

THE WAR-TRAIL!

CHAPTER LXII.—(CONTINUED.)

That they might succeed in running down the steed, cumbered as he was, was probable enough. Sooner or later they would overtake him. It might be after a long, long gallop over hill and dale, through swamp and chaparral; but still it was probable those tough, tireless pursuers would overtake him. They would launch themselves upon his flanks; they would seize upon his wearied limbs—upon hers, the helpless victim upon his back: both horse and rider would be dragged to the earth—both torn—parted in pieces—devoured!

I gazed upon the horrid apprehension.

"Look thar!" said Gary, pointing to the ground, and holding his torch so as to illuminate the surface: "the hooss has made a slip thar. See! hyar's the track o' the big wolf—he has sprung up jest hyar; I can tell by the scratch o' his hind-claws."

I examined the "sign." Even to my eyes it was readable, and just as Gary had interpreted it. There were other tracks of wolves on the damp soil, but one had certainly launched himself forward, in a long leap, as though in an effort to fasten himself upon the flanks of some animal. The hoof-mark plainly showed that the steed had slipped as he sprang over the wet ground; and this had tempted the spring of the watchful pursuer.

We hurried on. Our excited feelings hindered us from pausing longer than a moment. Both rangers and trappers shared my eagerness, as well as my apprehensions. Fast as the torches could be carried, we hurried on.

Shortly after parting from the mesa, there occurred a change in our favor. The lights had been carried under hats to protect them from the rain. This precaution was no longer required. The storm had passed—the shower ceasing as suddenly as it had come on; the clouds were fast driving from the face of the firmament. In five minutes more the moon would shine forth. Already her refracted rays lightened the prairie.

We did not stay for her full beam; time was too precious. Still trusting to the torches we hurried on.

The beautiful queen of the night kept her promise. In five minutes her cheering orb shot out beyond the margin of the dark pall that had hitherto shrouded it, and her white disc as if purified by the storm, shone with unwonted brightness. The ground became conspicuous almost as in the day; the torches were extinguished, and we followed the trail more rapidly by the light of the moon.

Here, still in full gallop, had passed the wild horse, and for miles beyond—still had he gone at utmost speed. Still close upon his heels had followed the ravenous and untiring wolves. Here and there were the prints of their clawed feet—the signs of their unflagging pursuit.

The roar of water sounded in our ears: it came from the direction in which the trail was conducting us; a stream was not far distant.

We soon diminished the distance. A glassy sheet glistened under the moonlight. And towards this the trail tended in a straight line.

It was a river—a cataract was near, down which the water, freshened by the late rain, came tumbling, broken by the rocks into hummocks of white foam. Under the moonlight, it appeared like an avalanche of snow. The trappers recognized an affluent of the Rio Bravo, running from the north—from the high steppe of the Llano Estacado.

We hurried forward to its bank, and opposite the frothing rapids. The trail conducted us to this point—to the very edge of the foaming water. It led no further. There were the hoof-marks forward to the brink, but not back. The horse had plunged into the torrent.

CHAPTER LXIII. ACROSS THE TORRENT.

SURELY was it so. Into that seething rapid the steed had launched himself—where the spume was whitest, and the rocks gave out their hoarsest echoes. The four hoof-prints, close together upon the bank, showed the point from which he had sprung, and the deeply indented turf testified that he had made no timid leap. The pursuers had been close upon his heels and he had flung himself with desperate plunge upon the water.

Had he succeeded in crossing? It was our first thought. It appeared improbable—impossible. Notwithstanding its foam-bedappled surface, the current was swift, and looked as though it would sweep either man or horse from his footing. Surely it was too deep to be forded. Though here and there rocks were seen above the surface, they were but the crests of large boulders, and between them the impetuous wave ran dark and deep. Had the horse lost footing? had he been forced to swim? If so, he must have been carried with the current—his body submerged—his withers sunk below the surface—his helpless rider—

The conclusion was evident to all of us. All felt the conviction simultaneously. No—not all. There came a word of comfort from the oldest and wisest—a word that gave cheer to my drooping spirit.

"Wagh! I the hooss hain't swam a lick he hain't."

"Are you sure, Rub? How can you tell?" were the quick interrogatories.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Earthquakes in South America.

The recent terrible disaster in Costa Rica gives additional interest to the subject of destruction by earthquakes. The four towns reported destroyed by the earthquake are on the southwestern side of the mountains. Alajuela is a city of 8,000 inhabitants, and is the capital of the province of the same name. It is an important station near the Pacific coast terminus of the only railroad in the country, running from Port Limon on the Caribbean sea, to Puenta Arenas, on the Gulf of Nicoya on the Pacific. Heredia is the seat of government in the province of Heredia. It has nearly 10,000 inhabitants, and is situated in the south-eastern part of the republic, near the head of the Gulf of Dulce. In common with the entire Pacific coast of America, and indeed with all the shores of the Pacific ocean, Costa Rica is a volcanic region, and is subject to frequent earthquake shocks. This fact is indicated by the ancient Indian name of Central America, Cuscatlan, which signifies "the land that sways or shakes like a hammock." There were severe earthquakes in San Salvador, in 1770, and more than a century afterward, on March 19, 1873, the capital city of that republic, San Salvador, was entirely destroyed by three successive shocks. The loss of life, however, was small, fewer than 500 persons being killed. There have been numerous earthquakes in the West Indies and in California, in recent years, but the most disastrous shocks have occurred along and near the South American coast, at Quito, Callao, Concepcion, Valparaiso and other points. The city of Concepcion has been laid in ruins four times, suffering from 300 shocks in two weeks in February, 1835. In August, 1868, Arica, Peru, was visited by a severe earthquake and tidal wave, by which the United States steamer Waterloo and several other vessels were carried far inland and left stranded there. The East Indies, Japan and the Sandwich Islands have frequently been visited by violent shocks. So, too, have the countries of southern Europe, where occurred the earthquakes of Lisbon, on November 1, 1775, destroying 60,000 persons in six minutes, and of Calabria in 1783 causing the death of 100,000 persons. Many severe shocks have been felt on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, also. In Judea, in 31 B. C., 10,000 persons perished; the city of Antioch was several times destroyed, 250,000 persons being killed there in 526, and 30,000 more in 587; and the terrible destruction of life and property at Seis in April last is still freshly remembered.

New York in 1881.

During 1881 38,624 deaths occurred in New York city, and 35,000 births were reported.

For the education of children some \$4,000,000 was expended while the drinking places, of which there are 9,215, absorbed, it is estimated, the enormous sum of \$60,000,000.

Of the army of wine bibbers who cast their substance into this pool 31,391 were committed to the Tombs. The amount expended in amusements of all sorts amounted to \$7,000,000.

In the police stations 110,034 asked for and were furnished with lodgings, and 24,000, outdoor poor were relieved.

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