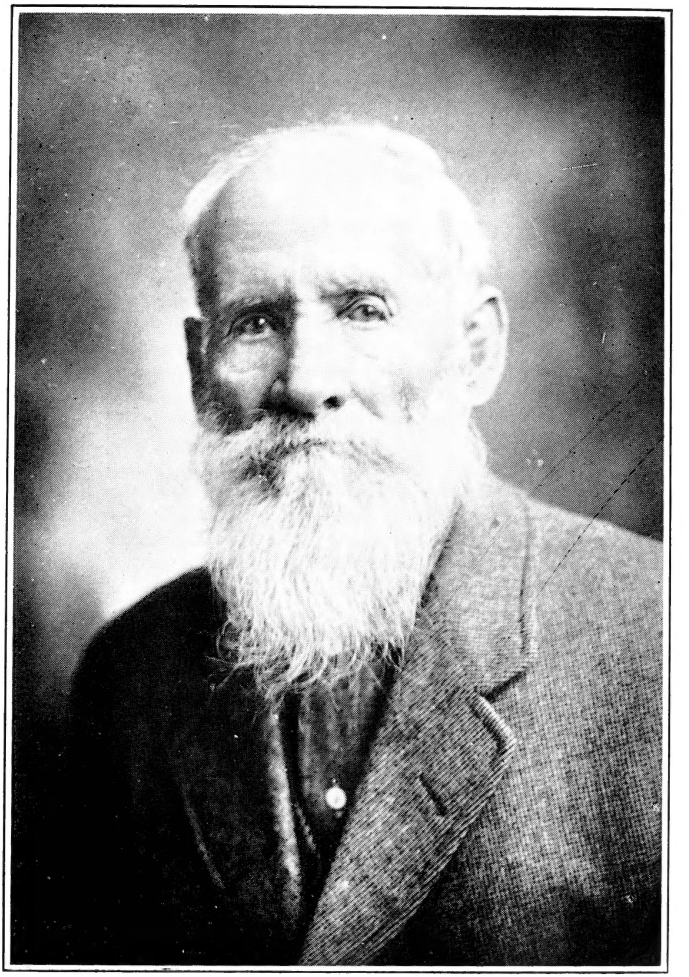
EARLY DAY STORIES

A. J. LEACH



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The Overland Trail
Animals and Birds that Lived Here
Hunting Stories
Looking Backward

Second
Edition

By A. J. LEACH

Press of
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Prefatory

This book is descriptive, historical, instructive, truthful.

It is a safe book for the young people.

It is intended to be an interesting book for the old people.

These stories are drawn from the personal experiences of the author, during a trip across Nebraska, and westward over the mountains to the Pacific coast in the year 1852, and from a residence in Nebraska since May 16, 1867.

It is a book of frontier stories taken from actual life.

These stories were first printed in the county newspapers, with no thought of having them published in book form. They met with so much favor that it was determined to send them forth in a bound volume.

Here it is.

A. J. LEACH.

Oakdale, Nebraska, March 13, 1916.

Contents

CHAPTER I.

Ignorance of Nebraska History—A Great Thoroughfare—The Different Starting Points—The Overland Stage—Marked by Graves Along the Route.

This story is written chiefly for the young people, but it may interest also the older ones, some of whom possibly may have a dim and shadowy remembrance of events described herein, or of the persons who took part in these events, and who helped to make them a part of the history of our state and country.

There is much ignorance among our young people, and the older ones as well, about the early history of the state of Nebraska. The reason is that this history is not found in full in our books, nor taught in our schools. Important events that transpired in the early days, and that left a lasting impress upon the destinies of our state are either entirely overlooked or have received only mere mention in such records as have been kept. Had these events happened in New England or New York or Virginia in colonial times there would have been a record made of them, and they would have become a part of the history of our country, and would be as familiar to our school boys and girls of today as are the stories of Pocahontas, of Red Jacket, and of Osceola.

If you will take one of our modern large dictionaries and turn to the list of proper names, you will easily find such names as Pocahontas, Powhatan, Red Jacket, Osceola, Tecumseh, Pontiac, Black Hawk and many others who flourished in the early days of our nation, but in some of them, at least, you will look in vain for the name of Blackbird or Red Cloud or Spotted Tail or Sitting Bull, or any

of the great Indian warriors of more recent times. We have become a great people—wonderful discoveries are constantly being made—great events are happening, one right after the other, and these things all claim our attention, so that we have little time to give thought to matters of early history, and yet these things should not be neglected nor forgotten.

Before there was a railroad west of the Mississippi river, the country then known as Nebraska territory had the greatest thoroughfare of the kind ever known in historical times. This was the Overland Trail, starting at first from Independence, Missouri, and afterward from Westport, Missouri, (now Kansas City), with branches from St. Joseph, Missouri, from Leavenworth, Kansas, and from Nebraska City, Nebraska, these lines all converging on the south side of the Platte nearly opposite Grand Island, the route continued on west through Nebraska to Denver, Salt Lake, Oregon and California. On the north side of the Platte river was another prong of this great highway that crossed the Missouri at Sarpy's Landing, (now Bellevue), and also at Kanesville, (now Council Bluffs), and these two uniting at the crossing of the Elkhorn river passed up the valley on the north side of the Platte, going directly through the places where now stand the cities of Fremont, Columbus and Grand Island. These two roads, one on the north, and one on the south side of the Platte, united near Fort Laramie in Wyoming and continued on west as one thoroughfare, but divided again farther west, one branch going to Oregon and one to California, with still a third and shorter one to Salt Lake.

On the 7th day of May, 1859, gold was discovered in Colorado. Prior to this date Colorado was unsettled and unknown. There were a few traders and trappers within its borders, and possibly a few settlers of Mexican lineage in the extreme southern part, but as a whole it was a wilder-

ness, unoccupied excepting by wild animals and scattered bands of Indians. This finding of gold gave great impetus to the travel through Nebraska, tens of thousands of people passing over the road in covered wagons, many of the wagons bearing the legend "Pikes Peak or bust."

When this overland trail first came into use about the year 1840 but to a greater extent by 1843, it was used chiefly by emigrants to Oregon, and later to California and still later by the Mormons on their journey to Utah.

After the discovery of gold in Colorado a vast amount of freighting was done over the road, one firm, that of Russell, Majors and Waddell, it is claimed had about $2,000,000 invested in the business, employing 6,000 teamsters, and working 45,000 oxen besides many horses and mules. Before the building of the U. P. Railroad, the freighting and emigrant travel had assumed enormous proportions. There was also a stage line carrying the United States mail and passengers. At first in 1850 there was a stage each way once a month—in 1857 it was increased to a weekly, and in 1861 to a daily service. The fare by stage from Missouri river points was $75 to Denver, $150 to Salt Lake, and $225 to Placerville, Calif.

When these two trails were first traveled—one on the north and one on the south side of the Platte river, each one consisted of a single wagon road, and the travel was almost entirely of wagons drawn by ox teams, there being from two to four yoke of oxen to each covered wagon; the wagons following one directly behind the other, thus forming only a single track or road. Along the left side of the road was a plain foot path made by the drivers. As the traffic increased over the road other tracks were made parallel with the first one, so that by the year 1860 there were five or six parallel tracks a few feet apart, meandering along up the Platte valley, and so on over the mountains

to Utah and the Pacific coast. Before the railroad was built, this was the great highway connecting the East with the West. Over it passed tens of thousands of emigrants to Oregon, California, Utah and Colorado, and hundreds of thousands of tons of freight, in the form of machinery, tools, provisions, grain, feed and merchandise of all kinds needed in Colorado and Utah. Nothing like it was ever seen before either in ancient or modern times, and never will be seen again. There were two other routes to Colorado—one called the Arkansas valley route through southern Kansas, and the other the Smoky Hill route through central Kansas, but both of these together had only a small fraction of the travel that passed through Nebraska over the Oregon and California trails. This trail is now entirely obliterated almost everywhere in the central and eastern parts of the state, where the land is arable and has been put in cultivation, but as one goes west where there is more waste land it is yet plainly marked by several parallel tracks, deeply indented in the soil but almost everywhere overgrown with buffalo grass. A few years ago the writer examined the trail in Scotts Bluff county just west of Gehring. Here the trail passes over the low divide separating the northern from the southern part of the Scotts Bluff Hills or mountains as they should properly be called. The old trail as it passes up the slope on the eastern side, and so on through the gap, is still used for a wagon road today, but as it goes down the steeper western slope, it is gullied out by the rains into parallel ravines from five to fifteen feet deep. On the north side of the river, through an almost level pasture field the four or five parallel tracks were cut down into the hard, gravelly soil five or six inches, but all covered over with buffalo and gramma grass.

On both sides of the Platte river, and so on west along the whole course, clear through to Oregon and California, these trails were marked by the graves of those who had

dropped out by the way. Some of these graves were unmarked—some were marked by a slab or board only, with the name and age and date cut with a knife, or burned in with a hot iron; and at the head and foot of others a rough stone was placed without inscription. Very few, indeed, of these graves can be located today, although there are thousands of them. Perhaps the only one that is known in the eastern part of the state is in Jefferson county, five miles northwest of Fairbury; this has for a headstone a large sandstone slab, on which is chiseled the following: "George Winslow, Newton, Mass." And on the footstone, "1849." As one goes west where the soil is harder other graves can be found, but generally, the markings, if there were any have perished. About two miles east of the village of Scotts Bluff is a well preserved and well marked grave that was visited by the writer a few years ago and in which he took great interest because it was made probably only about a month after he had passed along the route driving four yoke of oxen. This grave was marked by a wagon tire which had been cut and the ends driven into the earth so as to form a bow over the head of the grave. On this was cut with a cold chisel, "Rebecca Winters—aged 50 years. Died Aug. 15, 1852." A short distance south of the grave were the deep indentations in the earth, still plainly visible made by the wheels of thousands of wagons more than fifty years ago. In the year 1902—the centennial year of the birth of Mrs. Winters, her grandchildren placed an enduring stone monument properly inscribed at the head of this grave, leaving also the wagon tire with the original inscription in place.

CHAPTER II.

Start from Home in Genesee County, Mich.—Journey on Foot to LaSalle, Ill.—Down the Illinois River to St. Louis—Up the Missouri to St. Joseph—Hire Out to Drive Team—Journey With Ox Team from St. Joseph to Sarpy's Landing.

This and seven following chapters will be mostly a record of the writer's personal experiences on a journey from central Michigan to Sarpy's Landing (now Bellevue, Neb.); and thence over the Overland Trail to the Pacific coast during the spring and summer of 1852. It is given for the purpose of making it clear and plain to the readers of the present time, how things looked in the western country at that early date, and how people traveled in those days, and what opinions about this country were held at that time. The reader will be able to make his own comparisons between things as they were then, and are now, and to draw his own conclusions. It is not expected that anything of very great importance will be recorded, there is nothing strange or wonderful to tell, but it is believed that the contrast between the past and the present will be wonderful to contemplate, and almost unbelievable, because of the changes that have taken place. In 1852 there was not a railroad west of the Mississippi river—Kansas City was a little village then called Westport—St. Paul and Minneapolis, if they existed at all, were mere "villages," and Omaha was not on the map. Western Iowa was a thinly settled frontier country, only partly surveyed, and was the extreme limit of civilization—it was the jumping off place on a journey to the west.

At the beginning of the year 1852, I was living near Flint, Genesee county, Mich., where I had lived since early boyhood—had never been anywhere else since I was a small child, and had no knowledge of any other place or country except from reading and from listening to the talk of others. At that time I was teaching a country school—the first I had ever taught, a four months' term, for twelve dollars per month, and "board round." My cousin, Wesley G. Conant, about three years my senior, but also my chum and companion, was working in a cooper shop, making flour and pork barrels. We got the Oregon fever, and determined to start, as soon as my school closed in the spring, on the overland journey to Oregon. About the middle of April, 1852, we were ready. Our outfit consisted of a pony, valued at $30.00, our clothing, a rifle apiece, two or three pairs of blankets, a little tent just big enough for two to sleep under, a pack saddle, a big pair of canvas saddle bags, each side holding about a bushel, and between us a hundred dollars in money. My cousin had saved up fifty-five dollars at his trade, and when my school was out I received a district order for my whole wages, for forty-eight dollars for the four months work. There was no money on hand in the district and I sold the order for forty-five dollars in cash.

Packing our clothing and a few small articles in the saddle bags, and placing this and all our other equipage on the back of the pony, we started for the Great West, on foot, leading the horse by the bridle. We were young, strong, well and happy. I would like to do it again.

Going in a southwest direction we passed through such towns as Ann Arbor, Coldwater, Burr Oak and Sturgis, Mich., Elkhart, South Bend and Michigan City, Ind., and Joliet and Ottawa, Ill., leaving Chicago about thirty miles to the north of our course, and arriving early in May at

La Salle, Ill., at the head of navigation on the Illinois river. Could our young people of Antelope county now make such a journey, just as it was then, I believe that what would strike them as the strangest of all things along the journey, would be the farms cut up into little fields of from five to ten acres each, and all fenced with the old fashioned zigzag rail fence. Not a town that we passed through on this trip from home to La Salle, Ill., was anything more than a fair sized village at that date, although some of them are large cities now.

At La Salle we took passage on a river steamer to St. Louis, where we purchased provisions for the trip, consisting principally of flour, parched corn meal, bacon and beans. Parched meal was used because ordinary corn meal would not keep well on such a trip. We also laid in a supply of powder and lead, and a quantity of matches. Tea and coffee we had no use for, and of sugar we took only a small supply. Peoria was the only city of any size we saw until we reached St. Louis. The city of St. Louis was a revelation to me. I had never been in a place half as large before. There were no railroads running into St. Louis then, but there was a wilderness of steam boats tied up to the quay, or coming in or going out, or receiving or discharging freight, the work being done by gangs of negro slaves. The streets along the river banks were paved with cobble stones, and the rattle of the wagons and trucks over these, the screeching of whistles and the hoarse coughing from the exhaust pipes of the steamboats, made a din and racket that was quite confusing to a green country boy from the backwoods of central Michigan.

The trip from home to St. Louis had been on the whole very pleasant. As stated we led our pony all the way to La Salle, Ill., and we also furnished our own provisions and did our own cooking, excepting that we bought our bread. I do not remember that we slept in a bed or

ate at a table during the whole time. We slept in a house or barn, nearly every night, paying for the privilege, whatever the charge might be which, if any, was always small. Sometimes when it was pleasant we slept in the little tent. There was a good deal of rainy weather and sometimes the roads were muddy, but generally we had a good time and at small cost. The trip down the Illinois by boat we thought very fine and enjoyed it much, as it was the first trip we had ever made on a river steamboat. The steamboat stopped at every town along the way to take on or discharge passengers or freight, and as we were going down stream, the boat always made a turn in landing so as to bring the bow of the boat up stream. This is always the way with a river steamboat, to land with the bow up stream.

At St. Louis we shipped on another and much larger steamboat for St. Joseph, Mo., which was to be our starting point for the journey by the Overland Trail. Our boat was heavily loaded with passengers, wagons, mules, horses, oxen and supplies, all bound for Oregon or California. Among the passengers were many women and children. The passengers were mostly from Illinois with also quite a sprinkling of emigrants from Missouri, Kentucky and Tennessee. Of course we took deck passage and fed ourselves, and we also had a bale of hay and some oats for the pony. Many of the emigrants had their wagons and supplies on board, but no stock of any kind, intending to buy oxen or mules on their arrival at St. Joseph.

It was a tedious journey up the Missouri river. Many times the boat ran aground and had to back off down stream and seek a different and deeper channel. Sometimes the boat would stick fast for two or three hours, and then spars had to be rigged as levers, and the force of the engine applied by means of ropes and pulleys to push it off the sand bar. At Westport, now Kansas City, a large number of passengers disembarked, and a great amount of

freight was unloaded. These emigrants that got off at Westport, whether going to Oregon or California, would take the trail that run northwest from Westport, and would strike Nebraska on the south line of what is now Jefferson county, and the Platte a little west of Grand Island.

At Westport while the boat was discharging freight a lot of the young men arranged a match to see who could jump the highest. The match was to be between the steerage and cabin passengers. Two older men were chosen to hold a string at a certain height, gauged by notches cut in a pole; this was gradually raised a notch higher each time until only my cousin Wesley was left to represent the steerage, and a nice looking young gentleman dressed in black for the cabin passengers. The string had been gradually raised to about five feet—both contestants stripped to their shirts, pants and socks. Our friend from the cabin made his jump and cleared the string, then Wesley did the same, both apparently clearing it with ease. Wesley, however, declared he had done his best, and was willing to call the contest a draw. The other said he believed he could do one notch better. He tried it, cleared the string and won the game, but his black pants were split behind from the suspenders down. Covering the exposed part of his person with both hands, he hurried to the cabin without waiting to listen to the plaudits of the audience.

A day or two later we arrived at St. Joseph where we unloaded our stuff, pitched our little tent and began to prepare for the trip across the plains. I had been sick for two or three days from what was supposed to be a bad cold, but on coming to the tent one day from a trip up town, my cousin found me nicely broken out with the measles. I kept close to the tent, was careful not to take cold and was soon all right again.

St. Joseph at that time was perhaps as large a place as Neligh is at the present time, but not nearly so compact-

ly built, and with much poorer buildings than Neligh now has. It was a lively place—there were hundreds of people camped near the town, some in tents and some in covered wagons, all preparing for their western journey. We knew that we could not pack supplies enough on our pony to last us more than half way to Oregon, and our intention was to hire out to drive teams for others. While I was sick with the measles my cousin found a man who wanted two men to drive his team, so that he might have time to hunt and fish and look out for camping places, or do anything else that suited him. He offered that if we would drive his team, and give him our pony, he would haul our stuff, put our provisions in with his, he and his wife doing the cooking, and that we should all eat together and work together as one family during the entire journey to Oregon. We accepted his offer, found them nice intelligent people and we got along well together. His name was Knapp, but his first name has been forgotten. I have heard that Knappton in Washington was named for him. His family consisted of his wife and a little girl about two years of age.

Mr. Knapp bought for the journey a yoke of oxen well broken and handy, and a yoke of three year old, and another of two year old steers and a yoke of cows. The steers and cows were tame but had never been yoked up and our first work was to break them in. This was not difficult for we both had been used to oxen all our lives but had never used horses to any extent.

Mr. Knapp decided to take the trail on the north side of the Platte river, believing there would be less travel on that side and therefore better grass for the stock. We therefore struck out to drive up along the east side of the Missouri river through northwestern Missouri and southwestern Iowa to Traders' Point opposite to where Bellevue, Neb., now stands, where we would cross the river to Sarpy's Trading post, and begin our western journey. We found

the country well settled and quite well improved until we crossed the Iowa line, when the settlements became new and thin and the improvements small. At Sidney, Iowa, as I remember it there was one house only, in which the Sidney post office was kept. At Glenwood there was a small collection of houses and another post office.

Rather an amusing thing occurred a day or so after leaving St. Joseph. As we went into camp at night, I found an old farmer camped about a quarter of a mile from us with a whole wagon load of smoked hams, shoulders, and bacon, on his way to St. Joseph to market. Reporting the fact to Mr. Knapp he directed me to buy from the old farmer a half dozen or so of hams, and handed me a little pasteboard box containing, I should say, from seventy-five to a hundred gold dollars. This was before the era of greenbacks or national currency. Our money consisted at that time principally of bills issued by state or private banks, much of which was at a discount, and most of it unsafe. There was however much gold and silver in circulation. Mr. Knapp had saved up expressly for this journey all the gold dollars he could get. Probably most of my readers have never seen a gold dollar—it is somewhat less in size and thinner than a dime. I wish they were in circulation now—it was the prettiest money I ever saw. I selected the hams, the farmer weighing them with his steelyards—we figured up the amount, and I counted out the sum in gold dollars, making the small change in silver. He looked at the money and said: "I 'low it mought be good all right, but I never seed sich money afore. I reckon I'll take my pay in bills." I had to go back and get paper money for him.

On arriving at Traders' Point I inquired for Council Bluffs post office and was directed to a little one story frame house about a mile away on the prairie. Here I got letters from home, the first we had received, and a good

drink of buttermilk and lots of good advice from the kind old Mormon lady who kept the post office.

What is now Council Bluffs was then called Kanesville, and Council Bluffs post office at that time was near Traders' Point. I thought the country passed over from St. Joseph to Traders' Point very fine, and after we crossed the Missouri river and passed on west this fine country continued until we crossed the Elkhorn and struck the Platte bottom, after which I did not like it so well. I will now say, however, after having had some experience, and having traveled extensively in twenty or more states, that I think the eastern third of Nebraska, and the western third of Iowa, the very finest and best farming country I have ever seen anywhere, of equal extent.

CHAPTER III.

Crossing the Missouri—Camp where Bellevue now stands—Gather wild strawberries May 28, 1852—Start west on the journey from the Missouri May 29, 1852—Join Capt. Wells' train—Cross the Elkhorn River.

There were not many emigrants camped at Traders' Point on our arrival there, but they were coming from the east every day in covered wagons chiefly from Illinois and eastern Iowa, but some also from Indiana and Wisconsin. There had been a large number of emigrants at this point a few days before our arrival, awaiting their turn to be ferried across the river, but a river steamboat that had been used as a ferry boat had transferred the last of these just a day or so before we came. This steamboat had now gone down the river, leaving only two or three flat boats to do the ferrying. These flat boats could carry only one wagon and the team attached at a time, and it was slow work. We drove the wagon on to the boat with only one yoke of oxen attached, leading the other three yoke aboard and tying them to the wagon wheels. The boat was carried over the river mostly by the force of the current, which set across obliquely from the loading place to the landing on the opposite shore, but was also propelled and guided by two men with setting poles, and by a man with a large oar that worked on a pivot at the stern. The current was very swift and the boat was carried down stream at least a quarter of a mile before landing. On the return trip the boat was cordelled, that is, drawn by a rope and pushed by setting poles, up along the bank of the river, half or three quarters of a mile to a place where the current set across to the eastern shore. It must have taken nearly two hours to transfer one load and make the return to the

eastern bank. It was almost night when we got across, and driving out a short distance west of Sarpy's trading post we camped for the night within the limits of the present village of Bellevue, Sarpy county, Nebraska.

Sarpy's post, at that time consisted, as I remember it, of the store buildings of Peter A. Sarpy, a blacksmith shop for the Indians, a mission school, a government Indian Agency, and three or four dwellings. There were no settlers in Nebraska, then, nor for two years thereafter. The first real settlers—farmers who came to make this their home—to raise crops and to improve and develop the country, did not begin to arrive until the summer and fall of 1854. There were military and trading posts within the present boundaries of the state—there were traders, hunters and two or three missionaries among some of the Indian tribes, and although tens of thousands of emigrants to the territories further west had crossed the fertile plains of Nebraska seeking for homes, none of them tarried here. The country was not open to settlement, the title of the Indians to the land was not extinguished until the summer of 1854.

It is sometimes claimed that Manuel de Lisa was the first settler in Nebraska. He was a fur trader and not a settler in the true meaning of the word. He established probably the first trading post in Nebraska, about the year 1807, at or near the present site of Ft. Calhoun, Washington county, and spent most of his time here, but he also had trading posts in Dakota and in Montana—his headquarters were in St. Louis, where he died in 1820. He could not with propriety be called a settler.

