Over the Rocky Mountains to Alaska, and A Bit of Old China

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Wandering Will in the Land of the Redskin

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"Over the Rocky Mountains"

Preface.

Note: Plan of this Miscellany.

There is a vast amount of interesting information, on almost all subjects, which many people, especially the young, cannot attain to because of the expense, and, in some instances, the rarity of the books in which it is contained.

To place some of this information, in an attractive form, within the reach of those who cannot afford to purchase expensive books, is the principal object of this Miscellany.

Truth is stranger than fiction, but fiction is a valuable assistant in the development of truth. Both, therefore, shall be used in these volumes. Care will be taken to insure, as far as is possible, that the *facts* stated shall be true, and that the *impressions* given shall be truthful.

As all classes, in every age, have proved that tales and stories, are the most popular style of literature, each volume of the series (with, perhaps, one or two exceptions) will contain a complete tale, the heroes and actors in which, together with the combination of circumstances in which they move, shall be more or less fictitious.

In writing these volumes, the author has earnestly endeavoured to keep in view the glory of God and the good of man.

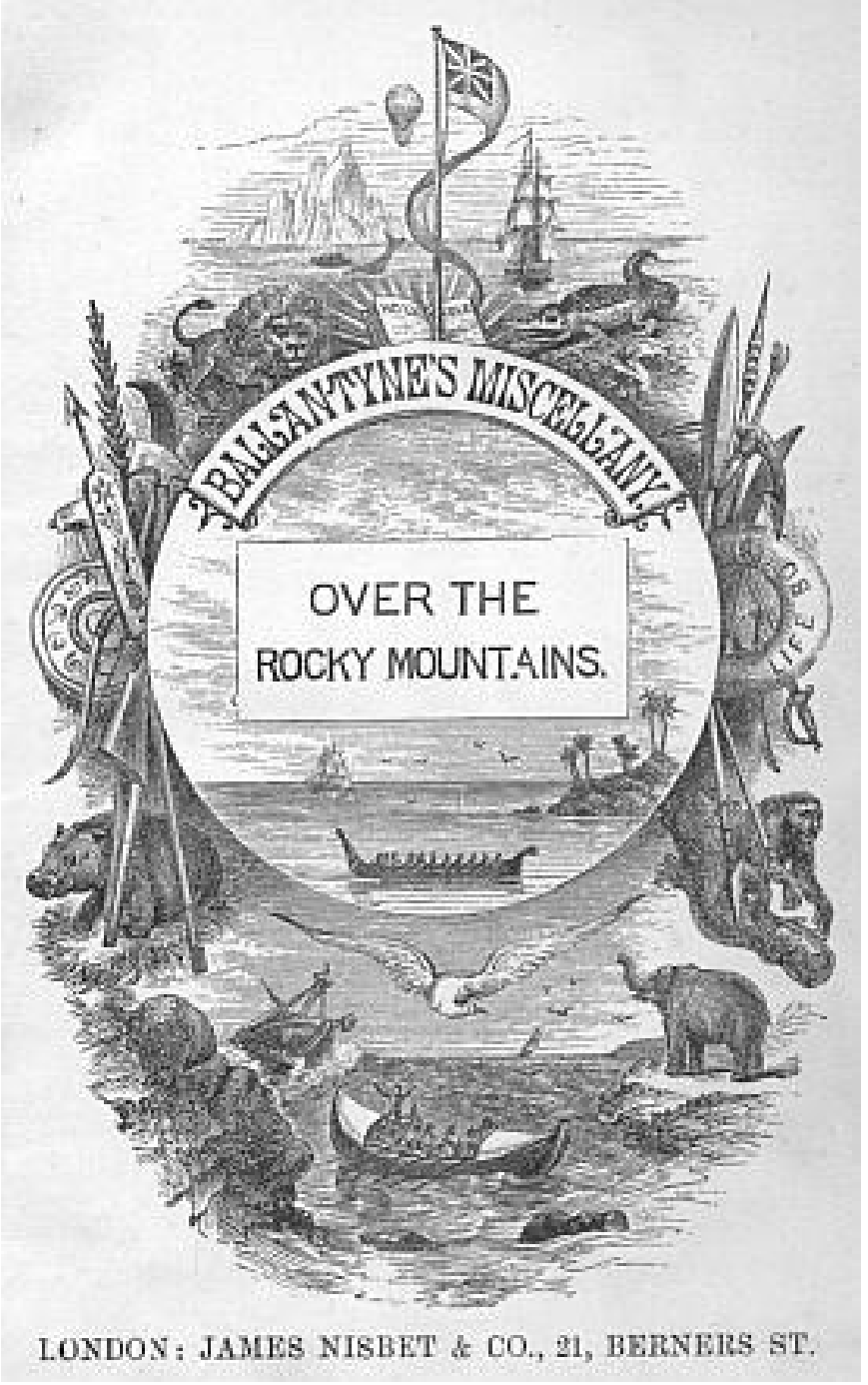
Chapter One.

Describes Home-Coming, and shows that Matters whispered in the Drawing-Room are sometimes loudly proclaimed Below-Stairs.

It was late on a winter evening when our hero, William Osten, arrived in England, in company with his two friends and former messmates, Bunco and Larry O'Hale.

When a youth returns to his native land, after a long absence which commenced with his running away to sea, he may perhaps experience some anxieties on nearing the old home; but our hero was not thus troubled, because, his father having died during his absence, and his mother having always been tender-hearted and forgiving, he felt sure of a warm reception.

Our hero was so anxious to see his mother, that he resolved to travel by the night-coach to his native town



of B—, leaving his companions to follow by the mail in the morning. Railways, although in use throughout the country, had not at that time cut their way to the town of B—. Travellers who undertook to visit that part of the land did so with feelings somewhat akin to those of discoverers about to set out on a distant voyage. They laid in a stock of provisions for the journey, and provided great supply of wraps for all weathers. When Will Osten reached the coach-office, he found that all the inside places were taken.

"You'll have to go aloft, sir," said the coachman, a stout and somewhat facetiously inclined individual, who, observing something of the sailor in Will's costume and gait, suited his language to his supposed character; "there's only one berth left vacant, on the fogs'l 'longside o' myself."

"Well, I'll take it," said Will.

Five minutes afterwards the guard shouted "all right," and they set off.

"Do you happen to know many of the people in the town of B—?" said Will to the coachman, as they emerged from the suburbs and dashed out upon a long tract of moorland.

"Know many of 'em, sir," said the man, tipping the off-leader on the flank by way of keeping his hand in; "I should 'ope I does; it's two year, this very day, since I came to this 'ere part o' the country, and I've got married in B— to a 'ooman as knows everythink and everybody, so, of course, I knows everythink and everybody, too."

"Then you have heard of a Mrs Osten, no doubt, a widow lady?" said Will.

"Wot, the widder o' that grumpy old gen'lman as died last year, leavin', they say, a big estate in furrin parts?"

Will felt a tendency to seize the man by the throat, and tumble him off his box into the road, but on second thoughts he restrained himself and said—

"She is the widow of a gentleman with whom I was intimately acquainted. I did not know anything about his

having estates abroad."

"I axe your pardon, sir," said the man, a little abashed by Will's grave manner; "didn't know they wos friends of yours. No offence, I 'ope. The old lady is raither low since her husband's death—for it wos somewhat sudden—an' they do say she's never got over the runnin' away of her only son—at least so my wife says, an' she ought to know, for she's bin intimate with the family for many years, an' knows the ooman as nussed the boy—"

"What, Maryann?" exclaimed Will.

"The same. You seems to know 'em all, sir."

"Yes, I know them well. Is Maryann still with my—with Mrs Osten?"

"Yes, sir, she is, an' wot's more, she aint likely to quit in a 'urry. W'y, sir, that 'ooman 'as 'ad no fewer than six hoffers of marriage, an' 'as refused 'em all for love of the old lady. My wife, she says to me the other night, when she wos a-washin' of the baby in the big bread can—you see, sir, the washin' tub's gone and sprung a leak, an' so we're redoosed to the bread can—Well, as I wos a-sayin', my wife says to me—'Richards,' says she, 'it's my belief that Marryhann will never marry, for her 'art an' soul is set upon Mrs Osten, an' she's got a strange feelin' of sartinty that Master Will, as she calls the runaway boy, will come back to comfort 'is mother an' look arter the furrin estates. No, Richards, mark my words, Maryhann will never marry.'"

"'It may be so, Jemimar,' says I,—Did you speak, sir?" said the coachman, turning sharp round on hearing Will utter an exclamation of surprise.

“Is your wife’s name Jemima?”

“Yes, it is; d’you ’appen to know her, too?”

“Well, I think I do, if she is the same person who used to attend upon Mrs Osten—a tall and—thin—and and—somewhat—”

“Stiff sort of woman—hout with it, sir, you’ll not ’urt my feelins. I didn’t marry Jemimar for her beauty, no, nor yet for her money nor her youth, for she aint young, sir—older than myself a long way. I took her for her *worth*, sir, her sterlin’ qualities. *You* know, sir, as well as I do, that it aint the fattest an’ youngest ’osses as is the best. Jemimar is a trump, sir, without any nonsense about her. Her capacity for fryin’ ’am, sir, an’ bilin’ potatoes is marvellous, an’ the way she do dress up the baby (we’ve only got one, sir) is the hadmiration of the neighbour’ood.”

“You said something just now about the deceased Mr Osten’s estate. Can you tell me how he came by it?”

“No, sir, I can’t. That’s the only thing that my wife ’as failed to fathom. There’s somethink mysterious about it, I think, for Missis Hosten she won’t speak to Marryhann on the subjec’, an’ all she knows about it is that the lawyer says there’s an estate somewheres in furrin parts as needs lookin’ arter. The lawyer didn’t say that to Maryhann, sir, of course, but she’s got a ’abit of hairin’ ’er ears at key’oles an’ over’ears things now an’ then.”

Further conversation on this point was here stopped by the arrival of the coach at the end of a stage, and when the journey was resumed with fresh horses, Will felt

inclined to sleep. He therefore buttoned up his coat tight to the chin, fixed his hat well down on his brows, and put himself into one of those numerous attitudes of torture with which "outsides" were wont to beguile the weary hours of night in coaching days. When the sun rose next morning, Will was still in that state of semi-somnolence which causes the expression of the countenance to become idiotic and the eyes owlish. At last the chimneys of his native town became visible, and in a short time he found himself standing before the well-remembered house tapping at the old door, whose panels—especially near the foot—still bore the deep marks of his own juvenile toes.

It is not necessary to drag the reader through the affecting scene of meeting between mother and son. Two days after his arrival we find them both seated at tea in the old drawing-room drinking out of the old mug, with the name "William" emblazoned on it, in which, in days gone by, he was wont to dip his infantine lips and nose. Not that he had selected this vessel of his own free will, but his mother, who was a romantic old lady, insisted on his using it, in order to bring back to her more vividly the days of his childhood, and Will, in the fulness of his heart, said he would be glad to drink tea out of the coal-scuttle if that would give her pleasure. The good lady even sent to the lumber-room for the old arm-chair of his babyhood, but as neither ingenuity nor perseverance could enable him to squeeze his stout person into that, he was fain to content himself with an ordinary chair.

"Now, dear mother," said Will, commencing the fifth slice of toast, under pressure (having eaten the fourth with difficulty), "you have not yet told me about this wonderful estate which everybody seems to know of

except myself."

"Ah! darling Will," sighed Mrs Osten, "I have avoided the subject as long as possible, for I know it is to be the cause of our being separated again. But there is no help for it, because I promised your dear father when he was dying that I would tell you his wishes in regard to it, and that I would not attempt to dissuade you from doing your duty. Well, you remember uncle Edward, I suppose?"

"His name—yes," said Will, "but I never knew anything else about him. I had nothing to remember or to forget, except, indeed, that he got the name of being a wild scapegrace, something like myself!"

"Like yourself, darling," exclaimed the old lady, with a look of indignation—"no indeed! Have not you repented and come back, like a good prodigal son; and didn't the dear beautiful letter that you wrote from that awful island—what's its name—where you were all but eaten alive—"

"The coral island," suggested Will.

"Yes, the coral island—didn't that dear letter give more delight to your beloved father than any letter he ever received in his life, and more than made up to him for your running away, and cheered him to his last hour, whereas uncle Edward was wicked to the last—at least so it is said, but I don't know, and it's not right to speak ill of the dead. Well, as I was going to say, uncle Edward died in some outlandish place in North America, I never can remember the name, but it's in the papers, so you'll see it—somewhere on the other side of the something mountains—I forget—"

"Rocky, perhaps."

"Yes, that's it, the Rocky Mountains, and I wish they were not so rocky, for your sake, darling, for you've got to go there and take possession (or serve yourself heir to, or something of that sort) of the property. Not that it's large, so they say (I wish with all my heart it did not exist at all), but they tell me there is gold on it, though whether it is lying on the fields or down in holes I'm sure I don't know, and oh dear, I don't care, for it entails your going away again, my darling boy."

Here the poor old lady broke down, and, throwing her arms round Will's neck—regardless of the fact that in so doing she upset and broke one of her best china tea-cups—wept upon his bosom.

Such was the manner of the announcement of the news in the drawing-room.

In the kitchen the same subject was being discussed by a select party, consisting of Maryann, Mr Richards the coachman, his spouse Jemima—formerly Scrubbins—the baby Richards—who has already been referred to as being reduced in the matter of his ablutions to a bread can—and Larry O'Hale with his faithful Indian friend Bunco.

"To think," said Maryann, with a quiet laugh, as she handed a cup of tea to Bunco—"to think that I should ever come for to sit at tea with a live red Indian from Ameriky—not that he's red either, for I'm sure that hany one with eyes in their 'ead could see that he's only brown."

"Ah, my dear, that's 'cause he's changed colour," said

Larry, pushing in his cup for more tea. "He wasn't always like that. Sure, when I first know'd Bunco he was scarlet—pure scarlet, only he took a fancy one day, when he was in a wild mood, to run his canoe over the falls of Niagara for a wager, an', faix, when he came up out o' the wather after it he was turned brown, an's bin that same ever since."

"Gammon," exclaimed Maryann.

"Sure ye don't misdoubt me word, Maryann," said Larry reproachfully; "isn't it true, Bunco?"

"Yoos a norribable liar, Larry," answered Bunco with a broad grin.

Richards the coachman, who had been for some minutes too busy with the buttered toast and bacon to do more than listen and chuckle, here burst into a loud guffaw and choked himself partially. Jemima and Maryann also laughed, whereupon the baby, not to be outdone, broke suddenly into a tremendous crow, and waved its fat arms so furiously that it overturned a tea-cup and sent the contents into Bunco's lap. This created a momentary confusion, and when calm was restored, Mrs Richards asked Maryann "if hanythink noo 'ad turned up in regard to the estate?" which she seemed to know so much about, but in regard to which she was, apparently, so unwilling to be communicative.

"Not so, Jemimar," said Maryann, with a look of offended dignity, "*unwillin'* to speak I am not, though *unable* I may be—at least I was so until yesterday, but I *have* come to know a little more about it since Master Will came 'ome while I chanced to be near—"

Maryann hesitated a moment, and Richards, through a mouthful of toast, muttered "the keyhole."

"Did you speak, sir?" said Maryann, bridling.

"No, oh! no, not by no means," replied Richards, "only the crust o' this 'ere toast is rayther 'ard, and I'm apt to growl w'en that's so."

"If the crust is 'ard, Mr Richards, your teeth is 'arder, so you ought to scrunch 'em without growling."

"Brayvo, my dear," exclaimed Larry, coming to the rescue; "you're more nor match for him, so be marciful, like a good sowl, an' let's hear about this estate, for it seems to me, from what I've heard, it must be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bunco's native place."

Maryann, darting a look of mingled defiance and triumph at Richards, who became more than ever devoted to the toast and bacon, proceeded—

"Well, as I was a-sayin', I 'eard Mrs Osten say to Master Will that his uncle Edward—as was a scape somethin' or other—had died an' left a small estate behind the Rocky Mountains in Ameriky or Afriky, I aint sure which."

"Ameriky, my dear," observed Larry.

"An' she said as 'ow they 'ad discovered gold on it, which could be picked up in 'andfuls, an' it was somewhere near a place called Kally somethin'—"

"Calliforny?" cried Larry.

