seen deer in a state of living wildness before, and his heart thumped heavily in his breast as he gazed on the wonderful sight. He half groaned to himself that he was a great fool to have come away from home without a gun. What an easy shot it was! How nicely he could knock over the mother, if only he had a shot-gun! She was within such short range. Then he felt a sinking of the heart, as he imagined the horror of death that would have overtaken the innocent and harmless creatures, sporting there so thoughtless of man's hunting instincts and cruelty. Would he kill them, if he had the weapon to kill with? He could not make up his mind that he would. So he crouched silently in the underbrush, and watched the pretty sight as if it were a little animal drama enacted here in the wilderness, mother and child having a romp in their wildwood home.

"Well, I'll give them a good scare, anyhow," muttered the boy," his sportive instincts getting the better of his tender-heartedness at last. He dashed up noisily from the underbrush, swung his arms, and shouted, "Boo!" Instantly deer and fawn, with two or three tremendous bounds, were out of the little valley and far away on the prairie, skimming over the rolls of green, and before the

boy could catch his breath, they had disappeared into one of the many dells and ravines that interlaced the landscape.

But another animal was scared by the boy's shout. In his excitement he had slipped the bridle-rein from his arm, and the old sorrel, terrified by his halloo, set off on a brisk trot down the road. In vain Sandy called to him to stop. Free from guidance, the horse trotted along, and when, after a long chase, Sandy caught up with his steed, a considerable piece of road had been covered the wrong way, for the horse had gone back over the line of march. When Sandy was once more mounted, and had mopped his perspiring forehead, he cast his eye along the road, and, to his dismay, discovered that the sheep-tracks had disappeared. What had become of the sheep? How could they have left the trail without his sooner noticing it? He certainly had not passed another fork of the road since coming into this at the fork below.

"This is more of my heedlessness, mother would say," muttered Sandy to himself. "What a big fool I must have been to miss seeing where the sheep left the trail! I shall never make a good plainsman if I don't keep my eye skinned better than this. Jingo! it's getting toward sundown!" Sure enough, the sun was near the horizon, and Sandy could see none of the familiar signs of the country round about the Fork.

But he pushed on. It was too late now to re-

turn to the fork of the road and explore the other branch. He was in for it. He remembered, too, that two of their most distant neighbors, Mr. Fuller and his wife, lived somewhere back of Battles's place, and it was barely possible that it was on the creek, whose woody and crooked line he could now see far to the westward, that their log-cabin was situated. He had seen Mr. Fuller over at the Fork once or twice, and he remembered him as a gentle-mannered and kindly man. Surely he must live on this creek! So he pushed on with new courage, for his heart had begun to sink when he finally realized that he was far off his road.

The sun was down when he reached the creek. No sign of human habitation was in sight. In those days cabins and settlements were very, very few and far between, and a traveller once off his trail might push on for hundreds of miles without finding any trace of human life.

In the gathering dusk the heavy-hearted boy rode along the banks of the creek, anxiously looking out for some sign of settlers. It was as lonely and solitary as if no man had ever seen its savageness before. Now and then a night-bird called from a thicket, as if asking what interloper came into these solitudes; or a scared jack-rabbit scampered away from his feeding-ground, as the steps of the horse tore through the underbrush. Even the old sorrel seemed to gaze reproachfully at the lad, who had dismounted, and now led the animal through the wild and tangled undergrowths.

LOST!

When he had gone up and down the creek several times, hunting for some trace of a settlement, and finding none, he reflected that Fuller's house was on the side of the stream, to the west. It was a very crooked stream, and he was not sure, in the darkness, which was west and which was east. But he boldly plunged into the creek, mounting his horse, and urging the unwilling beast across. Once over, he explored that side of the stream, hither and yon, in vain. Again he crossed, and so many times did he cross and recross that he finally had no idea where he was. Then the conviction came fully into his mind: He was lost.

The disconsolate boy sat down on a fallen tree and meditated. It was useless to go farther. He was tired in every limb and very, very hungry. He bethought himself of the soda-biscuits in his sack. He need not starve, at any rate. Dobbin was grazing contentedly while the lad meditated, so slipping off the saddle and the package attached to it, Sandy prepared to satisfy his hunger with what little provisions he had at hand. How queerly the biscuits tasted! Jolting up and down on the horse's back, they were well broken up. But what was this so hot in the mouth? Ginger? Sure enough, it was ginger. The pounding that had crushed the biscuits had broken open the package of ginger, and that spicy stuff was plentifully sprinkled all over the contents of the sack.

"Gingerbread," muttered Sandy, grimly, as he

blew out of his mouth some of the powdery spice. "Faugh! Tobacco!" he cried next. His father's package of smoking-tobacco had shared the fate of the ginger. Sandy's supper was spoiled; and resigning himself to spending the night hungry in the wilderness, he tethered the horse to a tree, put the saddle-blanket on the ground, arranged the saddle for a pillow, and, having cut a few leafy boughs from the alders, stuck them into the turf so as to form a shelter around his head, and lay down to pleasant dreams.

"And this is Saturday night, too," thought the lost boy. "They are having beans baked in the ground-oven at home in the cabin. They are wondering where I am. What would mother say if she knew I was lost out here on Flyaway Creek?" And the boy's heart swelled a little, and a few drops of water stood in his eyes, for he had never been lost before in his life. He looked up at the leaden sky, now overcast, and wondered if God saw this lost boy. A few drops fell on his cheek. Tears? No; worse than that; it was rain.

"Well, this is a little too much," said Sandy, stoutly. "Here goes for one more trial." So saying, he saddled and mounted his patient steed, and, at a venture, took a new direction around a bend in the creek. As he rounded the bend, the bark of a dog suddenly rung from a mass of gloom and darkness. How sweet the sound! Regardless of the animal's angry challenge, he pressed on

That mass of blackness was a log-barn, and near by was a corral with cows therein. Then a light shone from the log-cabin, and a man's voice was heard calling the dog.

Fuller's!

The good man of the house received the lad with open arms, and cared for his horse; inside the cabin, Mrs. Fuller, who had heard the conversation without, had made ready a great pan of milk and a loaf of bread, having risen from her bed to care for the young wanderer. Never did bread and milk taste so deliciously to weary traveller as this! Full-fed, Sandy looked at the clock on the wall, and marked with wondering eye that it was past midnight. He had recounted his trials as he ate, and the sympathizing couple had assured him that he had been deceived by the sheep-driver. It was very unlikely that he was driving his flock to California. And it was probable that, coming to some place affording food and water, the sheep had left the main road and had camped down in one of the ravines out of sight.

As Sandy composed his weary limbs in a blanket-lined bunk opposite that occupied by Fuller and his wife, he was conscious that he gave a long, long sigh as if in his sleep. And, as he drifted off into slumber-land, he heard the good woman say, "Well, he's out of his troubles, poor boy!" Sandy chuckled to himself and slept.

CHAPTER XIV.

MORE HOUSE-BUILDING.

It was an anxious and wondering household that Sandy burst in upon next morning, when he had reached the cabin, escorted to the divide above Younkins's place by his kind-hearted host of the night before. It was Sunday morning, bright and beautiful; but truly, never had any home looked so pleasant to his eyes as did the homely and weather-beaten log-cabin which they called their own while they lived in it. He had left his borrowed horse with its owner, and, shouldering his meal-sack, with its dearly bought contents, he had taken a short-cut to the cabin, avoiding the usual trail in order that as he approached he might not be seen from the window looking down the river.

"Oh, Sandy's all right," he heard his brother Charlie say. "I'll stake my life that he will come home with flying colors, if you only give him time. He's lost the trail somehow, and had to put up at some cabin all night. Don't you worry about Sandy."

"But these Indian stories; I don't like them," said his father, with a tinge of sadness in his voice.

Sandy could bear no more; so, flinging down his burden, he bounced into the cabin with, "Oh, I'm all right! Safe and sound, but as hungry as a bear."

The little party rushed to embrace the young adventurer, and, in their first flush of surprise, nobody remembered to be severe with him for his carelessness. Quite the hero of the hour, the lad sat on the table and told them his tale, how he had lost his way, and how hospitably and well he had been cared for at Fuller's.

"Fuller's!" exclaimed his uncle. "What in the world took you so far off your track as Fuller's? You must have gone at least ten miles out of your way."

"Yes, Uncle Charlie," said the boy, "it's just as easy to travel ten miles out of the way as it is to go one. All you have to do is to get your face in the wrong way, and all the rest is easy. Just keep a-going; that's what I did. I turned to the right instead of to the left, and for once I found that the right was wrong."

A burst of laughter from Oscar, who had been opening the sack that held Sandy's purchases, interrupted the story.

"Just see what a hodgepodge of a mess Sandy has brought home! Tobacco, biscuits, ginger, and I don't know what not, all in a pudding. It only lacks milk and eggs to make it a cracker pudding flavored with ginger and smoking-tobacco!" And

everybody joined in the laugh that a glance at Sandy's load called forth.

"Yes," said the blushing boy; "I forgot to tie the bag at both ends, and the jouncing up and down of Younkins's old horse (dear me! wasn't he a hard trotter!) must have made a mash of everything in the bag. The paper of tobacco burst, and then I suppose the ginger followed; the jolting of poor old 'Dobbin' did the rest. Ruined, daddy? Nothing worth saving?"

Mr. Howell ruefully acknowledged that the mixture was not good to eat, nor yet to smoke, and certainly not to make gingerbread of. So, after picking out some of the larger pieces of the biscuits, the rest was thrown away, greatly to Sandy's mortification.

"All of my journey gone for nothing," he said, with a sigh.

"Never mind, my boy," said his father, fondly; "since you have come back alive and well, let the rest of the business care for itself. As long as you are alive, and the redskins have not captured you, I am satisfied."

Such was Sandy's welcome home.

With the following Monday morning came hard work, — harder work, so Sandy thought, than miserably trying to find one's way in the darkness of a strange region of country. For another log-house, this time on the prairie claim, was to be begun at once. They might be called on at any

time to give up the cabin in which they were simply tenants at will, and it was necessary that a house of some sort be put on the claim that they had staked out and planted. The corn was up and doing well. Sun and rain had contributed to hasten on the corn-field, and the vines of the melons were vigorously pushing their way up and down the hills of grain. Charlie wondered what they would do with so many watermelons when they ripened; there would be hundreds of them; and the mouths that were to eat them, although now watering for the delicious fruit, were not numerous enough to make away with a hundredth part of what would be ripe very soon. There was no market nearer than the post, and there were many melon-patches between Whittier's and the fort.

But the new log-house, taken hold of with energy, was soon built up to the height where the roof was to be put on. At this juncture, Younkins advised them to roof over the cabin slightly, make a corn-bin of it, and wait for developments. For, he argued, if there should be any rush of emigrants and settlers to that part of the country, so that their claims were in danger of dispute, they would have ample warning, and could make ready for an immediate occupation of the place. If nobody came, then the corn-house, or bin, would be all they wanted of the structure.

But Mr. Howell, who took the lead in all such

matters, shook his head doubtfully. He was not in favor of evading the land laws; he was more afraid of the claim being jumped. If they were to come home from a hunting trip, some time, and find their log-cabin occupied by a "claim-jumper," or "squatter," as these interlopers are called, and their farm in the possession of strangers, wouldn't they feel cheap? He thought so.

"Say, Uncle Aleck," said Oscar, "why not finish it off as a cabin to live in, put in the corn when it ripens, and then we shall have the concern as a dwelling, in case there is any danger of the claim being jumped?"

"Great head, Oscar," said his uncle, admiringly. "That is the best notion yet. We will complete the cabin just as if we were to move into it, and if anybody who looks like an intended claim-jumper comes prowling around, we will take the alarm and move in. But so far, I'm sure, there's been no rush to these parts. It's past planting season, and it is not likely that anybody will get up this way, now so far west, without our knowing it."

So the log-cabin, or, as they called it, "Whittier, Number Two," was finished with all that the land laws required, with a window filled with panes of glass, a door, and a "stick chimney" built of sticks plastered with clay, a floor and space enough on the ground to take care of a family twice as large as theirs, in case of need. When all was done, they felt that they were now able to hold their

farming claim as well as their timber claim, for on each was a goodly log-house, fit to live in and comfortable for the coming winter if they should make up their minds to live in the two cabins during that trying season.

The boys took great satisfaction in their kitchen-garden near the house in which they were tenants; for when Younkins lived there, he had ploughed and spaded the patch, and planted it two seasons, so now it was an old piece of ground compared with the wild land that had just been broken up around it. In their garden-spot they had planted a variety of vegetables for the table, and in the glorious Kansas sunshine, watered by frequent showers, they were thriving wonderfully. They promised themselves much pleasure and profit from a garden that they would make by their new cabin, when another summer should come.

"Younkins says that he can walk all over his melon-patch on the other side of the Fork, stepping only on the melons and never touching the ground once," said Oscar, one day, later in the season, as they were feasting themselves on one of the delicious watermelons that now so plentifully dotted their own corn-field.

"What a big story!" exclaimed both of the other boys at once. But Oscar appealed to his father, who came striding by the edge of the field where they chatted together. Had he ever heard of such a thing?

"Well," said Mr. Bryant, good-naturedly, "I have heard of melons so thick in a patch, and so big around, that the sunshine couldn't get to the ground except at high noon. How is that for a tall story?"

The boys protested that that was only a tale of fancy. Could it be possible that anybody could raise melons so thickly together as Mr. Younkins had said he had seen them? Mr. Bryant, having kicked open a fine melon, took out the heart of it to refresh himself with, as was the manner of the settlers, where the fruit was so plenty and the market so far out of reach; then, between long drafts of the delicious pulp, he explained that certain things, melons for example, flourished better on the virgin soil of the sod than elsewhere.

"Another year or so," he said, "and you will never see on this patch of land such melons as these. They will never do so well again on this soil as this year. I never saw such big melons as these, and if we had planted them a little nearer together, I don't in the least doubt that any smart boy, like Sandy here, could walk all over the field stepping from one melon to another, if he only had a pole to balance himself with as he walked. There would be nothing very 'wonderful-like' about that. It's a pity that we have no use for these, there are so many of them and they are so good. Pity some of the folks at home haven't a few of them — a hundred or two, for instance."

It did seem a great waste of good things that these hundreds and hundreds of great watermelons should decay on the ground for lack of somebody to eat them. In the very wantonness of their plenty the settlers had been accustomed to break open two or three of the finest of the fruit before they could satisfy themselves that they had got one of the best. Even then they only took the choicest parts, leaving the rest to the birds. By night, too, the coyotes, or prairie-wolves, mean and sneaking things that they were, would steal down into the melon-patch, and, in the desperation of their hunger, nose into the broken melons left by the settlers, and attempt to drag away some of the fragments, all the time uttering their fiendish yelps and howls.