After camping, I was sent out to watch the cattle while they pastured upon the grass. There were three or four other emigrant wagons with us, and as we had agreed to keep together, and travel in company a few days at least,

our cattle were all turned out together, to be herded until about nine o'clock, when they were driven in and tied to the wagons during the night, to be turned loose again as soon as daylight appeared in the east. While herding the cattle I found ripe wild strawberries, not in great abundance, as they were just beginning to ripen, but enough to remind me of home, as the strawberry plants were about the only kind of vegetation that had a familiar look—everything else being new, strange and unfamiliar. I had come from a thickly timbered country, and this was my first view of a new, wild, prairie land. Everything looked strange to me. The oak, elm and ash trees had somewhat of a familiar look, but they were different—they were not nearly so tall, were more bushy and spreading and altogether of a different appearance from the same varieties back home. Among the grasses and wild flowers of the prairie, and the weeds growing in the ravines, there was not one that had a familiar look excepting the wild strawberries. Years afterward, when I had become a resident of Nebraska and had familiarized myself with the trees, shrubs, grasses and other wild plants of the state, I found many that are identical with the same varieties of my home state, but I did not recognize any of them then.

The next morning, May 29th, 1852, we started on our journey by way of the Overland Trail, bound for Oregon City, Oregon. The road was a splendid one—a hard, well beaten track, showing much travel, and meandering to the northwest over a beautiful gently rolling prairie country, thickly covered with new fresh grass five or six inches high and dotted with little plats of blue and yellow spring flowers. The road held to the divide between the little timbered creeks and ravines running east toward the Missouri and the branches bearing south or southwest that were tributary to the Papillion. As our road followed the high land the view was extensive and enchanting. Grander and sublimer

scenery can be found among the mountains of Colorado, or Montana, or along the ocean coast of Oregon or Washington, but for exquisite beauty and loveliness, no scenery can excel or equal that of a fertile rolling prairie in springtime, just as God made it, with its green hills, its sloping valleys, its little meandering timber-bordered streams, and its plats of blue, purple and yellow flowers. And so it was here in Antelope county when I first saw it in 1869. I would like to live in such a place, with such surroundings, forever—but the White Man has come with his plow, his railroad, his telephone, his automobile and other discomforts of civilization and spoiled it. I do not blame the White Man—it is his way and I helped to do the spoiling myself. But I look back with a tinge of sorrow and of regret, and of longing to once more see what I never can behold again; a fertile prairie land in all its pristine loveliness, just as it came from the hand of its Creator. These things are all of the past and can never be again, and like Alexander the Great, I weep that it is so and that there are no more lands to conquer.

That night we camped on a little branch of the Papillion, where there was a fine grove of elm timber, some of the trees being very large. The grass and water were both abundant and good, and it was an ideal camping ground, excepting that there was no dry wood, the previous campers having used all that was in sight. The next morning it was raining, and it continued to rain all day and grew very cold for the season of the year. It was difficult to keep a fire with the green elm, but by piling on a large quantity of the green fuel, and finding some dry branches by going a long way for them, we finally got and kept up a good fire. Toward evening the rain ceased and Mr. Knapp went out with the rifle and shot the heads off of four or five wild pigeons. These were not the mourning or turtle dove, such as we have here now, but were the genuine pas-

senger pigeon, now an extinct variety, but which were more abundant sixty years ago than blackbirds are today, and which were often seen in larger flocks than any flocks of blackbirds of the present time. That night two Indians armed with bows and arrows, and accompanied by a little Indian boy about twelve years old came to the camp and asked permission to sleep by our fire. This was granted and at bed time they curled up in their buffalo robes, and kept quiet until after the morning fire was started. They were clothed with a band around the middle, with an apron or flap suspended before and behind extending about half way to the knees. Each adult Indian also had a good buffalo robe thrown over the shoulders and moccasins on his feet. The boy had nothing on except a short cotton shirt. We had Johnny cake for breakfast next morning and Mrs. Knapp gave the Indians a quantity of the dough, which they cooked in the ashes, covering it with coals. The little Indian found the place where I had cleaned the pigeons, and taking the entrails, stripped them through his fingers so as to press out what was on the inside, and then broiled them with the gizzards, heads and feet, upon the coals. These with the hot roasted Johnny cake were eaten with evident relish.

Leaving the camp on the little Papillion, we passed over the divide and down the western slope to the Elkhorn river. Here there was a rope ferry, the rope being attached to a tree on either side of the river, and to this two short ropes with pulleys, these shorter ropes being connected with the ferry boat or scow, which was carried across the river by the force of the current.

The country now became very flat and moist, as we had entered upon the great Platte valley, which we were to follow in an almost directly west course for more than six hundred miles. The road was wet and heavy until after

crossing the Rawhide, a short distance east of the present site of Fremont, when it became better again.

There was a large village of Pawnee Indians at that time just across on the south side of the Platte, and some of them were with us nearly all the time; they were friendly and gave no trouble whatever, but we did not feel safe and determined to unite with a larger company at the first opportunity. That opportunity came very soon. We met with a company of emigrants from Illinois, consisting of about seventeen wagons, who were on their way to California. They had crossed the river, as I recollect it, at Kanesville, now Council Bluffs, and had encamped exactly where Omaha now stands. They were fully organized, having a captain, a lieutenant, and an orderly and had adopted rules and regulations for the journey. It was known as Capt. Wells' train. We applied for permission to join the company, which was readily granted on our agreeing to conform to the rules and regulations. The company consisted of twenty-one wagons, I think, after we had joined, forty-two men, and about a dozen or fifteen women, and probably twenty or more children. The men were all armed, generally with rifles, but some had single or double barreled shotguns, and quite a good many carried revolvers, or single barreled pistols. We were well armed and equipped, as these things were considered then, but all the fire arms were muzzle loaders, as breech loading guns had not come into use at that time.

The captain selected the camping places, or sent his lieutenant or orderly on ahead for that purpose. The stock was turned loose to feed as soon as camp was made and a temporary guard placed over it. As soon as supper was over guards were mounted for the night, two to guard the wagons which were placed in a circle with the tents inside, and two to guard the cattle which were allowed to run loose all night, but were not permitted to stray away. About

nine o'clock the horses were brought inside the circle and secured to the wagons. There were very few horses in the outfit, the teams for the heavy wagons all being oxen. The guards were changed at one o'clock, and at daylight all hands were routed out by the wagon watch, breakfast prepared and served, and by a little after sunrise the train was on the move. At noon a stop was made of from one to two hours, but the cattle were not generally unyoked. Camp was made at night according to the distance to a good camping place—sometimes as early as four o'clock and sometimes as late as seven. The company was well organized and the discipline was good. There was no Sunday travel, that I recollect, on the first part of the journey. On Sunday the oxen were allowed to feed and rest, and generally it was washing day in camp.

CHAPTER IV.

Halted by a Band of Pawnees at Shell Creek—Pay Toll for crossing the creek—Cross Loup Fork near the present site of Genoa.

The object of writing this personal narrative with some minuteness of detail, is to place before the readers as clear a view as may be, of conditions in the country of the plains as they appeared to the writer in the year 1852, or two years before there were any white people living in Nebraska, excepting those doing either military or missionary duty or engaged in trade with the Indians or employed by the traders as hunters and trappers. In the year 1852 Nebraska was Indian country, with no white people excepting those just mentioned. The changes that have taken place since that time are astounding. It is doubtful if any of the thousands who passed along up the valley of the Platte, by way of the Overland Trail, in the year 1852 had the very faintest thought or conception of what was to follow in so short a time—the transforming of a wilderness filled with herds of buffalo and bands of roving tribes of Indians as wild as the game they pursued and upon which they subsisted; into a magnificent farming country—the best may be in the world; criss-crossed with railroads, dotted with thirving and growing cities and villages, covered with contented and prosperous communities of people, who are growing rich upon the products of a soil that had time and again been pronounced and denounced as desert. I am not expressing merely my own thoughts which I held at that time as to this country and its future, but the thoughts and opinions of others as far as I heard them expressed. If there was a man in our company of forty-two men, or if among the thousands who in 1852 passed over the 2,800

miles from the Missouri river to the Willamette valley of Oregon, who thought the country west of the crossing of the Elkhorn amounted to anything or would ever amount to anything as a farming country, I do not remember of his speaking of it in my presence. The prevailing, probably the unanimous opinion was, that the country to the Elkhorn crossing was beautiful, rich and fine. West of that it had grass, would produce pasture and hay for stock, and might some day be used for that purpose, but not in the near future. The thought was that there were better places—far better, than the flat, treeless, uninviting valley of the Platte, with its shallow, muddy river, its swarms of mosquitoes and green head flies, its stretches of wet, swampy ground, its prairie dog towns and its rattlesnakes. I found out afterward, but did not know it then, that prairie dogs never locate where the soil is poor, and that rattlesnakes always abound where there are prairie dogs, for the young of the prairie dogs make excellent food for the rattlesnakes.

Just seventeen years and three days after we crossed the Elkhorn, June 1, 1852, I located my homestead on Cedar Creek, one hundred and twenty miles above the Elkhorn crossing, in what afterwards became Antelope county —I am not dreaming—it is so.

Had we left the valley of the Platte and taken time to examine the low, undulating rolls and valleys that make up the highlands between the Platte valley and Maple creek, to the north of Fremont or had we looked over the valley of Shell creek north of Columbus, or followed up the valley of the Beaver from where Genoa now stands, we would have beheld a lovely and rich country, than which there is no better in Nebraska, or anywhere else. But we did not do this; we were cautioned not to leave the trail, to keep together, and not to go far from the wagons, and besides there was no time for investigation. The Indians were thought to be dangerous—some of them were in sight

from the wagons most of the time—there were only two or three riding horses in the outfit, and one could not go far away on foot and rejoin the train by camping time even though it were safe. So we passed through the country—that is, for the first two hundred miles—without seeing it, and formed our opinions of the country from what we saw of the Platte valley, which did not produce, on the whole, a favorable impression. From reading books of travel and exploration, and from talking with others, we had gotten unfavorable opinions of the country and we held to them. The mosquitos and green head flies did not bother us much at first, as it was too early in the season, but they got bad later on wherever there was wet land with tall grass. Later in the season the buffalo gnats became troublesome. These buffalo gnats were very bad also here in Antelope county for several years after its first settlement, but they have probably entirely disappeared. I think they are never found in a thickly settled farming country. They attack the eyes, ears and nose, and will fly right into one's mouth if he opens it. They are especially bad about attacking horses on the breast and under the lower jaw. The mosquitos left us entirely after we entered the dry, rolling country approaching the mountains.

As we neared the crossing of Shell creek, close to where Schuyler now stands, Mr. Knapp, who had been riding ahead, came back and reported that there was a large number of Indians at Shell creek crossing. Orders were given by Capt. Wells to halt the train, and all the men were commanded to get their arms ready for instant use. The women and children, many of whom had been walking, were ordered into the wagons, which command was really not necessary, for they were very willing to get under cover, and the train was commanded to move in close order with guards on either side. We were in the Pawnee country, and the Pawnees at that time did not have a good reputa-

tion. I do not now think there was a particle of danger, but we were looking for it then and to some extent at least, expecting it. My cousin and I were both with our team which was very near the head of the procession. As we came to Shell creek bridge we found a large force of Indians, mostly on horseback, and all armed, and most if not all painted. They had bows and arrows in their hands and quivers, filled with arrows, hung over their shoulders; some few of them also had guns. It looked warlike the way they were armed, but they appeared friendly. As I came up one of the Indians was trying to talk with Mr. Knapp, who with Capt. Wells and three or four of the guards was a little in advance of the teams. The Indian addressed himself to Mr. Knapp, thinking him to be our captain, probably because he was on horseback, the others of us all being on foot. The Indian handed Mr. Knapp a paper, which, instead of reading himself he passed directly to me. It was written in a very plain, nice hand and stated that the bearer, giving his name which I have forgotten, was the head chief of the Pawnees and that it would be to the interest of the emigrants to treat him with consideration and respect. After reading it aloud to those present, I was asked by Mr. Knapp to try and see if I could make out what he wanted. I had lived for several years within a mile of about a dozen families of Chippewa Indians, had played with and gone to school with the children, and could speak Chippewa fairly well, and also knew something of the sign language. My knowledge of Chippewa did no good, but by signs we managed to come to an understanding. The chief claimed that the Pawnees had built the bridge over the creek, and wanted pay for crossing—he made signs of planting corn, and wanted his pay in corn. There was doubt expressed about the Indians having built the bridge, although I believe personally that the chief told the truth about it. However it was decided to pay toll in corn. Accordingly the

Indians placed a skin on the ground, and three or four bushels of shelled corn were brought from the wagons and piled upon the skin. The chief said in English, "Heap Squaw" meaning there were plenty of squaws to do the planting, and made signs for more corn. The pile was increased to five or six bushels, which seemed to satisfy him, and opening up the ranks of his warriors he allowed us to proceed, after shaking hands with Knapp and myself, and repeating two or three times "Heap good man," "Heap good man." These two phrases "Heap Squaw" and "Heap good man," probably comprised all his knowledge of English—at least it was all he made use of during the interview. The chief did not shake hands at parting with any except Mr. Knapp and myself, probably supposing that Knapp was in command because he was on horseback, and that I was his lieutenant, because Knapp handed me the note to read. I never knew why Mr. Knapp passed the note to me, but I always suspected he was just enough scared to be a little beside himself. I made no attempt to count the Indians or estimate their numbers, but some who did, said there were about three hundred—probably one hundred would be more nearly correct. A bad mistake was made by Capt. Wells in permitting the teams to remain in line in charge of the drivers, provided he thought the Indians meant to be hostile. The wagons should have been parked, and preparations made for defense, and only two or three should have gone out to meet the Indians. It was the only time on the whole trip that we were stopped by Indians, or that there was the least appearance of hostility, and the only signs of hostility this time were that the Indians were fully armed, there were no squaws with them, and they blocked the road to the bridge. The bridge was made of willow poles placed across the creek for stringers, covered with smaller willow poles, brush and sods. It was a slimsy affair, and teetered

up and down when we crossed it like a teeter board, but it carried us safely over.

Leaving Shell creek we passed on up the valley, going directly through the place where Columbus now stands, and following on up the north side of Loup Fork near to the present site of Genoa. We camped over night on the north bank of the Loup, and began to make preparations to ford the stream the next day. The Loup, like the Platte, is a bad stream to ford, the bottom being all quick sand, and the current rapid. There were two or three men sent afoot across and back in different places to ascertain the depth and to find the best place to ford. It seemed about all alike everywhere. The bottom was all sand, the water shallow, being from a few inches to about a foot, excepting in the main channel where for fifteen or twenty feet the water was from two to three feet deep, but there the bottom was better. There was considerable timber along the river here, and cottonwood poles seven or eight inches thick were cut and placed lengthwise under the wagon boxes so as to raise them above where the water would come. From eight to ten yoke of oxen were hitched to each wagon with two drivers for each team . The crossing was made without difficulty, but it took the most of the day. I helped to take eight wagons across and in doing it waded the river fifteen times. Toward the middle of the afternoon a strong wind came up from the northwest and it turned very cold for that time of year, just as Nebraska weather has not forgotten to do in early summer, even of recent years. It was a chilly, disagreeable camp; although there was plenty of timber, it consisted almost entirely of green cottonwood, the dry wood having been used up by previous campers.

CHAPTER V.

From Loup Fork to Wood River—Buffalo Chips—Lone Tree—The first Buffalo hunt—Flagging Antelope.

After crossing Loup Fork, we went on, the next morning, in a southwest direction, over a low, sandy divide, again striking the Platte valley at or near the present town of Clarks, in Merrick county, crossing on the way Prairie creek, which is a small sluggish stream abounding in sloughs and wet land. This creek, unlike most of the streams tributary to the Platte, does not take its rise in the hills but drains the great flat country north of Clarks, Central City, and Chapman, in Merrick county, and north of Grand Island, in Hall county. Here the Platte bottom is very wide, so that the hills on the north side could not be seen often, if at all from the trail, but south across the Platte river they were in plain view. Wood for camp fires now became very scarce—in fact there was none, excepting little willows not larger than one's finger, and even these were not plentiful. We therefore had to depend on the bois de vache (literally wood of cow), as it was called by the Canadian hunters and trappers but which in plain blunt English was translated buffalo chips. This material had been dropped by the millions on millions of buffalo that ranged all over our Nebraska prairies at that date and when cured by lying in the sun and wind for a year or two, and when perfectly dry, made a passably good fire. It did not burn like dry willow or ash brush, with a quick, bright blaze, but slowly and almost without flame, like sawdust or wood so rotten and decayed as to fall all to pieces. It produced considerable heat and did very well for cooking, but made a poor campfire to sit by in the evening. It had to be perfectly dry to burn at all, and it was amusing whenever there were signs

of an approaching shower to see the men strike out from the wagons, each one provided with a sack to gather up a supply of dry buffalo chips for use at the next camp. It was not necessary to carry a supply along in dry weather, because it was found in incredible quantities everywhere on the prairie. The emigration this year, 1852, was very large, and in fact it had been quite large every year since 1843, so that at camping places where there was timber, all the dry wood had been used up, but no impression whatever had been made on the buffalo chips, except in the immediate vicinity of favorite camping grounds, and even there it was plentiful within a quarter of a mile of the camp. When it is called to mind that this was the condition everywhere on the Nebraska prairies in the vicinity of living water where the buffalo came to drink, one may form a faint idea of the incredible numbers of these wild native cattle that once roamed all over the land that we have now appropriated to ourselves, pasturing and growing fat upon the wild grasses that grew and flourished in a land that had been named a desert, and of which Washington Irving, in his Astoria, among many other dreadful things, has this to say: "It spreads forth into undulating and treeless plains and desolate and sandy wastes, wearisome to the eye from their extent and monotony, and which are supposed by geologists to have formed the ancient floor of the ocean, countless ages since when its primeval waves beat against the granite bases of the Rocky mountains. It is a land where no man permanently abides; for in certain seasons of the year there is no food for the hunter or his steed. The herbage is parched and withered; the brooks and streams are dried up; the buffalo, the elk, and the deer have wandered to distant parts keeping within the verge of expiring verdure and leaving behind them a vast uninhabited solitude, seamed by ravines, the beds of former torrents, but now serving only to tantalize and increase the thirst of the

traveler." Page on page could be quoted from authors, many of them prominent, similar to the quotation given above. Even Horace Greeley, as observant and practical a man as he was, speaking of his trip to Colorado by stage after gold had been discovered at Pikes Peak, in articles prepared by himself and published in the New York Tribune, said substantially as follows: "This country will not or cannot be used for farming until nature by its slow process has pulverized the soil, and dissolved it into finer particles, so that it can sustain and support plant growth." This is not his language exactly, for that has been forgotten, but it is exactly the thought as I read it myself in the Tribune; and yet Horace Greeley as he passed over the route could see with his own eyes the rich buffalo, gramma and other grasses, the dried excrement dropped, and the trails made by the millions of these wild cattle of the plains. How could a country be thought to be a desert, when at that very time it was pasturing wild cattle that greatly exceeded in number all the tame cattle of the United States? I want to make all these things plain to our young people of Antelope county today—I want them to see and know just how things were, and just how they were regarded, and that is the excuse, if excuse is needed, for dwelling upon these things. But besides the buffalo, there were millions of elk, deer and antelope all feeding upon the grasses of our prairies; but this will be taken up in subsequent articles.

There was in our company a guide book, which described the route, telling of the best camping places where wood and water could be found, and giving the distances from one noted point to another. This guide book claimed that the route had been measured by an odometer, an instrument attached to a wagon wheel and so constructed as to record the revolutions of the wheel. Hence by multiplying the number of revolutions by the measurement around the circumference of the wheel ,the distance traveled could

easily be obtained. It was from this guide book that we ascertained that it was 2800 miles from the crossing of the Missouri river to Oregon City, Oregon. This guide book mentioned among other noted objects along the route Lone Tree. This tree was a single large cottonwood very near Central City, Merrick county. It was a prominent land mark, standing alone, between the trail and the river Platte, and was the only tree in sight for many miles. At that time it was apparently partly decayed, although I did not leave the trail to examine it. Central City was at first called Lone Tree, and it seems to me a mistake that the name was changed. Lone Tree has a definite meaning, and a history, and the name should have been perpetuated. The tree has lived its day, done its allotted task and gone to decay. Where it stood a monument has recently been erected to commemorate the fact that for many years it was a beacon marking the way westward, to the pioneers who were making the toilsome journey overland to people the countries of the Pacific coast.

Soon after passing the place where Grand Island now is, we began to see the caravans of white topped wagons that were following the trail on the south side of the river, but could hold no communication with them, for the wide stream always flowed between us and them and generally there was a mile or so of intervening land, for the road very seldom followed along the immediate bank of the river. We also met from time to time people returning from California, Oregon or Utah, to the states, and once or twice we met companies of returning trappers. All these people were traveling on horseback, carrying their effects on pack horses. I do not think we met a wagon at all. These all told us that we would probably see no more Indians until we neared Ft. Laramie where there would be plenty of Sioux—that we need have no fears of the Indians attacking us, or doing us any harm whatever unless to steal our

horses, which they would do if they got a chance—that the Indians did not want our cattle and had no use for them—that there were plenty of buffalo which were fatter and better than the cattle, and which the Indians preferred. We were cautioned not to let the horses straggle away from camp, and to secure them at night. We were told to use always the water of the Platte river or of some pure running stream, and never to drink the water from shallow wells. It is proper to explain that we had often found wells that had been dug where the ground was low, whenever the road was far from the river. These wells were from four to six or eight feet deep, and contained a foot or two of water. We had not often used any of this well water because our guide books had cautioned against it.