"Yes, that was it."

"I towld ye that, Bunco!" exclaimed the Irishman, becoming excited; "go on, dear."

"Well, it seems there's some difficulties in the matter, wich I'm sure don't surprise *me*, for I never 'eard of things as 'ad to do with estates and law as didn't create difficulties, and I'm thankful as I've got nothin' to do with none of such things. Well, the end of it all is that, w'en master was dyin', he made missis swear as she'd urge Master Will to go to see after things hisself, an' missis, poor dear, she would rather let the estate and all the gold go, if she could only keep the dear boy at 'ome, but she's faithful to her promise, an' advises him to go—the sooner the better—because that would let him come back to her all the quicker. Master Will, he vowed at first that he would never more leave her, and I b'lieve he was in earnest, but when she spoke of his father's wish, he gave in an' said he would go, if she thought it his dooty so for to do."

"Hooray!" shouted Larry, jumping up at this point, and performing a species of war-dance for a few moments, and then sitting down and demanding another supply of tea. "Didn't I tell ye, Bunco, that the order would soon be up anchor an' away again! It's Wanderin' Will he's been named, an' Wanderin' Will he'll remain, that's as plain as the nose on me face."

"No doubt the nose on your face is very plain—the plainest I ever did see," said Maryann sharply,—"but you're quite wrong about Master Will, for he's very anxious to get married, I can tell you, an' wants to settle down at 'ome, like a sensible man, though it does grieve my 'eart to think of the creetur as has took him in in

furrin parts."

"Get married!" exclaimed Larry, Jemima, and Richards in the same breath.

"Yes, get married," replied Maryann, very full of the importance of her keyhole discoveries, and not willing to make them known too readily.

"How did you come to know that, Maryhann?" asked Jemima; "are you sure of it?"

"How I came for to know it," replied the other, "is nobody's business (she paused a moment and looked sternly at Richards, but that sensible man continued to gaze steadfastly at his plate and to 'scrunch' crusts with grave abstraction), and, as to its bein' true, all I can say is I had it from his own lips. Master Will has no objection to my knowing what he tells his mother—as no more he shouldn't, for Jemimar, you can bear me witness that I've been a second mother to him, an' used to love him as if he were my own—though he *was* a aggrawatin' hinfant, an' used to bump his 'ead, an' skin his knees, an' tear his clothes, an' wet his feet, in a way that often distracted me, though I did my very best to prevent it; but nothink's of any use tryin' of w'en you can't do it; as my 'usband, as was in the mutton-pie line, said to the doctor the night afore he died—my 'eart used to be quite broke about him, so it did; but that's all past an' gone—well, as I was a-sayin', Master Will he told his mother as 'ow there was a young lady (so he called her) as 'ad won his 'art, an' she was a cannibal as lived on a coal island in the Paphysic Ocean. Then he told her some stories about the coal island as made my blood run cold, and said his Flora behaved like a heroine in the midst of it all."

At this point Larry and Bunco exchanged meaning glances, and the former gave vent to a soft whistle, which he accompanied with a wink.

"I'm sure," continued Maryann, "it's past my comprehension; for instead of being dreadfully shocked, as I had expected, Mrs Osten threw her arms round Master Will's neck and blessed him and the cannibal, too, and said she hoped to be spared to see 'em united, though she wouldn't like them to remain on the coal island in the Paphysic. I do assure you, Jemimar," continued Maryann, putting the corner of her apron to her eyes, "it quite gave me a turn, and I was nearly took bad w'en I 'eard it. Master Will, he made his mother promise to keep it to herself, as, he said, not a soul in the world knew of it but him and her—"

Mr Richards coughed at this point, and appeared to be engaged in a severe conflict with an untractable crust, which caused Maryann to stop suddenly and look at him. But Larry again came to the rescue by saying—

"Why, Maryann, my dear, ye've bin an' mistook a good deal of what you've heard, intirely. This Flora Westwood is no cannibal, but wan o' the purtiest bit craturs I iver had the good luck to set eyes on; as white as a lily, wid cheeks like the rose, not to spake of a smile an' a timper of an angel. She's a parson's daughter, too, an' lives on a coral island in the Pacific Ocean, where the people is cannibals, no doubt, as I've good raison to know, for they ait up a lot o' me shipmates, and it was by good luck they didn't ait up myself and Master Will too—though I do belaive they'd have found me so tough that I'd have blunted their teeth an' soured on their stummicks, bad luck to them. But it's surprised that I am to hear about

this. Ah, then, Master Will, but ye're a sly dog—more cunnin' than I took ye for. Ye threw dust in the eyes of Larry O'Hale, anyhow."

Poor Maryann appeared much relieved by this explanation, although she felt it to be consistent with her dignity that she should throw considerable doubt on Larry's statement, cross-question him pretty severely, and allow herself to be convinced only after the accumulation of an amount of evidence that could not be resisted.

"Well, now, that accounts for the way in which his mother received the news," said Maryann.

"It is a strange story," remarked Jemima.

"Uncommon," observed Richards.

Bunco said nothing, but he grinned from ear to ear.

At that moment, as if it were aware of the climax at which the party had arrived, the baby, without a single note of warning, set up a hideous howl, in the midst of which the bell rang, and Maryann rose to answer it.

"Master Will wants to speak to you, Mr Hale, and to Mr Bunco, too," she said on returning.

"Come along, *Mister* Bunco," said Larry, "that'll be the order to trip our anchors."

"My friends," said Will Osten, when the two were seated on the corners of their respective chairs in the drawing-room, "I sent for you to say that circumstances have occurred which render it necessary that I should visit

California. Do you feel inclined to join me in this trip, or do you prefer to remain in England?”

“I’m yer man,” said Larry.

“So’s me,” added Bunco.

“I thought so,” said Will, smiling; “we have been comrades together too long to part yet. But I must start without delay, and mean to go by the plains and across the Rocky Mountains. Are you ready to set off on short notice?”

“In half an hour av ye plaze, sur,” said Larry.

Bunco grinned and nodded his head.

“The end of the week will do,” said Will, laughing; “so be off and make your preparations for a long and rough trip.”

In pursuance of this plan, Will Osten and his two staunch followers, soon after the date of the above conversation, crossed the Atlantic, traversed the great Lakes of Canada to the centre of North America, purchased, at the town of Saint Pauls, horses, guns, provisions, powder, shot, etcetera, for a long journey, and found themselves, one beautiful summer evening, galloping gaily over those wide prairies that roll beyond the last of the backwood settlements, away into the wild recesses of the Western Wilderness.

Chapter Two.

Describes a Burst over the Western Prairie, and introduces a New Character, also a Hunt, and a Great Feast.

Wandering Will and his companions laid the reins on the necks of their half-tamed horses and galloped wildly away over the western prairie. Perhaps it was the feeling of absolute freedom from human restraints that excited them to the galloping and shouting condition of maniacs; perhaps it was the idea of sweeping over unbounded space in these interminable plains, or the influence of the fresh air around, the sunny blue sky overhead, and the flower-speckled sward underfoot—perhaps it was all these put together, but, whatever the cause, our three travellers commenced their journey at a pace that would have rendered them incapable of further progress in a few hours had they kept it up. Their state of mind was aptly expressed, at the end of one of these wild flights, by Larry, who exclaimed, as he reined in—

"Ah, then, it's flyin' I'll be in a minit. Sure av I only had a pair o' wings no bigger than a sparrow's, I cud do it aisy."

"Yoo's a goose, Larry," observed Bunco.

"Faix if I was it's mesilf as would fly away an' lave you to waller on the dirty earth ye belongs to," retorted the other.

"Dirty earth!" echoed Will Osten, gazing round on the plains of bright green grass that waved in the soft air with something like the gentle heavings of the sea. "Come, let's have another!"

They stretched out again at full gallop and swept away

like the wind itself.

"Hooroo!" shouted Larry O'Hale, wildly throwing out both arms and rising in his stirrups; "look here, Bunco, I'm goin' to fly, boy!"

Larry didn't mean to do so, but he *did* fly! His horse put its foot in a badger-hole at that moment and fell. The rider, flying over its head, alighted on his back, and remained in that position quite motionless, while his alarmed comrades reined up hastily and dismounted.

"Not hurt, I hope," said Will, anxiously.

"Och! ha! gintly, doctor, take me up tinderly," gasped the poor man as they raised him to the perpendicular position, in which he stood for nearly a minute making very wry faces and slowly moving his shoulders and limbs to ascertain whether any bones were fractured.

"I do belave I'm all right," he said at length with a sigh of relief; "have a care, Bunco, kape yer paws off, but take a squint at the nape o' me neck an' see if me back-bone is stickin' up through me shirt-collar."

"Me no can see him," said the sympathetic Bunco.

"That's a blissin' anyhow. I only wish ye cud *feel* him, Bunco. Doctor, dear, did ye iver see stars in the day-time?"

"No, never."

"Then ye'd better make a scientific note of it in yer book, for I see 'em at this good minit dancin' about like will-o'-the-wisps in a bog of Ould Ireland. There, help me on to

the back o' the baste—bad luck to the badgers, say I."

Thus muttering to himself and his comrades, half exasperated by the stunning effects of his fall, yet rather thankful to find that no real damage was done, Larry remounted, and all three continued their journey with not much less enjoyment, but with abated energy.

Thus much for the beginning. Availing ourselves of an author's privilege to annihilate time and space at pleasure, we change the scene. The three travellers are still riding over the same prairie, but at the distance of a hundred miles or so from the spot where the accident above described took place.

It was evening. The sun was gradually sinking in the west—far beyond that "far west" to which they had penetrated. The wanderers looked travel-stained, and appeared somewhat fatigued, while their horses advanced with slow steps and drooping heads. Two pack-horses, which had been procured by them with an additional supply of necessaries at a solitary fort belonging to the fur-traders of that region, were driven by Larry, whose voice and action seemed to indicate that he and they were actuated by different sentiments and desires.

"Of all the lazy bastes," he exclaimed, giving one of the horses a tremendous cut over the flank that startled it into temporary life, "I iver did see—but, och! what's the use—there's niver a dhrop o' wather in this wilderness. We may as well lie down an' die at wance."

"Hush, Larry," said Will Osten, "don't talk lightly of dying."

"Lightly is it? Well, now, there's nothin' light about me from the sole o' me fut to the top o' the tallest hair on me head, an' the heaviest part about me is the heart, which feels like lead intirely. But cheer up, Larry, yer owld grandmother always said ye was born to be hanged, so of coorse ye can't be starved—that's a comfort, anyhow!"

"What think you, Bunco," said Will Osten, turning to his dark-skinned companion, "shall we encamp on this arid part of the plain and go waterless as well as supperless to rest, or shall we push on? I fear the horses will break down if we try to force them much further."

"Water not be far-off," said Bunco curtly.

"Very well, we shall hold on."

In silence they continued to advance until the sun was descending towards the horizon, when there suddenly appeared, on the brow of an eminence, the figure of a solitary horseman. Sharply defined as he was against the bright sky, this horseman appeared to be of supernaturally huge proportions—insomuch that the three travellers pulled up by tacit consent, and glanced inquiringly at each other.

"It's a ghost *at last*!" muttered the superstitious Irishman, whose expression of countenance showed that he was not by any means in a jesting humour.

"Ghost or not, we must be prepared to meet him," said Will, loosening a large hunting-knife in its sheath and examining the priming of his rifle.

The strange horseman had evidently observed the party,

for he presently descended the rising ground and rode slowly towards them. In doing so he passed out of the strong light, and consequently assumed more ordinary proportions, but still when he drew near, it was evident that he was a man of immense size. He rode a black steed of the largest and most powerful description; was clad in the leathern hunting-shirt, belt, leggings, moccasins, etcetera, peculiar to the western hunter, and carried a short rifle in the hollow of his right arm.

"Good-evening, strangers," he said, in a tone that savoured of the Yankee, but with an easy manner and good-humoured gravity that seemed to indicate English extraction. "Goin' far?"

"To California," said Will, smiling at the abrupt commencement of the conversation.

"H'm, a longish bit. Come far?"

"From England."

"H'm, a longish bit, too. Lost and starvin', I see."

"Not exactly, but pretty nearly so," said Will. "I had entertained the belief, presumptuous if you will, that I could find my way in any part of the wilderness by means of a sextant and pocket compass, and, to say truth, I don't feel quite sure that I should have failed, but before I had a sufficient opportunity of testing my powers, one of our baggage horses rolled down the bank of a creek and broke my sextant. In trying to save him I rolled down along with him and smashed my compass, so I have resigned the position of guide in favour of my friend here, who, being a native, seems to possess a mysterious power in the matter of finding his way."

“From the other side of the mountains?” asked the strange horseman, glancing at Bunco.

“Yoo’s right,” said Bunco, with a grin.

There was a slight touch of humour in the grave stern countenance of the stranger as he replied in a language which was quite unintelligible to Will and Larry, but which appeared to create wonderful sensations in the breast of Bunco, who for some minutes continued to talk with much volubility and eagerness.

“You appear to be old friends?” said Will, inquiringly, to the stranger.

“Not ’xactly,” he replied, “but I’ve trapped on the west side o’ the mountains, and the Redskin is excited a bit at meetin’ with a man who knows his nation and his name. I’ve heard of him before. He was thought a brave warrior by his tribe, but it is so long since he disappeared from the face o’ the ’arth that they’ve given him up for dead. His wife was alive last fall. I saw her myself, and she has steadily refused to marry any of the young braves—at least she had refused so to do up to the time I left; but there’s no calc’latin’ what these Redskins will do. However, I’ve comforted this one wi’ the news.”

“With your leave, Mister Trapper,” said Larry, breaking in impatiently at this point, “may I suggest that when you’re quite done talkin’ we should continue our sarch for grub an’ wather, for at present our stummicks is empty an’ our mouths is dry!”

“Have you no food?” asked the trapper.

"None," answered Will; "we finished our last scrap of meat yesterday morning, and have been hoping and expecting to fall in with buffalo ever since, for the signs around show that they cannot be far distant."

"You are right; I am even now followin' their trail, for, like yourselves, I'm well-nigh starvin'. Not had a bite for three days."

"Ye don't look like it!" said Larry, gazing at the man in some surprise.

"Perhaps not, nevertheless it's a fact, so we'll push on an' try to find 'em before sundown."

Saying this, the stalwart trapper gave the rein to his stead and galloped away over the plains, followed as close as possible by the wearied travellers.

The pace was hard on the horses, but there was need for haste, because the sun was close on the horizon, and as far as the eye could reach no buffalo were to be seen. Ere long the character of the prairie changed, the arid ground gave place to more fertile land, here and there clumps of willows and even a few small trees appeared, while, in the far distance, a line of low bushes ran across the country.

"Water dere," said Bunco.

"The Redskin's right," observed the trapper, slackening his speed a little; "'tis his natur' to know the signs o' the wilderness. Does his hawk-eye see nothing more?"

"Bufflo!" exclaimed Bunco, as he drew up and gazed intently at a particular spot in the wilderness.

“Ay, lad, it is buffalo an’ no mistake. I know’d I should find ’em there,” said the trapper, with a quiet chuckle, as he examined the priming of his rifle. “Now, friends, we’ll have to approach them quietly. You’d better catch up the halters o’ your pack-horses, Mister Irishman—”

“Larry O’Hale at your sarvice, Mister Trapper.”

“Benjamin Hicks at yours, Mister O’Hale, but I’m better known as Big Ben! And now,” he continued, “keep well in rear, all of you, an’ follow me down in the bottom there, between the ridges. Don’t out o’ cooriosity go exposin’ yourselves to the buffalo. In the meantime keep quiet, and let your mouths water at the thought o’ fat steaks and marrow-bones.”

Benjamin Hicks galloped along the bottom of the hollow for a considerable distance; then, dismounting, hobbled his horse by tying its two fore feet together with a piece of rope. Thus hampered, it could hop about in an awkward fashion and feed, while its master advanced on foot. With rapid strides he proceeded some distance further along the bottom, and then ascended the ridge in a stooping position. On nearing the summit he crept on hands and knees, and, on gaining it, he sank like a phantom into the grass and disappeared.