Somebody had told the boys that the juice of watermelons boiled to a thick syrup was a very good substitute for molasses. Younkins told them that, back in old Missouri, "many families never had any other kind of sweetenin' in the house than watermelon molasses." So Charlie made an experiment with the juice boiled until it was pretty thick. All hands tasted it, and all hands voted that it was very poor stuff. They decided that they could not make their superabundance of watermelons useful except as an occasional refreshment.

CHAPTER XV.

PLAY COMES AFTER WORK.

THE two cabins built, wood for the winter cut and hauled, and the planting all done, there was now nothing left to do but to wait and see the crop ripen. Their good friend Younkins was in the same fortunate condition, and he was ready to suggest, to the intense delight of the boys, that they might be able to run into a herd of buffalo, if they should take a notion to follow the old Indian trail out to the feeding-grounds. In those days there was no hunting west of the new settlement, except that by the Indians. In that vague and mysterious way by which reports travel — in the air, as it were — among all frontier settlements, they had heard that buffalo were plenty in the vast ranges to the westward, the herds moving slowly northward, grazing as they went. It was now the season of wild game, and so the boys were sent across to Younkins's to ask him what he thought of a buffalo-hunting trip.

Reaching his cabin, the good woman of the house told them that he had gone into the tall timber near by, thinking he heard some sort of wild birds

in the underbrush. He had taken his gun with him; in fact, Younkins was seldom seen without his gun, except when he was at work in the fields. The boys gleefully followed Younkins's trail into the forest, making for an opening about a half-mile away, where Mrs. Younkins thought he was most likely to be found. "Major," the big yellow dog, a special pet of Sandy's, accompanied them, although his mistress vainly tried to coax him back. Major was fond of boys' society.

"There's Younkins now!" cried Oscar, as they drew near an opening in the wood into which the hot sunlight poured. Younkins was half crouching and cautiously making his way into the nearer side of the opening, and the boys, knowing that he was on the track of game, silently drew near, afraid of disturbing the hunter or the hunted. Suddenly Major, catching sight of the game, bounded forward with a loud bark into the tangle of berry bushes and vines. There was a confused noise of wings, a whistle of alarm which also sounded like the gobble of a turkey, and four tremendous birds rose up, and with a motion that was partly a run and partly a flying, they disappeared into the depths of the forest. To their intense surprise, the usually placid Younkins turned savagely upon the dog, and saying, "Drat that fool dog!" fired one barrel loaded with fine bird-shot into poor Major.

"Four as fine wild turkeys as you ever saw in

your life!" he explained, as if in apology to the boys. "I was sure of at least two of 'em; and that lunkhead of a dog must needs dash in and scare 'em up. It's too pesky blamed bad!"

The boys were greatly mortified at the disaster that they had brought upon Younkins and Major by bringing the dog out with them. But when Charlie, as the eldest, explained that they had no idea that Major would work mischief, Younkins said, "Never mind, boys, for you did not know what was going on-like."

Younkins, ashamed, apparently, of his burst of temper, stooped down, and discovering that Major's wounds were not very serious, extracted the shot, plucked a few leaves of some plant that he seemed to know all about, and pressed the juice into the wounds made by the shot. The boys looked on with silent admiration. This man knew everything, they thought. They had often marvelled to see how easily and unerringly he found his way through woods, streams, and over prairies; now he showed them another gift. He was a "natural-born doctor," as his wife proudly said of him.

"No turkey for supper to-night," said Younkins, as he picked up his shot-gun and returned with the boys to the cabin. He was "right glad," he said, to agree to go on a buffalo hunt, if the rest of the party would like to go. He knew there must be buffalo off to the westward. He went with Mr. Fuller and Mr. Battles last year, about

this time, and they had great luck. He would come over that evening and set a date with the other men for starting out together.

Elated with this ready consent of Younkins, the lads went across the ford, eager to tell their elders the story of the wild turkeys and poor Major's exploit. Sandy, carrying his shot-gun on his shoulder, lingered behind while the other two boys hurried up the trail to the log-cabin. He fancied that he heard a noise as of ducks quacking, in the creek that emptied into the Fork just below the ford. So, making his way softly to the densely wooded bank of the creek, he parted the branches with great caution and looked in. What a sight it was! At least fifty fine black ducks were swimming around, feeding and quacking sociably together, entirely unconscious of the wide-open blue eyes that were staring at them from behind the covert of the thicket. Sandy thought them even more wonderful and beautiful than the young fawn and his dam that he had seen on the Fort Riley trail. For a moment, fascinated by the rare spectacle, he gazed wonderingly at the ducks as they swam around, chasing each other. and eagerly hunting for food. It was but for a moment, however. Then he raised his shot-gun, and taking aim into the thickest of the flock, fired both barrels in quick succession. Instantly the gay clamor of the pretty creatures ceased, and the flock rose with a loud whirring of wings, and wheeled away over

the tree-tops. The surface of the water, to Sandy's excited imagination, seemed to be fairly covered with birds, some dead, and some struggling with wounded limbs. The other two boys, startled by the double report from Sandy's gun, came scampering down the trail, just as the lad, all excitement, was stripping off his clothes to wade into the creek for his game.

"Ducks! Black ducks! I've shot a million of 'em!" cried the boy, exultingly; and in another instant he plunged into the water up to his middle, gathering the ducks by the legs and bringing them to the bank, where Charlie and Oscar, discreetly keeping out of the oozy creek, received them, counting the birds as they threw them on the grass.

"Eighteen, all told!" shouted Oscar, when the last bird had been caught, as it floundered about among the weeds, and brought ashore.

"Eighteen ducks in two shots!" cried Sandy, his freckled face fairly beaming with delight. "Did ever anybody see such luck?"

They all thought that nobody ever had.

"What's that on your leg?" asked Oscar, stooping to pick from Sandy's leg a long, brown object looking like a flat worm. To the boys' intense astonishment, the thing would not come off, but stretched out several inches in length, holding on by one end.

Sandy howled with pain. "It is something that bites," he cried.

"And there's another,—and another! Why, he's covered all over with 'em!" exclaimed Oscar.

Sure enough, the lad's legs, if not exactly covered, were well sprinkled with the things.

"Scrape 'em off with your knife!" cried Sandy.

Oscar usually carried a sheath-knife at his belt, "more for the style of the thing, than use," he explained; so with this he quickly took off the repulsive creatures, which, loosening their hold, dropped to the ground limp and shapeless.

"Leeches," said Charlie, briefly, as he poked one of them over with a stick. The mystery was explained, and wherever one of them had been attached to the boy's tender skin, blood flowed freely for a few minutes, and then ceased. Even on one or two of the birds they found a leech adhering to the feathers where the poor thing's blood had followed the shot. Picking up the game, the two boys escorted the elated Sandy to the cabin, where his unexpected adventures made him the hero of the day.

"Couldn't we catch some of those leeches and sell them to the doctors?" asked the practical Oscar.

His father shook his head. "American wild leeches like those are not good for much, my son. I don't know why not; but I have been told that only the imported leeches are used by medical men."

"Well," said Sandy, tenderly rubbing his

wounded legs, "if imported leeches can bite any more furiously than these Kansas ones do, I don't want any of them to tackle me! I suppose these were hungry, though, not having had a taste of a fresh Illinois boy lately. But they didn't make much out of me, after all."

Very happy were those three boys that evening, as, filled with roast wild duck, they sat by and heard their elders discuss with Younkins the details of the grand buffalo hunt that was now to be organized. Younkins had seen Mr. Fuller, who had agreed to make one of the party. So there would be four men and the three boys to compose the expedition. They were to take two horses, Fuller's and Younkins's, to serve as pack-animals, for the way to the hunting-ground might be long; but the hunting was to be done on foot. Younkins was very sure that they would have no difficulty in getting near enough to shoot; the animals had not been hunted much in those parts at that time, and the Indians killed them on foot very often. If Indians could do that, why could not white men?

The next two days were occupied in preparations for the expedition, to the great delight of the boys, who recalled with amusement something of a similar feeling that they had when they were preparing for their trip to Kansas, long ago, away back in Dixon. How far off that all seemed now! Now they were in the promised land, and were going out to hunt for big game — buffalo! It seemed too good to be true.

Bread was made and baked; smoked side-meat, and pepper and salt packed; a few potatoes taken, as a luxury in camp-life; blankets, guns, and ammunition prepared; and above all, plenty of coffee, already browned and ground, was packed for use. It was a merry and a buoyant company that started out in the early dawn of a September morning, having snatched a hasty breakfast, of which the excited boys had scarcely time to taste. Buffalo beef, they confidently said, was their favorite meat. They would dine on buffalo hump that very day.

Oscar, more cautious than the others, asked Younkins if they were sure to see buffalo soon.

"Surely," replied he; "I was out to the bend of the Fork just above the bluffs, last night, and the plains were just full of 'em- just simply black-like, as it were."

"What?" exclaimed all three boys, in a breath. "Plains full of them, and you didn't even mention it! What a funny man you are."

Mr. Howell reminded them that Mr. Younkins had been accustomed to see buffalo for so long that he did not think it anything worth mentioning that he had seen vast numbers of the creatures already. So, as they pressed on, the boys strained their eyes in the distance, looking for buffalo. But no animals greeted their sight, as they passed over the long green swales of the prairie, mile after mile, now rising to the top of a little emi-

nence, and now sinking into a shallow valley; but occasionally a sneaking, stealthy coyote would noiselessly trot into view, and then, after cautiously surveying them from a distance, disappear, as Sandy said, "as if he had sunk into a hole in the ground." It was in vain that they attempted to get near enough to one of these wary animals to warrant a shot. It is only by great good luck that anybody ever shoots a coyote, although in countries where they abound every man's hand is against them; they are such arrant thieves, as well as cowards.

But at noon, while the little party was taking a luncheon in the shade of a solitary birch that grew by the side of a little creek, or runlet, Sandy, the irrepressible, with his bread and meat in his hand, darted off to the next roll of the prairie, a high and swelling hill, in fact, "to see what he could see." As soon as the lad had reached the highest part of the swale, he turned around and swung his arms excitedly, too far off to make his voice heard. He jumped up and down, whirled his arms, and acted altogether like a young lunatic.

"The boy sees buffalo," said Younkins, with a smile of calm amusement. He could hardly understand why anybody should be excited over so commonplace a matter. But the other two lads were off like a shot in Sandy's direction. Reaching their comrade, they found him in a state of great agitation. "Oh, look at 'em! Look at 'em!

Millions on millions! Did anybody ever see the like?"

Perhaps Sandy's estimate of the numbers was a little exaggerated, but it really was a wonderful sight. The rolls of the prairie, four or five miles away, were dark with the vast and slow-moving herds that were passing over, their general direction being toward the spot on which the boys were standing. Now and again, some animals strayed off in broken parties, but for the most part the phalanx seemed to be solid, so solid that the green of the earth was completely hidden by the dense herd.

The boys stood rooted to the spot with the intensity of their wonder and delight. If there were not millions in that vast army of buffalo, there were certainly hundreds of thousands. What would happen if that great mob should suddenly take a notion to gallop furiously in their direction?

"You needn't whisper so," said Charlie, noticing the awe-struck tones of the youngsters. "They can't hear you, away off there. Why, the very nearest of the herd cannot be less than five miles off; and they would run from us, rather than toward us, if they were to see and hear us."

"I asked Younkins if he ever had any trouble with a buffalo when he was hunting, and what do you suppose he said?" asked Oscar, who had recovered his voice. "Well, he said that once he was out on horseback, and had cornered a young

buffalo bull in among some limestone ledges up there on the Upper Fork, and 'the critter turned on him and made a nasty noise with his mouth-like,' so that he was glad to turn and run. 'Nasty noise with his mouth,' I suppose was a sort of a snort — a snort-like, as Younkins would say. There come the rest of the folks. My! won't daddy be provoked that we didn't go back and help hitch up!"

But the elders of the party had not forgotten that they were once boys themselves, and when they reached the point on which the lads stood surveying the sight, they also were stirred to enthusiasm. The great herd was still moving on, the dark folds of the moving mass undulating like the waves of a sea, as the buffalo rose and fell upon the surface of the rolling prairie.

As if the leaders had spied the hunters, the main herd now swung away more to the right, or northward, only a few detached parties coming toward the little group of hunters that still watched them silently from its elevated point of observation.

Younkins surveyed the movement critically and then announced it as his opinion that the herd was bound for the waters of the Republican Fork, to the right and somewhat to the northward of the party. The best course for them to take now would be to try and cut off the animals before they could reach the river. There was a steep

and bluffy bank at the point for which the buffalo seemed to be aiming; that would divert them further up stream, and if the hunters could only creep along in the low gullies of the prairie, out of the sight of the herd, they might reach the place where the buffalo would cross before they could get there; for the herd moved slowly; an expert walker could far out-travel them in a direct line.

"One of you boys will have to stay here by the stuff; the rest of us will press on in the direction of the river as fast as may be," said Uncle Aleck. The boys looked at each other in dismay. Who would be willing to be left behind in a chase so exciting as this? Sandy bravely solved the puzzle.

"Here, you take my shot-gun, Charlie," he said. "It carries farther than yours; I'll stay by the stuff and the horses; I'm pretty tired, anyhow." His father smiled approvingly, but said nothing. He knew how great a sacrifice the boy was making for the others.

Left alone on the hill-top, for the rest of the party moved silently and swiftly away to the northward, Sandy felt the bitterness of disappointment as well as of loneliness while he sat on the grass watching with absorbed attention the motions of the great herds. All trace of his companions was soon lost as they passed down into the gullies and ravines that broke the ground adjacent to the Fork to the westward of the stream. Once, indeed, he saw the figures of the

hunters, painted dark against the sky, rise over a distant swell and disappear just as one of them turned and waved a signal in dumb show to the solitary watcher on the hill.

"If those buffalo should get stampeded," mused Sandy, "and make a break in this way, it would be 'all day' with those horses and the camp stuff. I guess I had better make all fast, for there may be a gale of wind, or a gale of buffalo, which is the same thing." So saying, the thoughtful lad led the animals down into the gully where the noon luncheon had been taken, removed their packs, tethered them to the tree, and then ran back to the hill-top and resumed his watch.