About this time there was a change made in the plan of camping. The wagons were still drawn up in the form of a circle on forming camp for the night, and at about nine o'clock the few horses belonging to the train were either brought inside and secured, or tethered with picket ropes near by outside of the circle of the wagons, but no guard was placed over the camp. The cattle were driven quite a distance from the camp to some place where the grass was good and watched by the guards until they quit feeding and began to lie down, when the guards too lay down with the cattle and went to sleep. The cattle guard from this time on was not changed during the night but remained with the cattle all night, bringing them in soon after sunrise. By the time the guards came with the cattle breakfast was over ,and while the men were yoking up the oxen and preparing to break camp, the guards ate their breakfast which had been kept warm for them. The people of our train were having a pretty good time. There had been no sickness nor accidents, there was no prospect of any trouble with the Indians, and the fear of them had about all subsided, the weather was nearly always pleas-

ant, there not having been any rain except light showers since our camp at the Little Papillion the first day out from Sarpy's Landing, and excepting a few wet swaly spots, and a few miles of sand between the Loup crossing and the Platte, the road had been excellent. Discipline, therefore, was very properly relaxed, and the men whose duties did not keep them with or near the train were permitted to ramble wherever or whenever they pleased. Game was not yet plentiful—no buffalo had been seen nor heard of, and the men whom we had met coming from the west reported that there would probably no buffalo be seen until after passing Ft. Laramie. There were antelope in sight every day, but they were wild and we did not get any of them—there were prairie chickens, and jack rabbits but not yet for us. The only thing we could find to vary the bill of fare from biscuit, pancakes, corn bread, beans, rice and bacon or ham, was wild onions; these were plentiful and we gathered them as often as needed. Not many miles west of where Grand Island now is the trail struck Wood river, which is a beautiful stream about half as large as the Elkhorn, but without any of the low, sandy bottoms or flats that prevail along the Elkhorn river. The country now looked very fine along Wood river and pleased us all nearly as well as did the country east of the Elkhorn crossing. My cousin and I took turns in driving, each having a day on and a day off. We must have been at this time near the east line of Buffalo county in the vicinity of the present village of Shelton. I had not as yet left the trail to go any distance away and had been just spoiling for a week or two for something exciting. As the trail would follow along up Wood river on the north side for some distance before crossing, a young man about my age and who felt just about as I did, got permission with me to go on a hunt to the north of the trail, and to turn west and meet the train some time in the afternoon or at any rate not later than

camping time in the evening. After having been admonished over and over again, not to lose sight of the train, to be careful and not get lost or run into danger, and not to be out after dark, we started northwest, and for three or four miles could see not only our own train but two or three others also; crawling along at a snail's gait by the side of Wood river which could be traced by its line of bushes and small trees. The prairie over which we traveled was fine, thickly covered with grass just high enough to wave nicely in the wind, prominent among which was the wild blue stem, although I did not then know the names of any of the wild prairie grasses; and there were also the spider lillies in great abundance, and other wild spring flowers common to our Nebraska prairies. The day was fine and I was happy. There were antelope in sight nearly all the time, but they were shy and cunning, and knew just how near to approach, and just when to raise the long white hairs on the rump, which they do when alarmed, and bound away as if they had steel springs in their feet. We had heard about flagging antelope, and we tried it. We tied a red handkerchief on a ram rod, and lay flat down raising and waving the flag, and tried it over and over again—the antelope would come up within about forty rods, stop and gaze, run off, circle around and come up on the other side, then bound away again. It was of no use—there was no chance to get antelope steak for supper. We gave it up. Just north of us a short distance was a little gentle swell in the prairie—we reached the top, looked over to a little valley through which meandered a prairie brook, lined here and there with a few large handsome elm trees, and there, feeding not more than a half mile away were two buffalo. We were surprised, not to say astonished, for we had been told that there were no buffalo anywhere near the trail at that point or at that season of the year. We were now almost sure of buffalo steak for breakfast next morning. It

was easy to approach them for the wind was favorable and there were trees for shelter, and not far from the place where the buffalo were feeding was a large elm log for cover. After winding about to keep behind the cover of the trees, we finally crawled on hands and knees to the elm log, made ready, counted three and fired, both shots falling short. We were not used to estimating distance on the prairie, and our rifles were of light caliber. The buffalo looked up in a wondering, surprised sort of way gazing at the smoke of our rifles, sniffed the air, and then started off in a heavy, lumbering sort of gallop, and before we could reload were over the next rise of ground out of sight. We did not have buffalo steak for breakfast, but we did have a good time and a good appetite for supper. However, some time after we had buffalo meat in plenty, but this will be told later on.

Note—Surprise has often been expressed at the scarcity of game along the entire route of the Trail. This scarcity is easily explained. There was abundance of game at no great distance, but it was frightened away from the immediate vicinity of the route, by the sight and scent of the constant stream of wagons, people and stock traversing the road.

CHAPTER VI.

The journey up the Platte Valley—Hunting Mountain Sheep —Talk With a Sioux Indian—The Buffalo Hunt.

As the trail passed on up the Platte valley to the west, the country began to change in appearance—the valley became gradually narrower, and the hills bounding it on either side became high, rough and bluffy in form—the elevation was greater, the air rarer and drier, and there were no rains excepting brief showers which were generally accompanied with a good deal of thunder and lightning. The scenery grew more and more interesting as the western part of the state was reached, and Court House Rock, Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluff came one after the other into view.

Grass became less abundant as the train progressed toward the west, although there was always plenty of it found by going some distance away from the camping grounds. Camp was always made where there was water, and if possible where there was wood also. If there was no wood there was always the substitute mentioned in a previous chapter. At one time when we had toiled along all day up hill and down, for we had left the level valley of the Platte—the country being quite hilly, rough and broken, but the road though hilly was not bad, but was hard and smooth almost as a rock—it had clouded up, and showed signs of a storm as we made camp. Mr. Knapp had gone on ahead with the pony and selected a good camping place, and about a mile from camp had found good pasture for the oxen, for it was all eaten off near the camping ground. It was my turn to go out with the cattle and stay with them all night, and Jolly was to be my companion on guard. Jolly was an Englishman, and a very good fellow, but he had some ways and traits that were not agreeable. His name

was Jolly, but that was not his nature—he always had a grouch. Mr. Knapp and another man drove the herd out to the pasture ground as soon as the oxen were unyoked, while Jolly and I remained to eat supper before going. We reached the cattle just as it was getting dark and had some trouble in keeping them from wandering off, as there was a strong, cold wind from the west and the weather was becoming disagreeable. A big black cloud was coming up and there were sharp flashes of lighting with heavy thunder, and a little rain. Although it rained scarcely enough to wet us, what little rain there was felt as cold as ice. Finally the cattle became partly quieted down and Jolly undertook to build a fire, the very thing which he could not do. I tried to get him to let me do it, but he said "No! You watch the dom cattle. I'll build the fire." Finally he gave up after using most of his matches and called for me to try my hand at it. That was one thing I could always do, to build a fire under almost any circumstances when camping out. I got some large sage brush, of which there was plenty, whittled off a good lot of dry shavings, got Jolly to get down on his knees and spread out his overcoat as a wind shield, and used one match only. The next morning was bright and cold, and the Rocky mountains, streaked with broad white patches of snow were in plain sight for the first time, sixty miles away to the west. No wonder it was a cold rain—it came right down from the snowy mountains.

We saw no Indians after leaving Loup Fork until within about a day's drive of Ft. Laramie, Wyoming. I was out hunting one day when we were about twenty miles or so east of Ft. Laramie, trying to get a shot at some mountain sheep. The hills were high and very steep and rough; I had come in sight of the game several times, but always they had gone to the top of some high, steep bluff, from the summit of which they would stand on the edge of a

steep precipice and gaze down at me. Finally I determined to climb the bluff on which there was a flock of six or eight, and try and outwit them and get a shot. Going away off some distance to the west among the low rolls at the foot of the bluff, and keeping out of sight as I supposed, I approached the hills again from another side where it was not so steep, and carefully climbing up probably eight or nine hundred feet, reached the summit after a good deal of hard work, to find that the game had gone down on the other side, crossed a deep, rough valley and now stood gazing at me from the top of another bluff of equal height, about a quarter of a mile away. Making up my mind that I was not a mountain sheep hunter—a thing I ought to have known before—I gave it up and started for camp. Just as I got to the foot of the bluff I saw an Indian at some distance away who had no doubt been watching my performances and laughing to himself about them, and who beckoned me to wait. I sat down on a rock until he came up. He was armed with a very poor kind of light, single shot gun, called a fusee. We shook hands and sat down to talk and get acquainted. He told me he was a Sioux—that there were lots of Sioux near by, pointing to the west and northwest, and making signs that they were in camp with their families and teepees. The only word spoken that I could understand was Sioux, but he made his talk plain by signs. We had quite a long friendly chat together, and as he said he was out of powder, I gave him on parting several charges of powder and some bullets, and we shook hands and parted good friends. On reaching camp I found my friends very uneasy for my safety, as there had been several mounted Indians at the camp, and others were seen at a distance. We camped a day on the north side of the river about a mile from the fort. The Indians were all on the opposite side of the river but many of them came over, bringing buffalo robes, dressed deer skins and moccasins to trade.

My cousin and I both traded for moccasions, and it was lucky we did as our shoes would not have lasted through to the end of the journey.

If you will examine a map of Wyoming, you will find that a few miles west of Casper the Platte river makes a big bend, coming at that point almost from the south, and then turning abruptly to the east. Just as this elbow of the river we camped for several days to hunt buffalo and to cure the meat. Game had been scarce and wild all the way so far. There were plenty of antelope, but that was the only kind of large game excepting that there were mountain sheep after we reached the rough country, but we got no sheep, and very few antelope. Occasionally we caught a catfish in the Platte, and also got a very few ducks, chickens and rabbits. At this elbow of the Platte there were some very high hills, their steep shelving sides streaked with red. These were called the Red Buttes. Just at the foot of these buttes there were some very large, cold springs—there was also plenty of good, cold water in the Platte, which had now lost its muddy character and quick sand bottom, and instead had clear water and a rock bottom. We heard from other campers who had been hunting and curing meat, that buffalo were plenty just across the river only a few miles from the camp. Next morning all the men who could be spared and who wanted to go, started on a buffalo hunt. Only a few had horses, nearly all going on foot. I went alone from choice, and it is only what happened to myself and Jolly, whom I came across later in the day, that can here be related. I first went about a mile up the river along the foot of Red Bluffs, stopping to examine several big springs one of which, icy cold, flowed right out from under the largest one of the Red Buttes, in a stream half as large as Cedar creek at the crossing north of Oakdale. Taking off all my clothing, packing it up in a bundle and tying it on my shoulders, I waded the river, holding my

gun and powder horn above my head. The water was swift, cold and almost up to my arms in one place, and the stony bottom being rough and slippery, I came near being taken off my feet, but made the crossing all right, put on my clothing and walked to a hill about a mile away, from the top of which I expected to see buffalo, but none were in sight. Turning back I recrossed the river and climbed the highest of the Red Buttes, from the top of which I thought I could see a good many black specks away to the southeast but if buffalo, which was probable, they were too far away for me to hunt on foot. Nearby, however, to the west, and probably not more than a mile from the hill on which I stood were two buffalo quietly feeding, and close by right at the foot of the hill was Jolly. I hurried down, met Jolly and told him what I had seen. We went after the two buffalo, being very careful to keep out of sight, and coming up to them so that the wind was in our favor, we easily got up within seventy-five steps of them. Remembering my ill success at Wood river, where we saw the first buffalo, we meant to make sure of these. We both agreed to shoot at the buffalo nearest, which was a big fellow standing broad side, and apparently unsuspicious of danger. At the count of three we both fired, one of the bullets breaking the fore leg above the knee. Our guns were too light for such game, and had not the fore leg been broken, doubtless he would have carried away the lead from both shots, and we would have lost him. He could scarcely run at all, he was so bulky and heavy, and after following the other a short distance he turned aside, and lay down in a small, steep ravine. As soon as we could reload I started on the run after the wounded buffalo but Jolly called out "Hold on, young man, hold on, something has happened to my gun." But the young man did not hold on—he kept right on after the game, which was soon overtaken. The wounded buffalo was lying in the bottom of a dry creek under a

cut bank that was probably eight feet high, and taking in the surroundings at a glance, I came up right over him on top of the cut bank. He gave a snort and a deep, hoarse bellow and getting on to his three feet began to hook the cut bank, throwing the clay all over his back. I knew he could not get at me without going up or down the ravine several rods, and so I stood and watched him a little while —he was mad and awful savage. I then shot him in the head and he fell to the ground and did not try to rise again. Jolly now came up puffing and blowing, for he was too short of wind to run in that high altitude without getting out of breath. He put in the final shot and the great brute rolled over on his side. I had read and heard much about the great size of the buffalo but this one looked larger to me than I had supposed them to be. Jolly by this time had lost his grouch and we both felt very proud and well satisfied with our kill. We cut out what meat we could carry and went back to camp which was probably not over two miles away. Getting help, and horses to pack the meat on, we returned and cut all the best of the meat from the bones, leaving the carcass to the wolves, the ravens and the buzzards. The other party returned at evening with all the meat they could carry, but I do not remember how many buffalo were killed. We cut the meat in thin strips, salted it slightly, and dried it in the sun, smoke, and heat of the fire. This took three or four days. We had all the meat we could afford to spend time to cure, besides an abundance of fresh meat for several days. In that dry climate and high altitude fresh meat will keep for a long time without spoiling. Without this supply of meat our provisions would have run low long before reaching a place where supplies could be had. We did run short as it was, before reaching our journey's end, as will be seen in another chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

Incidents of the Journey—Out on the Trail Over Night—The Dogs and the Wolves.

I have omitted to state that somewhere along near the western line of the present state of Nebraska, but I have forgotten at just what point, Mr. Knapp, became dissatisfied with the method of travel of Capt. Well's train, and he determined to pull out and leave it. He thought a train of twenty-one wagons too large—that it took too much time to pitch camp in the evening, and to break camp in the morning, and that there were too many cattle in one herd to do well when turned loose to feed. He therefore determined to travel alone for a time, until we could pick up a few wagons with people who would be congenial and agreeable to us, and thus form a new and much smaller train that would be more easily handled. His position upon this question was well taken, and the reasons therefor were good and sound. We therefore traveled by ourselves for a week or ten days, my cousin Wesley and myself taking the whole charge of the cattle, one or the other of us always, and some of the time both of us staying out with them all night. We got along all right, only that Wesley and I did not have our full amount of sleep, because when out with the cattle we had to be up and stirring whenever the cattle got up to feed. When the cattle were driven out to pasture after making camp, they would usually feed until about ten o'clock, when they would lie down and be quiet until about one or two o'clock, and then get up and feed for an hour or so and lie down again. If they did not get up and go to feeding at the first streak of daylight, it was our business to rout them out, which we did if we were awake ourselves, which generally was not the case, and then at about

sunrise they were to be driven to camp. Do not think that we with our wagon were alone at any time, even if we were traveling by ourselves. There were wagons ahead, and wagons behind us, all the time and in plain sight, unless for a short time it happened that our wagon was hidden in some small valley. Mr. Knapp, who spent much of his time on horseback soon picked up some emigrants with three or four wagons and directly thereafter three or four more, making a train of eight wagons in all, and about twenty-four persons, men, women and children. This train was, from that time on to the end of the journey, known as Knapp's train. It just came to be known as such because Knapp was the most prominent and best known person of the company, but not because he was captain, for we had no captain or other officers, nor any rules or regulations. Mr. Knapp was the leader—always selected the camping places, going on ahead with the pony for that purpose, and as he had good sense and good judgment, his plans were always followed and his suggestions adopted. However, he never assumed to command, or even to take the lead, but consulted with the others as if desirous of getting their opinions, but somehow his opinions were always satisfactory and were followed out without objection.

I was the only one in the company, as I now remember, who ever gave any trouble; but I was a constant source of anxiety to my cousin and in a less degree to Mr. Knapp. As stated before my cousin and I each had a day on and a day off; our duties were light and easily performed; the oxen had become thoroughly broken, and would mind at the word. Our lead team of oxen were called Tom and Tim —it was the easiest thing in the world to turn them out of the track either to the left or right, even when the driver was away back by the wheel oxen, by calling out, "Whoa,

haw, Tom, haw, Tim," or "gee, Tom, gee, Tim." They were all of them as tame and tractable as a pet dog; and Tim was my pet. When watching the cattle at night, as soon as they lay down to rest, I would lie down by Tim, snuggling up close to his side if the night was chilly, which was always the case when we had reached a high altitude, and I would immediately fall asleep, to be awakened when Tim made a move to get up to go to feeding. Poor Tim, he fell by the way and did not live to feed in the green pastures of the Willamette valley. I hope there is a heaven for all such faithful friends of man, as are our domestic animals, for it seems to me that there would be something lacking to be forever without their devoted companionship. We do not know—we cannot tell—it may be.

As intimated, I was a constant source of worry to my cousin, and I think in a less degree to Mr. Knapp. When it was my day to drive, Wesley always stayed near the wagons, and never went hunting or exploring, although he was free to do so if he desired. On the contrary, when we reached that interesting country in the upper part of the Platte valley, and so on west, if it was my day off, I was always out with my gun as soon as the train was ready to pull out, and generally was not seen again until after noon, and frequently not till supper time, unless it was my turn to guard the cattle, when I would always get back before camping time. I do not think Mr. Knapp cared anything about it only that, as I was out quite late a few times, he was afraid I would get lost and delay the train. But Wesley was one of the cautious kind and was afraid I would break a leg, or that the Indians would get me, or that some other dreadful thing would happen. One night we made camp on the north bank of Malheur river, in extreme eastern Oregon, and just across the Snake river opposite the

place where now stands the city of Payette, Idaho. The next morning it was my day off, and borrowing from a member of our company a book entitled "Journal of Travel over the Rocky Mountains to the Columbia River," by Joel Palmer, I lay down under a tree as soon as the train was in motion and began to read. I was admonished by my cousin not to stay too long, but to overtake the train before noon, which of course I readily and faithfully promised to do. Under existing circumstances such a book, as one can readily see, was enchanting, in fact absorbing, and I forgot all about time or place. The sun grew hot and two or three times I changed my position to secure shade—train after train passed along and I continued to read. At last when the book was finished the sun was well down in the west, and I knew it would be dark before I could overtake the train. But I was light on foot then, was wearing moccasins, and had no coat—coat and rifle having been left in the wagon, and besides I had had no dinner and was not burdened with a full stomach—there was nothing to carry but the book I had been reading. It was a good long stretch to the next camping place which was called I think, mud springs, and I knew I could overtake no wagons until I reached that place, as that was the first water. Just at dark I heard a dog bark ahead of me in the road, and looking up saw two large brindled dogs that belonged to our train. They had been hunting together, as they were accustomed to do, and had now returned to the road looking for the train, which of course, was their home. They were as glad to see me as I was to see them. Going on in company with the dogs, I expected surely to meet our folks at the springs and so evidently did the dogs, judging from their actions, but although there were three or four outfits in camp, our train was not there. On inquiring for Knapp's train I was told "It is about an hour ahead." That would mean about

a half hour for me, and after traveling more than half an hour I came to another camp and asked again for Knapp's train, and was told "It is about an hour ahead." The dogs and I went on—there was starlight but no moon—the road was full of loose stones, and I was constantly stubbing my toes, in the dark, the moccasins not affording very satisfactory protection. I was hungry, not having had a mouthful since breakfast. I am not sure, but think I must have been getting tired, and am quite sure I was getting mad. I told the dogs it was time to camp, so we turned aside up a little hollow; I gathered up a big armful of sage brush, of which there was plenty, and soon had a good big fire. The dogs and I curled up by the fire and went to sleep together . The night was cool, and I was in my shirtsleeves, but sage brush was plenty and the fire was replenished many times during the night. The wolves, the big gray kind, were around camp all night, snapping and howling but there was not a particle of danger from them—they were not hungry, for the trail was strewn with dead or dying cattle. The dogs chased them off several times, and seemed to think it was their business to take care of me. What a faithful friend to man is a dog—he never wavers in his affection for, or devotion to his master. Had a man been my companion that night, he might have forsaken me and saved himself if possible, had there been danger, but these dogs would have stayed by me to the last and would have given their lives to save mine. A few days later these dogs went on a hunt and did not return. I was very sorry, for although they were not mine, they were my friends, especially on that night. I got to camp next morning just as they were yoking up the oxen and Mr. Knapp had the pony saddled to start back after me. I got a good rounding up, which of course was merited, but it did not do one bit of good. "The leopard cannot change his spots, nor the Ethiopian his skin."

There were many things that tended to make this trip interesting. Among other things, while we were traveling along the Platte valley with Capt. Wells' train, some member of the company had a greyhound, a very tall, fleet dog that was a great favorite. He would chase antelope every time one came near enough so that he could see it, but I think he was never able to catch one, although they had to get right down to business and do their best to keep out of his reach.

One day two of the men were about sixty rods away from the wagons, trying, I think, to get some prairie chickens, having the dog with them. A big wolf started up out of the grass, and the dog gave chase. The ground was perfectly level, and the chase was a fine one, and all in plain sight of the wagons, as the wolf, instead of running north toward the hills, kept right on west the way we were going. The dog caught him in a short distance and at one snap disabled one hind leg—the wolf turned, but the dog got out of the way. Again the wolf started to run, and the dog caught him again and soon had both hind legs crippled. The wolf then stopped to fight and refused to run, when one of the men came up near enough and shot him. The dog and wolf did not clinch, and the dog was not hurt at all.

While in camp opposite Ft. Laramie a number of young Indians visited our camp with their bows and arrows and began shooting at a mark. The men would put an old fashioned cent in a split stick and placing it at a distance of ten steps away, the Indians would shoot at it, the cent going to the one that could hit it.

After awhile, borrowing a bow and arrows from one of the Indians I tried my luck at it, and found that I could shoot about as well as the Indians.

It surprised them very much that a white man knew

how to handle a bow and arrows. If I had had a Chippewa bow I believe I could have beaten them. I had used a Chippewa bow and arrows from the time I was eight years old until I was grown, and had become expert. The bows of the Chippewas are much longer than those of the Sioux. but the arrows are about the same.

When we reached the upper waters of the Platte, and also farther west on the Sweetwater there were an abundance of wild, ripe gooseberries, and also yellow and black wild currants, and after crossing the divide and getting over into Bear river valley and beyond as far as Snake river, we found ripe, wild service berries in such quantities as I had never seen before nor have I ever seen anything like it since. There were also wild strawberry plants in great abundance on the Sweetwater, but the fruit was all gone before we reached that place.

Probably from what has been told in this and some of the preceding chapters, the reader will be of the opinion that it was a very pleasant thing to cross the continent with an ox team in the early fifties, and this opinion will be at least partly correct. It was not only in many respects a pleasant trip, but it was also instructive—it was an education of a kind that could be had in no other way—it was worth more to a young man than any term of equal length in school. But there was a serious side also—it was not all pleasure and there was very little play. The next chapter, or at least a part of it, will be devoted to some of the more serious problems that presented themselves during the trip.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Cholera—Death of Hosea Ballou—The Story of Mrs. Knapp and Her Baby.

It might be inferred by the reader from perusing the preceding articles, that about all the travel over the Oregon and California trail in the year 1852, and previous years, was by ox teams. To quite an extent this was true. At the time of which I am writing, all the trains that I saw on the route were made up of ordinary farm wagons drawn by ox teams, excepting that there were in almost every train a few light wagons, generally with springs, that were drawn by horses, and carrying the women and children and sometimes the bedding. These light wagons and horse teams were scarce, however, as most of the emigrants had but one wagon, which carried the provisions and bedding of the owner, as well as a few common, indispensible tools, and in which also rode the wife and children, provided the owner had a family. However in the early part of the season many trains had passed over the road, made up of men almost entirely, with horse or mule teams lightly equipped, and able to travel rapidly, and all bound for the gold mines of California. These were all ahead of us, and we saw none of them. They could make the overland trip with good luck in ninety days from the Missouri river, while it took the slow-moving ox trains a full five months. These horse and mule outfits were in much more danger from the Indians than were the trains drawn by oxen, because the Indians wanted the horses and mules and would steal them at any time if there was a chance, but they had no use whatever for the oxen. The feeling of danger from Indians therefore to our train, soon ceased to trouble us, except that there were some timid ones who were always afraid. As

for myself, I had always known Indians, liked them, and on every occasion when any came to our camp I made their acquaintance as much as possible and treated them as friends. It was intimated in the last chapter that this article would treat in part at least of some of the serious problems of the trip that had to be met and solved. I have mentioned the Indians at this time because it seems to stick permanently in the minds of many that the probability of Indian attack was the most serious of all the problems confronting the emigrant. Let this idea of Indian attack be eliminated from the reader's mind—if such danger ever existed, and it did sometimes, it did not exist in the year 1852.