The party who followed him stopped on reaching the spot where the horse had been left, and for some time waited in excited and silent expectation, listening for the report of the hunter’s rifle. Despite the caution given them, however, they could not long refrain from attempting to see what was going on. After waiting a few minutes, Will Osten hobbled his horse and crept up the side of the ridge, which might be more correctly described as an

undulating prairie-wave. Bunco and Larry followed his example. When they all lay flat among the grass on the summit and raised their heads cautiously, the sight that met their eyes sent a thrill of delight to their hearts.

It was still the boundless prairie, indeed, but its uniform flatness was broken by innumerable knolls and hillocks, of varied extent, which looked like islands in a green sea. Some were covered with clusters of white pines, others with low bushes. Rich grass waved gently in the evening breeze, giving to the whole scene an air of quiet motion. Not far distant flowed the little stream already referred to, and as this reflected the gorgeous golden clouds that were lit up by the setting sun, it appeared like a stream of liquid fire meandering over the plains, while, far, far away on the hazy and glowing horizon—so far that it seemed as if a whole world lay between—a soft blue line was faintly visible. It might have been mistaken for the distant sea, or a long low cloud of azure blue, but Will Osten knew that, however unlike to them it might appear, this was in reality the first glimpse of the Rocky Mountains! The pleasantest sight of all, however, was a group of ten or a dozen buffalo, which grazed, in all the lazy ease of fancied security, at the side of a knoll not more than three hundred yards distant. As our travellers lay, with bated breath and beating hearts, gazing at these animals, dreaming of feasting on fat things, and waiting for a shot, they became aware of a low murmuring sound somewhat resembling distant thunder, but softer and more continuous. On scanning the plains more intently they perceived that here and there were other scattered groups of buffalo, more or less concealed by knolls, while in the extreme distance a black line, which they had at first mistaken for bushes, proved to be an immense herd of living creatures, whose pawings and

bellowings reached them like a faint murmur.

Suddenly the animals close to them sprang into the air as if they had received an electric shock. At the same instant a white cloudlet of smoke rose above the grass, and a few seconds later the sharp crack of the trapper's rifle broke on their ears. The huge ungainly brutes bounded away, leaving one of their number behind. He writhed violently, and then lay gently down. A moment of suspense followed, for he might rise again and run beyond pursuit, as buffalo often do under a deadly wound! But no! he curled his tail, gasped once or twice, and rolled over on his side.

Knives were out in a moment, and the whole party rushed like wolves upon the prey. First, they rolled the animal upon his brisket, slit his hide along the spine, peeled it down one side, and cut off a piece large enough to form a wrapper for the meat. Next the flesh on each side of the spine was pared off, and the tongue cut out. The axe was then applied to his ribs—the heart, the fat, the tender loins and other parts were taken out; then the great marrow-bones were cut from his legs, and the whole being wrapped in the green hide, was slung on a pole, and carried by Will Osten and the trapper to the nearest suitable camping ground. This was on the edge of a grove of white pine by the side of the clear rivulet under the shade of a woody hill. Here, before darkness had completely set in, Will and his new friend kindled a

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great fire and prepared supper, while Larry and Bunco went off to fetch and tether the horses.

Now, reader, you must understand that it was no light duty which lay before the wanderers that evening. They had to make up for a good many missed meals. The word "ravenous" scarcely indicates their condition! They were too hungry to lose time, too tired to speak. Everything, therefore, was done with quiet vigour. Steaks were impaled on pieces of stick, and stuck up before the fire to roast. When one side of a steak was partially done, pieces of it were cut off and devoured while the other

was cooking. At the expense of a little burning of the lips, and a good deal of roasting of the face, the severe pangs of hunger were thus slightly allayed, then each man sat down before the blaze with his back against a tree, his hunting-knife in one hand, a huge rib or steak in the other, and quietly but steadily and continuously devoured beef!

"Och! when did I iver ait so much before?" exclaimed Larry, dropping a peeled rib.

"What! not goin' to give in yet?" said Big Ben, setting up another rib to roast; "why, that'll never do. You must eat till daylight, if you would be fit to travel in the prairie. Our wild meat never pains one. You may eat as much as you can hold. That's always the way we do in the far west. Sometimes we starve for six or eight days at a time, and then when we get plenty, we lay in good store and pack it well down, always beginnin' wi' the best pieces first, for fear that some skulkin' Redskin should kill us before we've had time to enjoy them. See here, you've only had the first course; rest a bit while I prepare the second."

While he spoke, Ben was breaking up the marrow-bones with his hatchet, and laying bare the beautiful rolls of "trappers' butter" within. Having extracted about a pound of marrow, he put it into a gallon of water, and, mixing along with it a quantity of the buffalo's blood and a little salt, set it on the fire to boil. In a short time this savoury soup was ready. Turn not up your noses at it, "ye gentlemen of England, who live at home at ease," (though, by the way, we doubt the reality of that "ease," which causes so much dyspepsia amongst you that good food becomes unpalatable and strong food nauseous),

but believe us when we tell you that the soup was super-excellent.

"Musha!" exclaimed Larry, when he tasted the first spoonful, "I feel exactly as if I had ait nothin' at all yit—only goin' to begin!" And with that he and his comrades attacked and consumed the soup until their faces shone again with grease and gladness.

"That'll do now," said Larry in a decided tone, as he rose and stretched himself, preparatory to filling his beloved pipe—"not a dhrop nor a bite more on any account."

"Is you stuffed full?" asked Bunco.

"Pretty nigh," replied Larry, glancing at his friend with an inquiring look; "seems to me that *you* have overdone it."

"Me is pretty tight," said Bunco languidly.

"Come, come," cried the trapper, "don't shirk your victuals. There's one more course, and then you can rest if you have a mind to."

So saying, the indefatigable man took up the intestines of the buffalo, which had been properly prepared for the purpose, turned them inside out, and proceeded to stuff them with strips of tender loin well salted and peppered. The long sausage thus hastily made was hung in festoons before the fire, and roasted until it was thoroughly browned. Portions were then cut off and set down before the company. When each thought of beginning he felt as though the swallowing of a single bite were utterly impossible, but when each had actually begun he could not stop, but continued eating until all was finished, and then wished for more, while Benjamin

Hicks chuckled heartily to witness the success of his cookery and the extent of his friends' powers.

Ah, it is all very well, reader, for you to say "Humph! nonsense," but go you and wander for a year or two among the Rocky Mountains, acquire the muscles of a trapper and the digestion of an ostrich, then starve yourself for a few days, and get the chance of a "feed" such as we have feebly described, and see whether you won't come home (if you ever come home) saying, "Well, after all, truth *is* strange, stranger than fiction!"

It need scarcely be said that the solace of the pipe was sought immediately after the meal was concluded by Will, Larry, and Bunco; but Big Ben did not join them. He had starved longer than they, and intended, as he said, to eat all night!

"Well," observed Larry, as he extended himself at full length before the blaze, and resting his right elbow on the ground and his head on his hand, smoked in calm felicity; "I've often found that there's nothin' like tiredness to make a man enjoy rest, but, faix, it's this night I've larned, as I niver did before, that there's nothin' like starvation to mak wan enjoy his victuals."

"Eight, Larry," said Will Osten with a laugh; "upon my word I think it would be worth while to live always on the plan of missing our meals each alternate day, in order to enjoy them more thoroughly on the other days."

"If city men would go on that plan," observed the trapper, gravely tearing the flesh from a rib with his teeth, and speaking at the same time, "there would be no use for doctors."

“Ah, then, think of that now; wouldn’t it be a rail hard case for the poor doctors?” said Larry, with a sly glance at Will.

Bunco grinned at this, and observed that it was “time for hims be go sleep.” Whereupon he rolled his blanket about him and lay down with his feet to the fire. Will Osten also lay down and fell asleep almost immediately. Larry, too, stretched himself out in repose, leaving Big Ben still engaged with the buffalo beef.

The night was rather cold. In course of time Will Osten awoke, and called to the trapper to mend the fire, which he did, and then resumed his former occupation. Once or twice after that, one and another of the slumberers awoke, and, looking up sleepily for a few seconds, beheld the enduring man still hard at work. The last to lift his head that night was Larry. The puzzled Irishman gazed in mute amazement during the unusually long period of half a minute, for Benjamin Hicks still sat there, glittering in the light of the camp-fire, grave as a Redskin, and busy as ever with the bones!

Chapter Three.

Relates how Big Ben became a Travelling Companion, and how a Big Bear was Captured—Discussions and Misfortunes.

To the great satisfaction of Will Osten and his friends, it was discovered that Benjamin Hicks was a wandering trapper, whose avocations led him to whatever part of

the wilderness was most likely to produce furs, and who had no particular objection to take a trip across the mountains with our adventurers. Indeed Big Ben thought no more of a ride of several hundreds of miles than most men do of an afternoon walk, and, if particular business did not prevent him, he was always ready to undertake a "venture" so long as it was, in his opinion, justifiable and likely to pay.

"You see, sir," he said, as he and Will cantered together along the base of a low hill one evening, "it's not that I'm of an unsettled natur', but I've bin born to this sort o' life, an' it would be no manner o' use in me tryin' to change it. Once upon a time I used to think o' settlin' in one of the back settlements—that was when my poor old mother was alive. I used to live with her and take care of her after my father's death. Then I married and thought I was fairly fixed down for life, but one night when I chanced to be out looking after my traps, a war-party o' Injuns attacked the village and killed every soul in it. At least so it was said at the time, but afterwards I met a lad who had escaped, an' he told me that he had seen my mother and wife killed, but that a few of the men escaped as well as him."

The trapper's voice deepened as he spoke, and he paused.

"Was it long ago?" asked Will, in a tone of sympathy.

"Ten years now," answered Ben, sadly—"though it seems to me but yesterday. For many a day after that I tried to find the trail o' the Redskins that did it, but never succeeded, thank God. If I had, it would only have ended in the spillin' of more blood, without any good comin' of it. It is long now since I left off thirstin' for revenge, but

I suppose I'll never cease wishin' that—that—well, well, God's will be done," he added, as if rousing himself out of a sad reverie, "I'm not used to speak about this, but somehow whenever I meet with white men *o' the right sort* in the plains or mountains, I always feel a kind o' longin' to let my tongue wag raither too free. However, as I was goin' to say, I've been a wanderer since then, goin' where I think I can be o' use to myself or others; and so, as you don't appear to be overly knowin' about the trail across the mountains, I'll go with 'ee a bit o' the way an' pint it out, if you have no objections."

"No objections!" echoed Will; "I'll be delighted to have your company, and would be only too glad if you could go all the way."

"Who knows but I might be willin' to go if I was asked," said the trapper, with a slight approach to a smile.

"Are you in earnest?" asked Will Big Ben not only admitted that he was in earnest, but said that he was quite ready to start at once, if they would only consent to diverge from their route about thirty miles to a small outpost belonging to the fur-traders, where he had deposited a lot of peltries, which he wished to convert into supplies for the journey. This was readily agreed to, and, accordingly, next day about noon, they came in sight of Rocky Mountain Fort—so-called because of its being situated in a somewhat wild glen, near the verge of one of the eastern spurs of the Rocky Mountains.

While the fort was still far distant, though in sight, Larry O'Hale uttered a sudden exclamation, and pointed to a black spot lying on the side of one of the numerous mounds with which the country was diversified.

“A black bear,” said the trapper, quietly.

“Have at ye then!” shouted Larry, as he drove his heels against the ribs of his steed and went off at full gallop.

“Stay, Bunco, let him have all the glory to himself,” cried Will, laughing.

Bunco, who had started to follow, reined up, and all three cantered to the top of a neighbouring height, whence they could clearly see the country for many miles in all directions.

Meanwhile the enthusiastic Larry had descended into a hollow, to leeward of the bear. Along this he trotted smartly, following its windings and keeping carefully out of sight, until he judged himself to be nearly opposite to the spot where the bear lay, then breaking into a gallop he turned at right angles to his former course, bounded over the ridge that had concealed him, and rushed furiously on his victim. The bear was a young one, but nearly full grown. On beholding the horseman it rose on its hind legs and showed all its formidable teeth.

“Och! is it laughin’ ye are?” exclaimed Larry, bringing forward the muzzle of his gun, “it’s cryin’ ye’ll be before long.”

As he spoke the piece exploded. Whether it was that his finger had pressed the trigger too soon, or that the aim, owing to the pace, was unsteady, we know not, but Larry missed; the ball hit the ground just in front of the bear, and drove such a quantity of earth into his facs, eyes, and mouth, that he shook his head with a spluttering cough which ended in a savage growl, but, on beholding the wild Irishman charging down on him with the ferocity

and thunder of a squadron of heavy dragoons, he dropt on his fore-legs, turned tail, and fled. Larry tried to re-load while pursuing, but, owing to the uneven nature of the ground, which required him to devote earnest attention to the badger-holes, he could not manage this. Without knowing very well what to do, he continued the chase, meditating as to whether it were better to try to ride over the bear, or to attempt the breaking of its skull with the butt end of his gun. As, however, it was all he could do to keep pace with the brute, he found either alternative impossible.

"Ochone! what'll I do wid ye?" cried the perplexed man, in despair.

The bear, as if in reply, glanced aside at him and grinned horribly.

"I do belaive it's laughin' again at me! Git on, ye baist," (to his horse), "sure ye're four times as big, an' ought to run faster."

Larry forgot to do his steed the justice to add that it carried fourteen stone weight on its back. The poor man tried hard to overtake the bear, but failed to gain an inch on him. To make matters worse, he observed that the brute was edging towards a wood which lay on his right. Seeing this he diverged a little, and, by making a dive into a hollow, he managed to cut off its retreat in that direction. Rocky Mountain Fort, which lay on his left, was now within half a mile of him, and he could see some of its inhabitants, who had observed the party coming from the plains, standing at the gate of the fort watching the chase with much interest. A glance over his shoulder showed him that his travelling companions were in view behind. Keenly alive to the fact that he should be

overwhelmed with ridicule if he failed, the now desperate man conceived the bold idea of driving the bear into the fort! He felt that this feat was not beyond the bounds of possibility, for the bear was beginning to flag a little, while his hardy steed was still in good wind. He therefore applied the whip with greater energy, and soon came alongside of the bear, which attempted to turn to the right, but Paddy had become a good and alert horseman by that time, and was on his other side in an instant. Again the bear tried to double, and again his enemy checked him and urged him on. Thus they progressed until they drew near to the gate of the fort. This was now deserted, for the fur-traders soon understood the game that the wild horseman was playing, and made way for the entrance of the stranger. At last the bear came so close to the walls of the fort that it observed the open gateway. A way of escape was here—it evidently imagined—so it went through at full gallop! It was immediately met by a house. Turning quickly round, it was met by another house. Dashing aside, it was brought up by a wall. As a last resource it ran behind a pile of cut firewood and stuck its head into a hole, just as Larry O'Hale bounded through the gateway with a wild cheer of triumph. Will Osten, Big Ben, and Bunco quickly followed, and the gates were shut by the men of the fort.

But the victory was by no means completed. The question still remained, How was the enemy to be made prisoner? One of the fur-traders seized it by the tail and tried to draw it out. He failed to do more than draw forth a tremendous growl. Another fur-trader, aided by Larry, came to the assistance of the first, and, by their united power, plucked Bruin out of the hole like a cork out of a bottle. He turned with fury on his enemies, two of whom sprang back, overturning Larry in the act. At that moment

one of the fur-traders, a stalwart Canadian, leaped upon the bear, grasped him by the throat, and tried to strangle him. One of the others, seeing this, caught at the brute's legs and tumbled him on his side, for which he was rewarded with a scratch which tore his right arm open from the elbow to the wrist. The hands of the stout Canadian were at the same time severely lacerated by the brute's claws. During the brief moments in which this struggle lasted, Big Ben had leaped from his steed; detached the stout line which always hung at his saddle-bow; made a noose as deftly as if he had been a British tar or a hangman, and passed it quickly over the bear's muzzle. Drawing it tight he took a turn round its neck, another round its fore-legs, and a third round the body. After this the work of subjugation was easy, and Bruin was finally reduced to slavery.

We know not, good reader, what you may think of this incident, but we beg to assure you that, in its essence, it is a fact, and that that bear was afterwards sent to England to suck its paws in a menagerie, and delight the eyes and imaginations of an admiring public.

Again we change the scene to the heart of the Rocky Mountains, in which, after many days of toil and trouble, heat and cold, hunger and thirst, difficulty and danger, our travellers found themselves at the close of a bright and beautiful day.