There was no change in the situation except that there were, if possible, more buffalo moving over the distant slopes of the rolling prairie. The boy stood entranced at the sight. More, more, and yet more of the herds were slowly moving into sight and then disappearing in the gullies below. The dark brown folds seemed to envelop the face of the earth. Sandy wondered where so many creatures could find pasturage. Their bodies appeared to cover the hills and valleys, so that there could not be room left for grazing. "They've got such big feet," he soliloquized aloud, "that I should think that the ground would be all pawed up where they have travelled." In the ecstasy of his admiration, he walked to and fro on the hill-top, talking to himself, as was his wont.

"I wonder if the other fellows can see them as I do?" he asked. "I don't believe, after all, that it is one-half so entertaining for them as it is for me. Oh, I just wish the folks at home could be here now, and see this sight. It beats all nature, as Father Dixon used to say. And to think that there are thousands of people in big cities who don't have meat enough to eat. And all this buffalo meat running wild!" The boy laughed to himself at the comicality of the thought. "Fresh beef running wild!"

The faint report of a gun fired afar off now reached his ear and he saw a blue puff of smoke rising from the crest of a timber-bordered hill far away. The herd in that direction seemed to swerve somewhat and scatter, but, to his intense surprise, there was no hurry in their movements; the brown and black folds of the great mass of animals still slowly and sluggishly spread out and flowed like the tides of the sea, enveloping everything. Suddenly there was another report, then another, and another. Three shots in quick succession.

"Now they are getting in their work!" shouted the boy, fairly dancing up and down in his excitement. "Oh, I wish I was there instead of here looking on!"

Now the herds wavered for a moment, then their general direction was changed from the northward to the eastward. Then there was a swift and sud-

den movement of the whole mass, and the vast dark stream flowed in a direction parallel with the Fork instead of toward it, as heretofore.

"They are coming this way!" shouted Sandy, to the empty, silent air around him. "I'll get a shot at 'em yet!" Then, suddenly recollecting that his gun had been exchanged for his brother's, he added, "And Charlie's gun is no good!"

In truth, the herd was now bound straight for the hill on which the boy maintained his solitary watch. Swiftly running down to the gully in which the horses were tethered, Sandy got out his brother's gun and carefully examined the caps and the load. They had run some heavy slugs of lead in a rude mould which they had made, the slug being just the size of the barrel of the shot-gun. One barrel was loaded with a heavy charge of buckshot, and the other with a slug. The latter was an experiment, and a big slug like that could not be expected to carry very far; it might, however, do much damage at short range.

Running up to the head of the gully, which was in the nature of a shallow ravine draining the hill above, Sandy emerged on the highest point of land, a few hundred feet to the right and north of his former post of observation. The herd was in full drive directly toward him. Suppose they should come driving down over the hills where he was! They would sweep down into the gully,

stampede the horses, and trample all the camp stuff into bits! The boy fairly shook with excitement as the idea struck him. On they came, the solid ground shaking under their thundering tread.

"I must try to head 'em off," said the boy to himself. "The least I can do is to scare them a good bit, and then they'll split in two and the herd will divide right here. But I must get a shot at one, or the other fellows will laugh at me."

The rushing herd was headed right for the spot where Sandy stood, spreading out to the left and right, but with the centre of the phalanx steering in a bee-line for the lad. Thoroughly alarmed now, Sandy looked around, and perceiving a sharp outcropping of the underlying stratum of limestone at the head of the little ravine, he resolved to shelter himself behind that, in case the buffalo should continue to come that way. Notwithstanding his excitement, the lad did not fail to note two discharges, one after the other, in the distance, showing that his friends were still keeping up a fusillade against the flying herds.

At the second shot, Sandy thought that the masses in the rear swung off more to the southward, as if panic-stricken by the firing, but the advance guard still maintained a straight line for him. There was no escape from it now, and Sandy looked down at the two horses tethered in the ravine below, peacefully grazing the short, thick grass, unconscious of the flood of buffalo undulat-

ing over the prairie above them, and soon to swoop down over the hill-side where they were. In another instant the lad could see the tossing, shaggy manes of the leaders of the herd, and could even distinguish the redness of their eyes as they swept up the incline, at the head of which he stood. He hastily dodged behind the crag of rock; it was a small affair, hardly higher than his head, but wide enough, he thought, to divide the herd when they came to it. So he ducked behind it and waited for coming events.

Sandy was right. Just beyond the rock behind which he was crouched, the ground fell off rapidly and left a stiff slope, up which even a stampeded buffalo would hardly climb. The ground trembled as the vast army of living creatures came tumbling and thundering over the prairie. Sandy, stooping behind the outcropping, also trembled, partly with excitement and partly with fear. If the buffalo were to plunge over the very small barrier between him and them, his fate was sealed. For an instant his heart stood still. It was but for an instant, for, before he could draw a long breath, the herd parted on the two sides of the little crag. The divided stream poured down on both sides of him, a tumultuous, broken, and disorderly torrent of animals, making no sound except for the ceaseless beat of their tremendous hoofs. Sandy's eyes swam with the bewildering motion of the living stream. For a brief space he saw nothing but a

confused mass of heads, backs, and horns, hundreds of thousands flowing tumultuously past. Gradually his sense of security came back to him, and, exulting in his safety, he raised his gun, and muttering under his breath, "Right behind the fore-shoulder-like, Younkins said," he took steady aim and fired. A young buffalo bull tumbled headlong down the ravine. In their mad haste, a number of the animals fell over him, pell-mell, but, recovering themselves with incredible swiftness, they skipped to their feet, and were speedily on their way down the hill. Sandy watched, with a beating heart, the young bull as he fell heels over head two or three times before he could rally; the poor creature got upon his feet, fell again, and while the tender-hearted boy hesitated whether to fire the second barrel or not, finally fell over on his side helpless.

Meanwhile the ranks of buffalo coming behind swerved from the fallen animal to the left and right, as if by instinct, leaving an open space all around the point where the boy stood gazing at his fallen game. He fired, almost at random, at the nearest of the flying buffalo; but the buckshot whistled hurtlessly among the herd, and Sandy thought to himself that it was downright cruelty to shoot among them, for the scattering shot would only wound without killing the animals.

It was safe now for Sandy to emerge from his place of concealment, and, standing on the rocky

point behind which he had been hidden, he gazed to the west and north. The tumbling masses of buffalo were scattered far apart. Here and there he could see wide stretches of prairie, no longer green, but trampled into a dull brown by the tread of myriads of hurrying feet; and far to the north the land was clear, as if the main herd had passed down to the southward. Scattered bands still hurried along above him, here and there, nearer to the Fork, but the main herd had gone on in the general direction of the settlers' home.

"What if they have gone down to our cabin?" he muttered aloud. "It's all up with any cornfield that they run across. But, then, they must have kept too far to the south to get anywhere near our claim." And the lad consoled himself with this reflection.

But his game was more engrossing of his attention just now than anything else. He had been taught that an animal should not bleed to death through a gunshot wound. His big leaden slug had gone directly through the buffalo's vitals somewhere, for it was now quite dead. Sandy stood beside the noble beast with a strange elation, looking at it before he could make up his mind to cut its throat and let out the blood. It was a young bull buffalo that lay before him, the short, sharp horns ploughed into the ground, and the massive form, so lately bounding over the rolling prairie, forever still. To Sandy it all seemed like a dream,

He Gently Touched the Animal with the Toe of His Boot and Cried, "All by My Own Self."

it had come and gone so quickly. His heart misgave him as he looked, for Sandy had a tender heart. Then he gently touched the animal with the toe of his boot and cried, "All by my own self!"

"Well done, Sandy!" The boy started, turned, and beheld his cousin Oscar gazing open-mouthed at the spectacle. "And did you shoot him all by your very own self? What with? Charlie's gun?" The lad poured forth a torrent of questions, and Sandy proudly answered them all with, "That is what I did."

As the two boys hung with delight over the prostrate beast, Oscar told the tale of disappointment that the others had to relate. They had gone up the ravines that skirted the Fork, prowling on their hands and knees; but the watchers of the herd were too wary to let the hunters get near enough for a good shot. They had fired several times, but had brought down nothing. Sandy had heard the shots? Yes, Sandy had heard, and had hoped that somebody was having great sport. After all, he thought, as he looked at the fallen monarch of the prairie, it was rather cruel business. Oscar did not think so; he wished he had had such luck.

The rest of the party now came up, one after another, and all gave a whoop of astonishment and delight at Sandy's great success as soon as they saw his noble quarry.

The sun was now low in the west; here was a good place for camping; a little brush would do for firing, and water was close at hand. So the tired hunters, after a brief rest, while they lay on the trampled grass and recounted the doings of the day, went to work at the game. The animal was dressed, and a few choice pieces were hung on the tree to cool for their supper. It was dark when they gathered around their cheerful fire, as the cool autumnal evening came on, and cooked and ate with infinite zest their first buffalo-meat. Boys who have never been hungry with the hunger of a long tramp over the prairies, hungry for their first taste of big game of their own shooting, cannot possibly understand how good to the Boy Settlers was their supper on the wind-swept slopes of the Kansas plains.

Wrapping themselves as best they could in the blankets and buffalo-robes brought from home, the party lay down in the nooks and corners of the ravine, first securing the buffalo-meat on the tree that made their camp.

"What, for goodness' sake, is that?" asked Charlie, querulously, as he was roused out of his sleep by a dismal cry not far away in the darkness.

"Wolves," said Younkins, curtly, as he raised himself on one elbow to listen. "The pesky critters have smelt blood; they would smell it if they were twenty miles off, I do believe, and they are gathering round as they scent the carcass."

By this, all of the party were awake except Sandy, who, worn out with excitement, perhaps, slept on through all the fearful din. The mean little prairie-wolves gathered, and barked, and snarled, in the distance. Nearer, the big wolves howled like great dogs, their long howl occasionally breaking into a bark; and farther and farther off, away in the extremest distance, they could hear other wolves, whose hollow-sounding cry seemed like an echo of their more fortunate brethren, nearer the game. A party of the creatures were busy at the offal from the slain buffalo, just without the range of the firelight, for the camp-fire had been kept alight. Into the struggling, snarling group Younkins discharged his rifle. There was a sharp yell of pain, a confused patter of hurrying feet, and in an instant all was still.

Sandy started up. "Who's shot another buffalo?" he asked, as if struggling with a dream. The others laughed, and Charlie explained what had been going on, and the tired boy lay down to sleep again. But that was not a restful night for any of the campers. The wolves renewed their howling. The hunters were able to snatch only a few breaths of sleep from time to time, in moments when the dismal ululation of the wolf-chorus subsided. The sun rose, flooding the rolling prairies with a wealth of golden sunshine. The weary campers looked over the expanse around them, but

not a remnant of the rejected remains of the buffalo was to be seen; and in all the landscape about, no sign of any living thing was in sight, save where some early-rising jack-rabbit scudded over the torn sod, hunting for his breakfast.

Fresh air, bright sunlight, and a dip in a cool stream are the best correctives for a head heavy with want of sleep; and the hunters, refreshed by these and a pot of strong and steaming coffee, were soon ready for another day's sport.

CHAPTER XVI.

A GREAT DISASTER.

THE hunters had better success on their second day's search for buffalo; for they not only found the animals, but they killed three. The first game of the day was brought down by Younkins, who was the "guide, philosopher, and friend" of the party, and Oscar, the youngest of them all, slew the second. The honor of bringing down the third and last was Uncle Aleck's. When he had killed his game, he was anxious to get home as soon as possible, somewhat to the amusement of the others, who rallied him on his selfishness. They hinted that he would not be so ready to go home, if he yet had his buffalo to kill, as had some of the others.

"I'm worried about the crop, to tell the truth," said Mr. Howell. "If that herd of buffalo swept down on our claim, there's precious little corn left there now; and it seemed to me that they went in that direction."

"If that's the case," said the easy-going Younkins, "what's the use of going home? If the corn is gone, you can't get it back by looking at the place where it was."

They laughed at this cool and practical way of looking at things, and Uncle Aleck was half ashamed to admit he wanted to be rid of his present suspense, and could not be satisfied until he had settled in his mind all that he dreaded and feared.

It was a long and wearisome tramp homeward. But they had been more successful than they had hoped or expected, and the way did not seem so long as it would if they had been empty-handed. The choicest parts of their game had been carefully cooled by hanging in the dry Kansas wind, over night, and were now loaded upon the pack-animals. There was enough and more than enough for each of the three families represented in the party; and they had enjoyed many a savory repast of buffalo-meat cooked hunter-fashion before an open camp-fire, while their expedition lasted. So they hailed with pleasure the crooked line of bluffs that marks the big bend of the Republican Fork near which the Whittier cabin was built. Here and there they had crossed the trail, broad and well pounded, of the great herd that had been stampeded on the first day of their hunt. But for the most part the track of the animal multitude bore off more to the south, and the hunters soon forgot their apprehensions of danger to the corn-fields left unfenced on their claim.

It was sunset when the weary pilgrims reached the bluff that overlooked the Younkins cabin

where the Dixon party temporarily dwelt. The red light of the sun deluged with splendor the waving grass of the prairie below them, and jack-rabbits scurrying hither and yon were the only signs of life in the peaceful picture. Tired as he was, Oscar could not resist taking a shot at one of the flying creatures; but before he could raise his gun to his shoulder, the long-legged, long-eared rabbit was out of range. Running briskly for a little distance, it squatted in the tall grass. Piqued at this, Oscar stealthily followed on the creature's trail. "It will make a nice change from so much buffalo-meat," said the lad to himself, "and if I get him into the corn-field, he can't hide so easily."

He saw Jack's long ears waving against the sky on the next rise of ground, as he muttered this to himself, and he pressed forward, resolved on one parting shot. He mounted the roll of the prairie, and before him lay the corn-field. It was what had been a corn-field! Where had stood, on the morning of their departure, a glorious field of gold and green, the blades waving in the breeze like banners, was now a mass of ruin. The tumultuous drove had plunged down over the ridge above the field, and had fled, in one broad swath of destruction, straight over every foot of the field, their trail leaving a brown and torn surface on the earth, wide on both sides of the plantation. Scarcely a trace of greenness was left where once the corn-field had been. Here and there, ears of grain,

broken and trampled into the torn earth, hinted what had been; but for the most part hillock, stalk, corn-blade, vine, and melon were all crushed into an indistinguishable confusion, muddy and wrecked.

Oscar felt a shudder pass down his back, and his knees well-nigh gave way under him as he caught a glimpse of the ruin that had been wrought. Tears were in his eyes, and, unable to raise a shout, he turned and wildly waved his hands to the party, who had just then reached the door of the cabin. His Uncle Aleck had been watching the lad, and as he saw him turn he exclaimed, "Oscar has found the buffalo trail over the corn-field!"