The first real trouble that befell our train, and that while we were traveling with Capt. Wells' company, was the appearance of Asiatic cholera, or at any rate what was called Asiatic cholera. I find on consulting certain authorities recently, that it is denied that there ever has been any real Asiatic cholera in the United States but once, that being in 1832-1834, and that the scourge of so called cholera of 1850-1854 was not cholera at all. "Who shall decide when doctors disagree?" If a disease that is kindred to cholera and that carries off 30 to 50 percent of those attacked, is in our presence, it makes little difference what it is called. Our company suffered from this disease but little comparatively, but it was very prevalent in some companies, and very fatal. It apparently had followed the emigration from St. Louis up the Missouri river, and so on across the country by the overland trail, perhaps not quite across the continent but at least as far west as the Snake river valley in Idaho.

In our company was a Mr. Hosea Ballou with his wife and, I think two or three little children, accompanied also by a brother, Henry Ballou, all from Henry county, Ill. We had heard of cholera, and of some deaths in some of the neighboring companies, but our people had been well,

excepting some cases of dysentery, when suddenly Mr. Hosea Ballou was stricken with cholera and died in a few hours. I saw him die, and it was the first death I had ever witnessed. It made a deep impression on my mind. A strong man who only a day or so previous to his death, I had seen going about his work in apparent health, was cut down without warning, leaving a wife and two or three helpless babies. It seemed to me that we were utterly helpless in the presence of such a scourge. A grave was dug by the side of the trail, and the body wrapped in a bed quilt as there was no lumber for a coffin, was sorrowfully and silently lowered into it, and without a prayer or a song or the reading of a single passage of Scripture, the grave was filled and the train moved on. God deliver us from such a death and burial. It was better to be broken and killed by a fall from a precipice—to be drowned in the waters of the river or to be killed by the Indians, than to die such a death, and to have such a burial. This cast a dreadful gloom over the whole company, but it was the only death from this cause. There were two or three more light cases of the disease in our train, one of whom was Mr. Knapp, but all speedily recovered. For many weeks, however, there were cases of dysentery, some of which were serious, obstinate, and of long duration.

Another serious matter, and the cause of a good deal of trouble, and loss, amounting in some cases to the breaking up of some of the teams, and abandonment of the wagons, was the lameness and sickness of some of the oxen. There was little or none of this for the first five or six hundred miles, but as we approached the mountains and the roads became very hard, gravelly, and hilly, the oxen, especially the heavy ones, and those used as the wheel teams —that is those next to the wagon—became footsore and lame, in some cases the feet becoming worn through on the bottom so that they would bleed. Our employer, Mr.

Knapp, had provided against this trouble by bringing along a supply of ox shoes and nails for putting them on. Some, however, did not think of this, or did not forsee such a difficulty and did not provide themselves with ox shoes. We lay over for two days when our oxen first began to have tender feet, and shod all in our train that needed it, as some had shoes, and Mr. Knapp fortunately had enough to supply those who had none. In the lumber woods, and elsewhere where it is necessary to shoe oxen, a frame is kept at every blacksmith shop, into which the ox is led, where he is secured and by means of a clutch, straps, ropes and pulleys he is easily placed in position, and the work is quickly and easily done. Out on the plains, however, it was different, and was no easy job. Sometimes the front feet could be shod with the ox standing if he was very quiet and gentle, but to shoe the hind feet the ox had to be thrown on his side, his head secured so he could not raise it ,and the hind feet drawn forward up against the body and tied with ropes. Our man, Jolly, mentioned in the last article, was a blacksmith, and expert at the business as soon as the best plan to throw and hold the ox was discovered. Very many oxen became so footsore that they could not travel and had to be abandoned, to be devoured by the wolves. After crossing the Rocky mountains there was a disease among the cattle which was not understood, and which was incurable, that took off a great many. From the summit of the Rocky mountains west to the end of the journey the trail was marked so thickly with dead cattle, that they were hardly ever out of sight, and the wolves, buzzards and ravens attracted by the carcasses upon which they feasted were more numerous than I have ever seen them elsewhere.

I wonder if any mother, who is a reader of these papers, would be ambitious to make such a trip of almost 2800 miles as the road runs, and taking from the middle of May to the middle of October, or even a longer time, having in her care

from one to five children, riding in the day time and sleeping at night in a covered wagon, cooking by an open fire, with the wind, dust or rain to contend with, to say nothing of the hot sun by day, the music of the wolves by night, and the more or less constant fear and dread of the Indians. If any feel that way—well—they have got grit—that is all.

At the same time that the oxen were shod, the tires were set on many of the wagons, as the hot weather and dry atmosphere was hard on the woodwork. This, however, was quite an easy job—cottonwood bark was plentiful at that camp and was used for heating the tires.

As stated in a former chapter, our family, when we left St. Joseph, Mo., consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Knapp and their little girl, and my cousin, Wesley, and myself, but away over the continental divide somewhere, I cannot now remember just where, there was an addition to our family, Mrs. Knapp presenting her husband with a little girl baby. It cannot be said that there was rejoicing in camp because an addition of that kind was really desired or welcomed, but there was rejoicing that the baby lived and that Mrs. Knapp recovered her strength rapidly, and only a delay of two or three days was necessary before resuming the journey.

And now comes the saddest part of my story. I shrink from telling it, and have seldom mentioned it—but it is proper and right that it should be told. We were camped on Burnt river, in what is now Baker county, eastern Oregon, somewhere between Huntington and Baker City—the oxen had died off so that our team was not strong enough to draw the wagon, and all the other teams were in a similar condition—we were getting short of provisions, and we supposed none could be had nearer than Walla Walla, probably 200 miles distant. It was decided to double teams, abandon part of the wagons, and all the single men to leave the train and go on foot, to shift for themselves as well as

they could. The teams so doubled could easily draw the remaining wagons, and it was thought there might be provisions enough left to last those that tarried with the teams, until supplies could be reached. There were four of us to go on ahead, my cousin, Wesley, a man by the name of Root, another whose name has gone from me, and myself. We bade them all good bye, and started off, but our journey of 400 miles on foot will be told in the next chapter.

Mrs. Knapp and her babies I never saw again. I saw Mr. Knapp in Portland about a year later, and he told me this sad story. Soon after we left the company the baby was taken sick and died and was buried in a poor, little, lonely grave, only another added to the thousands that already marked the whole course of the trail. It was too much for the mother—she probably had not become very strong and in just a few days she followed her baby to the better land. Poor Mrs. Knapp—her lot for the last few months of her life was a hard one. Born of well to do parents in Louisiana, her father an owner of slaves, reared in a good home, well educated, surrounded by luxuries, she yet consented, and willingly, I think, to undertake this trip, knowing of some of the things at least, that she was to endure. She had energy, courage and grit, but had never been drilled in the school of adversity. Her strength was insufficient for the burdens she had to carry. Mr. Knapp was born in Ohio but went to Louisiana when quite young, and married his wife there. He did not believe in slavery and wanted to go to a state where it did not exist, and his wife was willing to go with him. They decided that Oregon was the place. The reader has heard the story but I could scarcely summon sufficient resolution to relate it.

CHAPTER IX.

Four Young Men Leave the Train and Go On Afoot—Arrival at the Dalles—Trip Down the Columbia—Arrive at Oregon City.

Referring back to the narrative given in the last chapter, it will be remembered that our train was reconstructed, and that to economize in provisions, four young men of the train who had no families, were to leave the company and make the rest of the journey on foot. It had been known for some time that provisions were getting scarce, and every effort possible had been put forth to procure game and fish to help out. Before we left the train and while encamped on one of the tributaries of Snake river called Goose creek, a number of fish of the sucker variety, weighing from one to two pounds apiece, were shot with a rifle in the shallow waters, and this gave us one good mess. A little farther on we came to an Indian village at a place where there were some low falls in the river, and these Indians were engaged in drying salmon for their winter supply of provisions. They were not willing to sell the dried fish but offered fresh ones right out of the water for sale. I traded for a large red salmon that would probably weigh thirty pounds, a ten cent tin powder flask, containing about six charges of powder. This was all we wanted for our wagon, and it tasted so good that nearly all of us overate and were sick from its effects. Near this place we crossed Snake river, because it was known that the road for a hundred miles or so was much better on the north than on the south side. The river was too deep to ford, and a raft was constructed by taking two of the tightest and best wagon boxes, lashing them together side by side, caulking the seams as tightly as possible, thus forming a pretty safe and sub-

stantial raft. The wagons were unloaded and taken apart, and every thing ferried safely over, it taking a good many trips, but it was accomplished with little difficulty. The cattle were driven across, having to swim part of the way, and it fell to my lot here as elsewhere, when any large stream was to be crossed, to follow them over on horseback. Resuming our journey we soon came to Boise or Wood river, which was crossed and then followed down to its mouth, where we again crossed Snake river in the same way as at first. All along Boise river there was an abundance of rabbits, the common cottontail kind such as are found here. The first mess of these procured on Boise river was shot by Mr. Knapp. I went with him and carried the rifle and the game, Mr. Knapp doing the shooting. He had the best rifle in the whole outfit—in fact the only real good one, and he was a good shot, but at this time was just recovering from the illness caused by eating too much salmon, and was not yet strong enough to carry the heavy rifle. In about half an hour he killed seven rabbits, scarce missing a shot.

The country passed over along Boise river looked good to us, being thickly covered with grass about eight or ten inches high, but dry and dead at that time of year, and having a dark and evidently productive soil provided there was sufficient water for the growing plants. I have understood that this is one of the best parts of Idaho, and is now well settled and improved. Not long after crossing Snake river the last time, we came to the camp on Burnt river where we parted company and started on afoot. We took very little in the provision line from the train as it could not be spared—the only thing as I remember being a little of the dried buffalo meat that had been killed and prepared at the last camp on Platte river near Red Buttes, as previously told. We had each a gun, a blanket or two, an overcoat, and among us a small tin pail and a frying pan, and one of the men, Root I think, had a watch. We could have

taken more bedding but did not care to be burdened with it. I think every one had a little money left, and it was hoped that with it enough provisions could be bought from emigrant trains that we would overtake and pass, to keep us eating until the settlements were reached. We also took with us a black mare said to be of good stock, belonging to one of our company, with instructions to take her through if she could keep up, but if not to turn her loose and the owner would pick her up again if he found her. The mare was very thin, and seemed to be growing weaker all the time. We always turned her loose at night, and one morning she could not be found, and we did not care to tarry to hunt her up.

We wanted to know about how much ground we covered in each day's travel, and it was arranged that we should take turns in counting our steps, calling 1700 steps a mile. As there are 5280 feet in a mile 1700 steps would just about equal a mile, provided the one counting his steps or "paces" as we called it measured just a little over three feet at a pace. In this way by noting by the watch the time it took to "pace" off one mile, we found that we could easily cover thirty miles a day, and in this way could tell just about how long it would take us to get to a place where we could get something to eat. That was really the problem that was to be solved—getting something to eat. We were all well, strong and happy. I liked that trip. Our guns were a burden, and almost of no use on the trip, as all the game we had a chance to shoot during the trip was one grouse that alighted near us on the side hill as we were eating breakfast, and one or two ruffed grouse, or pheasants found in the thick timber while crossing the Blue mountains. However, in the end, the guns helped us out, for on arriving at the Dalles, I sold mine for four dollars, and I think my cousin got five dollars for his. We had very poor luck buying provisions from the emigrants, nearly all being

short themselves, and those that had a little to spare generally felt that it ought to be kept for others that were short, who had women and children dependent upon them. This reason for not selling to us, and which was unanswerable, was given in a number of instances. Upon one occasion I had quite an adventure while trying to buy something to eat of a man belonging to a company that was in camp near where we stopped for lunch. I said stopped for lunch, but we could have no lunch that time unless I succeeded in buying something. I bought for a dollar about as much bread as one can now get at a bake shope for ten cents, and was just turning away with my purchase, when a man belonging apparently, to another wagon asked, "What did you sell that bread for?" and began cursing the man that sold it, and declaring he would shoot him, went to his wagon and got a revolver. I thought there would be bloodshed, and did not know whether to offer to trade back, or to run. I did neither. The man who sold the bread never said a word, probably knowing that to be the best way, and presently the other quieting down somewhat, approached me and said in an apologetic sort of way, "We are short ourselves, and haven't enough for our own women and children." I told him how we were fixed and he seemed considerably mollified. It is probable that some of the emigrants let us have a little food when they really could not spare it—in fact I am sure that was the case. After crossing the Blue mountains, from the western slope of which Mt. Hood, one of the highest and sharpest peaks in the Cascade range was in plain sight away to the west, all white with snow, we came down upon the Umatilla river, where we found Indians that farmed a little, and they brought to us potatoes and dry shelled peas to sell. Our money by this time was gone, and in fact the Indians cared little for it anyway, not well knowing its value. They also had dried camas roots. The camas is a bulbous plant with a root or

bulb something like a small onion. It grows in great quantities on the prairies of Central and Eastern Oregon and Washington, its beautiful blue flowers in springtime being so numerous as to give tint and color to the landscape. A camas prairie in early springtime is a lovely sight. The Indians dig the roots in great quantities, and prepare them for winter use. The taste is sweet and agreeable, and has the appearance of having been soaked in molasses before being cured. The saccharine matter, however, is in the plant itself. We had very little to offer them in trade. They would take powder and lead, but of this we only had a small supply. My cousin was trying to strike a bargain with an old squaw for some dried camas roots, but she was sharp and refused whatever he had to offer. Finally putting his hand in his pocket for something he was looking for he accidentally drew out a large smoked pearl button that belonged on my overcoat and that happened to be in his pocket. The squaw gave a scream of delight, pushed the bunch of camas roots towards him and seizing the button ran off, evidently thinking she had struck a grand bargain. My overcoat was double breasted, having two rows of smoked pearl buttons up and down in front. From that time on we could buy of the Indians anything they had to offer in the provision line as long as the buttons lasted. At last they were all cut off and the coat was tied together with strings. We had currency of the most acceptable kind until we reached the Dalles where there were supplies in plenty.

I forgot to state that a day or two after we parted company from our train on Burnt river we overtook a young fellow whose name has been forgotten, if indeed, I ever knew it, but who was called Bud. He said he had left his company because they were short of eatables and was making his way alone. He had no money, no blankets, no overcoat, and nothing to eat. We felt sorry for him and took him in, and took care of him until we arrived at the Dalles

where we left him when we took a canoe to go down the Columbia. He paid us off well, however, for helping him along, and gave us something to remember him by, for every one of us got lousy sleeping with him. We did not go by Walla Walla as had been intended, but cut off two or three days' travel by leaving it to the north, and going on straight to the Dalles. At the Dalles a settlement had been commenced. There were one or two board shanties, quite a large number of tents, and there were supplies of all kinds for sale. We were entirely out of money, but had one large smoked pearl button left, which, however, did not pass current with the white traders, but did serve us well, however, later on. We here sold our rifles, and nearly all our blankets and got something to eat and supplies, as we supposed, enough to last us to the Cascades of the Columbia. There were Indians here with big Columbia river canoes, waiting to take passengers down the river, the charge being four dollars each and board yourself. We found five other men, making nine in all of white men, and picking out a good looking canoe, manned by two Indians, pushed off down the Columbia. At the start it was a charming trip —the smooth, deep river, with clear water and high, bluffy shores—the bold range of the Cascade mountains in front, and seeming to grow higher and higher as we neared them —the bright sunshine overhead—the rocks and cliffs becoming bolder and higher as we approached the mountains, and at last as we entered the gateway of the mountains the evergreen trees, covering the sides and crowning the summits of the mountains nearest the river, and every now and then a cascade where some mountain brook came tumbling down from rock to rock, or poured over a high precipice, dissolving into spray before reaching the river.

Soon after entering the mountains it began raining with a strong wind coming directly up the river from the ocean. The home of the Indians who owned the canoe was

at the mouth of the White Salmon river, and here we landed and remained three days waiting for the storm to subside, and of course we ate up all our store of provisions before we got under way again. We were just about out of everything to trade on, and the Indians, finding it out, were good to us. We had no blankets left at all as I remember, but there was lots of timber, some of it very large, which sheltered us from the wind and we took lodgings under a big fir tree that shed a good deal of rain, made and kept up a big fire, and got along pretty well. The Indians had some very coarse shorts, and we traded something, I do not remember what, for some of it, intending to make a cake and bake it in our frying pan, but it would not make dough that would hold together, but fell apart like bran, so we boiled it in the tin pail and called it mush—however, it was about half way between mush and soup. Then Wesley took the one remaining pearl button, and started out to trade. He found a squaw who had just caught a large white salmon, weighing probably thirty pounds, and struck a bargain for it. The squaw, however, insisted on dressing and cooking the salmon, and bless her that she did—it was the best job of the kind I ever saw. She split the salmon on the back, then run two or three long, slim sticks through it lengthwise, then two or three crosswise to keep it spread out wide and flat, stuck the long ends of the sticks in the ground, before the fire and roasted it, then when it was cooked, placing it on a broad, clean piece of bark, withdrawing the sticks, she placed it before us.

At the risk of making this too long, one or two more things must be told. The storm over, we were taken on down the river, landing at the upper end of the Cascades or lower falls of the Columbia, and then walking five miles down over the rocks on the north side of the river to the foot of the falls, where was the little village called the Cascades. Here, which was the head of tide water, and at that

time the head of navigation on the Columbia, there was a steamboat, just arrived from Portland. The captain offered to take us to Portland and give us dinners, if we would help unload the cargo. This we gladly did, and by a little stratagem which we worked on the cook, got our supper also, arriving in Portland after dark. The next morning Wesley and I crossed the Willamette river to the eastern bank, the ferryman agreeing to take us over on condition that we would pay at some future time if we ever came that way—which I am sorry to say we never did—it is still due. We went on up to Oregon City, there being then only one road up the river from Portland, and that on the east side. Arrived at Oregon City our journey over the Overland Trail was ended, and I immediately got work and soon had money enough to invest in a fine comb—the thing of all most needed.

CHAPTER X.

Wild Animals and Birds That Lived Here.

It is doubtful which is the worse habit, to read only to be amused, or not to read at all. This is a general statement, and will not apply in every case, because it is entirely proper sometimes to read for amusement and relaxation. But if the object in reading is solely to be entertained, the habit is a bad one. One who reads only to be entertained or amused, and who receives no instruction from what is read, and only skims along to get the run of the story, and how it turns out in the end, injures his memory and unfits his mind for study or for profitable reading. All books should be written in such style, and the subjects presented should be treated in such manner as to be both entertaining and instructive. Such books as entertain only, and do not instruct, should in general be kept out of the hands of young people, because, while perhaps not absolutely hurtful in the stories they tell, they lead the mind in the wrong direction.

In preparing all these articles it has been the intention of the writer to both instruct and entertain those that read, and especially the young readers, who can know nothing of these things only as they read about them. This chapter and two others to follow will describe portions of Antelope county, and perhaps also other parts of the state as they looked to the writer when first seen by him; and will also tell something about the wild animals and birds that were found here, and how some of these that were once plentiful have entirely disappeared, and how new kinds have come in and are now making this their home. It will also describe the habits of some of these wild animals, telling how they provide themselves with food, how they guard themselves against their enemies, and how they become wary

and wild as soon as they are hunted by man. What would I give to go back again to the old times, and old scenes, and old neighbors of forty years ago? It cannot be! yet it fills my heart and my eyes full to think of and to write of it.

About the 28th of May, 1869, we were camped near the east bank of Cedar creek, on the northeast quarter of section 27, Oakdale township, on the land now owned by Antelope county, and known as the county farm. "We" means Solomon S. King and myself, who had come to look the country over, and if we liked it to select claims for ourselves and for several others. We had been running lines for two or three days both east of the camp in Oakdale township and south as far as the center of Cedar township, but had not crossed to the west side of the creek as yet. It was all new and wild everywhere. There were no signs anywhere that there had ever been a white man in the country excepting in one place we found where probably a hunter or trapper had cut down a small cottonwood tree two or three years before, and excepting also the mounds and stakes made and set by the government surveyors two and a half years previous to this time. It was an ideal place to camp anywhere along Cedar creek. The water of the creek, flowing between steep banks, was deep and cold; fine springs of clear, pure water were numerous; there was an abundance of hardwood timber, plenty of dry wood, good grass and good shelter. We were not on a hunting trip and made no effort to get any game, except an occasional duck or prairie chicken, both of which were abundant. There were antelope in sight most of the time, and every day we saw deer and wild turkeys, and there were also tracks of elk in abundance, but we saw none of the animals themselves. We were in a great game country, but we were hunting land, not game. We thought we had found just the kind of country we were looking for, and we believed that we were the first upon the ground, as we had seen no signs of the

white man excepting those just alluded to, not even the track of a wagon, since leaving Battle Creek, in Madison county. There were abundant signs of beaver all along the creek, but we saw none of the beaver themselves at that time. There were trees that had been cut down by them some years before, some of which we used for camp fires, and there were numerous fresh cuttings of little willow and cottonwood trees which the beaver had drawn into the water and there eaten the bark. It is said that the beaver, when taking his meals, always sits with the hind parts in the water and while this statement is probably incorrect, he no doubt takes his food in or near the water.

They live mostly on the bark of trees, such as cottonwood, willow and poplar where it can be had. They also eat the coarse grass that grows in low grounds and swampy places along the streams. In one place in Oregon many years ago, while out hunting, I found a grove of little poplar trees, situated about twenty rods from the banks of a small river. Here the beaver worked at night, as is their custom. They had cut down many of these trees which were from two to three up to five or six inches through, and had then cut them up into lengths from a foot or so, to four or five feet long, according to the size, and then had drawn the most of them to the river where the bark had been eaten off. There was certainly a wagon load of these sticks in a bend of the river where it was still water, nearly all of which were without the bark, while in the grove were a dozen or more sticks just freshly cut, and all ready to be taken to the river, and there were also several sticks partly cut off and two or three trees partly cut down, but in no case was the bark eaten off except from those at or in the river. I have also seen one place on Beaver creek in Wheeler county, Nebraska, where there was a beaver dam and pond that apparently held a large colony of beaver. There was no timber at all here, excepting some small brush, but

Buck Antelope.

there were many acres of swampy ground covered with big grass and water plants that furnished the colony with food. While beaver generally do their work in the night, they sometimes are out in the day time but it is difficult to get a chance to see them. I have tried several times to get sight of a beaver, but succeeded only once. Several years ago in Sherman county, Nebraska, I came suddenly and silently upon a beaver sitting just at the edge of a pond. He was a big fellow, and we did not see each other until I was within a dozen feet of him as he sat at the edge of the water under a bank. He made a dive into the water, and swimming across the little pond went into a hole under water on the opposite bank. Beaver were quite plentiful here in the early days, and were probably found in all the streams of the county. Some of them were trapped, but not many. They are very shy and timid, and when persistently trapped, or when the country begins to settle, they will emigrate to new haunts. It is now against the law to take them in Nebraska at any season, and I hear that there are a few in the thinly settled parts of the upper Niobrara country and that they are increasing in numbers. There is also said to be a colony of them on the Elkhorn river in Stanton county.