"I think," said Will Osten, reining up by the side of a copse which crowned the brow of an eminence, "that this seems a good camping place."

"There is not a better within ten mile of us," said Big Ben, dismounting. "This is the spot I have been pushing on for all day, so let us to work without delay. We have a

hard day before us to-morrow, and that necessitates a hard feed an' a sound sleep to-night. Them's the trapper's cure for all ills."

"They cure many ills, doubtless," observed Will, as he removed the saddle from his jaded steed.

Larry, whose duty it was to cut firewood, remarked, as he administered his first powerful blow to a dead tree, that "grub and slumber at night was the chief joys o' life, and the only thing that could be compared to 'em was, slumber and grub in the mornin'!" To which sentiment Bunco grinned hearty assent, as he unloaded and hobbled the pack-horses.

Soon the camp was made. The fire roared grandly up among the branches of the trees. The kettle sent forth savoury smells and clouds of steam. The tired steeds munched the surrounding herbage in quiet felicity, and the travellers lay stretched upon a soft pile of brushwood, loading their pipes and enjoying supper by anticipation. The howling of a wolf, and the croaking of some bird of prey, formed an appropriate duet, to which the trickling of a clear rill of ice-cold water, near by, constituted a sweet accompaniment, while through the stems of the trees they could scan—as an eagle does from his eyrie high up on the cliffs—one of the grandest mountain scenes in the world, bathed in the soft light of the moon in its first quarter.

"'Tis a splendid view of God's handiwork," said the trapper, observing the gaze of rapt admiration with which Will Osten surveyed it.

"It is indeed most glorious," responded Will, "a scene that inclines one to ask the question, If earth be so fair,

what must heaven be?”

“It aint easy to answer that,” said the trapper gravely, and with a slight touch of perplexity in a countenance which usually wore that expression of calm self-reliance peculiar to men who have thorough confidence in themselves. “Seems to me that there’s a screw loose in men’s thoughts when they come to talk of heaven. The Redskins, now, think it’s a splendid country where the weather is always fine, the sun always shining, and the game plentiful. Then the men of the settlement seem to have but a hazy notion about its bein’ a place of happiness, but they can’t tell why or wherefore in a very comprehensible sort o’ way, and, as far as I can see, they’re in no hurry to get there. It seems in a muddle somehow, an’ that’s a thing that surprises me, for the works o’ the Almighty—hereaway in the mountains—are plain and onderstandable, so as a child might read ’em; but man’s brains don’t seem to be such perfect work, for, when he comes to talk o’ God and heaven, they appear to me to work as if they wor out o’ jint.”

The trapper was a naturally earnest, matter-of-fact man, but knew little or nothing of the Christian religion, except what he had heard of it from the lips of men who, having neither knowledge of it nor regard for it themselves, gave a false report both of its blessed truths and its workings. He glanced inquiringly at our hero when he ceased to speak.

“What is your own opinion about heaven?” asked Will Big Ben looked earnestly at his companion for a few seconds and said—

“Young man, I never was asked that question before, an’

so, of course, never made a straightforward reply to it. Nevertheless, I think I have a sort of notion on the pint, an' can state it, too, though I can't boast of havin' much larnin'. Seems to me that the notion of the men of the settlements isn't worth much, for few o' them can tell ye what they think or why they think it, except in a ramblin' way, an' they don't agree among themselves. Then, as for the Redskins, I can't believe that it's likely there will be such work as shootin' an' fishin' in heaven. So I'm inclined to think that we know nothin' about it at all, and that heaven will be nothin' more nor less than bein' with God, who, bein' the Maker of the soul an' body, knows what's best for both, and will show us that at the proper time. But there *are* mysteries about it that puzzle me. I know that the Almighty *must* be right in all He does, yet He permits men to murder each other, and do worse than that."

"I agree with you, Ben," said Will Osten, after a moment's reflection. "That everything in heaven will be perfect is certain. That we don't at present see how this is to be is equally certain, and the most certain thing of all is, that the very essence of heaven will consist in being 'for ever with the Lord.' I don't wonder at your being puzzled by mysteries. It would be strange indeed were it otherwise, but I have a book here which explains many of these mysteries, and shows us how we ought to regard those which it does *not* explain."

Here Will Osten drew a small volume from the breast-pocket of his coat.

"The Bible?" said the trapper.

"Part of it at all events," said Will. "It is the New Testament. Come, let us examine it a little."

The youth and the trapper sat down and began to read the New Testament together, and to discuss its contents while supper was being prepared by their comrades. After supper, they returned to it, and continued for several hours to bend earnestly over the Word of God.

In the wild remote part of the Rocky Mountains where their camp was made, neither trappers nor Indians were wont to ramble. Even wild beasts were not so numerous there as elsewhere, so that it was deemed unnecessary to keep watch during the night. But a war-party of Indians, out on an expedition against another tribe with whom they were at deadly feud, chanced to traverse the unfrequented pass at that time in order to make a short cut, and descend from an unusual quarter, and so take their enemies by surprise.

Towards midnight—when the rocky crags and beetling cliffs frowned like dark clouds over the spot where the travellers lay in deepest shade, with only a few red embers of the camp-fire to throw a faint lurid light on their slumbering forms—a tall savage emerged from the surrounding gloom, so stealthily, so noiselessly, and by such slow degrees, that he appeared more like a vision than a reality. At first his painted visage only and the whites of his glittering eyes came into view as he raised his head above the surrounding brushwood and stretched his neck in order to obtain a better view of the camp. Then slowly, inch by inch, almost with imperceptible motion, he crept forward until the whole of his gaunt form was revealed. A scalping-knife gleamed in his right hand. The camp was strewn with twigs, but these he removed one by one, carefully clearing each spot before he ventured to rest a knee upon it. While the savage was

thus engaged, Larry O'Hale, who was nearest to him, sighed deeply in his sleep and turned round. The Indian at once sank so flat among the grass that scarcely any part of him was visible. Big Ben, who slept very lightly, was awakened by Larry's motions, but having been aroused several times already by the same restless individual, he merely glanced at his sleeping comrade and shut his eyes again.

Well aware that in such a camp there must assuredly be at least one who was acquainted with the ways and dangers of the wilderness, and who, therefore, would be watchful, the savage lay perfectly still for more than a quarter of an hour; then he raised his head, and, by degrees, his body, until he kneeled once more by the side of the unconscious Irishman. As he raised himself a small twig snapt under his weight. The face of the savage underwent a sudden spasmodic twitch, and his dark eye glanced sharply from one to another of the sleepers, while his fingers tightened on the hilt of his knife, but the rest of his body remained as rigid as a statue. There was no evidence that the sound had been heard. All remained as still and motionless as before, while the savage bent over the form of Larry O'Hale and gazed into his face.

But the snapping of that little twig had not been unobserved. The trapper's eyes were open, and his senses wide awake on the instant. Yet, so tutored was he in the ways and warfare of the wilderness that no muscle of his huge frame moved, and his eyes were closed again so quickly that the glance of the savage, sharp though it was, failed to detect the fact of his having awakened. The busy mind of Big Ben was active, however, while he lay there. He saw that the savage was

armed, but the knife was not yet raised to strike. He saw, also, that this man was in his war paint, and knew that others were certainly around him, perhaps close to his own back, yet he did not dare to look round or to make the slightest movement. His spirit was on fire with excitement, but his body lay motionless as if dead, while he rapidly considered what was to be done. Presently the savage removed a corner of the blanket which covered Larry's broad chest and then raised his knife. In another moment the trapper's rifle sent forth its deadly contents, and the Indian fell across the Irishman in the agonies of death.

Instantly the other sleepers sprang to their feet and seized their arms, but before they had time to use them they were surrounded by the whole band of savages, and, amid a hurricane of whoops and yells, were overpowered and pinioned. Larry, with the fiery zeal of his countrymen, struggled like a madman, until one of the savages gave him a blow on the head with the flat of his tomahawk to quiet him, but the others, who knew that to struggle against overpowering odds would only make matters worse, at once surrendered.

"It is all over with us now," exclaimed Will Osten, bitterly; "if we had only had the chance of a good fight beforehand, it would have been some comfort!"

"When you have lived longer in the wilderness, lad," said Big Ben, "you'll not give way to despair so easily."

These remarks were made as they sat on the grass while the Indians were engaged in catching and saddling the horses. Soon after our travellers were assisted to mount, having their wrists tied behind their backs; and thus, with armed savages around them, they were led away

prisoners—they knew not whither.

Chapter Four.

Shows that the Tables are turned, and that Good and Bad Fortune continue to Commingle.

One fortunate circumstance attending the capture of Wandering Will and his friends was that the Indians happened to follow the route which they had been pursuing, so that, whatever might be their ultimate fate, in the meantime they were advancing on their journey.

Big Ben took occasion to point this out to his comrades the next night, when, after a severe day's ride, they were allowed to sit down and eat a scanty meal surrounded by the Indian warriors. No fire was lighted, for the savages knew they were now approaching their enemies' country. Their food, which consisted of dried buffalo meat, was eaten cold. In order to enable the captives to feed themselves, their hands had been loosed and refastened in front instead of behind them, but this did not in any degree improve their chance of escape, for they were guarded with extreme vigilance.

"You see, Mr Osten," said Big Ben, in a low tone, "it's a piece of good luck that they've brought us this way, 'cause when we leave them we have nought to do but continue our journey."

"Leave them!" exclaimed Will in surprise. "How shall we manage to leave them?"

"By escapin'," answered the trapper. "How it is to be gone about no man can tell, for man is only mortal an' don't know nothin' about the futur', but we'll find that out in good time."

"I hope we may," returned Will sadly, as he gazed round on the stern faces of the savages, who ate their frugal meal in solemn silence; "but it seems to me that our case is hopeless."

"Faix, that's what meself thinks too," muttered Larry between his teeth, "for these cords on me wrists would howld a small frigate, an' there's a black thief just forenint me, who has never tuk his eyes off me since we wos catched. Ah, then, if I wor free I would make ye wink, ye ugly rascal. But how comes it, Mister Trapper, that ye seem to be so sure o' escapin'?"

"I'm not sure, but I'm hopeful," replied Big Ben, with a smile.

"Hopeful!" repeated the other, "it's disapinted ye'll be then. Haven't ye often towld me that thim blackguards roast an' tear and torture prisoners nowadays just as bad as they ever did?"

"I have."

"Well,—d'ye think them Redskins look as if they would let us off, seein' that we've shot wan of them already?"

"They don't."

"Sure, then, yer hope stands on a bad foundation, an' the sooner we make up our minds to be skivered the better, for sartin am I that our doom is fixed. Don't 'ee think so,

Bunco?”

The worthy appealed to was busily engaged in tearing to pieces and devouring a mass of dried buffalo meat, but he looked up, grinned, and nodded his head, as if to say that he believed Larry was right, and that in his opinion being roasted, torn, tortured, and skivered was rather a pleasant prospect than otherwise.

“I have two reasons for bein’ hopeful,” observed Big Ben, after a short silence. “One is that I never got into a scrape in my life that I didn’t get out of somehow or another, and the other reason is that I have observed signs on the trees that tell me the enemies, for whom the Redskins are seeking, are aware of their bein’ on the trail and will give them a warm reception, perhaps sooner than they expect.”

“What signs do you refer to?” asked Will Osten. “I see no sign of man having been here.”

“Perhaps not, and by good luck neither do the Injuns, for why, they can’t read handwritin’ as is not meant for ’em, but I know somethin’ of the tribe they are after, an’ one or two small marks on the trees tell me that they are not far distant. No doubt they will attack the camp at night.”

“Ochone!” groaned Larry, “an’ won’t they brain an’ scalp us wid the rest, an’ our hands tied so that we can’t do nothin’ to help ourselves?”

“It is possible they may,” returned the trapper; “and if they do we can’t help it, but let me warn you all, comrades, if we are attacked suddenly, let each man drop flat on the grass where he sits or stands. It is our *only chance*.”

Poor Larry O'Hale was so overcome by the gloomy prospects before him that he dropped flat on his back then and there, and gave vent to a grievous sigh, after which he lay perfectly still, gazing up at the stars and thinking of "Ould Ireland." Being possessed of that happy temperament which can dismiss care at the shortest possible notice, and being also somewhat fatigued, he soon fell sound asleep. His companions were about to follow his example when they heard a whizzing sound which induced them suddenly to sink down among the grass. At the same moment an appalling shriek rudely broke the silence of the night, and two of the sentinels fell, transfixed with arrows. One of these lay dead where he fell, but the other sprang up and ran quickly, with staggering gait, after his comrades, who at the first alarm had leaped up and bounded into the nearest underwood, followed by a shower of arrows. That these deadly messengers had not been sent after them in vain was evinced by the yells which succeeded their discharge. A moment after, several dark and naked forms glided swiftly over the camp in pursuit. One of these, pausing for one moment beside the dead Indian, seized him by the hair, passed his knife swiftly round the head so as to cut the skin all round, tore off the scalp, and stuck it under his girdle as he leaped on in pursuit.

Fortunately the prisoners were not observed. Larry on being awakened by the yell had half raised himself, but, recollecting Big Ben's caution, dropped down again and remained perfectly still. The attacking party had, of course, seen the sentinels fall and the rest of the warriors spring up and dart away, and naturally supposing, doubtless, that no one would be so foolish as to remain in the camp, they had passed on without

discovering the prisoners. When they had all passed, and the sounds of the fight were at a little distance, Big Ben leaped up and exclaimed:—

"Comrades, look sharp, moments are golden. They'll be back like a shot! Here, Larry, grip this in yer hand an' stick the point of it agin' that tree."

While he spoke in a cool, calm, almost jocular tone, the trapper acted with a degree of rapidity and vigour which showed that he thought the crisis a momentous one. With his fettered hands he plucked the knife from the girdle of the dead Indian and gave it to Larry O'Hale, who at once seized it with his right hand, and, as directed, thrust the point against the stem of a neighbouring tree. The trapper applied the stout cords that bound him to its edge, and, after a few seconds of energetic sawing, was free. He instantly liberated his companions.

"Now, lads," said he, "down the stream and into the water as fast as you can."

Our hero and Larry, being utterly ignorant of the manners and habits of the people amongst whom they were thrown, obeyed with the docility of little children—showing themselves, thereby, to be real men! Bunco, before darting away, seized an Indian gun, powder-horn, and shot-belt which had been left behind. The attack had been so sudden and unexpected that many of the savages had found it as much as they could do to save themselves, leaving their arms behind them. Of course, therefore, no one had thought of encumbering himself with the weapons of the prisoners. Big Ben had thought of all this. His wits had long been sharpened by practice. He also knew that his white comrades would think only of escaping, and that there was no time to waste in telling

them to look after their weapons. Giving them, therefore, the general direction to rush down the banks of the stream and get into the water, he quietly but quickly seized his own piece and the guns of our hero and the Irishman, together with one of the large powder-horns and bullet-pouches of the war-party; also two smaller horns and pouches. The securing of these cost him only a few seconds. When Will Osten and Larry had run at full speed for several hundred yards down the stream which flowed near to the spot where the war-party had encamped, they stopped to take breath and receive further instructions. The active trapper and Bunco were at their heels in a moment.

"You forgot your guns," said the trapper, with a quiet chuckle, handing one to Larry and the other to Will.

"What nixt?" asked Larry, with a strange mixture of determination and uncertainty in his tone—the former being founded on his character, the latter on his ignorance.

"Follow me. Don't touch a twig or a blade o' grass on the banks, an' make as little noise as you can. Running water leaves no trail."

Saying this, Big Ben stepped into the stream, which was a small shallow one, and flowed for nearly half a mile through a sort of meadow among the mountains. Down this they all waded, carefully avoiding the banks, until they reached a narrow part where the stream tumbled over a precipice. Here the trapper paused, and was about to give some directions to his comrades, when the sound of constrained breathing was heard near to him. With a sudden demonstration of being about to fire, he turned

and cocked his gun. The sharp click was no sooner heard than three Indians burst out from beneath the bushes which overhung the water, and, springing up the bank, fled for their lives. The trapper could not refrain from chuckling.