The whole party moved quickly in the direction of the plantation. When they reached the rise of ground overlooking the field, Oscar, still unable to speak, turned and looked at his father with a face of grief. Uncle Aleck, gazing on the wreck and ruin, said only, "A whole summer's work gone!"

"A dearly bought buffalo-hunt!" remarked Younkins.

"That's so, neighbor," added Mr. Bryant, with the grimmest sort of a smile; and then the men fell to talking calmly of the wonderful amount of mischief that a drove of buffalo could do in a few minutes, even seconds, of time. Evidently, the animals had not stopped to snatch a bite by the way. They had not tarried an instant in their wild course. Down the slope of the fields they

had hurried in a mad rush, plunged into the woody creek below, and, leaving the underbrush and vines broken and flattened as if a tornado had passed through the land, had thundered away across the flat floor of the bottom-land on the further side of the creek. A broad brown track behind them showed that they had then fled into the dim distance of the lands of the Chapman's Creek region.

There was nothing to be done, and not much to be said. So, parting with their kindly and sympathizing neighbors, the party went sorrowfully home.

"Well," said Uncle Aleck, as soon as they were alone together, "I am awful sorry that we have lost the corn; but I am not so sure that it is so very great a loss, after all."

The boys looked at him with amazement, and Sandy said, —

"Why, daddy, it's the loss of a whole summer; isn't it? What are we going to live on this whole winter that's coming, now that we have no corn to sell?"

"There's no market for free-State corn in these parts, Sandy," replied his father; and, seeing the look of inquiry on the lad's face, he explained: "Mr. Fuller tells us that the officer at the post, the quartermaster at Fort Riley who buys for the Government, will buy nc grain from free-State men. Several from the Smoky Hill and from

Chapman's have been down there to find a market, and they all say the same thing. The sutler at the post, Sandy's friend, told Mr. Fuller that it was no use for any free-State man to come there with anything to sell to the Government, at any price. And there is no other good market nearer than the Missouri, you all know that, — one hundred and fifty miles away."

"Well, I call that confoundedly mean!" cried Charlie, with fiery indignation. "Do you suppose, father, that they have from Washington any such instructions to discriminate against us?"

"I cannot say as to that, Charlie," replied his father; "I only tell you what the other settlers report; and it sounds reasonable. That is why the ruin of the corn-field is not so great a misfortune as it might have been."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WOLF AT THE DOOR.

UNCLE ALECK and Mr. Bryant had gone over to Chapman's Creek to make inquiries about the prospect of obtaining corn for their cattle through the coming winter, as the failure of their own crop had made that the next thing to be considered. The three boys were over at the Younkins cabin in quest of news from up the river, where, it was said, a party of California emigrants had been fired upon by the Indians. They found that the party attacked was one coming from California, not migrating thither. It brought the Indian frontier very near the boys to see the shot-riddled wagons, left at Younkins's by the travellers. The Cheyennes had shot into the party and had killed four and wounded two, at a point known as Buffalo Creek, some one hundred miles or so up the Republican Fork. It was a daring piece of effrontery, as there were two military posts not very far away, Fort Kearney above and Fort Riley below.

"But they are far enough away by this time," said Younkins, with some bitterness. "Those military posts are good for nothin' but to run to

in case of trouble. No soldiers can get out into the plains from any of them quick enough to catch the slowest Indian of the lot."

Charlie was unwilling to disagree with anything that Younkins said, for he had the highest respect for the opinions of this experienced old plainsman. But he couldn't help reminding him that it would take a very big army to follow up every stray band of Indians, provided any of the tribes should take a notion to go on the warpath.

"Just about this time, though, the men that were stationed at Fort Riley are all down at Lawrence to keep the free-State people from sweeping the streets with free-State brooms, or something that-a-way," said Younkins, determined to have his gibe at the useless soldiery, as he seemed to think them. Oscar was interested at once. Anything that related to the politics of Kansas the boy listened to greedily.

"It's something like this," explained Younkins. "You see the free-State men have got a government there at Lawrence which is lawful under the Topeka Legislatur', as it were. The border-State men have got a city government under the Lecompton Legislatur'; and so the two are quarrelling to see which shall govern the city; 'tisn't much of a city, either."

"But what have the troops from Fort Riley to do with it? I don't see that yet," said Oscar, with some heat.

"Well," said Younkins, "I am a poor hand at politics; but the way I understand it is that the Washington Government is in favor of the border-State fellows, and so the troops have been sent down to stand by the mayor that belongs to the Lecompton fellows. Leastways, that is the way the sutler down to the post put it to me when I was down there with the folks that were fired on up to Buffalo Creek; I talked with him about it yesterday. That's why I said they were at Lawrence to prevent the streets being swept by free-State brooms. That is the sutler's joke. See?"

"That's what I call outrageous," cried Oscar, his eyes snapping with excitement. "Here's a people up here on the frontier being massacred by Indians, while the Government troops are down at Lawrence in a political quarrel!"

The boys were so excited over this state of things that they paid very little attention to anything else while on their way back to the cabin, full of the news of the day. Usually, there was not much news to discuss on the Fork.

"What's that by the cabin-door?" said Sandy, falling back as he looked up the trail and beheld a tall white, or light gray, animal smelling around the door-step of the cabin, only a half-mile away. It seemed to be about as large as a full-grown calf, and it moved stealthily about, and yet with a certain unconcern, as if not used to being scared easily.

"It's a wolf!" cried Oscar. "The Sunday that Uncle Aleck and I saw one from the bluff yonder, he was just like that. Hush, Sandy, don't talk so loud, or you'll frighten him off before we can get a crack at him. Let's go up the trail by the ravine, and perhaps we can get a shot before he sees us."

It was seldom that the boys stirred abroad without firearms of some sort. This time they had a shot-gun and a rifle with them, and, examining the weapons as they went, they ran down into a dry gully, to follow which would bring them unperceived almost as directly to the cabin as by the regular trail. As noiselessly as possible, the boys ran up the gully trail, their hearts beating high with expectation. It would be a big feather in their caps if they could only have a gray wolf's skin to show their elders on their return from Chapman's.

"You go round the upper side of the house with your rifle, Oscar, and I'll go round the south side with the shot-gun," was Charlie's advice to his cousin when they had reached the spring at the head of the gully, back of the log-cabin. With the utmost caution, the two boys crept around opposite corners of the house, each hoping he would be lucky enough to secure the first shot. Sandy remained behind, waiting with suppressed excitement for the shot. Instead of the report of a firearm, he heard a peal of laughter from both boys.

"What is it?" he cried, rushing from his place of concealment. "What's the great joke?"

"Nothing," said Oscar, laughing heartily, "only that as I was stealing around the corner here by the corral, Charlie was tiptoeing round the other corner with his eyes bulging out of his head as if he expected to see that wolf."

"Yes," laughed Charlie, "and if Oscar had been a little quicker, he would have fired at me. He had his gun aimed right straight ahead as he came around the corner of the cabin."

"And that wolf is probably miles and miles away from here by this time, while you two fellows were sneaking around to find him. Just as if he was going to wait here for you!" It was Sandy's turn to laugh, then.

The boys examined the tracks left in the soft loam of the garden by the strange animal, and came to the conclusion that it must have been a very large wolf, for its footsteps were deep as if it were a heavy creature, and their size was larger than that of any wolf-tracks they had ever seen.

When the elders heard the story on their arrival from Chapman's, that evening, Uncle Aleck remarked with some grimness, "So the wolf is at the door at last, boys." The lads by this understood that poverty could not be far off; but they could not comprehend that poverty could affect them in a land where so much to live upon was running wild, so to speak.

"Who is this that rides so fast?" queried Charlie, a day or two after the wolf adventure, as he saw a stranger riding up the trail from the ford. It was very seldom that any visitor, except the good Younkins, crossed their ford. And Younkins always came over on foot.

Here was a horseman who rode as if in haste. The unaccustomed sight drew all hands around the cabin to await the coming of the stranger, who rode as if he were on some important errand bent. It was Battles. His errand was indeed momentous. A corporal from the post had come to his claim, late in the night before, bidding him warn all the settlers on the Fork that the Cheyennes were coming down the Smoky Hill, plundering, burning, and slaying the settlers. Thirteen white people had been killed in the Smoky Hill country, and the savages were evidently making their way to the fort, which at that time was left in an unprotected condition. The commanding officer sent word to all settlers that if they valued their lives they would abandon their claims and fly to the fort for safety. Arms and ammunition would be furnished to all who came. Haste was necessary, for the Indians were moving rapidly down the Smoky Hill.

"But the Smoky Hill is twenty-five or thirty miles from here," said Mr. Bryant; "why should they strike across the plains between here and there?"

Battles did not know; but he supposed, from his talk with the corporal, that it was expected that the Cheyennes would not go quite to the fort, but, having raided the Smoky Hill country down as near to the post as might seem safe, they would strike across to the Republican Fork at some narrow point between the two rivers, travel up that stream, and so go back to the plains from which they came, robbing and burning by the way.

The theory seemed a reasonable one. Such a raid was like Indian warfare.

"How many men are there at the post?" asked Uncle Aleck.

"Ten men including the corporal and a lieutenant of cavalry," replied Battles, who was a pro-slavery man. "The rest are down at Lawrence to suppress the rebellion."

"So the commanding officer at the post wants us to come down and help defend the fort, which has been left to take care of itself while the troops are at Lawrence keeping down the free-State men," said Mr. Bryant, bitterly. "For my part, I don't feel like going. How is it with you, Aleck?"

"I guess we had better take care of ourselves and the boys, Charlie," said Uncle Aleck, cheerily. "It's pretty mean for Uncle Sam to leave the settlers to take care of themselves and the post at this critical time, I know; but we can't afford to quibble about that now. Safety is the first consideration. What does Younkins say?" he asked of Battles.

"A randyvoo has been appointed at my house to-night," said the man, "and Younkins said he would be there before sundown. He told me to tell you not to wait for him; he would meet you there. He has sent his wife and children over to Fuller's; and Fuller has agreed to send them with Mrs. Fuller over to the Big Blue, where there is no danger. Fuller will be back to my place by midnight. There is no time to fool away."

Here was an unexpected crisis. The country was evidently alarmed and up in arms. An Indian raid, even if over twenty miles away, was a terror that they had not reckoned on. After a hurried consultation, the Whittier settlers agreed to be at the "randyvoo," as Battles called it, before daybreak next morning. They thought it best to take his advice and hide what valuables they had in the cabin, make all snug, and leave things as if they never expected to see their home again, and take their way to the post as soon as possible.

It was yet early morning, for Mr. Battles had wasted no time in warning the settlers as soon as he had received notice from the fort. They had all the day before them for their preparations. So the settlers, leaving other plans for the time, went zealously to work packing up and secreting in the thickets and the gully the things they thought most valuable and they were least willing to spare. Clothing, crockery, and table knives and forks

were wrapped up in whatever came handy and were buried in holes dug in the ploughed ground. Lead, bullets, slugs, and tools of various kinds were buried or concealed in the forks of trees, high up and out of sight. Where any articles were buried in the earth, a fire was afterwards built on the surface so that no trace of the disturbed ground should be left to show the expected redskins that goods had been there concealed. They lamented that a sack of flour and a keg of molasses could not be put away, and that their supply of side-meat, which had cost them a long journey to Manhattan, must be abandoned to the foe — if he came to take it. But everything that could be hidden in trees or buried in the earth was so disposed of as rapidly as possible.

Perhaps the boys, after the first flush of apprehension had passed, rather enjoyed the novelty and the excitement. Their spirits rose as they privately talked among themselves of the real Indian warfare of which this was a foretaste. They hoped that it would be nothing worse. When the last preparations were made, and they were ready to depart from their home, uncertain whether they would ever see it again, Sandy, assisted by Oscar, composed the following address. It was written in a big, boyish hand on a sheet of letter-paper, and was left on the table in the middle of their cabin: —

GOOD MISTER INDIAN: We are leaving in a hurry and we want you to be careful of the fire when you come. Don't eat the corn-meal in the sack in the corner; it is poisoned. The flour is full of crickets, and crickets are not good for the stomach. Don't fool with the matches, nor waste the molasses. Be done as you would do by, for that is the golden rule. Yours truly,

THE WHITTIER SETTLERS.

Even in the midst of their uneasiness and trouble, their elders laughed at this unique composition, although Mr. Bryant thought that the boys had mixed their version of the golden rule. Sandy said that no Cheyenne would be likely to improve upon it. So, with many misgivings, the little party closed the door of their home behind them, and took up their line of march to the rendezvous.

The shortest way to Battles's was by a ford farther down the river, and not by the way of the Younkins place. So, crossing the creek on a fallen tree near where Sandy had shot his famous flock of ducks, and then steering straight across the flat bottom land on the opposite side, the party struck into a trail that led through the cottonwoods skirting the west bank of the stream. The moon was full, and the darkness of the grove through which they wended their way in single file was lighted by long shafts of moonbeams that streamed through the dense growth. The silence, save for the steady tramp of the little expedition, was absolute. Now and again a night-owl hooted, or a

sleeping hare, scared from its form, scampered away into the underbrush; but these few sounds made the solitude only more oppressive. Charlie, bringing up the rear, noted the glint of the moonlight on the barrels of the firearms carried by the party ahead of him, and all the romance in his nature was kindled by the thought that this was frontier life in the Indian country. Not far away, he thought, as he turned his face to the southward, the cabins of settlers along the Smoky Hill were burning, and death and desolation marked the trail of the cruel Cheyennes.

Now and again Sandy, shivering in the chill and dampness of the wood, fell back and whispered to Oscar, who followed him in the narrow trail, that this would be awfully jolly if he were not so sleepy. The lad was accustomed to go to bed soon after dark; it was now late into the night.

All hands were glad when the big double cabin of the Battles family came in sight about midnight, conspicuous on a rise of the rolling prairie and black against the sky. Lights were burning brightly in one end of the cabin; in the other end a part of the company had gone to sleep, camping on the floor. Hot coffee and corn-bread were ready for the newcomers, and Younkins, with a tender regard for the lads, who were unaccustomed to milk when at home, brought out a big pan of delicious cool milk for their refreshment. Altogether, as Sandy confessed to himself, an In-

dian scare was not without its fun. He listened with great interest to the tales that the settlers had to tell of the exploits of Gray Wolf, the leader and chief of the Cheyennes. He was a famous man in his time, and some of the elder settlers of Kansas will even now remember his name with awe. The boys were not at all desirous of meeting the Indian foe, but they secretly hoped that if they met any of the redskins, they would see the far-famed Gray Wolf.