It was thought best to take a look at the country on the west side of the creek, and as my comrade, Sol King, could not walk very far, from the fact that he had lost a leg while fighting for his country during the civil war, and as it was very difficult to ford the creek with a horse, he agreed to keep the camp while I looked over the country to the west. I went up the creek about two miles from the camp, and crossing to the west side on a fallen tree, placed myself in line with certain objects on the east side of the creek that had been marked a day or two before, and that could be plainly seen, and tracing the line thus previously marked, soon came to a section corner. It will be remembered that

this was in May, 1869, and that the government survey was made in October, 1866, therefore it was an easy matter to trace the section lines and locate the corners. The corners in this part of the county were plainly marked; and generally the mounds were well preserved, even many of the sight mounds could be plainly seen for a considerable distance. These sight mounds were made of sods, and were built up to the heighth of sixteen or eighteen inches at prominent places on the line, as a guide to the chainmen. It was thus very easy to follow the line and find the section corners. Of course the old men living here now who were here forty or more years ago, know all about these things, but I am particular in giving this description to make it plain to the young people how it looked here in the early days. The first section corner that I found was plainly defined, the mound well preserved, and the four pits from which the earth had been taken to make the mound were only partly filled with drift. The corner stake, however, had been burned off near the ground by the prairie fire of the previous fall and the markings could not be read. I went on a mile west to the next corner where the stake was standing and in perfect condition. This was the corner of sections 4, 5, 8 and 9 in Cedar township, just three miles east of the present village of Elgin.

There is no landscape scene in nature more beautiful than a fertile, gently rolling prairie in spring time just as it came from the hand of its Creator. And this spring morning in the year 1869 I was gazing upon a picture in color, painted by the hand of the Great Master, using the earth and the sky for a canvas, and done in such a masterful way as no other artist has ever been able to equal, or even successfully imitate. The earth was covered with a thick, bright green carpet of grass that waved and trembled in the breeze; there were few if any flowers, for they seek the low grounds and the sheltered places along the sides

of the ravines and in the valleys, but flowers were not needed in this scene. To the north and west the ground sloped gently upward to little low green rolls a quarter of a mile or so away that shut out a distant view in these directions. From the southwest around to the southeast and east the land was at first level, then there were gentle swells and undulations, and finally away to the south at a distance of six or seven miles were the high smooth green hills dividing the waters of the Elkhorn from those of Beaver creek. Nearby in the foreground to the southeast was a point of thick timber growing in and along the sides of a ravine that led away to the southeast to Cedar creek, narrow at the nearby point but broadening as it neared the creek, where it joined the strip of woodland that borders the creek and plainly marks its windings for five or six miles. I looked upon the picture before me with admiration, and thought then that I had never seen a more lovely landscape nor a more fertile soil. As I look back upon it after a lapse of more than forty years, I am now sure I was right. But the picture is not yet complete. I sat down upon the mound, and taking out my memorandum book, began to jot down the numbers and description of the adjacent lands. My thought was that almost anything in sight was good enough for a farm for anybody; and such it has proven to be. From that viewpoint, there was no land in any direction of all the thousands of acres in sight, with possibly the exception of a half dozen rough quarter sections, that has not since become fine, valuable and very productive farming land. But to complete the picture; while writing in the memorandum book, I happened to look down at old Captain, the dog, he was all atremble and crouched as if in the attitude of making a spring, and looking to the north, there, within thirty steps were five antelope looking upon us with apparent wonder. Probably they had never seen a man nor a dog before, and were curious to know what we were.

The one in the lead began to stamp his fore feet at us, and to utter the peculiar antelope cry of "tchew tchew" which they are apt to do when somewhat alarmed. Captain was waiting for the word from his master, for he was trained to wait until told to go. They were so near that I could have knocked one over with bird-shot, but I had no gun and we were in no need of meat, and it was not the season to kill such game, and besides it would have spoiled the picture. I said to Captain "Go," and he went like a shot, but the antelope is about the fleetest animal known, and they were perfectly safe. He was a fast dog, but the antelope is fleeter than any dog except possibly the greyhound. Captain could make an antelope get down to business and run straight, but he could not catch one in a fair race. They very soon all went out of sight over the little hill to the north, and I finished my notes and was ready to go when here came back the dog, his tongue hanging out of his mouth, and not more than thirty rods behind him were the antelope, trotting back to complete their investigation. The dog lay down lolling by my side, and I waited to see what the antelope would do. They did not come very near again, but circled around, stamping and uttering their peculiar "tchew tchew." Pronounce this as spelled, with the lips open, the teeth closed, forcing the air through the teeth, and you have it.

CHAPTER XI.

Wild Animals and Birds That Lived Here—Continued.

In all the experiences of my life, nothing that ever occured to me, or that came under my personal observation, has left upon my memory a more vivid or pleasing impression than the occurrences related in the latter part of the last chapter. There I was, a stranger in the country, viewing these scenes for the first time. Probably no white man had ever been in that place before, excepting the government surveyors. The soil was no more fertile, the lay of the land no more desirable, the scenery no more beautiful, and the location no better than could be found in scores of other places in the county; but here, what completed the picture and made it more beautiful and impressive, was the coming of those antelope into the foreground of the picture, being chased away by the dog, and then following him right back again. If there is one word that more than any other fully expresses the feelings that possessed my whole being that morning, it is the word "enchanted," and this being the fact is probably the reason why it left an impression of such vivid clearness upon my memory. There were then, and are now, many places in the county which afforded a grander and sublimer view than the one described, but I had not seen them at that time; in fact the whole of Antelope county in the early days, when it was as yet untouched and unmarred by the hand of the white man, presented a varied scene of symmetrical beauty, grandeur and loveliness that could scarcely be surpassed. How could the early settlers fail to be pleased, charmed and suited with what they saw before them?

Many of the wild plants that once helped to adorn and make beautiful the landscape scenes are now nearly extinct

or greatly diminished in quantity, having been turned over by the plow, or trampled to death by herds of cattle. Prominent among these is the wild sweet pea that was found in great abundance in the early days, especially where the land was somewhat sandy, giving color to the hillsides, and filling the air with fragrance. It is eaten by cattle as greedily as is the grass, and being an annual, it is only a matter of time until it will be exterminated. What a pity it is, that the white man cannot enter into and possess a fruitful and inviting wilderness, just as God gave it to him, without destroying some of its most charming attributes. The wild animals have gone, and so have many of the birds, the wild flowers and the wild grasses have either gone or are going —only the landscape remains, but shorn of many of its most beautiful features.

But to return to the wild things that were found here in an early day; the antelope were more numerous than any others of the larger animals, or in fact than all others combined. During the months of May, June and July they might be seen anywhere on the smooth prairie, either a solitary one, or in little bands of three or four, or an old doe with her two fawns, or sometimes a drove of a dozen or more. They are animals of the plains, and do not frequent the rough, hilly lands, nor the timbered tracts. They do not hide from their enemies, nor seek to conceal themselves, but lie out in the open where they can see as well as be seen. They depend wholly upon their senses of sight and smell to detect the presence of enemies, and upon their fleetness to escape. They stay out in the open, and do not seek shelter during storms. They feed upon almost every kind of weed that grows upon the prairie, but eat very little grass. I have observed our own tame antelope many times when feeding—in summer they would nip the weeds, leaving the grass untouched, and in winter would pick all the weeds from the hay leaving the grass uneaten, and al-

though they had access to shelter, they never used it. The vension of the antelope has a very marked gamy taste, probably from the fact of their eating weeds, and consequently it is not relished by most people as well as the vension of deer or elk; however, some people, and especially old hunters, prefer it to any other meat. They were somewhat migratory in habit, and generally did not stay here through the winter in great numbers. They would get together in large flocks in August and September, and while some would remain, the greater number would go west, to return again in April and May, to rear their young here during the summer. They were not very wild and wary when found here by the first settlers, but they very soon became so. I am taking much more space to describe the habits of the antelope than will be given to the description of any other animal, partly because there is a good deal of misinformation concerning the antelope, and partly because our county was named for the fleet, graceful little animal that once covered its prairies in such numbers. The male antelope has horns that when full grown attain the length of twelve or perhaps fourteen inches, each horn supplied with one small prong, hence they are often called the prong-horn. The females are hornless. Unlike other animals, such as the goat, sheep, cow, buffalo and others that have a hollow or pith horn, the antelope shed their horns annually. All animals of the deer family, such as the elk, moose, caribou, common deer and many others have solid horns, and these shed their horns in the winter, and grow them in full again during the spring and summer. The antelope shed their horns in the spring, the new horn growing inside the old one, and the old shell becoming loose, falls off. When the old shell is shed, the new horn is soft and partly covered with scattering hairs. The new horn soon grows to attain full size, and the outside hardens, forming a new shell.

Knowledge to be valuable should be exact, but some

of our best authors are frequently very inaccurate as to details, and therefore their teachings are to a greater or less extent erroneous. As a case in point the following instances will be given, taken from Francis Parkman's "California and Oregon Trail," page 105: "As we emerged from the trees a rattlesnake, as large as a man's arm, and more than four feet long, lay coiled on a rock, fiercely rattling and hissing at us; a gray hare, double the size of those of New England, leaped up from the tall ferns; curlew were screaming over our heads, and a whole host of little prairie dogs sat yelping at us at the mouths of their burrows on the dry plain beyond. Suddenly an antelope leaped up from the wild sage bushes, gazed eagerly at us, and then, erecting his white tail, stretched away like a greyhound." The foregoing sentences are elegantly written and are very interesting and instructive reading, but they convey information that will be very surprising to an old frontiersman who has read little or nothing of these matters, but whose stock of information comes only from personal experiences. Who ever heard a rattlesnake hiss? I have killed hundreds of them, and have talked with very many persons who have seen and killed many of these reptiles, but I have never heard of such a thing as a hissing rattlesnake except from reading books. The Rocky Mountain rattlesnakes are not noted for their great size—in fact they are rather undersized, therefore this one must have been a monster if the measurements are correctly stated. Who ever saw or heard of tall ferns in the foot-hills of the Laramie mountains, where these things occurred? Ferns grow only in a comparatively damp soil, and here it was very dry—in fact, almost a desert. Small ferns do grow higher up in the Laramie mountains where there is more moisture, but even then they are not tall enough to hide a hare. It would surprise an old plainsman to see an antelope leap out from the wild sage bushes, or any kind of bushes, for antelope do not

Doe Antelope.

hide; and still more to see him raise his white tail, for an antelope does not raise his tail when he runs, and if he did it would be too inconspicuous to be seen. And it is equally surprising that the antelope stretched away like a grey-hound—there are no two animals whose modes of running are more unalike than the antelope and the grey-hound. The running of a sheep and a grey-hound are as nearly alike as that of a greyhound and an antelope.

It probably will be considered presumptuous for one like myself who is almost devoid of learning, to criticise one of our standard authors; but I shall risk the hazard to my reputation to make the following statement: If from the descriptive works of Washington Irving, Francis Parkman and James Fenimore Cooper, the misconceptions and exaggerations were eliminated, their books would be considerably abridged in size, and would be of increased value, especially those of the last named author.

On either side of the rump of an antelope there is a patch as large as a man's hand of snow-white hair, which is four or five inches in length, and that lies down flat and smooth when the animal is feeding or at rest; but when about to start to run, which is done with a wonderfully quick, light, springy bound, these patches of hair rise and stand straight up. If the reader should ever be so lucky and so happy as to hunt antelope, when the moment comes when he is trying to get a shot, it will be all right to wait for a better chance as long as the animal stands and gazes, or even stamps his foot and repeats his "tchew" "tchew," but when those white hairs begin to rise—shoot quick, or you will lose the chance. The antelope have their young right out on the open prairie, where there is no cover excepting grass a few inches high. Several times I have found the young before they were old enough to run. They will then lie flat down with the under jaw close to the ground, and ears flat, as though pinned down, and they

will not move if very young, but will suffer themselves to be taken up, without making the least effort to get away. Even then, in very short grass it is difficult to see them, as they lie so quiet, and their color harmonizes so perfectly with the grass. But the days of the antelope in Nebraska are numbered—there are probably none now this side of Wyoming.

There have been no buffalo in Antelope county, so far as is known, since the settlements began, excepting as told in the history of the county. It was not many years before the settlement of the county that they were very numerous. I have never seen any place, either in Nebraska or Wyoming, where the skulls, bones and horns were more plentiful than they were here in 1869-70. The buffalo were very gregarious animals, living in large herds and going from place to place in search of pasture. Little need be said here about the buffalo, because their history and habits are pretty well known already.

The mountain sheep were probably never found here because the country is not at all suited to their habits. They live only in a very rough mountainous country. Seventy-five years ago, according to the accounts of the old hunters and trappers, they were very plentiful in the Wild Cat range in Scotts Bluff, Banner and Morrill counties, and probably also in all the counties traversed by Pine Ridge, as that country is suited to their habits.

The elk, and the black-tail and white-tail deer will not be described here, but will receive attention in the next chapter.

There were panthers or mountain lions here many years ago, their range being along the Elkhorn and its timbered branches, and no doubt they were also then found on the Verdigris in Sherman and Verdigris townships. So far as is known to me, only one has ever been seen in the county

since its settlement. At one time Mr. E. R. Palmer, one of the first settlers in Cedar township, was out hunting, when he started a panther on the west side of the creek, and followed it west nearly to the place where Elgin now stands. The animal was gray in color, as large as a large dog, had a long tail, and ran with bounds like a big cat. When it stopped to look back at him it turned its head only, and looked back over its shoulder, cat fashion. This is a peculiarity of all the cat family—they turn the head back, but do not turn broadside after the fashion of a deer or elk. Although it was followed several miles, there was no chance to get a shot, and it never was seen here again. I have seen a panther that I followed on the prairie and in the woods of Oregon, many years ago, that acted in precisely the same way.

About fifteen years ago I went to what is now Morrill county, Nebraska, to examine some land for an eastern party, and had occasion to run a section line through some rough, rocky hills that were covered with pine timber. This was in the immediate vicinity of the Wild Cat range, and was in fact just a point or edge of that range of mountainous country. It looked like a fine game country, and several times I ran across tracks of black-tail deer. I stopped with a man who lived on the smooth prairie about a half-mile from this rough country, and he told me the following story:

"There have been two mountain lions living in this part of the country, but I have not seen them for about two years, and whether they have been killed or have left the country I cannot say. They probably have left, for I think I should have heard of it had they been killed. A great many people used to come here to get firewood and timbers from the scrub pines, but they do not come so often now, for a good many have left on account of the dry weather, but they used to come from as far away as forty

miles, generally three or four teams together. About two years ago two men came, having a wagon and team each, and stopped at my well for water. They went down into the timber, got loaded up and camped over night, being all ready to pull out in the morning. The next morning they had harnessed the horses and tied them to the loaded wagons and fed them their grain, and were frying bacon for their own breakfast, when they saw the two mountain lions not far away, looking at them and sniffing the air as if they smelled the bacon. They did not come very near at first, and the men hooked up after finishing breakfast and pulled out, followed by the lions. One of the men had a rather small, short-legged dog, and the lions seemed bent on catching him. They came up closer and closer, and would have caught the dog only he kept right under the front axle between the wheels. One of the men had a loose chain on his load, which he would shake at the lions, and this frightened them some, but they followed on, almost to my house, when they turned and loped back to the hills."

Of the smaller wild animals that were found here when the county was first settled, some have diminished in number, and some have greatly increased. It was very seldom that a skunk was found, either the large striped kind or the small spotted variety, commonly but incorrectly called the civet cat. Now both varieties are numerous. Racoons, badgers, and wildcats are occasionally found now, but are not nearly as plentiful as formerly. The fox squirrel was here at first, but was very rare, while at the present time, being protected by law, they have greatly increased, and are found in the groves all over the country.

There is one animal of the fox kind that has probably entirely disappeared. It is the small gray prairie fox, commonly called the swift, so named from the swiftness with which it runs. It has none of the cunning of its relative, the red fox, and is easily trapped. These animals were quite

common in the early days, but I have not heard of one having been seen for many years. They are probably exterminated.

Rabbits were very abundant in an early day, both the gray or cottontail, and the large jack rabbits. The cottontails are still almost as plentiful as ever, but the jack rabbits have been very much thinned out excepting where there are large tracts of pasture land, where they are yet quite abundant.

CHAPTER XII.

Wild Animals and Birds That Lived Here—Concluded.

The black bear, the red fox and the Canada lynx have all been found in the eastern part of the state, in the hilly, timbered country adjacent to the Missouri river, but insofar as has come to my knowledge, none have been seen in Antelope county. The otter, mink and muskrat were found here when the country was new, and the mink and the muskrat are yet about as plentiful as ever, but the otter have probably nearly disappeared. There was a time when the large gray wolves were abundant here—in an early day they were found everywhere with the buffalo. When the buffalo retired from this country the gray wolves went with them. It is probable that one was seen occasionally by the first settlers, but it was a rare occurrence. The coyote or prairie wolf has always been plentiful here, there seemingly being little or no diminution of their numbers.

To sum up the matter: The last of the buffalo were seen here in July, 1872; the elk and the black-tail deer remained in diminished numbers five or six years longer; the white-tail deer were very scarce after the hard winter of 1880-'81, but there was an occasional one seen until the early nineties. One was killed between Neligh and Clearwater by Geo. W. Rapp of Neligh in the year 1891. A few antelope probably remained as late as the year 1880, but they were not numerous after 1875 or '76. The big wolves, what few there were here, left with the buffalo, and the swifts, or prairie foxes, were killed or trapped or driven out before the year 1890. The beaver all left the country prior to 1880, but as it is their habit to travel from place to place a few have been in the county of recent years, and one was trapped in the Elkhorn about the year 1900. Now and then an otter

has been seen in recent times, and the track of one was found between Oakdale and Neligh in the year 1910. The last one killed, unless I am mistaken, was shot near Oakdale by V. E. Brainard in 1887 or '88. The only panther ever seen in the county is the one spoken of in the preceding chapter. These things are mentioned as I have had my attention called to them, and the dates given may not be exact in every instance, but they are approximately correct. Of course, some of these animals may have been seen in the county recently and that fact may not have come to my knowledge.

Great changes have taken place among the birds that made this county their home, or used it as a stopping place during their migrations in the spring and fall of each year. Some kinds have left us entirely—others are yet with us in diminished numbers—others are as numerous as ever, or in some instances have actually increased in number, and there are a few new varieties now becoming common that were never seen here in the early days. Of the kinds that were common forty years ago, but that are now rarely or never seen, are the wild turkey, the raven, the magpie and the curlew. The magpies, however, are to some extent coming back again; for the last two winters they have been seen in quite large numbers in the timbered ravines of Cedar creek. Of those that were common but are now very rare are the turkey buzzard and the plover.

Among those that have greatly diminished in number are the wild geese, the different varieties of brants and wild ducks of many kinds, also prairie chickens and sharp-tail grouse. Occasionally there has been seen here a pelican, a blue heron, a loon, and now and then a small flock of white swans, but this country is avoided by them of late years. Among those that have greatly increased in number are the blackbirds, robins, bluebirds, blue-jays, brown thrushes and quails. Among those that have about held their own are the meadow larks, turtle doves, cat birds,

swallows, martins, night hawks, kingfishers, kingbirds, song sparrows, bobolinks, yellow-hammers, woodpeckers, the hairy, the downey and the red heads, and the Baltimore orioles. Of the new kinds that are now common, but that were either entirely unknown in an early day or were very rare, are the wood thrush, the rose-breasted grosbeak, the olive backed thrush, the peewee, and the orchard oriole. There are also two new birds that we perhaps could well do without—the crow and the English sparrow, but of this I am not sure. Of the birds that are remarkable for the beauty of their plumage or the rich melody of their songs that visit us occasionally may be mentioned the cardinal grosbeck, the scarlet tanager and the mocking bird. The mocking bird is quite common in the southern part of the state but is rare here; I have been hoping that they would visit us oftener. About two years ago, a Lewis woodpecker was seen by me for three or four days. He made his headquarters in a dead box elder tree that had been left standing for the birds, and from which he drove off a pair of flickers that were building a nest in a cavity. They are rare here, but are common farther west.

Besides those already named we have in great abundance the tohee, the junco, at least two kinds of vireos, the indigo bunting, the gold finches, the wrens, the horned larks, the nuthatch, the brown creeper, the kill-deer, the chickadee and other kinds not so well known. I have attempted to name only those that are of the most common and best known varieties. There are very many kinds of birds, chiefly small ones, that visit our groves and thickets and the tall grass and weeds of our prairies, that I cannot even call by name. Prof. Lawrence Bruner says that there are as many as 400 different kinds of birds found within the borders of Nebraska.

I wish that some attention might be given to the subject of bird study in every district school in the county. If

every school district had at least one book that describes accurately all of our most common and useful birds, and if during the spring and fall terms this book was consulted two or three times a week, or even every day, and the children taught to name the different kinds of birds at sight from the description given in the reference book, and at the same time were taught the use these birds are to the farmers, it would create an interest in the subject, and we would soon have a county full of bird lovers, and it would result in a great increase in the number of these friends of the farmer. The county superintendent should see to it that some such book as "Bird Neighbors," by Neltje Blanchan, is used in every school district in the county.

In early days Antelope county was a poor man's paradise. I doubt if the Garden of Eden was more beautiful than was Antelope county before it was desecrated by man. I do not see how the Garden of Eden could have surpassed Antelope county in beauty, for God created both, and no doubt pronounced them both good. The results were different—in the first case God drove man out of the garden —in the second case man drove out or marred many of the beautiful things that were found in Antelope county. He has driven out the elk, the deer, the antelope, the wild turkey, the curlew, the otter and the beaver. He has ruined the prairie grass and all the most beautiful of the wild flowers; but let him be given credit for what he has done by way of compensation. He has planted orchards and has dotted the county all over with thousands of acres of planted groves, which has partly changed the face of the country from that of native prairie to one of diversified prairie and timber, and by his railroads, telephones and telegraphs has made communication easy with all the rest of the world. If a strike occurs in the morning in the coal mines of Wales, or if the emperor of China abdicates his throne, or if there is an earthquake in Italy, we read of it in the evening papers.

Therefore it may be that things are about evened up after all.

The elk, the white-tail deer and the black-tail deer were all found here when the country was new. They are all closely related, but they differ a good deal in size, appearance and habits. I have seen quite a good many deer of both varieties weighed, after they were ready to ship for market—this means of course with the head and hide on—but I have never seen an elk weighed. A full-grown, white-tail buck when fat will weigh from 150 to 175 pounds, and sometimes a very large one will weigh 200 pounds—a full-grown fat doe will weigh about 50 pounds less than a buck. A black-tail deer will weigh about fifty pounds more than the white-tail when in the same condition, although a very large buck might weigh 75 pounds more than a white-tail. The elk is from two and a half to three times as large as a black-tail deer.