"These," said he, "are some of the rascals that caught us, making their escape by the same way that we are, but they don't know the ground as well as I do, and apparently have got perplexed at the top o' the fall. 'Tis well. If the Redskins pursue, they will find the trail here as clear as a king's highway—see what a gap in the bushes they have made in their fright at the sound o' my lock! Well, well, it's not many men that have pluck to keep quiet wi' that sound in their ears, and the muzzle pointed at their heads! All we have to do now is to descend the precipice without disturbing the shrubs, and then—"

A sound of horses galloping arrested him.

"Hist! don't move!"

At that moment about a dozen of the horses belonging to the war-party came thundering down along the banks of the stream. They had broken loose, and were flying from the Indians who had attempted to catch them. On nearing the precipice, over which the stream leaped with noisy petulance, the snorting steeds drew up in alarm, as if undecided which way to turn.

"A rare chance!" cried the trapper. "Every man for himself—keep well up the hill, comrades? an' hem them in."

Saying this, he ran up the bank, the others followed, and, in a few minutes, they drove the steeds into a

corner, from which they made a sudden rush, but as the long halter of each was trailing at its side, no difficulty was experienced in securing several of them as they passed by. Next moment the fugitives were mounted and hastening away from the scene of their late adventure as fast as the rugged nature of the ground would permit.

It is not necessary that we should follow our adventurers in all their windings through the mighty fastnesses of the far West. Suffice it to say that they made good their escape from the Indians, and that, for many days, they travelled through scenes so beautiful and varied that they have been spoken of by those who know them well as a perfect paradise. Every description of lovely prospect met their admiring eyes in endless succession, but so wary were the lower animals, and so few the human inhabitants, that those realms were to all appearance absolute solitudes—created, apparently, for no end or purpose. Nevertheless, there was enough there to tell the Christian philosopher that God had made the deserts for the enjoyment of His creatures, for, although not always visible or audible, myriads of living beings were there—from the huge buffalo and grizzly bear to the sand-fly and mosquito—which rejoiced in the green pastures and luxuriated beside the sweet waters of the land.

One afternoon the travellers came upon a small plain, which reminded them somewhat of the prairies. The first glance showed them that it was crowded with buffalos. Instantly a sensation of wild excitement passed through their frames, and showed itself in various ways. The Irishman uttered a shout of delight, and suggested an immediate onslaught; but it is due to his wisdom to say that the shout was a subdued one, and the suggestion

was humbly made. Our hero became restless and flushed, while the eyes of Bunco and Big Ben alone served as outlets to the fire which burned within. The plain was surrounded by low wooded hills, and had a lake on one side winding with many an inlet amongst the hills and into the plain, while here and there a tiny promontory, richly clothed with pines and aspens, stretched out into the water. Among the bluffs, or wooded islets of the plain, were to be seen several herds of bulls feeding about a mile off, and other bands in the distance.

"Tighten your girths," said Big Ben, dismounting. The horse which the trapper had secured, though not his own, was almost equal to it in point of size and strength. He eyed it with evident satisfaction as he tightened the girth, saying that if it wasn't for the difference in colour he would have thought it was the old one. The others having also seen to their harness mounted, and the cavalcade advanced at a walking pace into the plain. When they arrived within quarter of a mile of the largest band, the buffalo began to move slowly off. The scattered groups, seeing the horsemen, drew together, and, soon forming a large band, went off at a slow lumbering canter. The trapper, breaking into a trot, led the way, taking care to increase his speed gently, so as to gain on them insensibly, until he had got within about two hundred yards of the nearest, when he went off at full speed with a wild hurrah! The others followed, brandishing their arms and cheering in the excitement of the moment, while they hammered the horses' ribs violently with their unarmed heels. As they closed with them, the herd broke into separate bands, and each man, selecting the animal nearest to him, pursued it with reckless indifference to badger-holes. Fortunately for the

riders, the horses, being accustomed to the work, knew the danger, and kept a sharp look-out on their own account. Soon several shots told that the slaughter had begun, but each hunter was quickly separated from the other, and none knew aught of the success of the rest until the pun was over.

There was something particularly ludicrous in the appearance of the bulls as they lumbered along in their heavy gallop; their small hindquarters, covered with short hair, being absurdly disproportioned to the enormous front with its hump and shaggy main. As they galloped along, their fringed dewlaps and long beards swayed from side to side, and their little eyes glanced viciously as they peeped from out a forest of hair at the pursuing foe. One of the bulls suddenly took it into his head to do more than peep! He raised his tail stiff in the air—a sign of wicked intentions—turned round, and received Larry's horse on his forehead. Larry described the segment of a pretty large circle in the air, and fell flat on his back; but he jumped up unhurt, caught his horse, which was only a little stunned, and, remounting, continued the pursuit of the bull and killed it. He then pulled up, and looked round to see how it fared with his companions. Ben and Bunco were not in sight, but he observed Will Osten in hot pursuit of a large wolf. With a wild cheer, he made after him, and, by making a détour, came in front of the wolf, and turned it. Will fired at it quite close, but missed. Larry, who had reloaded, also fired and missed. Then they loaded and fired again, without success; so they endeavoured to ride over the animal, which they succeeded in doing, as well as in running against each other violently more than once, but without hurting the wolf, which dodged between the horses' legs, snarling viciously. This game went on until the horses began to

get exhausted. Then the wolf made straight off over the plain, and gained the mountains, still hotly followed, however, until it became evident to the pursuers that their steeds were blown, and that the wolf was distancing them at every stride.

When they at length unwillingly pulled up, the shades of evening were beginning to descend on the scene, and neither buffalo nor comrades were within range of their vision.

"Humph! we've got lost because of that rascal," grumbled Will Osten.

"Bad luck to it!" exclaimed his companion.

"Have you any idea of the way back?" asked Will, with a look of perplexity.

"Not in the laste," said Larry; "it's always the way, when a man goes on a wild-goose chase he's sure to come to grief, an' a wild-wolf chase seems to belong to the same family."

Will was too much vexed to reply, so he urged his steed to a gallop, and tried to retrace his way to the little plain, but the more they wandered the deeper did they appear to stray into the mountains.

Meanwhile, the trapper and Bunco, having cut off the best parts of the animals they had killed, made their encampment on the highest bluff they could find near the lake, and prepared supper; looking out now and then for their absent comrades. As the evening wore on they became anxious, and went out to search for them, but it was not till the following morning that they were

discovered, almost falling out of their saddles from exhaustion, and wandering about they scarce knew whither. Conducting them to the camp, the trapper and Bunco gave them food, and then allowed them to sleep until the sun was high, after which, with recruited energies and spirits, they resumed their journey.

Thus they travelled for many a day—now scaling rugged mountain passes where it seemed doubtful whether the horses would be able to clamber, anon traversing rich meadows, and frequently meeting with and shooting deer, bears, Rocky Mountain goats, and the other wild inhabitants of the region. But, in course of time, they reached a particularly barren part of the mountains, to travel through which was a matter of extreme difficulty, while, to add to their hardships, game became very scarce.

One evening they met with an adventure of a rather warm description, through the carelessness of Larry, which well-nigh cost them their lives. They had reached a forest of small pines, through which they proceeded several miles, and then, finding that the trees grew so close together as to render progress very difficult, they resolved to encamp where they were, and, accordingly, cut down a clear space, in one part of which they fastened the horses, and at the other end made the camp. The weather had for a considerable time been hot and dry, and mosquitoes and gadflies were very troublesome. They therefore lighted a fire for the horses as well as for themselves, in order to let the poor creatures get the benefit of the smoke which, as long as it lasted, effectually cleared away the flies. It was Larry's duty that night to hobble and secure the horses, but Larry was fatigued, and particularly anxious to commence

supper with as little delay as possible. He therefore fastened the horses so insecurely that one of them got loose, and, without being perceived, kicked about some of the blazing embers in his anxiety to get into the thickest of the smoke, and so find relief from his tormentors. These embers set fire to the dry moss. While the travellers were busy with supper, they were startled by a loud, crackling sound. Before any of them could jump up, they heard a roar, which was followed by a mighty illumination. One of the neighbouring pines had caught fire, and blazed up as if it had been gun-cotton. The moment was critical. The little wind there was blew from the burning tree towards the spot where they sat. They had scarcely realised what had occurred when another and another of the trees flashed up, for, although green, they burned like the driest timber. To unloose and drive the horses out of danger, and carry off their camp equipage in time, was impossible. Big Ben, seeing this at a glance, seized his axe and shouted to the others to assist. He sprang at the intervening trees, and, exerting his enormous strength to the uttermost, cut them down as if they had been willow-wands—fortunately they were small; some of them were lopped through with a single crashing blow. Our hero was not slow to emulate Ben, and, although not so expert, he did such good execution that in a few minutes there was a wide gap between the camp and the burning trees.

But the horses, meanwhile, were in danger of being suffocated, and the dry moss under foot was burning so fiercely that the fire threatened to spread in spite of their exertions. Seeing this, Bunco and Larry—first casting loose the horses—ran with their kettles and mugs to a neighbouring stream for water, which they poured on the moss. By this time they were nearly surrounded by

fire and smoke; the flames roared with appalling fury; the horse that had done all the mischief got burnt about the legs, threw himself down in the very midst of the fire and rolled in agony. Axes and kettles were instantly dropped, and all sprang to the rescue; grasped the creature by the head and tail, but could not drag him out. In desperation, Larry seized a stick, and so belaboured him that he leaped up and rushed out of the smoke and flames, terribly singed, indeed, but not much hurt otherwise. After this the fire was again attacked, and gradually its progress was cut off, so that our travellers were ultimately enabled to remove to a place of safety. But the flames had only been checked; they soon spread again, and, away to leeward of them, set the whole region on fire. From their new encampment that night, they could see rolling clouds of smoke mingling with tongues of flame which shot up, ever and anon, above the trees, and brought out in strong relief, or cast into deep shadow, the crags, gorges, and caverns of the mountains—presenting a scene of terrible devastation and indescribable sublimity.

Chapter Five.

Describes a Quiet Nook, and shows how Larry came by a Double Loss, besides telling of Wonderful Discoveries of more Kinds than One.

We must guard the reader, at this point, from supposing that our adventurers were *always* tumbling out of frying-pans into fires, or that they *never* enjoyed repose. By no means. The duty which lies upon us, to recount the most

piquant and stirring of the incidents in their journeying, necessitates the omission of much that is deeply interesting, though unexciting and peaceful.

For instance,—on one occasion, Larry and Bunco were deputed to fish for trout, while our hero and the trapper went after deer. The place selected by the anglers was a clear quiet pool in a small but deep rivulet, which flowed down the gentle slope of a wooded hill. The distant surroundings no doubt were wild enough, but the immediate spot to which we refer might have been a scene in bonnie Scotland, and would have gladdened the heart of a painter as being his *beau idéal*, perhaps, of a "quiet nook." The day was quiet too; the little birds, apparently, were very happy, and the sun was very bright —so bright that it shone through the mirror-like surface of the pool right down to the bottom, and there revealed several large fat trout, which were teazed and tempted and even exhorted to meet their fate, by the earnest Larry. The converse on the occasion, too, was quiet and peaceful. It was what we may style a lazy sort of day, and the anglers felt lazy, and so did the fish, for, although they saw the baits which were held temptingly before their noses, they refused to bite. Trout in those regions are not timid. We speak from personal experience. They saw Larry and Bunco sitting astride the trunk of a fallen tree, with their toes in the water, bending earnestly over the pool, just as distinctly as these worthies saw the fish; but they cared not a drop of water for them! Larry, therefore, sought to beguile the time and entertain his friend by giving him glowing accounts of men and manners in the Green Isle. So this pleasant peaceful day passed by, and Pat's heart had reached a state of sweet tranquillity, when, happening to bend a little too far over the pool, in order to see a

peculiarly large trout which was looking at him, he lost his balance and fell into it, head first, with a heavy plunge, which scattered its occupants right and left! Bunco chuckled immensely as he assisted to haul him out, and even ventured to chaff him a little.

"Yoo's good for dive, me tink."

"True for ye, lad," said Larry, smiling benignantly, as he resumed his seat on the tree-trunk, and squeezed the water out of his garments. "I was always good at that an' it's so hot here that I took a sudden fancy to spaik to the fishes, but the dirty spalpeens are too quick for me. I do belaive they're comin' back! Look there at that wan—six pound av he's an ounce."

Not only did the six-pounder return to the pool almost immediately after Larry left it, but a large number of his brethren bore him company, and took up their former position as if nothing had happened. Nay, more, the surprise had apparently so far stirred them up and awakened them to a perception of their opportunities, that the six-pounder languidly swallowed Bunco's hook and was in a moment whisked out of his native pool and landed on the bank,—for the anglers fished with stout cord and unbending rods!

"Musha! but ye've got 'im," exclaimed Larry.

"Yoos better take noder dive," suggested his friend.

"Hooroo!" shouted Larry, as he whipped another large fish out of the pool.

This, however, was the last for some time. The trout, ere long, appeared to have settled

The Trapper shoots his Dinner.—P. 77.

down into their former lazy condition, and the anglers' hopes were sinking, when it suddenly occurred to the Irishman, that if the fish were stirred up with a pole they might be again roused to an appreciation of their advantages. Accordingly a pole was cut, the trout were judiciously stirred up, and several of them actually took the bait in the course of the afternoon—whether under the influence of the unwonted excitement we do not pretend to say, but certain it is that before sunset an excellent dish was secured for supper!

Equally peaceful and pleasant were the experiences of our hero and the trapper on that tranquil day. They

wandered about in a state of silent happiness all the forenoon; then they shot a grizzly bear, the claws and teeth of which were claimed by Will, as he had drawn first blood. After that a deer chanced to come within range of the trapper, who brought it down, cut off the best parts of the meat, and, kindling a fire on the spot, sat down with his companion to a fat venison steak and a pipe.

"This sort o' life is what I calls happiness," said Big Ben, puffing out a cloud, through the hazy curls of which he gazed at a sunny landscape of unrivalled beauty.

"So it is," assented Will Osten, with enthusiasm.

"An' yet," pursued Big Ben, thoughtfully, "when I come to think on't, this sort o' life would be no happiness to an old man, or to a weak one."

"No, nor to a woman," added Will.

"Not so sure o' that," said the trapper; "I've know'd Injun women as was about as good hunters as their husbands, an' enjoyed it quite as much."

"That may be so, Ben, but women of the civilised world would scarcely think this a happy sort of life."

"P'raps not," returned Ben. "Happiness is a queer thing, after all. I've often thought that it's neither huntin' nor farmin', nor fair weather nor foul, that brings it about in the heart o' man or woman, but that it comes nat'ral to man, woman, and child, when they does what is best suited to their minds and bodies, and when they does it in the right way."

"Which is very much like saying," observed Will, "that happiness consists in obeying the laws of God, both natural and revealed."

"Just so," assented the trapper, after a few moments' consideration, "though I never quite thought of it in that light before."

Thus they conversed—or, rather, in somewhat similar strains they chatted, for they did not pursue any subject long, but allowed their minds to rove where fancy led—until evening began to close; then they carried their meat into camp and closed the day with a sumptuous feast of fish, flesh, and fowl, round a blazing fire, while the stream, which formed their beverage, warbled sweet music in their ears.

This, reader, is a specimen of one of their quiet days, and many such they had; but as these days of peace bore no proportion to the days of toil and trouble, we must beg you to be content with the account of this one as a fair sample of the rest, while we carry you over the Rocky Mountains and bear you down their western slopes towards the Pacific Ocean.

The mountains being crossed, the future course of our travellers was down hill, but in some respects it was more toilsome than their uphill journey had been. The scenery changed considerably in respect of the character of its vegetation, and was even more rugged than heretofore, while the trees were larger and the underwood more dense. Many a narrow escape had Will and his friends during the weeks that followed, and many a wild adventure, all of which, however, terminated happily—except one, to which we now request attention.