While the party, refreshed by their late supper, found a lodging anywhere on the floor of the cabin, a watch was set outside, for the Indians might pounce upon them at any hour of the night or day. Those who had mounted guard during the earlier part of the evening went to their rest. Charlie, as he dropped off to sleep, heard the footsteps of the sentry outside and said to himself, half in jest, "The Wolf is at the door."

But no wolf came to disturb their slumbers. The bright and cheerful day, and the song of birds dispelled the gloom of the night, and fear was lifted from the minds of the anxious settlers, some of whom, separated from wives and children, were troubled with thoughts of homes despoiled and crops destroyed. Just as they had finished breakfast and were preparing for the march to the fort, now only two or three miles away, a mounted man in the uniform of a United States dragoon dashed up to the cabin, and, with a flourish of soldierly

manner, informed the company that the commanding officer at the post had information that the Cheyennes, instead of crossing over to the Republican as had been expected, or attacking the fort, had turned and gone back the way they came. All was safe, and the settlers might go home assured that there was no danger to themselves or their families.

Having delivered this welcome message in a grand and semi-official manner, the corporal dismounted from his steed, in answer to a pressing invitation from Battles, and unbent himself like an ordinary mortal to partake of a very hearty breakfast of venison, corn-bread, and coffee. The company unslung their guns and rifles, sat down again, and regaled themselves with pipes, occasional cups of strong coffee, and yet more exhilarating tales of the exploits and adventures of Indian slayers of the earlier time on the Kansas frontier. The great Indian scare was over. Before night fell again, every settler had gone his own way to his claim, glad that things were no worse, but groaning at Uncle Sam for the niggardliness which had left the region so defenceless when an emergency had come.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DISCOURAGEMENT.

RIGHT glad were our settlers to see their log-cabin home peacefully sleeping in the autumnal sunshine, as they returned along the familiar trail from the river. They had gone back by the way of the Younkins place and had partaken of the good man's hospitality. Younkins thought it best to leave his brood with his neighbors on the Big Blue for another day. "The old woman," he said, "would feel sort of scary-like" until things had well blown over. She was all right where she was, and he would try to get on alone for a while. So the boys, under his guidance, cooked a hearty lunche vhich they heartily enjoyed. Younkins had milk and eggs, both of which articles were luxuries to the Whittier boys, for on their ranch they had neither cow nor hens.

"Why can't we have some hens this fall, daddy?" asked Sandy, luxuriating in a big bowl of custard sweetened with brown sugar, which the skilful Charlie had compounded. "We can build a hen-house there by the corral, under the lee of the cabin, and make it nice and warm for the win-

ter. Battles has got hens to sell, and perhaps Mr. Younkins would be willing to sell us some of his."

"If we stay, Sandy, we will have some fowls; but we will talk about that by and by," said his father.

"Stay?" echoed Sandy. "Why, is there any notion of going back? Back from "bleeding Kansas"? Why, daddy, I'm ashamed of you."

Mr. Howell smiled and looked at his brother-in-law. "Things do not look very encouraging for a winter in Kansas, bleeding or not bleeding; do they, Charlie?"

"Well, if you appeal to me, father," replied the lad, "I shall be glad to stay and glad to go home. But, after all, I must say, I don't exactly see what we can do here this winter. There is no farm work that can be done. But it would cost an awful lot of money to go back to Dixon, unless we took back everything with us and went as we came. Wouldn't it?"

Younkins did not say anything, but he looked approvingly at Charlie while the other two men discussed the problem. Mr. Bryant said it was likely to be a hard winter; they had no corn to sell, none to feed to their cattle. "But corn is so cheap that the settlers over on Solomon's Fork say they will use it for fuel this winter. Battles told me so. I'd like to see a fire of corn on the cob; they say it makes a hot fire burned that way. Corn-cobs without corn hold the heat a long time. I've tried it."

"It is just here, boys," said Uncle Aleck. "The folks at home are lonesome; they write, you know, that they want to come out before the winter sets in. But it would be mighty hard for women out here, this coming winter, with big hulking fellows like us to cook for and with nothing for us to do. Everything to eat would have to be bought. We haven't even an ear of corn for ourselves or our cattle. Instead of selling corn at the post, as we expected, we would have to buy of our neighbors, Mr. Younkins here, and Mr. Fuller, and we would be obliged to buy our flour and groceries at the post, or down at Manhattan; and they charge two prices for things out here; they have to, for it costs money to haul stuff all the way from the river."

"That's so," said Younkins, resignedly. He was thinking of making a trip to "the river," as the settlers around there always called the Missouri, one hundred and fifty miles distant. But Younkins assured his friends that they were welcome to live in his cabin where they still were at home, for another year, if they liked, and he would haul from the river any purchases that they might make. He was expecting to be ready to start for Leavenworth in a few days, as they knew, and one of them could go down with him and lay in a few supplies. His team could haul enough for all hands. If not, they could double up the two teams and bring back half of Leavenworth, if they had the money to buy so much. He "hated

dreadfully" to hear them talking about going back to Illinois.

But when the settlers reached home and found amusement and some little excitement in the digging up of their household treasures and putting things in place once more, the thought of leaving this home in the Far West obtruded itself rather unpleasantly on the minds of all of them, although nobody spoke of what each thought. Oscar had hidden his precious violin high up among the rafters of the cabin, being willing to lose it only if the cabin were burned. There was absolutely no other place where it would be safe to leave it. He climbed to the loft overhead and brought it forth with great glee, laid his cheek lovingly on its body and played a familiar air. Engrossed in his music, he played on and on until he ran into the melody of "Home, Sweet Home," to which he had added many curious and artistic variations.

"Don't play that, Oscar; you make me homesick!" cried Charlie, with a suspicious moisture in his eyes. "It was all very well for us to hear that when this was the only home we had or expected to have; but daddy and Uncle Charlie have set us to thinking about the home in Illinois, and that will make us all homesick, I really believe."

"Here is all my 'funny business' wasted," cried Sandy. "No Indian came to read my comic letter, after all. I suppose the mice and crickets must

have found some amusement in it; I saw any number of them scampering away when I opened the door; but I guess they are the only living things that have been here since we went away."

"Isn't it queer that we should be gone like this for nearly two days," said Oscar, "leaving everything behind us, and come back and know that nobody has been any nearer to the place than we have, all the time? I can't get used to it."

"My little philosopher," said his Uncle Charlie, "we are living in the wilderness; and if you were to live here always, you would feel, by and by, that every newcomer was an interloper; you would resent the intrusion of any more settlers here, interfering with our freedom and turning out their cattle to graze on the ranges that seem to be so like our own, now. That's what happens to frontier settlers, everywhere."

"Why, yes," said Sandy, "I s'pose we should all be like that man over on the Big Blue that Mr. Fuller tells about, who moved away when a newcomer took up a claim ten miles and a half from him, because, as he thought, the people were getting too thick. For my part, I am willing to have this part of Kansas crowded to within, say, a mile and a half of us, and no more. Hey, Charlie?"

But the prospect of that side of the Republican Fork being over-full with settlers did not seem very imminent about that time. From parts of Kansas nearer to the Missouri River than they were, they

heard of a slackening in the stream of migration. The prospect of a cold winter had cooled the ardor of the politicians who had determined, earlier in the season, to hold the Territory against all comers. Something like a truce had been tacitly agreed on, and there was a cessation of hostilities for the present. The troops had been marched back from Lawrence to the post, and no more elections were coming on for the present in any part of the Territory. Mr. Bryant, who was the only ardent politician of the company, thought that it would be a good plan to go back to Illinois for the winter. They could come out again in the spring and bring the rest of the two families with them. The land would not run away while they were gone.

It was with much reluctance that the boys accepted this plan of their elders. They were especially sorry that it was thought best that the two men should stay behind and wind up affairs, while the three lads would go down to the river with Younkins, and thence home by steamer from Leavenworth down the Missouri to St. Louis. But, after a few days of debate, this was thought to be the best thing that could be done. It was on a dull, dark November day that the boys, wading for the last time the cold stream of the Fork, crossed over to Younkins's early in the morning, while the sky was red with the dawning, carrying their light baggage with them. They had ferried their trunks across the day before, using the ox-

cart for the purpose and loading all into Younkins's team, ready for the homeward journey.

Now that the bustle of departure had come, it did not seem so hard to leave the new home on the Republican as they had expected. It had been agreed that the two men should follow in a week, in time to take the last steamboat going down the river in the fall, from Fort Benton, before the closing of navigation for the season. Mr. Bryant, unknown to the boys, had written home to Dixon directing that money be sent in a letter addressed to Charlie, in care of a well-known firm in Leavenworth. They would find it there on their arrival, and that would enable them to pay their way down the river to St. Louis and thence home by the railroad.

"But suppose the money shouldn't turn up?" asked Charlie, when told of the money awaiting them. He was accustomed to look on the dark side of things, sometimes, so the rest of them thought. "What then?"

"Well, I guess you will have to walk home," said his uncle, with a smile. "But don't worry about that. At the worst, you can work your passage to St. Louis, and there you will find your uncle, Oscar G. Bryant, of the firm of Bryant, Wilder & Co. I'll give you his address, and he will see you through, in case of accidents. But there will be no accidents. What is the use of borrowing trouble about that?"

They did not borrow any trouble, and as they drove away from the scenes that had grown so familiar to them, they looked forward, as all boys would, to an adventurous voyage down the Missouri, and a welcome home to their mothers and their friends in dear old Dixon.

The nights were now cold and the days chilly. They had cooked a goodly supply of provisions for their journey, for they had not much ready money to pay for fare by the way. At noon they stopped by the roadside and made a pot of hot coffee, opened their stores of provisions and lunched merrily, gypsy-fashion, caring nothing for the curious looks and inquisitive questions of other wayfarers who passed them. For the first few nights they attempted to sleep in the wagon. But it was fearfully cold, and the wagon-bed, cluttered up with trunks, guns, and other things, gave them very little room. Miserable and sore, they resolved to spend their very last dollar, if need be, in paying for lodging at the wayside inns and hospitable cabins of the settlers along the road. The journey homeward was not nearly so merry as that of the outward trip. But new cabins had been built along their route, and the lads found much amusement in hunting up their former camping-places as they drove along the military road to Fort Leavenworth.

In this way, sleeping at the farm-houses and such casual taverns as had grown up by the high-

way, and usually getting their supper and breakfast where they slept, they crept slowly toward the river. Sandy was the cashier of the party, although he had preferred that Charlie, being the eldest, should carry their slender supply of cash. Charlie would not take that responsibility; but, as the days went by, he rigorously required an accounting every morning; he was very much afraid that their money would not hold out until they reached Leavenworth.

Twenty miles a day with an ox-team was fairly good travelling; and it was one hundred and fifty miles from the Republican to the Missouri, as the young emigrants travelled the road. A whole week had been consumed by the tedious trip when they drove into the busy and bustling town of Leavenworth, one bright autumnal morning. All along the way they had picked up much information about the movement of steamers, and they were delighted to find that the steamboat "New Lucy" was lying at the levee, ready to sail on the afternoon of the very day they would be in Leavenworth. They camped, for the last time, in the outskirts of the town, a good-natured border-State man affording them shelter in his hay-barn, where they slept soundly all through their last night in "bleeding Kansas."

The "New Lucy," from Fort Benton on the upper Missouri, was blowing off steam as they drove down to the levee. Younkins helped them

unload their baggage, wrung their hands, one after another, with real tears in his eyes, for he had learned to love these hearty, happy lads, and then drove away with his cattle to pen them for the day and night that he should be there. Charlie and Oscar went to the warehouse of Osterhaus & Wickham, where they were to find the letter from home, the precious letter containing forty dollars to pay their expenses homeward.

Sandy sat on the pile of trunks watching with great interest the novel sight of hurrying passengers, different from any people he ever saw before; black "roustabouts," or deck-hands, tumbling the cargo and the firewood on board, singing, shouting, and laughing the while, the white mates overseeing the work with many hard words, and the captain, tough and swarthy, superintending from the upper deck the mates and all hands. A party of nice-looking, citified people, as Sandy thought them, attracted his attention on the upper deck, and he mentally wondered what they could be doing here, so far in the wilderness.

"Car' yer baggage aboard, boss?" asked a lively young negro, half-clad and hungry-looking.

"No, not yet," answered Sandy, feeling in his trousers pocket the last two quarters of a dollar that was left them. "Not yet. I am not ready to go aboard till my mates come." The hungry-looking darky made a rush for another more promising passenger and left Sandy lounging where the other

lads soon after found him. Charlie's face was a picture of despair. Oscar looked very grave, for him.

"What's up?" cried Sandy, starting from his seat. "Have you seen a ghost?"

"Worse than that," said Charlie. "Somebody's stolen the money!"

"Stolen the money?" echoed Sandy, with vague terror, the whole extent of the catastrophe flitting before his mind. "Why, what on earth do you mean?"

Oscar explained that they had found the letter, as they expected, and he produced it, written by the two loving mothers at home. They said that they had made up their minds to send fifty dollars, instead of the forty that Uncle Charlie had said would be enough. It was in ten-dollar notes, five of them; at least, it had been so when the letter left Dixon. When it was opened in Leavenworth, it was empty, save for the love and tenderness that were in it. Sandy groaned.

The lively young darky came up again with, "Car' yer baggage aboard, boss?"

It was sickening.

"What's to be done now?" said Charlie, in deepest dejection, as he sat on the pile of baggage that now looked so useless and needless. "I just believe some of the scamps I saw loafing around there in that store stole the money out of the letter. See here; it was sealed with that confounded

new-fangled 'mucilage'; gumstickum I call it. Anybody could feel those five bank-notes inside of the letter, and anybody could steam it open, take out the money, and seal it up again. We have been robbed."

"Let's go and see the heads of the house there at Osterhaus & Wickham's. They will see us righted," cried Sandy, indignantly. "I won't stand it, for one."

"No use," groaned Charlie. "We saw Mr. Osterhaus. He was very sorry — oh, yes! — awfully sorry; but he didn't know us, and he had no responsibility for the letters that came to his place. It was only an accommodation to people that he took them in his care, anyhow. Oh, it's no use talking! Here we are, stranded in a strange place, knowing no living soul in the whole town but good old Younkins, and nobody knows where he is. He couldn't lend us the money, even if we were mean enough to ask him. Good old Younkins!"

"Younkins!" cried Sandy, starting to his feet. "He will give us good advice. He has got a great head, has Younkins. I'll go and ask him what to do. Bless me! There he is now!" and as he spoke, the familiar slouching figure of their neighbor came around the corner of a warehouse on the levee.

"Why don't yer go aboard, boys? The boat leaves at noon, and it's past twelve now. I just

thought I'd come down and say good-by-like, for I'm powerful sorry to have ye go."