The flesh of the doe elk is always sweet and good, even when the animal is thin, but it is at its best from about the first of September to the first of January. The flesh of the buck is good in July and August, but gets strong in taste and smell by the latter part of September, and is almost unfit to eat thereafter for four or five months. It loses its strong taste after a time, but the animal remains thin in flesh until about the next July. The flesh of both varieties of deer is nearly always sweet and good, but sometimes that of an old buck will taste somewhat strong if killed after about the first of December. During the spring and summer the elk are scattered about over the country in small herds until the fawns are six weeks or two months old, when they invariably begin to collect in large herds, sometimes numbering hundreds in a bunch. In Nebraska, however, I have never seen more than sixty in a herd excepting on one occasion, and generally twenty to thirty was about the limit. In September the old master buck would drive all

Prairie Hen.

the weaker and younger ones out of the herd, and would endeavor to keep them out, but this kept him very busy for a month or two. When driven out of the herd the smaller and younger bucks get together in twos and threes and thus keep together for company. A big old fellow, however, who has been the boss of the herd, but has been defeated in battle, keeps by himself and is avoided by the others, because of his surly, quarrelsome disposition. It is good sport to hunt and kill such a one, for he is almost sure to furnish a fine pair of horns, but his flesh is absolutely unfit to eat. Along in November they all get together again, and remain in large herds until it is time for the fawns to appear in the spring. The elk are keen of sight and scent, and they are very difficult to approach excepting by those who thoroughly understand their habits and peculiarities. When feeding, if on rolling or hilly land there are some of them always on some of the highest points where a look-out can be had in all directions. When they lie down to rest, they always choose a place where the lay of the land is such that they can either see or smell the hunter when he attempts to approach them. There will also be some on the high points that can see in all directions, so that it is difficult to approach from any direction without being discovered. When disturbed they will always run into the wind, travel for four or five miles, then turn abruptly to the right or left for a quarter of a mile or so and then choose a spot similar in situation to the one they left, and either go to feeding or lie down again. It is easy to find them, because they are large in size, and generally go in droves, but it is not easy to get near enough for a fair shot.

They cannot run nearly as fast as either kind of deer, but they show more cunning in out-witting their enemies than do the deer. The black-tail deer's home is in a rough, hilly country, and they are perhaps about the easiest game to kill where they have been hunted but little, that is to be

found anywhere but when hunted much they become very watchful and exceedingly difficult to approach. It is sport to hunt them even when not very successful, because they live where there is wood, water, shelter, grass and everything necessary to a good camping ground. Half the pleasure in hunting comes from camping out in just the right kind of a place, one quarter comes from rambling over the country, seeing something new every day, breathing the fresh air and enjoying the bright sunshine and one quarter comes from looking for game and shooting it if you can. There is no animal that I have ever hunted that affords more real enjoyment than the black-tail deer. The black-tail deer does not seek to secrete itself by hiding in thickets of brush or in patches of big weeds nearly so much as does the white-tail. It is very apt to lie down near the top of a steep hill, or sometimes on the very top, where it can see in most directions and hear and smell in others, and where its color so harmonizes with the surroundings that it is not readily observed . It is almost sure to lie down where two or three bounds will take it behind some object that will protect it from the sight of the hunter. They are cunning and know how to take care of themselves all right. Their mode of running is different from that of the white-tail. They bound to their feet in an instant and spring away with quick, rapid bounds, raising all four feet from the ground at once, suggesting that they are jumping stiff-legged. They make rapid progress, however, and one has to shoot quickly or lose his chance.

The white-tail deer are found on level lands where there is tall grass in which they can hide—along the edges of the swamps where there are willows, cat-tail flags and coarse grass—in hilly or rolling lands where there are ravines filled with big weeds, and along all streams where there is timber and brush or big grass. They were found all over Antelope county more or less, but more especially

along the Elkhorn and its tributaries, on Willow creek and on the Bazile and Verdigris. The black-tail deer were found in the rough hills in the southwestern part of the county, on the Verdigris in the northwestern part, and to a very limited extent on Cedar creek. The elk traveled about from place to place, and were as apt to be found in one part of the country as another, and frequently for months did not come into the county at all.

CHAPTER XIII.

Hunting Stories—Antelope—White-tail Deer—Elk.

When the first settlers came to this county there was great abundance and a great variety of game here. Antelope and white-tail deer were more plentiful than any other kinds of large animals, and elk and black-tail deer were not at all uncommon. Wild geese, ducks and brants were very abundant every spring and fall, curlew and plover were plentiful in the spring and summer, this country being their nesting place, and prairie chickens and sharp tail grouse were at home here winter and summer in great numbers, and wild turkeys were found along all the timbered streams and ravines of the county. The kind of season, whether wet or dry, made a good deal of difference as to the abundance of ducks, geese and brants. If the season was dry they passed over and did not alight in very great numbers; but if the wet weather ponds were filled with water, these migratory birds would visit us by the tens of thousands.

Almost every settler had a gun of some sort, either a rifle or a single or double barrel shot-gun, all, of course, being muzzle loaders of the old style, and nearly every settler did more or less hunting. If any were unable to kill any large game they could at least get a mess of prairie chickens or ducks, as occasion required. Some also made traps for catching prairie chickens, and some set small steel traps, baited with corn, in the edges of the wet weather ponds, for ducks and geese. Everybody had more or less game, and it helped out wonderfully, especially whenever the grasshoppers foreclosed their lien on our corn and gardens. After the Indian raid in the late fall of 1870, fifty army guns were furnished to a home military company by the order of Gen. Augur in command of the Department of the

Platte. These guns were never called in by the government, and, as they were with one or two exceptions good shooting guns, were of large caliber and long range, and as fortunately they were not needed against the Indians, they did come in handy in enabling the settlers who learned how to use them to supply themselves and neighbors with fresh meat. Game in almost every case was hunted only to furnish a supply of fresh meat when needed. Deer and elk were not hunted in the spring or early summer, but antelope were hunted at any season when they could be found, but only the bucks were killed in the spring-time. As the antelope went west generally to winter where there was better winter pasture than there was here they were in better flesh in the early spring than were the buck deer —hence when we needed meat in the spring-time we usually hunted buck antelope. Of all the game that I have ever hunted, the most difficult to approach is the antelope, where they have been worried and shot at until they have become wild. They have a great deal of curiosity, and when an object that they do not understand is seen at a distance, they will approach to investigate, but will seldom come near enough for a shot, unless in a country where they have not been hunted.

At one time when hunting for deer in a rough country, having had poor success in finding game, I followed up a ravine to the edge of a smooth undulating table-land that was two or three miles wide, thinking there might be antelope in sight. Peering cautiously through the tall grass that fringed the edge of the table, there, within a quarter of a mile, were five antelope feeding. All kinds of wild animals are always on the lookout for danger. These antelope would feed for a half minute or so, then raise their heads and take a look around for possible danger, and then put their heads down again to feed. Some of them had their heads up and were on the look out for enemies all the time. As is always

the case they were wary and watchful. I had a field glass with me and watched them for some time. With this glass I could plainly see their eyes, and could see the movement of their jaws as they chewed their food. They were too far off for a shot, and there was not the least cover after leaving the fringe of scattering tall grass at the head of the ravine where I lay concealed. I knew that if I rose up they would be gone in an instant. Frequently, however, any kind of game will stop to investigate before running away if the object of their suspicion is lying flat upon the ground so that it cannot plainly be seen. I started to crawl toward the game, and although I could see them plainly all the time through the short grass, they paid no attention whatever to me. I think they did not notice me at all, from the fact that the sun being almost down, and at my back, its bright rays must have blinded their vision. It took quite a while to crawl forty or fifty rods, but I did it, and got an antelope at a single shot, but they were too far away for a second shot by the time I had thrown in another cartridge.

At another time I was hunting deer in Cedar township, and not having any luck, thought of trying a chance at antelope in the smoother country farther away from the creek. Following out a small ravine toward the head and climbing a steep bank, I caught a glimpse of two or three antelope just disappearing over a little hill not more than twenty rods away. Supposing they had seen me, I started on the run, thinking to get a long distance shot when they appeared at the top of the next rise of ground. But they had not seen me at all, and on coming to the place where I had seen them disappear, they were found feeding in a little valley just at the foot of the hill. I got one at a running shot, but had no chance to get in a second shot before they were out of reach. This was in September—we were out of meat and this antelope was very fat—it was a lucky kill. However, when a man hunts antelope in a country

White Tail Deer.

where they are acquainted with the white man and his long range guns, he is pretty apt to come home gameless.

One fall I was hunting in Garfield county and was camped in the sand hill country in a big thicket of willows at the very head of a little creek, a tributary of Cedar river. The weather had been cold, somewhat stormy and unpleasant, and we had been having poor luck, having succeeded in killing but one deer, and having found no fresh signs of elk. There had been five or six inches of snow on the ground which had thawed and settled down considerably, but it was still a pretty good tracking snow. I struck out early one very cold morning, the mercury, I should think, being down to zero, but there was no wind, and as walking is good exercise there was no difficulty in keeping warm. After a mile or two of travel I struck a fresh deer's track and following it cautiously soon started a fine white-tail doe. She was lying down among some little sand hummocks, and although she was not more than fifty yards away, I was not quick enough to get a shot before she was out of reach. Probably I followed the track for five miles before coming up with the deer again, but this time she was on the lookout, and saw me before I was near enough to shoot. I gave it up, and as the chase had led away from camp, I faced about and took a direction that would lead partly toward camp. Coming to the edge of a little sand hill valley covered with tall grass, I struck two fresh deer's tracks that were leading up the valley and directly toward camp. Taking a careful look with the glass, I saw the two deer about a mile away near the head of the valley, and just at the edge of the tall grass. This was my chance. When two deer are found together ,there is a good chance to get both, provided the first one shot at is killed on the spot. The other deer will then nearly always give a few bounds, turn broadside and look back for his mate; this gives a splendid shot at the second deer. If there are more than two deer together and

one is killed, the others will generally get out as fast as they can without stopping. By keeping on the lowest ground, stooping over and walking half bent, and part of the way going on hands and knees, I managed to get within fifty or sixty rods without being seen. The ground now between me and the deer was perfectly level, and partly covered with grass waist high. I now made good progress on hands and knees without being discovered until I was near enough for a long shot, when all at once one of the deer had a glimpse of my hat, as my body was entirely hidden by the tall grass. I had taken the precaution to trim my hat with grass, so that it was completely covered, but the deer had seen the motion of my head. The nearest deer started at once to run toward me, followed by the other, as they will often do when they discover an object in motion near the ground. Had I been standing up straight these deer would have run off at first sight, and there would have been little chance for a shot. As it was, the nearest one came up within seventy-five or eighty steps and stopped to gaze. Rising carefully to my knees, with the gun all ready for firing, I brought the nearest one down in its tracks—the other ran away, but stopped, turned broadside and gave a splendid chance for a shot as the tall grass did not interfere at all as it did in the first instance. I got both deer with a single shot at each, which is doing much better than usual. They were white-tails, a buck and a doe, and both in splendid condition.

Two things are necessary to make a first-rate hunter. The first essential is, to know how to find and approach the game—the second is to be a good shot. A man may be a first-rate marksman and a very poor hunter; on the other hand, he may be an indifferent marksman and yet be a pretty good hunter. To become a successful hunter one must study the habits of the wild animals, must know their haunts, how to approach the game, and where to ex-

pect them to go if he lies in wait. He must be quick of eye, must love the sport, must have patience and perseverance, and must hunt just as carefully the last hour of the day as he does the first, and lastily he must be a fairly good shot. However, he will kill lots of game even if he is a poor shot if he has all the other qualifications mentioned.

One fall in the early days I was hunting in Valley county, when the settlements in that county were very new and were confined almost entirely to the valleys of the North and Middle Loup rivers. The rough hill country was well supplied with black-tail deer; there were also a good many white-tail deer, and now and then a band of elk. I have never seen a better game country anywhere than was found in Greeley, Valley, Sherman and Custer counties in the early seventies. There were abundant signs of elk, but as yet none had been seen. I was hunting some very rough breaks on the south side of the North Loup, ten or twelve miles above the present site of Ord. I had seen many fresh signs of elk, and two or three times had heard them calling to one another with their long-drawn musical cry, which I cannot describe. There was no wind, and I moved toward the elk cries very slowly and cautiously. Finally, just at the head of a deep bluffy draw, perhaps fifty rods away, I saw two or three elk lying down where they could watch in my direction, and just beyond there, but out of sight, I again heard calls of other members of the herd. The ravine at the head of which these elk were lying was pretty well covered in the bottom with big blue-stem grass. By going down to the left a short distance I could keep out of sight, and reaching the bottom of the ravine could crawl up under cover of the tall blue-stem grass to a position near the place where the elk were lying. But the first thing to do was to trim my hat with blue-stem; this done, I crawled on my hands and knees toward the elk. I must have gotten within a hundred yards before they seemed to be looking

in my direction, and then they did not get up or seem to be at all alarmed. They no doubt saw the grass move, but could not tell what was there. I knew there was no danger of their running away until they began to show symptoms of alarm. Such a time is very interesting and exciting. It is worth a week of hard hunting to come to such a moment. You are almost sure of a good shot and of getting the game. Had there been a puff of wind in the direction toward the elk they would have scented the enemy at once, but even then there was a chance for a good shot before they could get fairly started to run. But they were not in the least alarmed—they saw something moving in the grass, but did not know what it was. Finally they got up very deliberately and the one nearest stood looking, breast toward me. It takes but an instant to draw a bead at such a time—the gun cracked, the elk turned, gave one quick strong bound and stopped—his frame began to tremble, he tried to run, but fell to the ground. The shot had struck low down in the center of the breast, and had passed clear through the vitals. I saw only three or four of the herd, but there was a great trampling and a clatter of hoofs as they got under way. I sent a shot after one of the others which crippled it badly, and probably inflicted a mortal wound, but I was unable in the rough ground and without a dog, to find it. This was the largest elk I ever killed, and one of the fattest. At that time I was working for the land department of the B. & M. R. R. Co., and the horns, a very long, heavy, twelve point pair, were sent by the company to England to be mounted in one of their land offices in the old country.

It is not always easy to get game even where it is abundant. I have hunted hard all day in a good black-tail country when the ground was free from snow, and where game signs were plentiful, without seeing a single deer. When there is a tracking snow of course it is different, for then one can follow the tracks and get sight of the game,

even if he does not get a chance for a shot. And besides one cannot always bring down the game even when he has a fair chance. Every fair shot will not be a lucky one—there are bound to be a good many misses. I would say that a man who knows how to hunt game, and who is a fairly good shot, may think himself lucky if he kills every third time.

CHAPTER XIV.

Hunting Elk and Deer in Wheeler and Garfield Counties.

I am unable to tell positively just when the events occurred that are related in this article. It was about the middle of the seventies, probably in 1876 or 1877.

Some time in the early fall, probably in September, Mr. George Clother, proprietor of the Clother House of Columbus, Neb., asked me to bring in a load of game to Columbus for sale, stating that he would buy for his hotel the hind quarters of an elk, or if elk could not be had, he would take a deer, but elk was preferred. He said also he thought there would be no difficulty in selling a load of game, and that he would help to find a market for it. I had never hunted for profit, but only for recreation and to supply the table with meat. We were too poor to afford a beef animal, if we wanted a change in diet from fat pork; and besides pork was too scarce to be had at all times of the year, so that sometimes we were out of meat unless game could be had. These statements will apply with equal force to every family in the neighborhood as well as to my own. It was agreed with Mr. Clother that the elk meat should be furnished when the weather got cold, either in November or December, provided it could be had ,and if not, then he surely might expect a good fat deer.

That fall was favorable for husking corn, and it was all gathered early, so that by the latter part of November we were ready to start out upon the hunt. Hank was the only one who went with me, as this trip was meant to be one of profit, and it was not desirable to make a division of the proceeds among too many partners. Hank was a neighbor whose homestead was just a half a mile from my own. It was arranged that during this trip his stock should

be turned in with mine to be cared for during his absence. What he wanted was to get some venison for his winter supply, and he was willing to go along for a small share of the game killed. It was therefore agreed that I should furnish everything for the trip, team, wagon, horse feed and provisions for ourselves, and that I should do the hunting. Hank on his part was to mind the camp, take care of the team, and do most of the cooking. For his share of the game, he was content to have one-half of the fore quarters of all game killed by me, and to have all the game killed by himself; it being expressly stipulated, however, that his hunting should not trespass upon his camp work, and that he should always get into camp in time to get supper and do the camp work before it became very dark.

My gun used on this trip was an army carbine, Sharp's pattern, being a single shot breech loader, caliber 50-70—as good a rifle as I ever hunted with excepting possibly a Winchester rifle that was used on several of my hunting trips. Hank if I remember correctly, carried an old style double barrel, muzzle loading shot gun with percussion lock. I think it was borrowed for the occasion, and even if it was old and out of style, it was still a good gun of its kind. He expected to get some grouse with it anyway even if he did not succeed in getting deer. On a hunting trip grouse come in first rate as an agreeable change of diet.

Possibly I feel more vividly and hear more plainly the "call of the wild," than do my neighbors of the present day. Whether this is so or not I do not know, or whether this trait in me was inborn or acquired I cannot tell; nor does it matter, but that I have it in an eminent degree is undeniable. I hearken back to those old times with feelings of unmingled pleasure, not to say of rapture. Let us drop the thread of this story for a moment and go back to those golden days of the olden time. You may say that it is the reverie of an old man who has already passed his 80th birth-

day, and it may be so, but if it be a dream, it is a pleasant one. Bear in mind that we are now considering conditions as they existed in 1876 and 1877, but the statements now to be made will apply equally as well to 1878 and 1879.

The very strenuous days of the first years that attended the settling of the county had passed away. The Indians were no longer troublesome—the "grasshopper" had almost ceased to be a "burden," and the ravages of the April storm of 1873, the worst ever known in the history of the state, were but a memory. Better times had already come to our new settlements, and still brighter days were in prospect. There was a buoyancy of spirit and a pervading feeling of hope and expectancy that thrilled the minds and hearts of the people of the community to a much greater degree than is apparent at the present time. There was a community of interest and a brotherhood of feeling that warmed the hearts of the people toward one another, and that prompted unusual interest in each other's welfare. People still lived in log houses, in sod houses and in dugouts, but they saw that this would not always be. They looked for better things than they then possessed, and felt sure of their coming. The soil had been productive beyond their greatest expectations, and although they did not expect to live to see their farms worth a hundred dollars an acre, they did hope to soon have good improvements on these farms, and to have all the other accessories of older communities, such as a railroad, market towns near by, and schools, churches and good roads. If they did not then possess all the conveniences and luxuries of our communities of the present day they were also free from many of our present ills and afflictions. There were no mortgages falling due, for the loan agents had not yet invaded this territory. If they had no automobiles to get out of fix and to vex and worry the owners and spoil their tempers, they did have good driving teams and good saddle horses. There

was no cornstalk disease among the cattle nor cholera to kill off the hogs. If they only had a weekly or semi-weekly mail, they needed no other, for this mail brought to them the New York Weekly Tribune and Harpers' Magazine for the old people, and Youth's Companion and St. Nicholas for the young folks. Their mode of life tended to create sound minds in sound bodies, and thus to promote ardent, hopeful temperaments. It seems to me that the future held out greater promise to the people of that day from their viewpoint than it does to the people of today from their viewpoint. But of this I leave the intelligent reader to judge.

But to resume the story:

Everything had been arranged the day before so that the morning we were to start out, all that was necessary to do was to load up and be off. It was the intention to go southwest to the big Cedar river, striking it in Greeley county, and to follow it up until a good hunting ground was found. We did finally go to the head of the Cedar in what is now Garfield county, but was then attached to Wheeler county. Camp was made the first night in a grove of ash trees among the rough hills in the northern part of Greeley county. It was a dry camp, but the horses had been watered at the crossing of Beaver creek, and we could melt snow for coffee. The night was cold, but we had plenty of blankets and buffalo robes as well as good firewood, and the horses were blanketed as was usually the case on such trips. It snowed some during the day, and continued to snow a little through the night, so that in the morning the ground was covered to the depth of about two inches.

The next morning going on toward the west, Hank drove the team, while I carried the rifle, going on ahead to get a shot if any game should be seen. Several deer were started, but no chance for a shot. The weather was

cold and growing colder all the time, so that we were both glad to go afoot most of the day. Toward night the weather cleared, but the northwest wind continued to blow strong, and the cold to increase. Coming to the Cedar valley several miles above the place where Spalding now stands, we found a sod house and stable, the last up the valley at that time. The weather had become so very cold, and there being no good camping place close by, we asked for lodgings for the night and were refused. This was a surprise, because at that early day a stranger was supposed to be always welcome. The place was occupied by two young men, recently from the east, who were not yet used to the ways of our western world. The case was argued for a little while and finally reluctant consent to remain over night was given Before bed time we had become acquainted and were good friends. The next morning we were invited to stay until the weather moderated. At that time the mercury fell to twenty-two degrees below zero, so I afterwards learned, and the northwest wind did not fail us. We stayed two days and three nights during which time I did some hunting in the rough hills nearby, but without result except that it furnished exercise and an appetite.

The third morning, the weather having moderated, we pulled out up the river valley to the northwest. There was no sign of a road, nor had there been since crossing Beaver creek at Whipple's Ford in Boone county, a few miles above the present village of Loretto. We did not stop to hunt at all, nor did we see many signs of game until the middle of the afternoon when six or eight miles above the present village of Ericson, in Wheeler county, a white-tail doe jumped out of the tall slough grass near the river and stopped to look. She waited too long, for one shot brought her down. Going on a short distance, a black-tail buck was seen in the low sand dunes about half a mile away. It was not yet camping time, but as it would take some time to try

Coyote.

for the deer, it was decided that Hank should make camp while I tried my luck for a shot. It proved to be easier than was supposed—the deer was reached by crawling on hands and knees under cover of a low knoll, and was killed at a single shot. Camp was made and the deer brought in before dark. This was luck—pure luck. We were traveling up the valley as fast as the team could walk but were not hunting, and we found these two deer without effort on our part. Wood was not to be had at this camp, and fire was made of coarse slough grass, cut with our butcher knives, and twisted into knots or little bundles before burning.

Next day we crossed what is now the east line of Garfield county, and made camp in a thick bunch of willows. Signs of deer had become plenty, and there were also elk tracks not very old. We did not unload the wagon, but blanketing the horses and putting them on picket ropes, we ate luncheon and went off north together to prospect for game. There were signs of elk and deer, and we concluded that the right place had been found. About two miles from camp a black-tail buck jumped out from behind a knoll and starting to run was brought to the ground by one shot from my rifle. The buck was dragged to camp by hand, the job being an easy one as the snow here was deeper than it was further down the valley. The camp was made quickly; an old rag carpet stretched over eight little straight poles cut from the timber on my homestead, being used as a substitute for a regular tent. Nobody of my acquaintance at that time was rich enough to afford a genuine canvas tent. However, our little tepee was comfortable. An opening was made by turning back the edges of the carpet on one side, and in front of this opening was the fire. We now had everything necessary for a good camp—a comfortable substitute for a tent, good shelter from the winds afforded by the thick brush, water and grass handy, and plenty of dead

willows for fuel. A pole was planted on a knoll nearby, and on this was hung a grain sack as a signal to locate the camp, as the tepee was hidden by the willows.