They had reached the Fraser River—that celebrated stream of British Columbia which waters a country that was destined in after years to become one of the great gold-mining regions of the world. On the afternoon of which we write, the party rode with difficulty down the rugged banks of the river, which, roaring through a narrow valley, had overflowed its banks, so that the trail was completely covered, the horses being frequently up to the girths in water. In the course of the day they came to a place where the trail passed along the face of a lofty cliff of crumbling slate. The path was only just wide enough for the horses to pass. On the right rose a perpendicular precipice. On the left, a few yards below, the swollen waters of the Fraser roared and boiled down their rocky bed with tremendous velocity. On turning a projection they found the track barred by a huge rock which had recently slipped down the mountain side. As it was impossible to pass the obstacle either above or below, there was nothing for it but to cut down trees, use them as levers, and dislodge the mass. It was discovered, when they dismounted to undertake this task, that Larry O'Hale was amissing. Will Osten had just uttered an exclamation of surprise, and the others had not had time to reply to the question, "Hallo! what's become of Larry?" when that worthy's voice was heard shouting in the distance, and his horse's hoofs were heard clattering along the narrow track as he approached at full gallop.

"Hooroo! howld on, doctor; hi' Bunco an' Ben, look here. Goold, avic, goold, I've got it at long last, sure enough!"

"You've got rid of your senses at last," said Will, as his comrade almost rode him down. "Have a care, man! What makes you ride at such a pace?"

"Goold! goold! goold!" cried the excited Irishman, plucking a little bag from his breast, leaping off his horse, and pouring the contents—a mass of glittering lumps and particles—on a flat stone. "Didn't I tell ye I was born to make my fortin' out o' goold? There's plenty more where that comed from. Come back an' I'll show 'ee the place!"

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, Larry," said Will, examining the so-called gold, "but I have seen this stuff before, and I believe it to be a substance which is not worth its weight in brass. Many poor fellows have been deceived by it before *now*."

Larry's face elongated very much at this. "What say *you*, Ben?" he inquired.

"I fear me that it an't worth picking up," replied the trapper, fingering the shining particles. "Leastwise I once collected a bag o' the same an' showed it to a man in the settlements who got the credit o' bein' a knowin' fellow in regard to metals. He told me it was somethin' that I don't remember the name of, but worth nothing, so I heaved it away."

Thus doubly assured, Larry sighed deeply as he collected the shining metal into the bag,

LARRY'S HORSE COMES TO GRIEF.—P. 82.

and stood eyeing it disconsolately. At this point Bunco chuckled.

"Worse luck to it," cried Larry, starting and tossing the bag violently into the stream, where it sank and vanished for ever. Little did any of the party imagine, at that time, that they had actually cast away some hundred pounds worth of pure gold, yet such was actually the case!

As it left Larry's hand, the bag touched the nose of his horse, which shied, slipped over the bank, fell into the river, and was swept away. Instantly they all clapped their shoulders to the big stone, and pushed with such good-will that it slipped and went crashing into the

stream, while the party went off at full speed after the horse. The poor animal was found at last stranded amid a mass of driftwood, with its saddle and baggage gone, but beyond this and the fright, no harm was done.

"Misfortin's niver come single. 'Tis always the way. Howsiver, niver say die; better luck nixt time; ye'll make yer fortin' yit, av ye only parsevair an' kape up yer heart, ould boy." Thus soliloquising, the unfortunate man remounted his wet and bare-backed steed, and rode away.

Time and tide are usually understood to wait for no man; we therefore decline to wait either for time or tide, but, sweeping onward in advance of both, convey our readers at once to the sea coast near Vancouver's Island, where our adventurers arrived after an unusual share of toil and trouble, and found a small craft about to sail for California—took passage in her, and, in due time, arrived at San Francisco. The gold-fever had just set in there. The whole town was in an uproar of confusion. Excitable men had given up their ordinary work, or shut their shops, and gone off to the diggings. Ships were lying idle in the bay, having been deserted by their crews, who had gone to the same point of attraction, and new arrivals were constantly swelling the tide of gold-seekers. Here Will Osten found his father's agent—a staid old gentleman of Spanish extraction, who, being infirm as well as old, was fever-proof. Being somewhat taciturn, however, and rendered irritable by the upheavings of social life which were going on around him, he only vouchsafed the information that the estate which belonged to the late Mr Osten was near the goldfields; that it was not a rich one by any means, and that his advice to Will was to go and see it for himself. Accepting

the advice, our hero expended the greater part of his remaining cash in purchasing provisions, etcetera, for the journey to the Sacramento River. By steamer they accomplished the first part of it, and on horseback progressed north-eastward until they drew near to the mighty mountain range named the Sierra Nevada.

On the way they had more than enough of company, for men of every clime and of all ages, between sixteen and fifty, were travelling on every description of horse and mule in the same direction. From most of these, however, they parted on reaching the entrance to the narrow valley in which the estate was said to lie.

"Is it far up the valley?" asked Will Osten of the landlord of the last ranche, or inn (a small hovel) in which they had passed the night.

"Not far," replied the innkeeper, a shrewd intelligent Yankee, with a touch of the nasal tone for which the race is noted; "guess it's about three leagues off."

"A wild gloomy sort o' place, no doubt?" asked Larry.

"Rayther. It'll stand tamin' a bit. There's nobody lives in the whole valley 'xcept a band o' miners who have been prospectin' all over it an' locatin' themselves in the house without leave."

"Locatin', is it?" exclaimed Larry, "faix, it's vacatin' it they'll be, widout so much as 'by yer lave,' this night."

"Have they found much gold, do you know?" asked Will Osten.

"Believe not," replied the innkeeper. "It's not a likely

place—though there *may* be some, for gold has been found below this, as you would see, I s'pose, when you passed the diggers on Cocktail Creek."

Bidding the host good-bye, our hero and his friends rode off to take possession of the estate. They were well armed, for, in these days, might, not right, was the law of the land.

It was evening before they reached the head of the valley where stood the house or wooden cottage which had been the abode of Will's eccentric old relative. The scenery was savage and forbidding in the extreme. Lofty mountains rose on every side, and only a small portion of the land in the neighbourhood of the dwelling had been brought under cultivation. The house itself was a low long-shaped building, and stood on the banks of a stream which gushed and tumbled furiously along its rocky bed, as if in hot haste to escape from the dark mountain gorges which gave it birth. A hut near by was the residence of an old native who had been the owner's only servant, and a few cattle grazing in the meadow behind the house were tended by him with as much solicitude as though his late master had been still alive. The only cheering point in the scene was a gleam of ruddy light which shot from a window of the house and lost itself in the deepening gloom of evening.

"A most lugubrious spot," said Will, surveying it sadly as he rode forward.

"Faix, I'd recommend ye to sell it to the miners for whativer it'll fetch," said Larry, in a disappointed tone.

"They're a jovial set of squatters, whatever else they may be," said Big Ben, as an uproarious chorus issued

from the house. "Hallo! Bunco, what d'ye hear, lad?"

Bunco's visage displayed at that moment a compound expression of surprise and deep attention. Again the chorus swelled out and came down on the breeze, inducing Bunco to mutter a few words to Big Ben in his native tongue.

"What is it?" inquired Will, eagerly, on beholding the huge frame of the trapper quivering with suppressed laughter.

"Nothin', nothin'," said Ben, dismounting, "only the redskin's ears are sharp, and he has heard surprisin' sounds. Go with him on foot. I'll hold the horses."

"Come 'long, foller me quick as you can," said Bunco, in a whisper—"no take gum?—no use for dem."

Filled with surprise and curiosity, Will and Larry followed their comrade, who went straight towards the window from which the light streamed. A voice was heard singing within, but it was not loud, and the air could not be distinguished until the chorus burst forth from, a number of powerful lungs:—

"Hearts of oak are our ships, Jolly tars are our men—"

At the first note, Larry sprang past his companions, and peeped into the room. The sight that met his gaze was indeed well calculated to strike him dumb, for there, in a circle on the floor, with the remains of a roast of beef in the centre—red-shirted, long-booted, uncombed, and deeply bronzed—sat six old comrades, whom they had not seen for such a length of time that they had almost forgotten their existence—namely, Captain Dall, long

David Cupples, old Peter, Captain Blathers, Muggins, and Buckawanga! They were seated, in every variety of attitude, round a packing-box, which did duty for a table, and each held in his hand a tin mug, from which he drained a long draught at the end of the chorus. The last shout of the chorus was given with such vigour that Larry O'Hale was unable to restrain himself. He flung open the door, leaped into the room with a cheer and a yell that caused every man to spring up and seize the nearest weapon, and Captain Dall, in a burst of fiery indignation, was in the act of bringing a huge mass of firewood down on the Irishman's skull when Will Osten sprang in and arrested his arm. At the same moment Muggins recognised his old messmate, and, rushing at him, seized him with a hug worthy of a black bear!

To describe the scene of surprise, confusion, and delight that followed were impossible. The questions put that were never answered; the answers given to questions never put; the exclamations; the cross purposes; the inextricable conglomeration of past, present, and future history—public, personal, and local; uttered, ejaculated and gasped, in short, or incomplete, or disjointed sentences—all this baffles description. After a few minutes, however, they quieted down, and, while the new arrivals attacked the roast of beef, their former messmates talked incessantly, and all at once!

"You're the laird of a splendid estate of rocks and scrub," said Captain Dall to Will.

"Not to mention the river," replied Will, smiling.

"Without fish in it, ha!" groaned Cupples.

"But lots o' goold," suggested Larry, with a wink; "give us

a drop o' yer grog, lads, it's dry work meetin' so many friends all at wanst."

"Nothin' but water here!" said Muggins.

"What! wos ye singin' like that on cowld wather?"

"We wos!" returned Muggins.

"An' what's more," said Old Peter, "we've got used to it, an' don't feel the want of grog at all. 'What's in a name,' as Jonathan Edwards says in his play of 'Have it yer own way,' or somethin' like that. Why, if you call it grog an' make believe, it goes down like—like—"

"Wather," suggested Larry; "well, well, let's have a drop, whativer it is."

"But how comes it to pass," inquired Will, "that we should all meet here just as people are made to do in a novel, or at the end of the last scene in a play?"

"Nothing more natural," said Captain Blathers. "You know, when we were cast adrift by the scoundrels that took my ship, Captain Dall, Mr Cupples, and I, made the coast, and got to San Francisco, where we remained, working at what we could, to scrape together a little money before leaving for England, as we had no heart for the goldfields. Some months after that we were surprised to see Old Peter and Muggins wandering about the town like beggars. They had come in a small craft from South America, and were very glad to join us. We were soon persuaded by them to go to the goldfields, and were about to start when we heard of this estate that had been left to a Mr Osten by his brother. I made inquiries, found it was your father it was left to, and, having heard

from Muggins of your father's death, I wrote a letter to let you know we were here, and to ask advice—which letter, by the way, is about half seas over to England by this time, if all's well. Then we agreed to come here, and prospect for gold all over the estate—the which we have done, but without much luck as yet, I'm sorry to say."

"But you have not yet accounted for the appearance of Buckawanga?" said Will.

"Oh, as to that, Muggins recognised him one day in the street. We found he had come over from them rascally Cannibal Islands, in the service of a missionary—"

"What!" exclaimed Will, dropping his knife and fork.

"The missionary, you know," said Captain Dall; "Mr Westwood, who—"

"Is he—is his *family*—in San Francisco?" asked Will, recovering himself and pretending to be busy with his supper.

"Ay, he is on his way to England—waiting for a ship, I believe; but Buckawanga prefers the goldfields, and so, has come with us, as you see."

"Are the Westwoods well—*all* of them?"

"So far as we know, they are. But in regard to the gold hereabouts—"

"Ay, that's the thing," said Larry, who had glanced at our hero with twinkling eyes when reference was made to the Westwoods; "nothin' like goold to warm the heart of a poor man an' gladden the eyes of a rich wan. It's that

same as'll interest the doctor most."

"Well," resumed the captain, "as I was about to say—"

"Didn't I hear you say something about going to San Francisco for fresh supplies and more tools a few minutes ago?" asked Will, abruptly.

"You did; we are short of provender and hard up for tools. I meant to start to-morrow, but now that you've come I'll delay—"

"We'll not delay an hour," cried Will, with unusual energy. "It will never do to waste time here when people are making fortunes all round us. The rest of the party can remain to prospect—but you and I, captain, will start for San Francisco *to-morrow*!"

"Ho, ho!" said Larry to himself that night, as he smoked his pipe after retiring to rest; "it's neck or nothin' is it—never ventur' never win, is the word? Well, well, 'tis the way o' the world. My blessin' go wid ye, doctor." With this benediction on his lips he turned round, shook the ashes out of his pipe and went to sleep.

Chapter Six.

In which Will makes a Retrograde Movement, and things come to a Pretty Pass—A Sudden and Decisive Step.

Next morning, true to his word, Will Osten started off to retrace his steps to San Francisco, much to the regret as

well as surprise of all his friends, except Larry O'Hale and Bunco, both of whom, being aware of his motive, chuckled mightily in their sleeves but wisely said nothing. Will was accompanied by Captain Dall and Mr Cupples, the former of whom gave him an account of his adventures since the period of their separation in the South Seas. As most of these adventures, however, were not particularly striking, and as they do not bear upon our tale, we will not inflict them on the reader, but merely refer to that part of the captain's career which was mixed up with our hero's new possessions in the Grizzly Bear Gulch, as his valley was named.

"You see, doctor," said Captain Dall, as they cantered easily over the soft turf of a wide plain, which, a little beyond the entrance to the gulch, spread out for a considerable distance along the base of the Sierra Nevada, "you see, when we discovered that this valley, or gulch, as they call it here, was yours—or your father's, which I suppose means the same thing—Captain Blathers, Mr Cupples, Muggins, Old Peter, and I held a council of war, and came to the conclusion that we would go up an' have a look at it, hopin' to find gold, but first of all we went to the regular diggin's on the Sacramento River to learn how to wash out the dirt an' make enough to keep us goin'. When we had done this an' lined our pockets with enough of gold-dust to set us up, we started for Grizzly Bear Gulch, where we found nobody but Old Timothy, the native that had been your uncle's servant."

"Timothy," said Will, "was that his name?"

"No, but he could not tell us his name, for the good reason that he does not understand a word of English, so

we christened him Timothy, and he answers to it. The old man cut up rusty at first, and seemed disposed to drive us away, but by howling the name of Osten into his ears and giving him a little gold, we converted him into a friend, and got him to allow us to squat in the empty house. Then we went off prospecting, and found gold, sure enough, in the stream in front of the door, but there was not much in the places we tried—little more than enough to pay."

"Then you don't think much of the property, I suppose," said Will, "for it is evident that in regard to agriculture it is not worth a straw?"

"I'm not so sure of that," returned the captain. "What do *you* think, Mr Cupples?"

The mate, whose melancholy tones and expressions had increased with his shore-going experiences, said that he did not know; that he was no judge of such matters, but that gold *might* be found in quantity, and, if so, the place would be worth something!

"A safe conclusion," said the captain, laughing; "but that is just the point. Gold *has* turned up in all directions near the valley, and why should we not find it there? Besides, there is a pretty fair bit of land under cultivation, and vegetables fetch fabulous prices at the diggin's; in addition to which there are a good many cattle on the ground, and provisions of all kinds are as good as gold just now—so, you see, I think that even if we don't find more of the dust on it, there is some chance that you may raise the wind by the property if you act wisely."

"Well, we shall see," said Will; "at all events I intend to make the most of my opportunities—and, talking of that,

Captain Dall, as I see that Mr Cupples is lagging behind, a word in your ear—I'll tell you a secret."

Hereupon our hero made the captain his confidant; told him of the object of his journey, and begged his advice and assistance, both of which the worthy man agreed to give him, to any extent, at any time, and under all circumstances—proving the sincerity of his assurances on the spot by at once offering several pieces of advice. One of these was, that Will should hasten on the consummation of his wishes without delay. This, as may be believed, was so consonant with Will's own opinion that he accepted it at once, and acted upon it then and there, as far as was possible, by plying whip and spur so vigorously that his steed skimmed over the plain more like a swallow than a quadruped.

Progressing thus they were not long in reaching the city of Sacramento, which was four or five days' journey from Grizzly Bear Gulch. Here they embarked in a small schooner, and descended the noble Sacramento River, into which all the other rivers in California flow. Thence they coasted along the bay of San Francisco, which is a land-locked sea of more than forty miles in length, and, finally, anchored off the town of the same name. And a wonderful town it was! The news of the discovery of gold had drawn so many thousands of ships and men to the port, that the hamlet of former days had become a city of tents and iron and wooden edifices of every kind. Gold can indeed work wonders—and never was its power more wonderfully displayed than in the rapid growth of San Francisco.