The boys explained to the astonished and grieved Younkins how they had been wrecked, as it were, almost in sight of the home port. The good man nodded his head gravely, as he listened, softly jingled the few gold coins in his trousers pocket, and said: "Well, boys, this is the wust scald I ever did see. If I wasn't so dreadful hard up, I'd give ye what I've got."

"That's not to be thought of, Mr. Younkins," said Charlie, with dignity and gratitude, "for we can't think of borrowing money to get home with. It would be better to wait until we can write home for more. We might earn enough to pay our board." And Charlie, with a sigh, looked around at the unsympathetic and hurryir ; throng.

"You've got baggage as security for your passage to St. Louis. Go aboard and tell the clerk how you are fixed. Your pa said as how you would be all right when you got to St. Louis. Go and 'brace' the clerk."

This was a new idea to the boys. They had never heard of such a thing. Who would dare to ask such a great favor? The fare from Leavenworth to St. Louis was twelve dollars each. They had known all about that. And they knew, too, that the price included their meals on the way down.

"I'll go brace the clerk," said Sandy, stoutly;

and before the others could put in a word, he was gone.

The clerk was a handsome, stylish-looking man, with a good-natured countenance that reassured the timid boy at once. Mustering up his waning courage, Sandy stated the case to him, telling him that that pile of trunks and guns on the levee was theirs, and that they would leave them on board when they got to St. Louis until they had found their uncle and secured the money for their fares.

The handsome clerk looked sharply at the lad while he was telling his story. "You've got an honest face, my little man. I'll trust you. Bring aboard your baggage. People spar their way on the river every day in the year; you needn't be ashamed of it. Accidents will happen, you know." And the busy clerk turned away to another customer.

With a light heart Sandy ran ashore. His waiting and anxiously watching comrades saw by his face that he had been successful, before he spoke.

"That's all fixed," he cried, blithely.

"Bully boy!" said Younkins, admiringly.

"Car' yer baggage aboard, boss?" asked the lively young darky.

"Take it along," said Sandy, with a lordly air. They shook hands with Younkins once more, this time with more fervor than ever. Then the three lads filed on board the steamboat. The gangplank was hauled in, put out again for the last

tardy passenger, once more taken aboard, and then the stanch steamer "New Lucy" was on her way down the turbid Missouri.

"Oh, Sandy," whispered Charlie, "you gave that darky almost the last cent we had for bringing our baggage on board. We ought to have lugged it aboard ourselves."

"Lugged it aboard ourselves? And all these people that we are going to be passengers with for the next four or five days watching us while we did a roustabout's work? Not much. We've a quarter left."

Charlie was silent. The great stern-wheel of the "New Lucy" revolved with a dashing and a churning sound. The yellow banks of the Missouri sped by them. The sacred soil of Kansas slid past as in a swiftly moving panorama. One home was hourly growing nearer, while another was fading away there into the golden autumnal distance.

CHAPTER XIX.

DOWN THE BIG MUDDY.

It is more than six hundred miles from Leavenworth to St. Louis by the river. And as the river is crooked exceedingly, a steamboat travelling that route points her bow at every point of the compass, north, south, east, and west, before the voyage is finished. The boys were impatient to reach home, to be back in dear old Dixon, to see the mother and the fireside once more. But they knew that days must pass before they could reach St. Louis. The three lads settled themselves comfortably in the narrow limits of their little stateroom; for they found that their passage included quarters really more luxurious than they had been accustomed to in their Kansas log-cabin.

"Not much army blanket and buffalo-robe about this," whispered Oscar, pressing his toil-stained hand on the nice white spread of his berth. "Say, wouldn't Younkins allow that this was rather comfortable-like, if he was to see it and compare it with his deerskin coverlet that he is so proud of?"

"Well, Younkins's deerskin coverlet is paid for, and this isn't," said Charlie, grimly.

But the light-hearted younger boys borrowed no trouble on that score. As Sandy said, laughingly, they were all fixed for the trip to St. Louis, and what was the use of fretting about the passage money until the time came to pay it?

When the lads, having exchanged their flannel shirts for white cotton ones, saved up for this occasion, came out from their room, they saw two long tables covered with snowy cloths set for the whole length of the big saloon. They had scanned the list of meal hours hanging in their stateroom, and were very well satisfied to find that there were three meals served each day. It was nearly time for the two o'clock dinner, and the colored servants were making ready the tables. The boat was crowded with passengers, and it looked as if some of them would be obliged to wait for the "second table." On board of a steamboat, especially in those days of long voyages, the matter of getting early to the table and having a good seat was of great concern to the passengers. Men stood around, lining the walls of the saloon and regarding with hungry expectation the movements of the waiters who were making ready the tables. When the chairs were placed, every man laid his hand on the top of the seat nearest him, prepared, as one of the boys privately expressed it, to "make a grab."

"Well, if we don't make a grab, too, we shall get left," whispered Sandy, and the boys bashfully

filed down the saloon and stood ready to take their seats when the gong should sound.

To eyes unused to the profuseness of living that then prevailed on the best class of Western steamboats, the display on the dining-tables of the "New Lucy" was very grand indeed. The waiters, all their movements regulated by something like military discipline, filed in and out bearing handsome dishes for the decoration of the board.

"Just look at those gorgeous flowers! Red, white, blue, purple, yellow! My! aren't they fine?" said Sandy, under his breath.

Oscar giggled. "They are artificial, Sandy. How awfully green you are!"

Sandy stoutly maintained that they were real flowers. He could smell them. But when one of the waiters, having accidentally overturned one of the vases and knocked a flaming bouquet on the carpeted floor of the cabin, snatched it up and dusted it with his big black hand, Sandy gave in, and murmured, "'Tis true; they're false."

But the boys' eyes fairly stood out with wonder and admiration when a procession of colored men came out of the pantry, bearing a grand array of ornamental dishes. Pineapples, bananas, great baskets of fancy cakes, and other dainties attracted their wonder-stricken gaze. But most of all, numerous pyramids of macaroons, two or three feet high, with silky veils of spun sugar falling down from summit to base, fascinated their attention.

They had never seen the like at a public table; and the generous board of the "New Lucy" fairly groaned with good things when the gong somewhat superfluously announced to the waiting throng that dinner was served.

"No plates, knives, or forks," said Sandy, as, amid a great clatter and rush, everybody sat down to the table. Just then a long procession of colored waiters emerged from the pantry, the foremost man carrying a pile of plates, and after him came another with a basket of knives, after him another with a basket of forks, then another with spoons, and so on, each man carrying a supply of some one article for the table. With the same military precision that had marked all their movements, six black hands were stretched at the same instant over the shoulders of the sitting passengers, and six articles were noiselessly dropped on the table; then, with a similar motion, the six black hands went back to their respective owners, as the procession moved along behind the guests, the white-sleeved arms and black hands waving in the air and keeping exact time as the procession moved around the table.

"Looks like a white-legged centipede," muttered Sandy, under his breath. But more evolutions were coming. These preliminaries having been finished, the solemn procession went back to the kitchen regions, and presently came forth again, bearing a glittering array of shining metal covered

dishes. At the tap of the pompous head-waiter's bell, every man stood at "present arms," as Oscar said. Then, at another tap, each dish was projected over the white cloth to the spot for which it was designed, and held an inch or two above the table. Another tap, and every dish dropped into its place with a sound as of one soft blow. The pompous head-waiter struck his bell again, and every dish-cover was touched by a black hand. One more jingle, and, with magical swiftness and deftness, each dish-cover was lifted, and a delightful perfume of savory viands gushed forth amidst the half-suppressed "Ahs" of the assembled and hungry diners. Then the procession of dark-skinned waiters, bearing the dish-covers, filed back to the pantry, and the real business of the day began. This was the way that dinners were served on all the first-rate steamboats on Western rivers in those days.

To hungry, hearty boys, used of late to the rough fare of the frontier, and just from a hard trip in an ox-wagon, with very short rations indeed, this profusion of good things was a real delight. Sandy's mouth watered, but he gently sighed to himself, "'Most takes away my appetite." The polite, even servile, waiters pressed the lads with the best of everything on the generous board; and Sandy's cup of happiness was full when a jolly darky, his ebony face shining with good-nature, brought him some frosted cake, charlotte

russe, and spun sugar and macaroons from one of the shattered pyramids.

"D'ye s'pose they break those up every day?" whispered Sandy to the more dignified Charlie.

"Suttinly, suh," replied the colored man, overhearing the question; "suttinly, suh. Dis yere boat is de fastest and de finest on de Big Muddy, young gent; an' dere's nuffin' in dis yere worl' that the 'New Lucy' doan have on her table; an' doan yer fergit it, young mas'r," he added, with respectful pride in his voice.

"My! what a tuck-out! I've ate and ate until I'm fairly fit to bust," said Sandy, as the three boys, their dinner over, sauntered out into the open air and beheld the banks of the river swiftly slipping by as they glided down the stream.

Just then, glancing around, his eye caught the amused smile of a tall and lovely lady who was standing near by, chatting with two or three rather superior-looking young people whom the lad had first noticed when the question of having the baggage brought on board at Leavenworth was under discussion. Sandy's brown cheek flushed; but the pretty lady, extending her hand, said: "Pardon my smiling, my boy; but I have a dear lad at home in Baltimore who always says just that after his Christmas dinner, and sometimes on other occasions, perhaps; and his name is Sandy, too. I think I heard your brother call you Sandy? This is your brother, is it not?" And the lady turned towards Charlie.

The lad explained the relationship of the little party, and the lady from Baltimore introduced the members of her party. They had been far up the river to Fort Benton, where they had spent some weeks with friends who were in the military garrison at that post. The young men, of whom there were three in the party, had been out hunting for buffalo, elk, and other big game. Had the boys ever killed any buffalo? The pleasant-faced young gentleman who asked the question had noticed that they had a full supply of guns when they came aboard at Leavenworth.

Yes, they had killed buffalo; at least, Sandy had; and the youngster's exploit on the bluff of the Republican Fork was glowingly narrated by the generous and manly Charlie. This story broke the ice with the newly met voyagers and, before the gong sounded for supper, the Whittier boys, as they still called themselves, were quite as well acquainted with the party from Baltimore, as they thought, as they would have been if they had been neighbors and friends on the banks of the Republican.

The boys looked in at the supper-table. They only looked; for although the short autumnal afternoon had fled swiftly by while they were chatting with their new friends or exploring the steamboat, they felt that they could not possibly take another repast so soon after their first real "tuck-out" on the "New Lucy." The overloaded table,

shining with handsome glass and china and decked with fancy cakes, preserves, and sweetmeats, had no present attractions for the boys. "It's just like after Thanksgiving dinner," said Oscar. "Only we are far from home," he added, rather soberly. And when the lads crawled into their bunks, as Sandy insisted upon calling their berths, it would not surprise one if "thoughts of home and sighs disturbed the sleeper's long-drawn breath."

Time and again, in the night-watches, the steamer stopped at some landing by the river-side. Now it would be a mere wood-pile, and the boat would be moored to a cottonwood tree that overhung the stream. Torches of light-wood burning in iron frames at the end of a staff stuck into the ground or lashed to the steamer rail shed a wild, weird glare on the hurrying scene as the roustabouts, or deck-hands, nimbly lugged the wood on board, or carried the cargo ashore, singing plaintive melodies as they worked. Then again, the steamer would be made fast to a wharf-boat by some small town, or to the levee of a larger landing-place, and goods went ashore, passengers flitted on and off, baggage was transferred, the gang-plank was hauled in with prodigious clatter, the engineer's bell tinkled, and, with a great snort from her engines, the "New Lucy" resumed her way down the river. Few passengers but those who were to go ashore could be seen on the upper deck viewing the strange sights of making a night-landing.

And through the whole racket and din, three lads slept the sleep of the young and the innocent in room Number 56. "Just the number of the year with the eighteen knocked off," Sandy had said when they were assigned to it.

When the boys had asked in Leavenworth how long the trip to St. Louis would be, they were told, "Three or four days, if the water holds." This they thought rather vague information, and they had only a dim idea of what the man meant by the water holding. They soon learned. The season had been dry for the time of year. Although it was now November, little or no autumnal rains had fallen. Passengers from Fort Benton said that the lands on the Upper Missouri were parched for want of water, and the sluggish currents of the Big Muddy were "as slow as cold molasses," as one of the deck-hands said to Sandy, when he was peering about the lower deck of the steamboat. It began to look as if the water would not hold.

On the second afternoon out of Leavenworth, as the "New Lucy" was gallantly sweeping around Prairie Bend, where any boat going down stream is headed almost due north, the turn in the river revealed no less than four other steamers hard and fast on the shoals that now plentifully appeared above the surface of the yellow water. Cautiously feeling her way along through these treacherous bars and sands, the "New Lucy," with slackened speed, moved bravely down upon the stranded fleet.

Anxious passengers clustered on the forward part of the steamer, watching the course of events. With many a cough and many a sigh, the boat swung to the right or left, obedient to her helm, the cry of the man heaving the lead for soundings telling them how fast the water shoaled or deepened as they moved down stream.

"We are bound to get aground," said Oscar, as he scanned the wide river, apparently almost bare to its bed. "I suppose there is a channel, and I suppose that pilot up there in the pilot-house knows where it is, but I don't see any." Just then the water before them suddenly shoaled, there was a soft, grating sound, a thud, and the boat stopped, hard and fast aground. The "New Lucy" had joined the fleet of belated steamers on the shoals of Prairie Bend.

The order was given for all passengers to go aft; and while the lads were wondering what they were so peremptorily sent astern for, they saw two tall spars that had been carried upright at the bow of the boat rigged into the shape of a V upside down, and set on either side of the craft, the lower ends resting on the sand-bar each side of her. A big block and tackle were rigged at the point where the spars crossed each other over the bow of the boat, and from these a stout cable was made fast to the steamer's "nose," as the boys heard somebody call the extreme point of the bow.

"They are actually going to hoist this boat over

the sand-bar," said Sandy, excitedly, as they viewed these preparations from the rear of the boat.

"That is exactly what they are going to do," said the pleasant-faced young man from Baltimore. "Now, then!" he added, with the air of one encouraging another, as the crew, laying hold of the tackle, and singing with a queer, jerky way, began to hoist. This would not avail. The nose of the boat was jammed deep into the sand, and so the cable was led back to a windlass, around which it was carried. Then, the windlass being worked by steam, the hull of the steamer rose very slightly, and the bottom of the bow was released from the river-bottom. The pilot rang his bell, the engine puffed and clattered, and the boat crept ahead for a few feet, and then came to rest again. That was all that could be done until the spars were reset further forward or deep water was reached. It was discouraging, for with all their pulling and hauling, that had lasted for more than an hour, they had made only four or five feet of headway.