The next morning I got an early start, taking along a luncheon and going west to hunt elk, although deer would be welcome if elk were not found. The country was sand hill, in some places consisting of low knolls and little flats, in others of big sand hills with blow-outs where the drifting sands had been scooped out by the winds, and in other places still, wide flats covered with heavy grass . I had not gone far, when on rising a little knoll I was met by a coyote coming on the run from the opposite direction. I was surprised at the suddenness of his appearance and he was badly scared. Turning quickly aside he ran off in a different direction. I thought I would try my luck at a running shot, and to my surprise the shot brought him down. Taking off the skin and tying it up in as small a bundle as possible so as to carry it easily I went on. Soon there were fresh signs of elk and going on slowly, and hunting carefully, a band of thirty-six was found about four miles from camp. They were in a difficult place to approach, but I was not sorry for this, because there is much more satisfaction in getting game when one has to work hard for it than when it is easily done. They were directly west, and on the farther side of a level hay flat that was half a mile wide. On the west and north of the herd were low, sandy knolls, on the south and southwest rather high sand ridges. The wind was moderate and was blowing from the southwest. The only way to reach them was to go north, then west and then come in from the northwest under cover of the low knolls. It took a long time, the distance to be traveled being about two miles, and in some places this had to be done on hands and knees. Finally under cover of big grass and a small knoll a good chance was had for a shot. By this time nearly all were lying down, some

in the tall grass, and others on the knolls where they could watch for enemies. My cap had been trimmed with grass, and my hunting jacket of brown denim was dead grass color. Carefully I crawled to the top of the little knoll that had afforded shelter, poked the rifle barrel through the scattered stalks of grass in front, reached forward with the left hand to remove some grass leaves from between the sights, then took a peep along the gun barrel to see that everything was clear . This was a very interesting and a very exciting moment, but everything had to be done with great deliberation, for a quick movement would alarm a large cow elk that was lying on top of a little knoll not more than seventy-five steps away, and was looking right towards me, but whether she had seen me or not I could not tell. Everything was ready—I was sure of that elk. The sight was quickly caught, the trigger pulled, and I saw the hair curl on the breast of the elk where the bullet struck, and heard the "thud" of the ball as it went home. The elk sprang to her feet and was off in an instant with the balance of the herd, but I knew she could not go far. I did not stop to watch—I knew from the lay of the land and the direction of the wind just where the herd would run, and throwing in another cartridge I ran south a short distance, gaining the top of a low ridge just in time to see the elk filing by in the narrow valley before me. They were still very close, and two more shots in quick succession brought down two more elk. The one hit at the first shot had now left the others, and going a few steps to one side had partly fallen and partly lain down. A shot through the head soon after finished her. A parting shot was given the herd when they were some distance away and another elk was slightly wounded, but as it kept up with the herd and bled very little I followed only a short distance. By the time the three elk were dressed, which in itself was quite a job, it was night and I was four miles from camp.

On the way to camp four white-tail deer were jumped up only a little way off to one side, and I fired twice at them by moon light but without danger to the deer. When within a mile of camp I came in sight of a fire that Hank had built on a hill to light me in, having carried brush on his shoulders a quarter of a mile for that purpose. The venison steak for supper that night was well cooked, juicy and delicious, the pancakes were excellent and the coffee never better. Hank had had good luck too, having brought down a fine white-tail buck with his shotgun. We now had a good load, four deer and three elk, and the next day after bringing in the game, we started for home by the most direct route, going back through the southern part of Holt county about a mile south of Willow lake.

CHAPTER XV.

Hunting Elk and Deer in Custer County.

It was the second week in November, 1872, while we were in camp on Oak creek in the western part of Howard county, Nebraska, that the events occurred that are herein related. Belonging to our camp were twelve persons—four surveyors, four assistants, two teamsters, one camp helper, and a cook. Five of these were from Antelope county; namely, George H. McGee, Bob, Will and Charley Skiles and myself; all the others were from Columbus, Nebraska, excepting one young man from Omaha. The company was in charge of I. N. Taylor, then of Columbus, but later of Antelope county, and who afterwards became well known to many of the early settlers of this part of the state. At this time Mr. Taylor was a member of the State Immigration Board, its headquarters being in Omaha. The duties of this office called him to Omaha occasionally, and as he was required to go to Lincoln to confer with the officials of the land department of the B. & M. railroad company, it happened that he was away from camp about half the time. Whenever Mr. Taylor was called away from camp to be gone a few days, he would, before going, call the four surveyors into his tent and give them instructions about the work to be done in his absence, but he never placed any one in charge of the camp. This was an unfortunate mistake on his part. There were two or three men in camp who were shiftless, and who would shirk duty at any time when they could, and these men were almost worthless in Mr. Taylor's absence. He ought when absent to have left George H. McGee in charge—he was equally as competent as Mr. Taylor himself. and was popular with us all.

Let me here pay a tribute to the memory of George H. McGee, not by way of praise, but as a deserved encomium. Work in the field such as ours was at that time, brings out and shows off all the qualities of the man, whether good or bad. We were in camp together that fall for seventy-five days, and I got to know Mr. McGee well. He was thoughtful and deliberate, always displaying under all circumstances an unruffled temper and a genial disposition. He was one of the strong, true men among those who settled Antelope county.

Our work was to survey and plat the lands belonging to the B. & M. railroad company. The plats were intended to show the topography of each quarter section, and the field notes accompanying these plats were to describe the quality of the soil, and to give the comparative value of each quarter section for farming purposes.

The reader will bear in mind that the year 1872 was a very early day in the history of Nebraska. All central Nebraska at that time, excepting a narrow strip along the U. P. railroad, was either wholly unsettled or just beginning to settle up. Oakdale contained only four or five houses—Neligh had not even been platted—Albion had three or four houses and was called Hammond. There was not a village in Greeley, Valley nor Sherman counties, and St. Paul, Howard county, was just starting. Our field work when it first began on the second day of September, was within the limits of the scattered settlements, but for the last four weeks the work had taken us just to or beyond their western border.

The work was not hard or difficult, and the outdoor life was very agreeable. Very seldom, if ever, have I put in the time for two months and a half at any kind of work that was more congenial to my nature than this work in the fall of 1872. Besides we were seeing a country that was

new to us, and were becoming intimately acquainted with the character of the country over which we traversed and worked. The table was well supplied, Mr. Taylor seeing to it that in addition to bacon and salt pork, a quarter or half a beef was provided when needed. However, as the extreme frontier was approached game became plentiful, and Mr. Taylor finding that my rifle could be depended upon to supply the camp with venison, had quit sending off for fresh beef, and he expected me to supply the outfit with fresh meat. As game was easy to get, it was not difficult generally to do this in addition to doing my regular work. My rifle would be taken along, either by myself or helper, and when game was killed, some one would be sent out to bring it into camp. However during the first week in November we were out of venison and had to come down to salt pork, the bacon also having been exhausted. By extra exertion, however, I succeeded in killing a deer, and marked the place so it could be found next day by one of the men from camp. Mr. Taylor at this time was away on a trip to Lincoln and the men left in camp refused to go after the deer, it being in a somewhat difficult place to reach, as a bad creek had to be crossed. I was vexed, and expressing my opinion in language more emphatic than complimentary of the men whose place it was to go after the venison and would not, threw down my rifle declaring I would not carry it another day—they might eat salt pork. My work the next day would lead me in a different direction, but Mr. McGee, whose work would take him within three or four miles of the deer, volunteered to bring it to camp. This he did, he and his assistant carrying it a considerable distance to the place where they had left a team. I think everybody in camp was more or less upset over this episode, excepting Mr. McGee, whose even temper continued as calm and placid as ever. When Mr. Taylor returned this deer was about all used up, and we were on the brink of getting back to salt pork again. I

had kept my word and had not used the rifle again at all, although two or three others had borrowed it without any success in getting game. I did not intend to say anything about it to Mr. Taylor, but on his return someone told him, explaining why we were out of fresh meat. Mr. Taylor sent for me and I went to his tent, partly expecting a reprimand for not using my rifle. However, he said nothing about it, but explained that I was to start the next morning, with Bob Skiles as my helper, for the valley of the Middle Loup river, in Sherman county, to examine and report on the timber found on railroad land. He instructed me to first make the necessary examination, and then to hunt until we had killed a load of game for the camp. That is how there happens to material for this story.

Getting an early start next morning we followed up the valley of Oak creek seven or eight miles, passing the place where the village of Ashton now stands, and then turning to the southwest made our way over the rough divide for about twelve miles to Middle Loup valley. We had a team of horses and a wagon to carry the camping outfit and bring back the game that it was expected would be killed. Of course we took none of the small supply of venison still left in camp, there not being a quarter enough to last the camp until our return. We expected to get a deer before reaching the Loup valley, but none were seen, and game signs were scarce. We struck the Middle Loup a mile or two below the present site of Loup City, where there was a cottonwood grove in which we encamped. While Bob put out the team and made camp, I started out with the compass and tripod to find a section corner and get a start to begin work. This was easy, for the survey was new, having been done only a few years before, and the government mounds were plain and most of the corner stakes standing; and besides the prairie had been burned only a few weeks before which exposed the mounds that otherwise

would have been hidden by the grass. The job of locating and examining the timber was a short one and was completed in two or three days. There was no game seen, however, while we were at work, and only an occasional fresh track. It had all left the burned over country. I was glad of this, for now in going up the valley to find a good hunting ground, there would be a chance to explore some new country.

Following up the valley several miles we found a tract that was not burned over, in the southwest corner of Valley county, near the present site of Arcadia, and here we made the first camp. It was nearly night, and while Bob did the camp work I went out with the rifle to get some venison for supper. It should have been easy, but it was not. I got two fair standing shots and missed them both. This was a bad beginning, but such things will happen sometimes. I could account for it only because it was almost night, and the sky was overcast making it difficult to see the gun sights plainly.

The next day our luck changed. We went afoot up the valley four or five miles to the Custer county line, where we found a good place to camp should we wish to move, and while there saw a band of elk a mile perhaps up the valley, coming down out of the hills toward the river. Here was the game we wanted. Great care was necessary in approaching them. Probably this was our only chance to get elk, and we knew it, because usually there is only one band of elk in the same neighborhood. They are always alert, looking out for danger. It is much more difficult to approach a drove of thirty or forty elk than to approach a small band of five or six, for the reason that they are spread out over more territory, and it is difficult to keep hidden from all of them at once . We watched them until they came near the river bank, when they stopped and some of them began to feed. Near the river was a tract of low land, some

of it swampy and covered with willow brush. This afforded cover so that we could walk rapidly most of the way, only now and then having to stoop, or crawl on hands and knees. And now a very unusual thing happened. While going through the willow brush we came upon first, two deer lying down not more than twenty steps away. They got up, made a few jumps and stood looking at us until we were out of sight. We had scarcely left these two, when we came onto three more deer, a large buck and two does, not more than sixty steps away. I drew a bead on the buck, then taking down the gun said to Bob: "We are after elk —these deer if they want to be shot can wait until tomorrow." They were not at all alarmed, and ran off only a few rods. There was little difficulty in getting within easy gunshot of the elk. They had now all gone into the river, some of them having reached the opposite bank, and some having stopped on a sand bar in mid stream. We were lying flat, Bob at my right hand—the elk had seen us but were not alarmed. I said, "Bob you take one on the right hand, I'll take one on the left and shoot when I count three." We each got an elk, one falling in the river the other getting to the opposite bank. I fired the second time and wounded another, but as it could almost keep up with the herd we did not follow it. Bob felt proud enough—it was the first time he had ever killed any large game. We could not drag a whole elk across the stream by hand, and the quick sands were too treacherous to use the team; we therefore skinned out the fore quarters and leaving them to the wolves and ravens and drawing the skin from the fore quarters back over the hind quarters so as to keep out the sand, we drew the hind quarters to the north bank of the stream. We had just time enough left before dark to move camp to the place already selected near the Custer county line. We now wanted two or three deer to make out the load.

Next morning Bob volunteered to stay in camp, boil some elk meat and make a pot pie for dinner while I tried to get a deer. First I hunted through the willow thickets, but the deer were not there. Next I went north to the hills, going but a short distance before I ran onto a large black-tail buck which was killed with one shot. Next I turned to the right, thinking to hunt through the low hills and make camp by noon, so as to be in time for the pot pie. But the pot pie had to wait, for I met with one of the strangest experiences I ever had in hunting, and did not get to camp until two or three o'clock. Before coming to the valley I found a short, deep canyon, with banks almost perpendicular, and going in at the head of it thought I would follow it to the river valley. I had gone but a short distance before I saw a perfectly fresh deer's track in the sand at the bottom of the canyon. It was a very large track and was going down toward the valley. Thinking the deer was probably going to the river for a drink, and that there would be a better chance at him if on high ground, I climbed the bank of the canyon and followed along its course expecting every moment to come in sight of the deer. But I did not see him. On reaching the place where the canyon came out into the valley I found that the deer had gone clear to the mouth of the canyon, and instead of going to the river, had turned and gone back up the canyon again. The tracks were very plain in the sand. I now followed the tracks up the canyon and had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile when on turning the point of a steep bank I came suddenly upon the deer not more than forty steps off. My gun was already cocked, but before I could take aim the deer was out of sight going up a short, steep side draw. He came in sight again just as he went out of the pocket at the top and taking a snap shot at him I fired, not expecting to hit. Going to the top of the bank, the deer was found lying on his side, and trembling or shivering as if he was cold. Taking out

my knife and stepping on one horn and holding the other with my left hand, so that he could not throw his head about, I stuck him, and jumping quickly back out of the way picked up the rifle. The deer, after considerable effort got upon his feet and started to run down into the canyon again, the blood streaming from his throat. He fell before reaching the bottom but rolled the balance of the way down the steep bank. The ball had passed through the neck between the cord and the neck bone. This buck was a whitetail, the largest one I ever killed of that species. He was a twelve pointer and I have always kept the horns, using them for a hat rack. Although we did not have a full load of game, it was thought best to gather it up the next morning and go back to the camp on Oak creek, knowing they needed the meat. Next morning, therefore, we went into the hills to get the deer. On the way out I killed two more, and coming back got another. We now had five whole deer, and the hind quarters of two elk making a good load. That night the weather turned intensely cold and the Loup river froze over. Before night the next day we were gladly welcomed back to camp, with the game which was greatly needed.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Summer Hunt.

Most of these stories are of hunting trips in the fall and early winter when game is at its best—This one will tell of a summer hunt.

In the fall of the year we hunted not only for meat to be used while fresh, but also for meat to be salted and kept in brine like beef, for winter and spring use, and also for drying. I remember that one fall, we had on hand a two bushel grain sack, filled as full as it could be tied, with dried deer and elk meat, and also a barrel full of salted meat in brine. There was no bone in any of the dried meat, and none in any of the salted elk meat, but the salted deer meat contained the ribs only. Together with what fresh venison we had through the winter, and that was a liberal amount, there was more than we could use, and toward spring we gave away to the neighbors a considerable part of the salted meat.

Our hunting trips in the fall of the year took us frequently as far away from home as fifty or sixty miles, and lasted from a week or ten days to three weeks for each trip, the one to Wyoming in 1888 taking about four weeks' time. Our summer hunting trips did not take us far away from home, nor did they last very long, because it was necessary to bring home the game as soon as possible after it was killed in order to take care of the meat before it spoiled, and besides, there was not much time to use in hunting at that season of the year. In the summer time we used to keep the meat in good condition by salting it slightly in crocks, then placing the crocks in a big covered box, sunk in the ground and so arranged that the water from a cold spring flowed through the box. Butter was also kept sweet and cold in the same way.

At one time when we had some venison and several rolls of butter stored in the manner described, there came a heavy rain, the creek raised about fifteen feet during the night, washed away the bank, bringing down tons on tons of earth upon the box, covering it so that it could not be rescued without a great deal of labor. The box with its contents is there yet.

In the fall of the year we killed whenever there was a chance, the bucks, the does and the fawns, but generally from preference selected the bucks and large does if there was a chance to do so. The fawns grow very fast, and by the middle of November are half as large as their mothers. All these game animals were very fat in September and October, but by November the bucks begin to lose flesh. The wild grasses of Nebraska were very nutritious, and the does and fawns kept fat all winter if the snow was not deep, but in severe winters they would become thin before spring. In the spring and summer it was our custom to shoot the bucks only, sparing the does for the sake of the increase.

In the early spring the best game to be had was buck antelope. The antelope mostly went west to spend the winter where there was less snow than here, and where there was an abundance of winter feed, such as the buffalo and gramma grasses. When the antelope began to return to this country from their western winter resort, the bucks, while not fat, were in good condition, and made the best venison to be had at that time of year. We hunted very little in the spring, and that only nearby home to get a buck antelope now and then; excepting that on two or three occasions we made a trip to capture young fawns. However thin and poor the game might become during the winter months, it fattened very quickly after the spring grass started. The same remark will equally apply to domestic stock of all kinds. The value of our native grasses and other

forage plants as a pasture for stock forms a very interesting subject, and possibly may furnish material for a special article at some future time, but not now,—this is a hunting story.

Almost every year in the early days, we made a trip just before harvest time to get fresh meat enough to last at least a part of the time through harvesting and stacking. Upon the present occasion, S. S. King, generally known as Sol. King, of the Cedar creek settlement, went along to look after the camp. All the old settlers will well remember S. S. King. He was a veteran of the civil war, having lost a leg in the service of his country. While he could do little or no hunting, he was a good cook, a good camp keeper, a good smoker, and one of the most entertaining of story tellers; all desirable qualities in a camping companion. It may be also that D. E. Beckwith was along—I am not sure. He was out with me on several occasions but whether at this time or not is uncertain.

We started from Cedar creek going almost directly west and passing about a mile north of where Elgin now stands. While in the low sandy knolls, between Elgin and Clay Ridge we drove near a little band of antelope, that stood watching us, not seeming to be at all alarmed. We were riding in the wagon, and it often happens that both deer and antelope will stand and look, without showing alarm, when driving by with a team, and yet they would run at first sight of anyone on foot. It was a long shot to make, and little chance to hit, except by accident. The team was stopped, and dropping from the wagon on the side opposite the game, resting the rifle against the hind wheel, aim was taken at a single antelope standing in full view on top of a little knoll.

The rear sight was not raised, but instead aim was taken at a point a little above the shoulders of the antelope, with the thought that the ball might fall enough to strike

about the middle of the shoulders. As the gun cracked the antelope gave a bound and fell, then hobbled over the knoll out of sight. Going to the place, it was found partly lying down just beyond the knoll, and a shot through the head finished it. The shot had broken both fore legs at the knee joint. It was a chance shot, and I have been very sorry that I did not step the distance. The longest successful shot I ever made when the distance was determined, was two hundred and thirty paces, at which distance I once killed an elk in Wheeler county. I think the shot at this antelope was somewhat longer, but am not sure. The weather at this time was very warm with a bright sun. We cut off all the thickest of the meat, rubbed it with salt, and spread it out on an old tarpaulin on top of the load to dry. In the evening, it was hung around the camp fire and thus dried and smoked. It cured perfectly. The bones and thin meat were boiled, and it lasted us until more game was killed When on such a trip it is easy to cure meat in this way if the weather is clear, by giving it sunshine in the day time, and the heat and smoke of the camp fire at night. It can even be done without salt, but it is much more palatable if it is first rubbed with salt.

On this trip the mosquitos were very bad. I have never anywhere seen the mosquitos worse than they were in the sand hills of Nebraska in early times, and that it putting it pretty strong, but none too strong. They were bad enough in the clay lands where the grass was big, but nothing like the sand hill country. In the sand hills, excepting in a very dry season there were hundreds of little ponds with more or less water, and filled with a growth of coarse grass and rushes, the breeding place of billions of mosquitos. That country is much drier now than it was. There are thousands on thousands of cattle and horses to feed down the grass, and the mosquitos are not a quarter as thick there now as they were formerly. The first night out we scarcely

Elk or Wapiti Deer.

slept at all. It was too warm to sleep with the head covered, and quite impossible to sleep with it uncovered. The only way to get any sleep was to keep up a thick smudge and sit or lie where it could reach one's head. Without doubt it was as hard on the horses as on ourselves. The second night out was at first, just as bad, and finding it impossible to sleep, I went out where the horses were picketed, and rubbed the mosquitos off their necks and legs, their bodies being blanketed, which helped some. Near the camp was a big blow-out, and thinking there might be a little breeze stirring near the top I went there to investigate. There was no wind, but near the top there were fewer mosquitos. The blow-out was a big one, the hollow covering nearly or quite half an acre, and being probably twenty feet deep, and all clean, bare sand. I went down into it, and there was not a mosquito there . I had learned something. Going back to camp, we carried the bed to the blowout and there slept until after sunrise, without hearing the music of a single one of the pests. We also spent the next night in the same place without being bothered at all.

The morning after our first night in the blow-out, we were late getting breakfast, and we ate it on the rim at the top of the blow-out, so as to be where we could look over the country for game. While eating breakfast we saw a herd of elk about a mile away to the southwest. They were feeding, and were working slowly to the north. After breakfast we saddled the horses and started after them. They were now out of sight, but had not seen us and were not alarmed. We rode perhaps a mile to the southwest, and then turned north to follow the elk, keeping behind the shelter of the sandhills, and riding near enough to the top of one frequently, so as to look sharp ahead, but never showing ourselves on any high place. While doing this we came upon a wolf lying asleep in the tall grass. He had not heard nor smelt us, and we watched him for a minute or two, un-

til he was startled by a noise made by one of the horses. He was a surprised and very badly scared wolf and lost no time in getting away, throwing his head from side to side frequently while running so as to look back to see if he was pursued. We had not long followed the elk until they were seen about half a mile away. They had quit feeding, and were lying down, three or four of them posted on high knolls, from which they could keep watch in every direction. The horses were left with Sol who was to keep out of sight while I made the approach. This was the most difficult job of approaching, in hunting elk, that I ever had to do, in which I succeeded. I had a number of other times to give it up, and wait until the next day, but this time I got my elk after two hours work. It was easy enough to get within about three hundred yards of the game as I judged the distance, but a shot at that distance was too uncertain, and I was unwilling to take the chance. I was lying on the south side of the narrow rim of a small blowout, from which point four or five elk were in plain sight, one of them a large buck lying on the very top of a knoll. If I could only get a dozen feet nearer to him, there was a chance to get into a little valley with a knoll beyond that would shield me from view. There was only one way to get into this valley without being seen and that was to dig through the rim of a small blow-out. By crawling over the edge of the blow-out, the elk would surely see me—by digging through the narrow rim, he might or might not see me. If he did discover me and showed alarm, I would fire, if not I could get near enough for a sure shot. With my hunting knife and my hands I dug a trench through the loose sand wide and deep enough for my body, and crawled through into the little blow-out and then into the little valley. If the elk saw me, which is not probable, he was not alarmed. This enabled me to reach a place where I got a sure shot. When the ball struck he bounded to his feet, and sprang down the opposite side of the knoll out of sight, but fell before going

a dozen rods. We cut the meat all off the bones, rubbed salt into it, and smoked and dried it by the fire and in the sun until partly cured. We did not have good luck with all of it however, as we found on reaching home that some of the larger pieces were tainted, but the most of it was good. This was a big elk, one of the largest I have ever killed; he was fat, and had a heavy pair of horns that were in the velvet.