But our hero took small note of such matters. He was bent on a mission which engrossed his whole soul and all

his faculties, and the fear that the Westwoods had found a homeward-bound ship, and perhaps had already set sail, induced him to go about everything he did in feverish haste. During the few weeks that had passed since he last saw it, the town had so changed its features that Will could scarce find his way, but at last he managed to discover the office of the agent who had advised him to go and see his property. Mr Zulino, as he was named, received his visitor with his wonted crustiness mingled with surprise, which was somewhat increased when he found that Will could not give a very comprehensible reason for his sudden return to the city. He could give no information as to the Westwoods, knew nothing about them, but advised that Will should make inquiry at the principal hotels in the town and at the shipping office, adding that he believed one of the ships which had long been lying in the port, unable to sail for want of hands, had at last succeeded in getting up a crew, and was to sail in a day or two for England, but he did not know her name or anything about her.

"It is plain we can make nothing out of Mr Zulino," said Will, with a look of chagrin, on quitting the office. "Come, let us go hunt up the hotels."

"Agreed," cried Captain Dall. Mr Cupples groaned his readiness to follow, so they set off.

All that day the three wandered about the city into every hotel and shipping office, and every public place they could find, until they were thoroughly exhausted, but without success.

"Now, doctor," said the captain, wiping his heated brow, "if we are to gain our ends, it is plain that we must feed. I feel like a ship's hold without a cargo. See, here is a

comfortable-looking inn; let us go and stow away something solid, have a pipe, and then turn in, so as to go at it fresh to-morrow morning early."

"Very well," said Will, languidly; "but I cannot rest, so do you go and order something while I try to cool myself by taking a stroll up this hill; I'll be back before supper is ready."

"I will go with you," said Mr Cupples, gloomily.

Poor Will would have gladly gone alone, but as he had no good reason for declining the companionship of his tall and solemn friend, he merely said "Very good," and walked away. Passing over the hill they came to a neat little cottage with a small garden in front, in which were a variety of flowers that evidently were well tended. The windows and doors of the cottage were invitingly open. As they passed the garden-gate a voice suddenly exclaimed, "Walk in."

They stopped abruptly, looked at the open door, and then at each other in surprise.

"Walk in," repeated the voice, louder than before.

"Well, really, I don't see why we should refuse so pressing an invitation," said Will with a smile.

"You may go in; I'll wait for you," said Mr Cupples.

In another minute our hero was in the lobby of the cottage, and then he discovered,—on the words "walk in" being reiterated very gruffly,—that it was a grey parrot which had been thus taught to use the language of hospitality! Will laughed, and was about to turn on his

heel when he observed a female reclining on a couch in one of the rooms. She looked up quickly on hearing his step and laugh, and Will, hesitating for a moment, advanced with the intention of explaining and apologising.

"Forgive my apparent intrusion, madam," he said, "but your parrot deceived—what!—am I—Flora—Miss Westwood!" he exclaimed in amazement, leaping forward and seizing her hand.

"Mr Osten!" said Flora, with a look of unfeigned surprise, "can it be—I—I—did not know—really—"

Now, reader, it would be ungenerous were we to give you a detailed account of all the absurd things that were uttered at the commencement of the conversation. Suffice it to say that Will and Flora stammered and blushed, and grew hot and cold, and tried to look cool and failed, signally, and then, feeling how very awkward their position was, made a desperate effort to be commonplace, and so began to talk with intense solicitude about "the weather!" Will soon perceived, however, that in the circumstances this was utterly ridiculous, so he made another effort and asked about Flora's father and mother, and then, happy thought, he suddenly remembered Buckawanga, and began to descant upon him, after which he naturally slid into ships and voyaging, and so came abruptly to the question:—

"By the way, Miss Westwood, is it true that you are trying to secure a passage to England just now?"

"We have succeeded in securing one," said Flora, with a deep blush and a peculiar look. "We sail *to-morrow*."

“To-morrow!” cried Will, in consternation.

There was for a moment a great swelling of *something* in our hero’s breast; then a sudden thought occurred, “Never venture never—;” next instant he seized Flora’s hand. “Oh, Miss West— Flora, *dearest* Flora—forgive—nay, do not turn away, I entreat, I beseech—”

“Old rascal!” exclaimed a stern voice at his back at that moment.

Will sprang up, burning with anger, and turning sharply round, observed the parrot gazing at him in mute surprise.

“Walk in—old rascal,” repeated the bird.

Will laughed, but there was a touch of bitterness in his tone as he turned again to Flora, who had risen from the couch.

“This is an awkward interruption, Flo—Miss Westwood, but necessity constrains me. I must, I *will* speak now, if—bear with me, dear girl, I did not mean to be rude, but—”

A footstep was heard in the passage.

“Supper will be cooling, I fear,” said the hollow voice of Mr Cupples. “Oh! I beg pardon. I did not know—I—”

Will turned, and rushed at his friend with savage intentions. At the same moment the figure of a man darkened the doorway. Mr Cupples vanished out of the house, Flora glided away, and Will Osten found himself face to face with Mr Westwood!

It might have been expected that the scene which followed would have been an embarrassing one, but such was not the case. Our hero had reached that point of nervous and mental turmoil and exasperation in which extremes meet. As the strong current of a river meets the rush of the rising tide, and at a certain point produces dead calm, so the conflicting currents in Will's bosom reached the flood, and he became desperately serene, insomuch that he held out his hand to Mr Westwood, and, with a smile of candour and a tone of deep earnestness, explained "the situation," and made "a clean breast of it." The result was, that Mr and Mrs Westwood received his advances favourably, but, being naturally cautious and solicitous about the happiness of their daughter, they pointed out that it was impossible to come to any conclusion at that time, because, in the first place, Will was, by his own showing, a poor wanderer with only the prospect of an income at his mother's death, and without professional practice; and, in the second place, as they were to set sail for England on the morrow, there was no time left even for consideration. Mr Westwood, therefore, said that he could not permit Will to see Flora again, except to bid her farewell, and advised him to have patience until he should return to England, where, he said frankly, he would be happy to see him. Will thereupon left the cottage, in a state of distraction, to lay his case before Captain Dall.

"So you see, captain," he added, after detailing all the circumstances, "there is only one course open to me, and that I am resolved to pursue. I shall sail for England in the—the what's the name of the ship the Westwoods are to sail in?"

"Don't know," answered the captain.

"Of course not—no matter. We shall find out. She sails to-morrow at all events, and I go with her. You will go back with Mr Cupples to Grizzly Bear Gulch, work the gold, make what you can out of it, pay yourselves, and hold the estate for me. I'll get that legally arranged to-night. You'll tell my comrades how sorry I am to leave them so abruptly, but under the circumstances they will —"

"Softly," interrupted Captain Dall; "if all this is to be settled to-night, we had better set about it at once, and not waste time with words."

"Right, captain. Let us off to search for the captain of the ship."

Leaving Mr Cupples to eat the supper alone, our hero and his friend went out in hot haste, and soon found themselves in the presence of the captain of the Roving Bess, which was to sail next day.

"By the way," whispered Will to his friend, as they were entering the room in which the skipper sat, "do you happen to have any cash? for *I* have only twenty pounds."

"Not a rap," whispered the captain.

"You are the captain of the Roving Bess, I am told?" said Will, addressing a big rawboned man, who sat at a table solacing himself with a glass of spirits and water and a cigar.

"Ya–a–s, Cap'n Bra–a–o–wn, at y'r sarvice."

Captain Brown drawled this out so slowly that one might have supposed he did it on principle, as a sort of general protest against the high-pressure speed and hurry that influenced every one around him.

"You have passengers going, I understand?"

"Ya–a–s. Reverend genlm'n an' two ladies."

"Can you take another?"

"A dozen mo–a–r, if need be."

"Then put my name down. How much is the passage fare?"

"Fo–a–g–sl two hundred, cabin three hundred pa–o–unds."

"What!" exclaimed Will.

Captain Brown smiled. "You see," said he, "it c–a–unt be done for less—ha— 'Bliged to give fa-bu-lous wages to crew, and only too thankful to get 'em at any price. Provisions cost their weight, a-most, in gold."

"Will you be here an hour hence?" asked our hero.

"Ya–a–s, two hours hence," drawled Captain Brown, lighting a fresh cigar at the stump of the old one.

Will Osten linked his arm through that of Captain Dall, and hurried him into the street.

"Now to the agent," he said. "If *he* fails me, all is lost—stay! no; I can offer to work my passage. That did not

occur to me till now. I shall keep it in reserve."

A few minutes more and they stood in the presence of Mr Zulino.

"Is it possible," said Will, with an anxious expression of face, "to sell the property in Grizzly Bear Gulch *immediately*?"

The dry visage of the agent wrinkled into a sarcastic smile as he replied "Ha! I see, you are like all the rest—wish to turn everything into gold. Well, it *is* possible to sell it, I make no doubt, because it is well situated and will increase in value; but what, do you mean by *immediately*?"

"To-night," said Will.

"Impossible."

"What's to be done?" cried our hero, turning to Captain Dall with a look of such perplexity and disappointment that even the hard heart of Mr Zulino was touched.

"Why such haste?" he inquired.

"Because business of the most urgent kind requires that I should embark for England in a vessel which sails to-morrow, and I have not money enough to pay for my passage."

"I can lend you some on the property, at a high rate of interest," said the agent.

"Then do so, my dear sir," said Will earnestly, "at any rate of interest you choose, and I will sign any papers

you may require. My friend here, Captain Dall, will see that you are regularly paid. I assure you that I shall *never* forget the obligation."

"Follow me," said Mr Zulino, rising and putting on his hat.

He led them to the office of a man who appeared to be connected with the law, and who drew up a paper which, being duly signed and witnessed, Mr Zulino put in his pocket, at the same time handing Will Osten a cheque for four hundred pounds.

"Now, captain," said Will, with a deep sigh of relief, as they, once more issued into the street, "we'll go and enjoy our supper."

Next morning Will Osten, with a small portmanteau containing his little all in his hand, and accompanied by Captain Dall and Mr Cupples, pushed his way through the crowded streets to the quay, where a boat awaited him.

"Once more, Captain Dall," he said, turning round and grasping his friend's hand, "farewell! I am sorry—more so than I can tell—to leave you. May God prosper you wherever you go. Remember my messages to our friends at the gulch. Tell Larry and Bunco, and the trapper especially, that I feel almost like a criminal for giving them the slip thus. But how can I help it?"

"Of course, of course," said Captain Dall, returning the hearty squeeze of Will's hand, "how could you? Love, like necessity, has no law—or, rather, itself is a law which all must obey. Good-bye, lad, and good luck attend ee."

Silently shaking hands with Mr Cupples, whose lugubrious expression seemed appropriate to the occasion, Will

leaped into the boat and was soon rowing over the bay to the spot where the Roving Bess lay with her anchor tripped and her sails loose. On approaching, he saw that Mr Westwood and his wife were pacing the quarterdeck, but Flora was not visible, the reason being that that busy little woman was down in her father's berth putting it to rights—arranging and re-arranging everything, and puzzling her brains with numerous little contrivances which were all meant to add to the comfort and snugness of the place—wonderfully ingenious contrivances, which could not have emanated from the brain of any woman but one who possessed a warm heart, an earnest soul, a sweet face, and a turned-up nose! She was a good deal dishevelled about the head, in consequence of her exertions, and rather flushed, and her eyes were a little moist. Perhaps she was sad at the thought of leaving San Francisco—but no—she was leaving no friends behind her there. *That* could not have been the cause!

The little round port-hole of the berth was open, and she stopped ever and anon in the midst of her operations to look out and listen to the variety of shouts and songs that came from the boats, vessels, and barges in the bay. Suddenly she stopped, turned her head the least bit to one side, and listened intently.

"My dear," said Mr Westwood to his wife, standing on the deck and leaning over the bulwarks, exactly above the open port near to which Flora stood, "*can* that be Mr Osten in yonder boat?"

Flora's bosom heaved, and her colour vanished.

"I think it is—stay—no—it looks like—yes, it *is* he," said Mrs Westwood.

Flora's face and neck became scarlet.

Presently the plash of oars were heard near the vessel, and next moment a boat approached, but not from such a quarter as to be visible from the port-hole.

"Mind your starboard oar," said a deep voice, which caused Flora's heart to beat against her chest, as if that dear little receptacle of good thoughts and warm feelings were too small to contain it, and it wanted to get out.

"Good morning, Mr Osten," cried Mr Westwood, looking down.

"Good morning, sir,—good morning, Mrs Westwood," answered Will, looking up.

"It is very kind of you to take the trouble to come off to bid us good-bye," said Mr Westwood.

Flora trembled a little, and leaned upon the side of the berth.

"I have not come to say good-bye," said Will (Flora's eyes opened wide with astonishment), "I am going—fend off, men, fend off, mind what you are about—I am going," he said, looking up with a smile, "to sail with you to England."

A peculiar gleam shot from Flora's eyes; the blood mantled again on her brow, and, sinking into a chair, she pressed her hands to her face and buried her head in her father's pillow!

Chapter Seven.

Rambling Reminiscences of Absent Friends, and a Happy Termination.

On the evening of a cold December day—the last day of the year—many months after the occurrence of the events narrated in the last chapter, old Mrs Osten sat in her drawing-room, toasting her toes before a cheerful fire. The widow looked very happy, and, to say truth, she had good reason for being so, for her stalwart son had come home to her safe and sound, and was at that moment sitting by her side talking in a most amazing way about his Flora—referring to her as a sort of captive bird which had now no chance of escaping, saying that he meant to take her to Paris, and Switzerland, and Rome, and in summer to the English Lakes, and Killarney, and the Scotch Highlands.

"In fact, mother," said Will, "after that little event comes off, which is fixed to take place next week, I mean to act the part of Wandering Will over again under entirely new and much more interesting circumstances. Ah! mother," he continued with enthusiasm, "how little did I think, when I was travelling through the wild regions of the far west, that I was being led to the spot where I should find *such* a wife!"

"Yes, dear, you were indeed *led*," said Mrs Osten, "for that wild region was the very last place in the world to which you would have thought of going to look for a good wife, had you been guided by your own wisdom."

"True, mother, most true. Gold is much more plentiful in

that land than wives, either good or bad. I wonder how my old comrades are getting on there now. You remember Larry, mother, and Bunco. How I wish I could have had them all here at our wedding! You would have delighted in old Captain Dall, and Captain Blathers, too, he's not a bad fellow though rather wild, but Big Ben would have pleased you most—by the way, this is the last night of the year. I doubt not they will be remembering me to-night, and drinking my health in clear cold water from the crystal springs of the Sierra Nevada. Come, I will pledge them in the same beverage," said Will, seizing a glass of water that stood at his elbow; "may success, in the highest sense of the word, attend them through life."

"Amen," murmured the widow, as Will drained the glass; "I hope they may get plenty of gold without catching the gold-fever, which is just another name for the love of gold, and that, you know, is the root of all evil. But go on telling me about your adventures, Will; I never tire of hearing you relate them."

"Well, mother, I'll begin again, but if you *will* be for ever interrupting me with questions and remarks about Flora, I shall never get to the end of them. Now, then, listen."

Hereupon Will began to talk, and his mother to listen, with, we need scarcely say, intense interest.

Thus was the last night of that year passed in the drawing-room. Let us see how it was spent in the kitchen.

"Yes, Jemimar," said Maryann, with her mouth full of buttered toast, "I always said it, and I always thought it, and I always knowed it, that Master Will would come

’ome, and marry a sweet beautiful young lady, which ’as come true, if ever a profit spoke, since the day of Jackariah—let me fill your cup, my dear, p’raps you’ll ’and me the kettle, Richards.”

The worthy coachman rose with alacrity to obey, and Jemima accepted the proffered cup of tea in the midst of a vain attempt to quiet the baby Richards, which happened to be unusually restive that night.

“To think, too,” continued Maryann with a laugh, “that I should ’ave gone an’ mistook the dear creetur at first for a cannibal!”

“Maryhann,” said Jemima, solemnly, “I don’t believe there’s no such things as cannibals.”

“No more do I, Jemimar—did you speak, Mr Richards?” inquired Maryann, with a sudden assumption of dignity.