"At the rate of five feet an hour, how long will it take us to spar our way down to St. Louis?" asked Charlie, quizzically.

"Oh, Charlie," cried Sandy, "I know now why the clerk said that there were plenty of fellows who had to spar their way on the river. It is hard work to pull this steamer over the sand-bars and shoals, and when a man is busted and has to work his way along, he's like a steamboat in a fix, like

this one is. See? That's the reason why they say he is sparring his way, isn't it?"

"You are quite correct, youngster," said the young man from Baltimore, regarding Sandy's bright face with pleasure. "Correct you are. But I never knew what the slang meant until I came out here. And, for that matter, I don't know that I ever heard the slang before. But it is the jargon of the river men."

By this time, even sparring was of very little use, for the spars only sank deep and deeper into the soft river-bottom, and there was no chance to raise the bow of the boat from its oozy bed. The case for the present was hopeless; but the crew were kept constantly busy until nightfall, pulling and hauling. Some were sent ashore in a skiff, with a big hawser, which was made fast to a tree, and then all the power of the boat, men and steam, was put upon it to twist her nose off from the shoal into which it was stuck. All sorts of devices were resorted to, and a small gain was made once in a while; but it looked very much as if the calculation of Charlie, five feet in an hour, was too liberal an allowance for the progress towards St. Louis.

Just then, from the boat furthest down the river rose a cloud of steam, and the astonished lads heard a most extraordinary sound like that of a gigantic organ. More or less wheezy, but still easily to be understood, the well-known notes of

"Oh, Susannah!" came floating up the river to them. Everybody paused to listen, even the tired and tugging roustabouts smiling at the unwonted music.

"Is it really music?" asked Oscar, whose artistic ear was somewhat offended by this strange roar of sounds. The young man from Baltimore assured him that this was called music; the music of a steam-organ or calliope, then a new invention on the Western rivers. He explained that it was an instrument made of a series of steam-whistles so arranged that a man, sitting where he could handle them all very rapidly, could play a tune on them. The player had only to know the key to which each whistle was pitched, and, with a simple arrangement of notes before him, he could make a gigantic melody that could be heard for many miles away.

"You are a musician, are you not?" asked the young man from Baltimore. "Didn't I hear you playing a violin in your room last night? Or was it one of your brothers?"

Oscar, having blushingly acknowledged that he was playing his violin for the benefit of his cousins, as he explained, his new-found acquaintance said, "I play the flute a little, and we might try some pieces together some time, if you are willing."

As they were making ready for bed that night, the pleasant-faced young man from Baltimore, who had been playing whist with his mother and sister,

and the "military man," as the boys had privately named one of the party, came to their door with his flute. The two musicians were fast friends at once. Flute and violin made delicious harmony, in the midst of which Sandy, who had slipped into his bunk, drifted off into the land of dreams with confused notions of a giant band somewhere up in the sky playing "Oh, Susannah!" "Love's Last Greeting," and "How Can I Leave Thee?" with occasional suggestions of the "Song of the Kansas Emigrants."

Another morning came on, cold, damp, and raw. The sky was overcast and there were signs of rain. "There's been rain to the nor'rard," said Captain Bulger, meditatively. Now Captain Bulger was the skipper of the "New Lucy," and when he said those oracular words, they were reported about the steamboat, to the great comfort of all on board. Still the five boats stuck on the shoals; their crews were still hard at work at all the devices that could be thought of for their liberation. The "War Eagle"—for they had found out the name of the musical steamer far down stream—enlivened the tedious day with her occasional strains of martial and popular music, if the steam-organ could be called musical.

In the afternoon, Oscar and the amiable young man from Baltimore shut themselves in their stateroom and played the flute and violin. The lovely lady who had made Sandy's acquaintance early in

the voyage asked him if he could make one at a game of whist. Sandy replied that he could play "a very little." The thought of playing cards here on a steamboat, in public, as he said to himself, was rather frightful. He was not sure if his mother would like to have him do that. He looked uneasily around to see what Charlie would say about it. But Charlie was nowhere in sight. He was wandering around, like an uneasy ghost, watching for signs of the rising of the river, now confidently predicted by the knowing ones among the passengers.

"My boys all play whist," said the lady, kindly; "but if you do not like to play, I will not urge you. We lack one of making up a party."

Sandy had been told that he was an uncommonly good player for one so young. He liked the game; there would be no stakes, of course. With his ready habit of making up his mind, he brightly said, "I'll play if you like, but you must know that I am only a youngster and not a first-rate player." So they sat down, the lovely lady from Baltimore being Sandy's partner, and the military gentleman and the young daughter of the lady from Baltimore being their opponents. Sandy had great good luck. The very best cards fell to him continually, and he thought he had never played so well. He caught occasional strains of music from room Number 56, and he was glad that Oscar was enjoying himself. From time to time the lovely

lady who was his partner smiled approvingly at him, and once in a while, while the cards were being dealt, she said, "How divinely those dear boys are playing!"

The afternoon sped on delightfully, and Sandy's spirits rose. He thought it would be fine if the "New Lucy" should stay stuck on a sand-bar for days and days, and he should have such a good game of whist, with the lovely lady from Baltimore for a partner. But the military gentleman grew tired. His luck was very poor, and when the servants began to rattle dishes on the supper-table, he suggested that it would be just as well perhaps if they did not play too much now; they would enjoy the game better later on. They agreed to stop with the next game.

When they had first taken their places at the card-table, the military gentleman had asked Sandy if he had any cards, and when he replied that he had none, the military gentleman, with a very lordly air, sent one of the cabin waiters to the bar for a pack of cards. Now that they were through with the game, Sandy supposed that the military gentleman would put the cards into his pocket and pay for them. Instead of that he said, "Now, my little man, we will saw off to see who shall pay for the cards."

"Saw off?" asked Sandy, faintly, with a dim notion of what was meant.

"Yes, my lad," said the military gentleman.

"We will play one hand of Old Sledge to see who shall pay for the cards and keep them."

With a sinking heart, but with a brave face, Sandy took up the cards dealt to him and began to play. It was soon over. Sandy won one point in the hand; the military gentleman had the other three.

"Take care of your cards, my son," said the military gentleman; "we may want them again. They charge the extravagant price of six bits for them on this boat, and these will last us to St. Louis."

Six bits! Seventy-five cents! And poor Sandy had only twenty-five cents in his pocket. That silver quarter represented the entire capital of the Boy Settlers from Kansas. Looking up, he saw Charlie regarding him with reproachful eyes from a corner of the saloon. With great carefulness, he gathered up his cards and rose, revolving in his mind the awful problem of paying for seventy-five cents' worth of cards with twenty-five cents.

"Well, you've got yourself into a nice scrape," tragically whispered Charlie, in his ear, as soon as the two boys were out of earshot of the others. "What are you going to do now? You can spar your way down to St. Louis, but you can't spar your way with that barkeeper for a pack of cards."

"Let me alone, Charlie," said Sandy, testily. "You haven't got to pay for these cards. I'll manage it somehow. Don't you worry yourself the least bit."

"Serves you right for gambling. What would mother say if she knew it? If you hadn't been so ready to show off your whist-playing before these strangers, you wouldn't have got into such a box."

"I didn't gamble," replied Sandy, hotly. "It isn't gambling to play a hand to see who shall pay for the cards. All men do that. I have seen daddy roll a game of tenpins to see who should pay for the alley."

"I don't care for that. It is gambling to play for the leastest thing as a stake. Nice fellow you are, sitting down to play a hand of seven-up for the price of a pack of cards! Six bits at that!"

"A nice brotherly brother you are to nag me about those confounded cards, instead of helping a fellow out when he is down on his luck."

Charlie, a little conscience-stricken, held his peace, while Sandy broke away from him, and rushed out into the chilly air of the after-deck. There was no sympathy in the dark and murky river, none in the forlorn shore, where rows of straggling cottonwoods leaned over and swept their muddy arms in the muddy water. Looking around for a ray of hope, a bright idea struck him. He could but try one chance. The bar of the "New Lucy" was a very respectable-looking affair, as bars go. It opened into the saloon cabin of the steamer on its inner side, but in the rear was a small window where the deck passengers sneaked up, from time to time, and bought whatever they wanted, and then

quietly slipped away again, unseen by the more "high-toned" passengers in the cabin. Summoning all his courage and assurance, the boy stepped briskly to this outside opening, and, leaning his arms jauntily on the window-ledge, said, "See here, cap, I owe you for a pack of cards."

"Yep," replied the barkeeper, holding a bottle between his eye and the light, and measuring its contents.

This was not encouraging. Sandy, with a little effort, went on: "You see we fellows, three of us, are sparring our way down to St. Louis. We have got trusted for our passage. We've friends in St. Louis, and when we get there we shall be in funds. Our luggage is in pawn for our passage money. When we come down to get our luggage, I will pay you the six bits I owe you for the cards. Is that all right?"

"Yep," said the barkeeper, and he set the bottle down. As the lad went away from the window, with a great load lifted from his heart, the barkeeper put his head out of the opening, looked after him, smiled, and said, "That boy'll do."

When Sandy joined his brother, who was wistfully watching for him, he said, a little less boastfully than might have been expected of him, "That's all right, Charlie. The barkeeper says he will trust me until we get to St. Louis and come aboard to get the luggage. He's a good fellow, even if he did say 'yep' instead of 'yes' when I asked him."

In reply to Charlie's eager questions, Sandy related all that had happened, and Charlie, with secret admiration for his small brother's knack of "cheeking it through," as he expressed it, forbore any further remarks.

"I do believe the water is really rising!" exclaimed the irrepressible youngster, who, now that his latest trouble was fairly over, was already thinking of something else. "Look at that log. When I came out here just after breakfast, this morning, it was high and dry on that shoal. Now one end of it is afloat. See it bob up and down?"

Full of the good news, the lads went hurriedly forward to find Oscar, who, with his friend from Baltimore, was regarding the darkening scene from the other part of the boat.

"She's moving!" excitedly cried Oscar, pointing his finger at the "War Eagle"; and, as he spoke, that steamer slid slowly off the sand-bar, and with her steam-organ playing triumphantly "Oh, aren't you glad you're out of the Wilderness!" a well-known air in those days, she steamed steadily down stream. From all the other boats, still stranded though they were, loud cheers greeted the first to be released from the long embargo. Presently another, the "Thomas H. Benton," slid off, and churning the water with her wheels like a mad thing, took her way down the river. All these boats were flat-bottomed and, as the saying was,

"could go anywhere if the ground was a little damp." A rise of a very few inches of water was sufficient to float any one of them. And, in the course of a half-hour, the "New Lucy," to the great joy of her passengers, with one more hoist on her forward spars, was once more in motion, and she too went gayly steaming down the river, her less fortunate companions who were still aground cheering her as she glided along the tortuous channel.

"Well, that was worth waiting some day or two to see," said Oscar, drawing a long breath. "Just listen to that snorting calliope, playing 'Home, Sweet Home' as they go prancing down the Big Muddy. I shall never forget her playing that 'Out of the Wilderness' as she tore out of those shoals. It's a pretty good tune, after all, and the steam-organ is not so bad now that you hear it at a distance."

CHAPTER XX.

STRANDED NEAR HOME.

It was after dark, on a Saturday evening, when the "New Lucy" landed her passengers at the levee, St. Louis. They should have been in the city several hours earlier, and they had expected to arrive by daylight. The lads marvelled much at the sight of the muddy waters of the Missouri running into the pure currents of the Mississippi, twenty miles above St. Louis, the two streams joining but not mingling, the yellow streak of the Big Muddy remaining separate and distinct from the flow of the Mississippi for a long distance below the joining of the two. They had also found new enjoyment in the sight of the great, many-storied steamboats with which the view was now diversified as they drew nearer the beautiful city which had so long been the object of their hopes and longings. They could not help thinking, as they looked at the crowded levee, solid buildings, and slender church spires, that all this was a strange contrast to the lonely prairie and wide, trackless spaces of their old home on the banks of the distant Kansas stream. The Republican Fork

seemed to them like a far-off dream, it was so very distant to them now.

"Where are you young fellows going to stop in St. Louis?" asked the pleasant-faced young man from Baltimore.

The lads had scarcely thought of that, and here was the city, the strange city in which they knew nobody, in full sight. They exchanged looks of dismay, Sandy's face wearing an odd look of amusement and apprehension mixed. Charlie timidly asked what hotels were the best. The young man from Baltimore named two or three which he said were "first-class," and Charlie thought to himself that they must avoid those. They had no money to pay for their lodging, no baggage as security for their payment.

As soon as they could get away by themselves, they held a council to determine what was to be done. They had the business address of their uncle, Oscar Bryant, of the firm of Bryant, Wilder & Co., wholesale dealers in agricultural implements, Front Street. But they knew enough about city life to know that it would be hopeless to look for him in his store at night. It would be nearly nine o'clock before they could reach any hotel. What was to be done? Charlie was certain that no hotel clerk would be willing to give them board and lodging, penniless wanderers as they were, with nothing but one small valise to answer as luggage for the party. They could have no money until they found their uncle.

Before they could make up their minds what to do, or which way to turn, the boat had made her landing and was blowing off steam at the levee. The crowds of passengers, glad to escape from the narrow limits of the steamer, were hurrying ashore. The three homeless and houseless lads were carried resistlessly along with the crowd. Charlie regretted that they had not asked if they could stay on the boat until Sunday morning. But Sandy and Oscar both scouted such a confession of their poverty. "Besides," said Sandy, "it is not likely that they would keep any passengers on board here at the levee."

"Ride up? Free 'bus to the Planters'!" cried one of the runners on the levee, and before the other two lads could collect their thoughts, the energetic Sandy had drawn them into the omnibus, and they were on their way to an uptown hotel. When the driver had asked where their baggage was, Sandy, who was ready to take command of things, had airily answered that they would have it sent up from the steamer. There were other passengers in the 'bus, and Charlie, anxious and distressed, had no chance to remonstrate; they were soon rattling and grinding over the pavements of St. Louis. The novelty of the ride and the glitter of the brightly lighted shops in which crowds of people were doing their Saturday-night buying, diverted their attention for a time. Then the omnibus backed up before a handsome hotel,

and numerous colored men came hurrying down the steps of the grand entrance to wait upon the new arrivals. With much ceremony and obsequiousness, the three young travellers were ushered into the office, where they wrote their names in a big book, and were escorted to a large and elegant room, in which were ample, even luxurious, sleeping accommodations for the trio.

