

THE WAR-TRAIL!

CHAPTER LXI.—(CONTINUED.)

"Rube struck the trail, cap'n," said he in a quiet voice, as he came up: "yonder he goes, what you see the bleeze o' the cannell! He'll soon be out o' sight, if we don't make haste, an' follow."

Without another word we seized the reins, sprang once more into our saddles, and rode off after the twinkling star, that beacons us across the plain.

Rube was soon overtaken, and we perceived that, despite the storm, he was rapidly progressing along the trail, his candle sheltered from the rain under the ample sombrero.

In answer to numerous queries, the old trapper vouchsafed only an occasional "Wagh," evidently proud of this new exhibition of his skill. With Garey, the curious succeeded better; and as we continued on, the latter explained to them how the trail had been recovered by his comrade—for to Rube, it appeared, was the credit due.

Rube remembered the mesa spring. It was the water in its branch that we had seen gleaming under the light. The thoughtful trapper conjectured, and rightly as it proved, that the steed would stop there to drink. He had passed along the stony shingle by the mound—simply because around the cliff lay his nearest way to the water—and had followed a dry ridge that led directly from the mesa to the spring branch. Along this ridge, going gently at the time, his hoof had left no marks—at least none that could be distinguished by torch-light, and this was why the trail had been for the moment lost. Rube, however, remembered that around the spring there was a track of soft, boggy ground; and he anticipated that in this the hoof prints would leave a deep impression. To find them he needed only a "kiver" for the candle, and the huge hat o' Quackenboss offered the very thing. An umbrella would scarcely have been better for his purpose.

As the trappers had conjectured, they found the tracks in the muddy margin of the spring branch. The steed had drunk at the pool; but immediately after had resumed his wild flight, going westward from the mound.

Why had he gone off at a gallop? Had he been alarmed by aught? Or had he taken fresh fright at the strange rider upon his back?

I questioned Garey. I saw that he knew why. He needed pressing for the answer.

He gave it at length, but with evident reluctance.

"That are wolf-traces on the trail."

CHAPTER LXII.

WOLVES ON THE TRACK.

THE wolves, then, were after him! The trackers had made out their foot-prints in the mud of the arroyo. Both kinds had been there—the large brown wolf of Texas, and the small barking coyote of the plains—a full pack there had been, as the trappers could tell by the numerous tracks. That they were following the horse, the track also testified to these men of strange intelligence. How knew they this? By what sign?

To my inquiries, I obtained answer from Garey.

Above the spring branch extended a shelving bank; up this the steed had bounded, after drinking at the pool. Up this, too, the wolves had sprung after: they had left the indentation of their claws in the soft loam.

How knew Garey that they were in pursuit of the horse?

The "scratches" told him they were going at their fastest, and they would not have sprung so far had they not been pursuing some prey. There were foot-marks of no other animal except theirs and the hoof-prints of the steed; and that they were after him was evident to the trapper, because the tracks of the wolves covered those of the horse.

Garey had no more doubt of the correctness of his reasoning than a geometer of the truth of a theorem in Euclid.

I groaned in spirit as I was forced to adopt his conclusion. But it was all probable—too probable. Had the steed been alone—unembarrassed—free—it was not likely the wolves would have chased him thus. The wild horse in his prime is rarely the object of their attack—though the old and infirm, the gravid mare, and the feeble colt, often fall before these hungry hunters of the plains. Both common wolf and coyote possess all the astuteness of the fox, and know, as if by instinct, the animal that is wounded to death. They will follow the stricken deer that has escaped from the hunter; but if it prove to be but slightly harmed, instinctively they abandon the chase.

Their instinct had told them that the steed was not ridden by a free hand; they had seen that there was something amiss; and in the hope of running down both horse and rider, they had followed with hungry howl.

Another fact lent probability to this painful conjecture: we knew that by the mesa were many wolves.

The spring was the constant resort of ruminant animals, deer and antelope; the half-wild cattle of the ganaderos drank there, and the tottering calf often became the prey of the coyote and his more powerful congener, the gaunt Texan wolf. There was still another reason why the place must of late have

been the favorite prowl of these hideous brutes: the debris of our skirmish had furnished them with many a midnight banquet. They had ravaged upon the blood of men and the flesh of horses, and they hungered for more.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Reading for Children.

Parents should give their children the advantages of a good, healthy library, and furnish them with papers that respect the morals. Select the matter for your children. Take time, since the whole future of your son or daughter may lie directly in the literature which you may place before them. The writer knows of cases that came under his own observation, which resulted in great harm, and all the result of reading improper books. You are interested in the future of your child; take care of the reading matter. There is nothing more injurious to the development of the mind and the formation of character in young people than for them to form the habit of reading corrupt literature. It is in such books that the false side of life is given to the young and they will get the idea that life is not the great earnest battle which we each must fight for himself. It is from what we read that we derive many of our thoughts and ideas, which influence many of our deeds and actions in after life. If our reading is pure, the thoughts obtained will likewise be pure; but if it is degrading in its nature, it will pull us down to a level with itself.

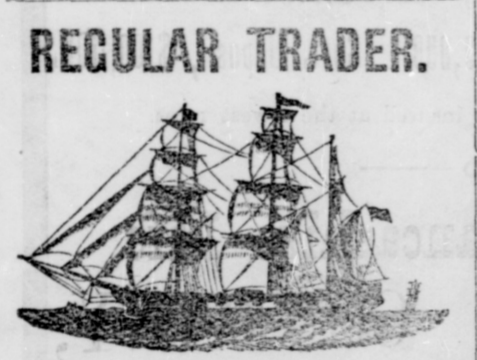
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TRAINS INWARD.

Table with 3 columns: STATIONS, MIXED, MIXED, MIXED. Rows include Ch'town, Royalty Jo, N. Witche's, Hunter R'r, Bradalbe's, Co'ty Line, Freetown, Keusing'tn, Summ'side, Wellington, Port Hill, O'Leary, Bloomfield, Alberton, Tignish, Royalty Jo, Bedford, Mt. Stew't, Cardigan, George'tn, Mt. Stew't, Morell, St. Peter's, Bear River, Souris.

L. B. ARCHIBALD, Superintendent Railway Office Charlottetown n. Nov. 29, 1881

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