The coachman, who was devotedly engaged with his fifth slice of buttered toast, protested solemnly that he had not spoken, but admitted that he had experienced a tendency to choke—owing to crumbs—just at the point when Maryann happened to allude to the cannibals. Maryann had a suspicion that the tendency to choke was owing to other causes than crumbs; but as she could not prove her point, and as the baby Richards took it into his head at that moment to burst into an unaccountable and vehement fit of laughter, she merely tossed her head, and resumed her observations.

“No, Jemimar, nothing will ever convince me that there are any savages so depravated as to prefer a slice of ’uman flesh to a good beefsteak, an’ it’s my belief that that himperent Irishman, Larry O’Ale, inwented it all to

gammon us."

"I quite agree with you, Maryhann," said Jemima, who indeed always agreed with any proposition her friend chose to put forth; "an' I 'old that it is contrairy to 'uman reason to imagin such beastliness, much less to do it."

Here Richards had the temerity to observe that he wasn't quite sure that such things were never done; "for," said he, "I 'eard Mr Osten himself say as 'ow he'd seen 'em do it, an' surely *he* wouldn't go for to tell a lie." At which remark Jemima advised him to hold his tongue, and Maryann replied, with an expression of scorn, that she wondered to 'ear 'im. Did he suppose Master Will didn't sometimes indulge in a little 'armless jesting like other people? She would have added more, but unfortunately the crumbs got into Richards' throat again, causing that sceptical man to grow red in the face, and give vent to sounds like mild choking.

"'Owever," observed Jemima, "it don't matter now, as Mr William and 'is bride are safe 'ome again, and if Mr O'Ale also was fond of a joke, like other people, there is no 'arm in that. Poor fellow, I 'ope 'e's well, an' Mr Bunco too, though he *is* a Red Hindian."

"'Ear 'ear!" said Richards, suddenly seizing his cup; "let us drink their 'ealth, an' the 'ealth of all their comrades, for this is the last night of the year, an' by all accounts they won't likely be spendin' it in the midst o' such comforts an' blessin's as we does. Come, lasses, drink it merrily, fill yer glasses, let the teapot circle round."

The tone in which this proposal was made, and the fact that it *was* the last night of the year, induced Maryann to respond, with gracious condescension:—

“Well, Richards, I’m agreeable.”

“Here, then,” said Richards, raising his cup on high, “I give you the ’ealth of Mr Larry O’Ale, Mr Bunco, an’ all absent friends—wishin’ ’em luck, an’ lots o’ gold.”

“An’ a ’appy deliverance from these ’orrible countries,” added Maryann.

“I agree with *you*, Maryhann,” said Jemima, draining her cup to the dregs in honour of the toast.

But how did Larry and his friends spend that last night of the year in the far-off golden land? Let Larry speak for himself, in a letter which was received by Will Osten, many months afterwards, and which we now give *verbatim et literatim*.

The letter in question was written in a remarkably cramped hand, on several very dirty sheets of blue ruled foolscap, folded with much care and crookedness, and fastened with a red wafer which bore the distinct impression of an extremely hard knuckle. It ran thus:—

“Grizlie bar gultch first janooary.

“Dear mister osten, i taik up my pen, the its litil i has to do wid sitch things, to let yoo no that this coms hopin’ your al wel as it leeves us—barrin bunko who overait hiself last nite at super but hees al rite again, yool be glad to larn that we hav diskivered lots o goold. wan day whin i wos up the straim i thowt id tri me luk in a hole, an faix didnt i turn up a nugit o puer goold as big as my hid. i tuk it down to the hous an’ didnt we spind a nite over it! its glad i was we had no likker for i do belaive

weed have all got rorin drunk, as it was, sure we danced haf the nite to the myoosik of a kitle drum—an owld tin kitle it was, but we didnt mind that, niver a taist, for the nugit kep up our sperits. Wel, we wint an turned up the hole kuntry after that, an' got heeps o goold. yool niver belaive it—there was nugits o' all sises from a pay to a pitaity. Kaptin dal wint to sanfransisky last munth an hees paid of the det to mister zooleeno, interest an all, so yoor free, an' theres a big sum in the bank, but i dont no ritely how much, but Kaptin dal is to rite yoo soon as to that an' a good many other things, he's too much exited about the nugit just now to midle wid the pen, so he's maid me his depity, dee see, an its that saim im allways willin to be, for im at all times as kool as a kookumber, an had a first-rate eddikashun—good luk to the parish praist, anyhow—theres a good skreed to begin wid, an' so as theres enuff in this part o' me leter to kaip ye thinkin till dinner, ill just go out an have another dig in the straim an resoom me pen when i cum bak.

"Wel, mister osten, as i wor saying, ive returned havin got nothin, bad skran to it, but a few small bits like a thimble, howsumeiver, that samell pay for sharpnin the tools, i now sit down to resoom me pen, as i said before i got up, but och! if ye heerd the row the other boys is goin on wid, yed find it as diffikilt to read this as i do to spel it. but niver mind, that saim dont mater much, for, as i said before, im allways kooll.

"Wel—youve no notion what a work we hav wid the goold, bekais, dee see, weer pikin it up in handfulls, sumtimes wid a nugit, now an again, like yer fist, an the boys is raither exited, for ov koorse they kant al keep as kool as me—but let that pas. as I wor sayin, the row is diffinin for that blakgird Buckywangy is spinin a yarn as

long as the mane yard o a sivinty-fore about wan o' thim spalpeens in the kanible ilands as had his unkles darters waitin maid, as wor a slaiv, hashed up, wid two litle boys an a pig, into what hees got the face to call a Irish stu, an it didnt sit lit on the Kanibles stumick for the raisin they forgot the pepper—its not aisy to write wid sich blarny ringin' in wans eers—an the boys larfin too as loud, amost as the nigers yel in the Kanible islands—be the way, that minds me o purty miss westwood as we met thair. its mistress osten sheel be by this no doubt, plaiz give her Larry's best respeks, an its wishin her good luck i am, an the saim to yersilf.

"Yool be glad to heer that buncos found his wife, he wint away south for three or fore weeks, an brot her bak wid him, an she hadnt married nobody in his absence, the its urgin her purty hard they was. shees patchin a pair o me owld breeches at this minit while I write them lines, an is uncomon usful wid her needle, capn blathers says he had no notion before that wimin was so nisisary to man. but hees a dirty owld bachiler. the traper tawks o laivin us, im sory to say. hees a good harted man an a rail broth of a boy is big ben, but he dont take kindly to goold diggin, thats not to say he kant dig. hees made more nor most of us, an more be token he gave the most of it away to a poor retch of a feller as kaim hear sik an starvin on his way to sanfransisky. but big bens heart is in the roky mountins, i kan see that quite plain, i do belaiv he has a sowl above goold, an wood raither katch foxes an bars, he sais heel stop another month wid us an then make traks for his owld hants—just like the way we sailors long for the say after a spree on shore, the i must say non of us say-dogs have any longin as yit to smel salt water, big ben sais that this sort o work is nother good for body nor sowl—an, dee no, i half belaiv hees

rite, for kool the i am i feels a litle feverish sometimes, i wos goin to tel ye a anikdot about mister cupples an a brown bar, but the boys are off to the straim again, so i must stop, but il resoom ritein after tay—hopin yool exkuse my fraquint interupshuns, mister ostin, il go.

"Wel, heer i am again—just comed in wid a failin about my inside like a botimles pitt, but thats aisy kured. il taik up the pen after tay, only i want to tell ye weer in luk agin, i got fore nugits as big as walnuts, and heeps o smal wans, an the rest has got a dale o goold wan way or other, now for super.

"There, the pitts fild up now. wel, whair was i. och! yes, it was about mister cupples an the brown bar. you must no that hees got the fever pritty bad, has mister cupples—the goold fever i mean, an goes off an owr or too before the rest of us waiks up of a mornin, but he dont make no more goold, which owld peter—yoo remimber owld peter, mister ostin—sais is a spechiel visitashun for his beein avaridgious. anyhow, he gits les slaip than the rest of us an no more goold. wel, as i wor sayin, he wint off wan mornin up the straim, an it so hapind that big ben and bunco wint in the saim direkshun. in the afternoon, as they was comin home, they turned off the trak an sot down to rest a bit. who shood they see comin along the trak soon arter but mister cupples. he was cumin along slow—meditatin like—for he always comed back slow from digin, as if he was loth to leav, but wint thair kuik enuff, anyhow, close behind him wos trotin a big brown bar. the bar didnt see him, by raisin that the trak was krookit and the skrub thik; but it was goin fast, and had almost overhawled mister cupples whin he wos cloas to the place whair the too men was hidin. heers fun, sais the traper, kokin his gun. bunco he grin'd, but

didnt spaik. yool remimber, mister osten, bunco had a way of his own o grinin widout spaikin, but big ben sais his eyes more nor makes up for his tung. wel, just as he comes fornint the too men, mister cupples he heers a sound o futsteps behind him, an stops an turns round, heed no gun nor nothin wotsomiver wid him, havin left all the tools at the place he was digin. in a moment round the corner cums the bar ful swing, it was a sharp turn, and the site o the mate kuite took him aback, for he got up on his hind legs and showed al his grinders, mister cupples was also much took by surprise, but he suddently shook his fist in the bar's face, an shoutid, ha, yoo raskal, as if he wor spaikin to a fellar creetur. whether it wos the length o the mate's face, or not bein yoosed to convarsashun, no wan nos; but the bar he 'bout ship, clapt on all sail, and stood away up the gulch at the rait o 15 or 20 nots, while mister cupples he looked after him chuklin, an bunco and big ben too was larfin fit to bust their sides, the they larfed inside, like, for fear o diskiverin thimselves, but when big ben see the bar cleering off like that he up wid his gun, let drive, an put a bal kuite nate in the bak of his skul if mister cupples wasnt afeerd o the bar, he got a most awful frite by the shot, for yoo must no theres bin a dale o murtherin going on at the digins of lait, tho, be good luk, its not cum our way as yet, so he turned and run like al posesed. yoo no what long leggs hees got, faix, he cleerd the ground wid them like a peir o kumpasses, an he was out o site in no time, an cum heer pantin and blowin like a broken-winded steem-ingin. soon after that, big ben cum in wid the skin o the bar over his shoulder, and bunco caryin his too hams to smok, for bar hams ant bad aitin, let me tel yoo, if yoor hungry an not partickler. of koorse mister cupples hasnt had the life of a dog since, for the boys are for iver jokin him amost out of his siven sensis about

that bar.

"This is about all iv got to tell, mister osten, not but that i cud go on for paiges an paiges yit, given ee odds an ends o smal tawk an ginral nuse, for whin i wance begin wid the pen i niver no when to stop—its awthership il taik to, maybe, if iver i git into diffikultys—but its ov no yoos spinin out a yarn when its done, so il stop now, wishin ye all helth an hapines, wid the saim from all yer owld frinds at the grizlie bar gultch digins. they bid me say thail never forgit the hapy days theyve spent wid ye in the south says, an the forests of south ameriky an the roky mountins. but them days is all past an gon now. sure i sometimes feel as if the hole thing was a draim. dont you, mister osten. wid best wishes, yoors til deth.

"Larry o hale."

"*p.s*.—Plaze give my apologys to yoor muther for forgitin to send my respeks to her. also to maryan, whos a dasent woman av she wasnt so fond o' fitein. also to richards an' his beter haf gemima. Shees a good sowl too av she wasnt aflikted wid too ardint a desir to wair some of her husbands garmints. so no more at present from L.o.h."

We can add little to the record so graphically penned by Larry O'Hale, and it were well, perhaps, that, having spun our yarn out to the end, we should follow his example and write no more. But we feel that it would be unjust to the memory of our hero were we to dismiss him without a "few words" as to his subsequent career.

It happens sometimes, though we believe not frequently, that those who begin life with what may be called a wild burst settle down at last into quiet domestic men, whose

chief delight it is to "fight their battles o'er again" with sympathetic comrades, and to "wander in dreams." Such was the case with Will Osten. Flora acted the part of a best-bower anchor to him all through life, and held him fast; but, if the whole truth must be told, it is our duty to add that Will did not strain hard at the cable! He rode easily in the calm harbour of *home*, which was seldom ruffled with gales—matrimonial or otherwise.

The success of his Californian estate was so great that, besides setting up in life the most of the comrades who had followed his fortunes, it placed himself beyond the necessity of working for his daily bread. Will did not, however, lead an idle life on that account. He recognised the great truth that he was answerable to his Creator for the management of his time and talents just as much as the man who has to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow, and he made it his chief aim in life to act the part of a faithful steward. That he did not succeed in this to the full extent of his wishes is certain, nevertheless his success must have been considerable if we are to believe the opinion of his friends, who used to say of him, with enthusiasm, that he was a blessing to the community in the midst of which he dwelt, for, in imitation of the Master whom he served, he went about continually doing good.

In process of time, several little boats (if we may be allowed the expression) appeared in the harbour and cast anchor alongside of Will; or, rather, attached themselves to the anchor which held him fast; and Flora was quite able to hold them all—though it must be admitted that she had infinitely more trouble with the little boats than she had with the big ship, for they had all wandering wills of their own, and, from the time of their first

appearance, evinced a strong tendency to strain with tremendous vigour at their cables. Indeed, on several occasions, one or two of the boats attempted actually to cut their cables and make off, as the old ship had done before them, but Will's wisdom and Flora's winning ways prevailed, and it was found that, having been trained in the way in which they should go from the commencement, they did not depart from that way when they grew old.

In reference to the early existence of this little flotilla, we may, with propriety, quote the opinion of Maryann—than whom there could not be a better witness, for she dwelt in Will's house, and nursed them all as she had nursed their father before them—superintended, of course, by old Mrs Osten, who dwelt in a cottage of her own hard by, and watched the rise and progress of her descendants for many a year with keen felicity. Maryann, in talking over matters with her faithful bosom friend, was wont to say:—

"Yes, Jemimar, I never had two opinions about it, they're the beautifulest an' sweetest children I ever did 'ave had to do with—just as Master Will, their papa, was simularly so; but I'm free to confess that they all has a surprisin' sperrit. There's Master William, now (I can't abear to call him Will, because that was the name as 'is father went by, and I 'old that in a sense it is sacred), there's Master William, though 'e's only jist out o' frocks an' frilled trousers, and noo into blue tights an' brass buttons, there 'e is, goin' about the country on a pony as isn't much bigger than a Noofoundland dog, but goes over the 'edges an ditches in a way as makes my blood to curdle an' my skin to creep, with that dear boy on 'is back and 'is tail flyin be'ind, an' shoutin' with a sort of wild delight

that I do think is wicked—I do indeed, Jemimar, I give you my word I think it sinful, though, of course, 'e dont mean it so, poor child, and 'is father cheerin' 'im on in a way that must sear 'is conscience wuss than a red 'ot iron, w'ich 'is mother echoes too! it is quite past my compre'ension. Then 'e comes 'ome sich a figur, with 'oles in 'is trousers an' 'is 'ats squeezed flat an' 'is jackets torn. But Master Charles aint a bit better. Though 'e's scarcely able to walk 'e can ride like a jockey, an' needs more mendin' of 'is clo'se than any six ordinary boys. Miss Flora, too, would be just as wild if she weren't good and bidable, w'ich is 'er salvation; an' the baby—oh! you wouldn't believe it! didn't I catch that hinfant, only the other day, tryin' to throw a summerset in its bed, in imitation of Master William, an' yesterday morning I caught Master Charles trying to teach it to 'ang on to the clo'se-rope in the nursery by its toes! It's an awful trainin' the poor things is gettin'—an' the only comfort I 'ave in 'em is, that their dear mother do constantly teach 'em the Bible—w'ich condemns all sich things,—an' she *do* manage to make 'em fond o' wisitin' an' considerin' of the poor."

To which observations Jemima, holding up her hands and gazing at her bosom friend in sympathy, would reply that her own sentiments was hidentically simular, that things in general was to her most amazin', and that there was no accountin' for nothin' in *this* life, but that w'atever came of it she 'oped the family would live long an' 'appy in a world, w'ich was, she must confess, a most perplexing mixture of good and evil, though of course she wasn't rightly able to understand or explain that, but she was sure of this anyhow, that, although she was by no means able to explain 'erself as well as she could wish, she knew that she wished well to every one who stuck to

the golden rule like Mr and Mrs Osten.

With which sentiment, good reader, we shall conclude this chronicle of the life and adventures of Wandering Will, and respectfully bid you farewell.

The End.

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