The colored porter assiduously brushed off the clothing of the lads. "Baggage?" the clerk at the desk had asked when they registered. "Baggage, sah?" the waiter asked again, as he dusted briskly the jackets of the three guests. Neither Charlie nor Oscar had the heart to make reply to this very natural question. It was Sandy who said: "We will not have our baggage up from the steamer to-night. We are going right on up north."

But when Sandy tipped the expectant waiter with the long-treasured silver quarter of a dollar, Charlie fairly groaned, and sinking into a chair as the door closed, said, "Our last quarter! Great Scott, Sandy! are you crazy?"

Sandy, seeing that there was no help for it, put on a bold front, and insisted that they must keep up appearances to the last. He would hunt up Uncle Oscar's place of abode in the city directory after supper, and bright and early Sunday morning he would go and see him. They would be all right then. What use was that confounded

old quarter, anyhow? They might as well stand well with the waiter. He might be useful to them. Twenty-five cents would not pay their hotel bill; it would not buy anything they needed in St. Louis. The darky might as well have it.

"And this is one of the swellest and most expensive hotels in the city," cried Charlie, eyeing the costly furniture and fittings of the room in which they were lodged. "I just think that we are travelling under false pretences, putting up at an expensive house like this without a cent in our pockets. Not one cent! What will you do, you cheeky boy, if they ask us for our board in advance? I have heard that they always do that with travellers who have no baggage."

"Well, I don't know what we will do," said Sandy, doggedly. "Suppose we wait until they ask us. There'll be time enough to decide when we are dunned for our bill. I suppose the honestest thing would be to own right up and tell the whole truth. It's nothing to be ashamed of. Lots of people have to do that sort of thing when they get into a tight place."

"But I'm really afraid, Sandy, that they won't believe us," said the practical Oscar. "The world is full of swindlers as well as of honest fellows. They might put us out as adventurers."

"We are not adventurers!" cried Sandy, indignantly. "We are gentlemen when we are at home, able to pay our debts. We are overtaken by an

accident," he added, chuckling to himself. "Distressed gentlemen, don't you see?"

"But we might have gone to a cheaper place," moaned Charlie. "Here we are in the highest-priced hotel in St. Louis. I know it, for I heard that Baltimore chap say so. We might have put up at some third-rate house, anyhow."

"But it is the third-rate house that asks you for your baggage, and makes you pay in advance if you don't have any," cried Sandy, triumphantly. "I don't believe that a high-toned hotel like this duns people in advance for their board, especially if it is a casual traveller, such as we are. Anyhow, they haven't dunned us yet, and when they do, I'll engage to see the party through, Master Charlie; so you set your mind at rest." As for Charlie, he insisted that he would keep out of the sight of the hotel clerk, until relief came in the shape of money to pay their bill.

Oscar, who had been reading attentively a printed card tacked to the door of the room, broke in with the declaration that he was hungry, and that supper was served until ten o'clock at night. The others might talk all night, for all he cared; he intended to have some supper. There was no use arguing about the chances of being dunned for their board; the best thing he could think of was to have some board before he was asked to pay for it. And he read out the list of hours for dinner, breakfast, and supper from the card.

"There is merit in your suggestion," said Charlie, with a grim smile. "The dead-broke Boy Settlers from the roaring Republican Fork will descend to the banquet-hall." Charlie was recovering his spirits under Oscar's cool and unconcerned advice to have board before being in the way of paying for it.

After supper, the lads, feeling more cheerful than before, sauntered up to the clerk's desk, and inspected the directory of the city. They found their uncle's name and address, and it gave them a gleam of pleasure to see his well-remembered business card printed on the page opposite. Under the street address was printed Mr. Bryant's place of residence, thus: "h. at Hyde Park."

"Where's that?" asked Sandy, confidently, of the clerk.

"Oh! that's out of the city a few miles. You can ride out there in the stage. Only costs you a quarter."

Only a quarter! And the last quarter had gone to the colored boy with the whisk-broom.

"Here's a go!" said Sandy, for once a little cast down. "We might walk it," Oscar whispered, as they moved away from the desk. But to this Charlie, asserting the authority of an elder brother, steadfastly objected. He knew his Uncle Oscar better than the younger boys did. He remembered that he was a very precise and dignified elderly gentleman. He would be scandalized greatly if

his three wandering nephews should come tramping out to his handsome villa on a Sunday, like three vagabonds, to borrow money enough to get home to Dixon with. No; that was not to be thought of. Charlie said he would pawn his watch on Monday morning; he would walk the streets to keep out of the way of the much-dreaded hotel clerk; but, as for trudging out to his Uncle Oscar's on Sunday, he would not do it, nor should either of the others stir a step. So they went to bed, and slept as comfortably in their luxurious apartment as if they had never known anything less handsome, and had money in plenty to pay all demands at sight.

It was a cloudy and chilly November Sunday to which the boys awoke next day. The air was piercingly raw, and the city looked dust-colored and cheerless under the cold, gray sky. Breaking their fast (Charlie keeping one eye on the hotel office), they sallied forth to see the city. They saw it all over, from one end to the other. They walked and walked, and then went back to the hotel; and after dinner, walked and walked again. They hunted up their uncle's store in one of the deserted business streets of the city; and they gazed at its exterior with a curious feeling of relief. There was the sign on the prosperous-looking outside of the building, — "Oscar G. Bryant & Co., Agricultural Implements." There, at least, was a gleam of comfort. The store was a real

thing. Their uncle, little though they knew about him, was a real man.

Then, as the evening twilight gathered, they walked out to the borders of the suburb where he lived. They did not venture into the avenue where they had been told his house was, vaguely fearing that he might meet and recognize them. As they turned their steps towards the hotel, Oscar said: "It's lucky there are three of us to keep ourselves in countenance. If that wasn't the case, it would be awfully lonely to think we were so near home, and yet have gone ashore, hard and fast aground; right in sight of port, as it were."

The parents of these boys had been born and brought up near the seacoast of New England, and not a few marine figures of speech were mingled in the family talk. So Charlie took up the parable and gloomily said: "We are as good as castaways in this big ocean of a city, with never a soul to throw us a spar or give us a hand. I never felt so blue in all my life. Look at those children playing in that dooryard. Pretty poor-looking children they are; but they've got a home over their heads to-night. We haven't."

"Oh, pshaw, Charlie!" broke in Sandy; "why will you always look on the dark side of things? I know it's real lonesome here in a strange city, and away from our own folks. But they are not so far away but what we can get to them after a while. And we have got a roof over our heads for

to-night, anyway; the Planters' is good enough for me; if you want anything better, you will have to get outside of St. Louis for it; and, what is more, they are not going to dun us for our board bill until after to-day. I'm clean beat out traipsing around this town, and I give you two fellows notice that I am not going to stir a step out of the hotel to-night. Unless it is to go to church," he added by way of postscript.

They did go to church that night, after they had had their supper. It was a big, comfortable, and roomy church, and the lads were shown into a corner pew under the gallery, where they were not conspicuous. The music of choir and organ was soothing and comforting. One of the tunes sung was "Dundee," and each boy thought of their singing the song of "The Kansas Emigrants," as the warbling measures drifted down to them from the organ-loft, lifting their hearts with thoughts that the strangers about them knew nothing of. The preacher's text was "In my father's house are many mansions." Then they looked at each other again, as if to say, "That's a nice text for three homeless boys in a strange city." But nobody even so much as whispered.

Later on in the sermon, when the preacher touched a tender chord in Oscar's heart, alluding to home and friends, and to those who wander far from both, the lad, with a little moisture in his eyes, turned to look at Sandy. He was fast asleep

in his snug corner. Oscar made a motion to wake him, but Charlie leaned over and said, "Leave the poor boy alone. He's tired with his long tramp to-day." When they went out after the service was over, Oscar rallied Sandy on his sleeping in church, and the lad replied: "I know it was bad manners, but the last thing I heard the minister say, was 'Rest for the weary.' I thought that was meant for me. Leastways, I found rest for the weary right off, and I guess there was no harm done."

With Monday morning came sunshine and a clear and bracing air. Even Charlie's face wore a cheerful look, the first that he had put on since arriving in St. Louis, although now and again his heart quaked as he heard the hotel porter's voice in the hall roaring out the time of departure for the trains that now began to move from the city in all directions. They had studied the railroad advertisements and time-tables to some purpose, and had discovered that they must cross to East St. Louis, on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River, and there take a train for the northern part of the State, where Dixon is situated. But they must first see their Uncle Oscar, borrow the needed money from him, settle with the steamboat people and the hotel, and then get to the railroad station by eleven o'clock in the forenoon. It was a big morning's work.

They were at their uncle's store before he arrived

from his suburban home; and, while they waited, they whisperingly discussed the question, Who should ask for the money? Charlie was at first disposed to put this duty on Sandy; but the other two boys were very sure that it would not look well for the youngest of the party to be the leader on an occasion so important; and Charlie was appointed spokesman.

Mr. Oscar Bryant came in. He was very much surprised to see three strange lads drawn up in a row to receive him. And he was still more taken aback when he learned that they were his nephews, on their way home from Kansas. He had heard of his brother's going out to Kansas, and he had not approved of it at all. He was inclined to think that, on the whole, it would be better for Kansas to have slavery than to do without it. A great many other people in St. Louis thought the same way, at that time, although some of them changed their minds later on.

Mr. Oscar Bryant was a tall, spruce-looking, and severe man in appearance. His hair was gray and brushed stiffly back from his forehead; and his precise, thin, white whiskers were cut "just like a minister's," as Sandy afterwards declared; and when he said that going to Kansas to make it a free State was simply the rankest kind of folly, Charlie's heart sunk, and he thought to himself that the chance of borrowing money from their stern-looking uncle was rather slim.

"But it doesn't make any difference to you boys whether slavery is voted up or down in Kansas, I suppose," he continued, less sternly. "You will live to see the day when, if you live in Kansas, you will own slaves and work them. You can never clear up a wild country like that without slave-labor, depend upon it. I know what I am talking about." And Uncle Oscar stroked his chin in a self-satisfied way, as if he had settled the whole Kansas-Nebraska question in his own manner of thinking. Sandy's brown cheeks flushed and his eyes sparkled. He was about to burst out with an indignant word, when Charlie, alarmed by his small brother's excited looks, blurted out their troubles at once, in order to head off the protest that he expected from Sandy. The lad was silent.

"Eh? what's that?" asked the formal-looking merchant. "Busted? And away from home? Why, certainly, my lads. How much do you need?" And he opened his pocket-book at once. Greatly relieved, perhaps surprised, Charlie told him that they thought that fifty dollars would pay all their bills and get them back to Dixon. The money was promptly handed over, and Charlie, emboldened by this good nature, told his uncle that they still owed for their passage down the river from Leavenworth.

"And did they really trust you three boys for your passage-money? How did that happen?" asked the merchant, with admiration.

Charlie, as spokesman, explained that Sandy had "sparred" their way for them; and when he had told how Sandy still owed for a pack of cards, and how it was his honest face and candid way of doing things that had brought them thus far on their homeward journey, Uncle Oscar, laughing heartily and quite unbending from his formal and dry way of talking, said, "Well done, my little red-hot Abolitionist; you'll get through this world, I'll be bound." He bade the wanderers farewell and goodspeed with much impressiveness and sent messages of good-will to their parents.

"How do you suppose Uncle Oscar knew I was an Abolitionist?" demanded Sandy, as soon as they were out of earshot. "I'm not an Abolitionist, anyhow."

"Well, you're a free-State man; and that's the same thing," said Charlie. "A free-State boy," added Oscar.

With a proud heart the cashier of the Boy Settlers paid their bill at the hotel, and reclaimed their valise from the porter, with whom they had lodged it in the morning before going out. Then they hurried to the levee, and, to their surprise, found that the little steamer that conveyed passengers across the river to the East St. Louis railway station lay close alongside the "New Lucy." Their task of transferring the baggage was easy.

"Say, Sandy, you made the bargain with the clerk to bring us down here on the security of our

luggage; it's nothing more than business-like that you should pay him what we owe," said Charlie.

"Right you are, Charlie," added Oscar, "and it's fair that Sandy, who has had the bother of sparring our way for us, should have the proud satisfaction of paying up all old scores." So Sandy, nothing loth, took the roll of bills and marched bravely up to the clerk's office and paid the money due. The handsome clerk looked approvingly at the boy, and said: "Found your friends? Good boy! Well, I wish you good luck."

The barkeeper said he had forgotten all about the pack of cards that he had trusted Sandy with, when the lad gave him the seventy-five cents due him. "I can't always keep account of these little things," he explained.

"But you don't often trust anybody with cards coming down the river, do you?" asked Sandy, surprised.

"Heaps," said the barkeeper.

"And do they always pay?"

"Some of 'em does, and then ag'in, some of 'em doesn't," replied the man, as with a yawn he turned away to rearrange his bottles and glasses.

With the aid of a lounger on the landing, whom they thought they could now afford to fee for a quarter, the youngsters soon transferred their luggage from the "New Lucy" to the little ferry-boat near at hand. To their great pleasure, they found

on board the pleasant-faced lady from Baltimore and her party. She was apparently quite as pleased to meet them, and she expressed her regret that they were not going eastward on the train with herself and sons. "We have had such a pleasant trip down the river together," she said. "And you are going back to Illinois? Will you return to Kansas in the spring?"

"We cannot tell yet," replied Charlie, modestly. "That all depends upon how things look in the spring, and what father and Uncle Aleck think about it. We are free-State people, and we want to see the Territory free, you see."

The pleasant-faced lady's forehead was just a little clouded when she said, "You will have your labor lost, if you go to Kansas, then; for it will certainly be a slave State."

They soon were in the cars with their tickets for Dixon bought, and, as Sandy exultingly declared, paid for, and their baggage checked all the way through. Then Sandy said, "I'm sorry that pretty lady from Baltimore is a Border Ruffian."

The other two boys shouted with laughter, and Oscar cried: "She's no Border Ruffian. She's only pro-slavery; and so is Uncle Oscar and lots of others. You ought to be ashamed of yourself to be so — what is it, Charlie? Intolerant, that's what it is."

The train was slowly moving from the rude shed that was dignified by the name of railroad depot. Looking back at the river with their heads out of

the windows, for the track lay at right angles with the river-bank, they could now see the last of the noble stream on which they had taken their journey downwards from "bleeding Kansas" by the Big Muddy. They were nearing home, and their hearts were all the lighter for the trials and troubles through which they had so lately passed.

"We don't cross the prairies as of old our fathers crossed the sea, any more, do we, Charlie?" said Oscar, as they caught their last glimpse of the mighty Mississippi.

"No," said the elder lad. "We may not be there to see it; but Kansas will be the homestead of the free, for all that. Mind what I say."