We made many other short summer trips with varying success, sometimes getting game, but not always; but at no other time were we so pestered with mosquitos as on this occasion.

CHAPTER XVII.

Hunting Near Home.

These stories are as leaves taken from my own book of memory. And how real, how vivid, how natural and clear these things seem to me now. As I write them down I am living over again the wonderfully bright and fascinating life of forty years ago. I see again the vast expanse of smooth rolling prairie, with its rounded hills, its long, smooth, gentle slopes, culminating at a distance of four or five miles in a broad swell somewhat higher than the rest, the dividing ridge between two water courses. In an opposite direction, and perhaps a mile or so distant can be traced the course of a timbered creek, winding its sinuous way back and forth from one side to the other of its beautiful and luxuriant valley, still in a state of nature just as God made it, but holding in its embrace scores of embryo farms, with a soil, it may be, the richest on earth. Tracing the course of the creek to its confluence with the broad valley of the Elkhorn one beholds a magnificent picture, unexcelled in lovliness anywhere, even if it does not quite match in grandeur, views to be had among the mountains or along the shores of the ocean. No landscape picture is quite complete without its hills, its plains, its groves of timber and its streams of water. All these were here in profusion and perfection, in the early days. They are here yet, but with the marks of man's interference to so great an extent that their original superb beauty has been almost effaced.

But the picture as drawn is not quite complete. To be perfect and true to nature it would hold some of God's wild creatures that were here in abundance in the early days. Three or four little bands of antelope should surely

be in sight, some of them so far off as to be indistinctly seen unless on some prominent hill, while others are so near by as to be plainly visible and easily counted, their natural curiosity having been so aroused that they are already approaching to investigate the intruder, coming within forty or fifty rods, stopping to gaze, then bounding away, and again approaching from a different direction, until either satisfied or alarmed they strike out for good, stopping to take a last look from the top of a ridge half a mile or more away. Who that has a love for nature or a soul for the beautiful could fail to be enchanted with such a scene? And yet such scenes were so common in the early days as to be little thought of and lightly appreciated by many of the early settlers. It seems too bad that these things can be looked upon and enjoyed no longer. Why did not the government reserve two tracts, each twelve miles square, in each one of the western states for a home for the deer, the antelope and the wapati, or elk? These preserves should have contained both rough and smooth land as well as timber and water, and would have been available as homes for the wild animals and pleasure resorts for the people. But in this utilitarian age these things are not thought of.

As I look backward I almost wonder that I ever could have been hard hearted enough to help destroy these beautiful and innocent wild animals. However we did not hunt them solely for sport, and seldom for any purpose except when needed for food, and we never wantonly destroyed them. On two occasions only, when money was very scarce, and game very plentiful, did I kill any for market. It is a fact, however, that their disappearance was inevitable, from a country such as we have, that ranks high as a farming district. As the country filled up with farms, the wild animals had to go, and although this is an unpleasant thought to contemplate, it could not have been otherwise.

It is therefore all the more a pity that reservations were not provided while the country was yet new, and the wild animals plentiful, where they could be confined by woven wire fences, and cared for and fed in severe winters. And what a lovely resort such a place would be for campers and pleasure seekers in which to spend their summer vacations. What a magnificent game preserve and pleasure resort could have been made of Verdigris, Sherman, Garfield and Royal townships in our own county, with their springs and streams of pure, cold, soft water abounding in trout, its unrivalled scenery and unmatched facilities for a pleasant outing.

The winter of 1880 was a bad one. Probably none of the old settlers have forgotten how the winter begun with a bad storm about the middle of October, and how that October snow remained upon the ground in some places until the first of the next May; of course being covered over and over again by subsequent snows. That was a bad winter on the deer—they were plentiful here before that, but very scarce thereafter. The hunters, the wolves and the hard winter killed them about all off.

That fall, 1880, I did some hunting around home, the last I have ever done in Antelope county. The corn was not all husked, in fact the most of it was still in the field when the storm came, and the deer in our Cedar creek neighborhood, and probably elsewhere also, got into the habit of coming into the cornfields and getting their share of the corn at night. We had had no venison that fall before the storm, and as we all wanted some, I started out with my rifle about the last of October to try my luck. I soon found a buck's track leading out of a cornfield on the farm of H. W. Swett, now owned by Dr. Nelson of Oakdale. The track led north, going straight toward Oakdale. I followed as fast as I could easily walk where the ground was smooth, but soon the track led down into a ravine filled with big

weeds. This was on the place now owned by Abe Simmons, and here I began to go very slowly, and to watch carefully, expecting the deer at any moment to jump out of his hiding place in the big weeds. This he did, but the result was not just what I had expected. I was walking along the ravine ten or twelve feet up its side with the rifle at a ready, and when the deer rushed out, instead of firing at him as was intended, my feet slipped and I slid down clear to the bottom of the ravine. Shaking off the snow, and cleaning it from the gun barrel which was filled with it, I took the track and followed on. The deer soon came down to a walk showing that he was not greatly alarmed. I soon came up with him again, this time finding him lying down in the weeds and grass, in a little basin or sag in the land, on the place now owned by George Hunter, and not more than forty rods south of the place where the Hunter house now stands. This time I got in a shot, but he ran almost a mile before he fell, going nearly half way to Oakdale. I found him lying dead just east of the Putney place.

But a single deer, even if it be a big one, does not last long in a family of good size, especially where there are plenty of neighbors. In a few days we were out of venison again. There had been another snow storm by this time, but it did not drift like the first one, but it covered the prairie grass so that the whole country was white. This time I made ready for the hunt by pinning a white cloth over my cap and wrapping a sheet around my shoulders, so as to cover the arms also as much as possible. When about a mile from home, I started five deer at a place now called the Swett Hill, in the southern part of Oakdale township. The deer were in the deep ravine about a dozen rods below where the iron bridge now stands at the crossing of the little creek. The deer ran up the north bank, and near the top ran into a big snow drift that hindered them considerably causing them to run slow. I fired and got one, but could

not get in a second shot before they were too far away. Dressing the deer, I followed on after the others and found them in a patch of brush in a ravine, not more than forty rods from the place where Ben Moon's house now stands. I think I saw the deer before they saw me, but could see no way to approach them near enough for a shot without exposing myself. I therefore lay flat down and crawled through the snow until near enough for a pretty fair shot. Selecting the one that appeared to be the largest I fired. The deer made two or three jumps and fell in the bottom of the ravine. The others ran south but stopped soon after reaching the top of the bank, when I fired again and missed. As soon as this second deer was attended to I started again on the track. The next time I came upon them they were lying in the open prairie on the place now owned by N. P. Swanson. There was no chance this time, and they ran when I was almost a quarter of a mile away. I then did not expect to get another shot, but as they ran southwest which was almost in the direction toward home, I followed on, when about a mile west of the Morris Murphy farm I struck a draw, the head of which was filled with sumach bushes and big weeds, and from this cover the three deer jumped out. There was a chance for a good running shot, and that shot brought down the third deer. A second running shot was taken but without effect excepting to increase the speed of the game, the shot falling behind and throwing up the snow where the ball struck. It was now getting well along in the afternoon, and I struck out for home as soon as the last deer was dressed. I learned from C. P. Mathewson of Norfolk, a successful hunter himself, that if a handkerchief or any piece of cloth that had been upon one's person, was tied upon a stick or weed near any game killed, neither the big wolves, nor the coyotes would touch the game. I found from experience that this was true. The wolf is a very cowardly and suspicious animal, and will not

approach game when so protected. I always made a practice of doing this when it was necessary to leave the game out over night. In the morning I have often seen wolf tracks in the snow only a few rods away, but they did not dare to touch the game. The next morning I went with the team and sleigh and brought in the three deer.

Sometime in the seventies, but I cannot tell just when I had a very peculiar experience in hunting in this same neighborhood. I started on horseback, having a very excellent riding mare, but she was nervous, and somewhat afraid of a gun, and of the game, especially if it was close by. This time also, I found the track of a big buck that had been feeding in one of Mr. Swett's cornfields during the night. Dismounting and leading the mare, so as to be ready to shoot quickly when the game started, I came upon this deer lying down in a ravine on the George Hunter place, perhaps a quarter of a mile southeast of the place where the house now stands. Only the head and horns and part of the neck could be seen, and these not very distinctly. Aiming as well as I could at the neck, the head dropped at the crack of the rifle. Going up to the deer intending to stick him, I stepped on one horn so as to hold his head down, but the mare was afraid and kept pulling back on the bridle, the deer in the meantime kicking with his hind, and striking with his fore feet. I had to give it up, and looking around for a place to tie the mare, saw some big weeds a dozen rods away that would answer the purpose. Having tied the mare, I picked up the rifle and turned to go back to the deer, when to my surprise I saw him running up the bank of the ravine nearly a hundred yards away. I fired but of course the shot missed him. This was the first case of this kind that I had ever met with. I followed on, not having a doubt that the deer would be overtaken and killed. The tracking snow was good and the track easy to follow. I rode the mare to the place where the deer crossed Cedar

creek about two miles south of the Oakdale mill. As the creek was bad to ford I gave up the chase for the day, and going home, waited until the next morning, when I took it up afoot. The next morning, after following the track for a mile or so, I came upon his bed where he had lain through the night in a thicket of brush. From this place the track led northwest, going almost toward Neligh. Finally I started him out of another thicket, but the brush were so thick that there was no chance to shoot. He then ran almost directly west, and when I overtook him again he was lying down on a sandy knoll watching for me. He saw me and started to run when I was a quarter of a mile away. This was almost directly south of Neligh and not more than two miles from the town. I gave it up. The wound had entirely stopped bleeding, excepting a little where he had lain over night, and no doubt the deer got well.

Afterward I had a similar experience when hunting in Custer county, as already related in a previous article, although that time I did not let the deer get away. Also at another time Mr. E. R. Palmer and I lost an elk in a similar manner when hunting in Garfield county.

Sometimes deer used to cross the sandy track south of Neligh, going back and forth from the north branch of Cedar creek to the Elkhorn near the mouth of Antelope creek. One winter in the seventies I struck such a track that was coming to the Cedar. I found it about two miles southwest of Neligh. The deer was walking very slowly, examining every thick bunch of tall grass, evidently looking for a place to lie down. It needs careful hunting at such a time unless one is content to take chances at a running shot. When not more than a mile and a half from Neligh the track entered a little circular valley, containing four or five acres and covered, although not very thickly with tall grass. From the rim of the basin where I was

standing the whole surface was in plain sight, and it seemed that a jack rabbit could not hide there without being seen, there being five or six inches of snow at the time. The rifle was raised and all ready to take aim, but after carefully scanning the valley and seeing nothing of the deer, I took the gun down and started to follow the track. Just then the deer jumped out, not more than ten rods away and started to run. I fired wounding him badly, but did not think it necessary to give a second shot, although there was plenty of time to do so. The deer ran a little south of east, crossing the road running south from Neligh just at the pond where Alexander McKay was drowned only a year or so before. Within another quarter of a mile I came upon the deer lying down on a knoll not much more than a mile from Neligh in a straight line. A shot through the head finished him.

There are many pleasant recollections connected with the lives of the wild animals aside from the interest in hunting them. There was one old buck that seemed to make his headquarters on the north branch of the Cedar, that was very cunning, and for a long time eluded all attempts to get him. I made several trips to the north branch on purpose to hunt him, but without avail. I got three or four shots at different times, but always under a disadvantage—he would never leave the brush until he was entirely beyond reach. After a time D. E. Beckwith killed somewhere in that vicinity a very large buck corresponding in size and the appearance of the horns to this one. As the old fellow was not seen afterwards in his customary haunts, he probably fell to Mr. Beckwith's rifle.

One summer there were two deer that used frequently to come and lick the salt where we salted the cattle, less than a quarter of a mile from and in plain sight of the house. One winter there were ten antelope that frequently came to

feed on the stubble ground near the house, sometimes coming so near that one of them could have been shot from the door. Toward spring there were only eight of them, two having either strayed away or been killed. We never disturbed or intentionally frightened these animals that seemed to have learned not to fear us. Ah well! those times are past —gone forever, leaving a sad, but yet a pleasant memory.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Hunting and Camping Lore.

To make a hunting trip thoroughly complete and enjoyable one of the chief requisites is a good camp. Remember that I am now speaking from experience gained during my own hunting trips chiefly in north Nebraska, but also to some extent in Wyoming and South Dakota. This extended over a period of thirty years, from 1868 to 1897 inclusive. I did hunt some, but not a great deal prior to 1868, but have hunted none at all since 1897. My hunting was done mostly during the months of September, October, November and December, when cold storms, either of rain or snow, were likely to occur, making a good sheltered camp all the more necessary. The best shelter possible for a camp is a dense thicket of brush—nothing else makes so perfect a wind-break. The next best shelter is a steep bank—not a hill, but a bluff as nearly perpendicular as possible, to protect the camp on the north and west. The camp should be only a few feet away from the bluff, and the camp fire should be directly against its steep side so as to throw the heat immediately upon the camp. In the sand hill country I have several times found a good camping place in an old blow-out. These blow-outs are formed by the wind scooping out the sand from the northwest side of a big sand hill, and drifting it over to the southeast side, until it forms a circular hollow in the hill sometimes fifteen or twenty feet deep, and makes on the southeast side of the hill a bare sand bank just like a great snow drift. These blow-outs are scooped out by the wind, sometimes in a dry time to such a depth that when deep snows come in the winter, followed by heavy rains in the spring, the water level is raised so much that the deep blow-outs become filled with

water to the depth of several feet. After a series of years the shape of the hills in the vicinity of a blow-out sometimes becomes so changed that the wind ceases to act upon it. The blow-out then, in a short time becomes grassed over, and being protected from the winds on all sides, makes a fine sheltered place for a camp.

There should be wood and water near the camp, and also good grass for the horses. It is better, however, to carry the water necessary for the camp for a considerable distance, rather than to make camp in an exposed place. As to fuel—there are always dead bushes, either willows or plum brush that have been killed by the fire, whenever the camp is made in a thicket. In the sand hill country there are always dead and well seasoned red roots that make a very hot fire that lasts well. The red root is a shrub that grows almost everywhere in the sand hill country, excepting on the low ground. It has roots from one to two inches in diameter that are often uncovered by the wind, thus causing the shrub to die. It usually takes but a few minutes to gather up a big armful of them. Sometimes also cotton wood, ash or hackberry trees could be had for fuel. A big camp fire is not necessary either for pleasure or comfort, but a well sheltered place for the camp is absolutely necessary, and a small camp fire with enough fuel to often replenish it is sufficient.

We never used a tent until some time in the nineties—in fact we had no tent and it cost too much to buy one when the financial condition of those times was considered. Instead of a tent we always used an old rag carpet thrown over some poles, tepee fashion, and it was just as comfortable and made us just as happy as though we had the best kind of a canvas tent.

If we camped in the sand hill country it was usually our habit to plant a pole on top of some prominent peak

near camp, and on this hang a grain sack, or an old coat as a signal. The sand hill country all looked very much alike, and this helped sometimes to bring in a straggler, especially if the day was cloudy. If the camp was on a stream of water, such a precaution was not necessary, the stream being a guide to the camp.

As to the best kind of gun to be used in hunting, there is a chance for a great diversity of opinion. Before our modern breech loading guns came into use I had hunted some with the old style muzzle loading rifles, and also with a double barrel muzzle loading shot gun. With the old muzzle loading percussion lock rifles I killed two antelope and seven deer, and helped to kill one buffalo. With the old style shot gun I killed one antelope, two elk, and about twelve deer, having forgotten exactly how many. Since December, 1870, I have used breech loading guns only, having hunted more or less with the Maynard, Smith & Wesson, Ballard, Sharps, Remington, four styles of the Winchester rifle, and also the army Springfield rifled musket. I had the best luck with the Springfield rifled musket, or needle gun as it was called, the Sharps carbine, both of which carried a caliber 50 bullet weighing 450 grains and taking 70 grains of powder, and the Winchester repeater caliber 45-75, my preference above all being for the Winchester. I have had no experience with the modern small bore high power rifles, they having come into use since my hunting days were passed. I think the only reason why I had better luck with the three guns last named than with any of the others was because they carried a heavier bullet than the others not because they were more accurate shooters. A heavy bullet will bring down a deer or an elk, when a light one will only wound the animal, and unless there is a tracking snow, even if the wound is finally fatal, the game is liable to be lost. Any rifle without regard to caliber, that is sure fire, and that will shoot true, will answer to hunt deer with, but if

the caliber is small the bullet must reach a vital spot or the game is very likely to get away. I knew a young man who killed a large black bear with a 22 rifle, but the bear was shot in the brain at a distance of not more than thirty steps, while he was eating wild berries. Such cases however are extremely rare, and even where deer are plentiful and not very wild much better results would be had by using a large bore gun than by using a small one. It is the weight of the bullet that tells.

In this connection it is proper to consider the distance at which a rifle shot is pretty sure to find the mark. There is much misconception upon this point with people generally. It is commonly supposed that a good hunter, with a good rifle, can easily kill deer at a distance of four hundred or five hundred yards. Such is not the case—at such a distance no hunter, no matter how good his gun, would kill once in five shots, and probably not once in ten. I believe that in all my hunting, the average distance at which game was killed would be considerably less than a hundred yards—probably not more than seventy-five yards, and the same statement will apply to all others with whom I have hunted. Of course I have often made much longer shots, but I early found out by experience, that long range shots were very uncertain. There are reasons for this that will be explained. If a rifle is sighted with "level sights"—that is, if the front and rear sights are exactly the same distance above the bore of the gun barrel there will be no elevation or upward trend of the bullet when fired, and in one second after leaving the muzzle of the gun that bullet will fall about sixteen feet. Now how does this work out in practice? My Sharps carbine, an excellent gun, was sighted for one hundred yards, and when fired at a target at that distance the bullet did not fall perceptibly, but at a hundred and twenty-five yards it would fall about two or three inches, and at a hundred and fifty yards about six or eight inches. My 40-82 caliber Win-

chester, which was the strongest shooting gun I ever used, when fired at a mark a hundred and eighty-five yards off, the ball would strike about eight inches below the mark. Of course all these hunting rifles have sights that can be raised, and they will all shoot to kill at a half mile or even a mile or more. But there are so many difficulties in the way when shooting at game beyond the distance to which the gun will carry with "level sights," that it is better not to shoot at all under such circumstances, but rather to wait for a better chance. In shooting at long range, the distance must be correctly estimated so that the rear sight can be properly adjusted, the rifle must be held with great steadiness, which is not easy to do, the eye sight must be very sharp so as to distinctly see the game, the direction and force of the wind must be taken into account, as it is liable to swerve the bullet from its true course, and the sunlight, whether too bright or too dim has its effect. Shooting at a target where the distance is exactly known, and where the target itself is of such a color and so placed as to be distinctly seen, and where the rifle is equipped with peep sights, and wind gauge, is very different from shooting at game that is more or less indistinctly seen, and where the distance must be guessed at and where the wind and sun have to be reckoned with. Two hundred yards, therefore, is a long shot for the hunter, and two hundred and fifty yards a very long one, even with our present day long range guns.

It makes a good deal of difference in hunting what kind of sights are used on the gun. If the front sight becomes worn so that it is bright, while it may be all right in a cloudy day it will glimmer in the sunshine, and will be apt to cause bad shooting. And besides, metal sights of any kind cannot be clearly seen after dusk. The best sights for hunting that I have ever used are an ivory bead for the front sight, and a double rear sight consisting of two pieces of flat steel hung on a hinge so that one or both can be turned

down. One of these pieces has a notch just like any ordinary rear sight—the other has fitted into it a little ivory triangle. In the day time the part with the triangle should be turned down, using only the sight with the notch. The ivory front sight shows clear and plain when seen through the notch, and never glimmers in the sunshine, nor looks dull and hard to see in a dark day. When dusk comes on, the sight with the notch should be turned down and the ivory triangle raised to its proper place. The sight is then perfectly caught when the bead in front appears to stand just at the top of the ivory triangle. Good shooting can be done with such sights when it is too dark to use the ordinary kind. A peep sight can also be added to these ivory sights, but when the peep sight is used the double rear sight should be turned down so as to be out of the way. The peep sight is not often needed but is convenient in making a long range shot. The peep sight should be graduated for any distance from a hundred yards up to half a mile.

With sights such as have been described above, a man with eyesight quite defective can do pretty good shooting, when he would make an utter failure with ordinary sights. A hunter should be dressed in clothing that corresponds in color with the landscape over which he is to hunt. When game has been sighted at a distance the hat or cap should be trimmed with grass before making the approach. In the winter if there is snow deep enough to cover most of the grass, the cap should be covered with a white cloth, and the shoulders wrapped in a white sheet. In such a dress, when there was a foot or so of snow on the ground, I have crawled up to deer close enough for a fair shot without alarming them, and yet they were looking my way. It is probable that they could not tell what it was. Had the attempt been made to get near enough for a shot by walking erect, or even in a stooping posture, it would have failed.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Hunting Trip to Wyoming.

There were only two of us—Charley and I, and we hardly knew where we were bound for. It had been several years since I had been away on a hunting trip, and what hunting had fallen to my lot in the past had mostly been done in the early days in Antelope county, or the adjacent counties of Wheeler and Holt, or sometimes even as far away as Garfield and Custer counties. At the time of which I am now writing, the elk and the antelope had entirely disappeared from my old hunting grounds in the counties named above, and deer were scarce, and what few were left in the sandhills of Garfield and other counties were wild and hard to find, and still harder to get a shot at when found. But the spell had come upon me, and for months I had been longing, and for weeks planning for the trip. It so happened that this fall I could get release for a few weeks from business, and it was too good a chance to lose. Much of the time for years I had been in the employ of the B. & M. Railroad company, as land examiner and appraiser, consequently being furnished with annual passes not only over their own road but over the C. & N. W. and it branches as well; it cost me nothing for transportation. I owned a new Winchester rifle, caliber 45-75, which had seen very little use. I said the rifle was new, and in fact it was, although it had been about eight years since it was bought, there having been little chance in all that time to use it, hence it looked almost as clean and new as when it first came from the factory. Conditions for the trip were all favorable, and the impulse was on me—it could not be resisted.

Charley, my companion for the trip, was a drummer. This does not mean that he pounded the bass, or tap tapped the snare drum for the Oakdale band, but that he was a traveling salesman for an eastern wholesale hat and cap house. He had been off duty for several months, taking care of his father who was confined to the house with an incurable disease. Being used to an active out of door life, the confinement necessary in caring for his father was wearing on him greatly. Hence he determined to take this trip with me, his father being even more anxious than Charley himself that he should take a few weeks of needed relaxation.

It was between three and four o'clock in the afternoon of a bright pleasant day in the latter part of November, 1888, that we left Oakdale for some station in Wyoming, being undecided as yet as to what point we would leave the railroad. At that time that branch of the railroad running west from Chadron, was completed to Casper, Wyoming.

Our plan of campaign was as follows: We would go by railroad to some point in Wyoming—possibly Van Tassell or Manville or Douglas, but probably Glenrock. At whatever place we left the railroad we intended to buy a pony and a pack saddle to carry the blankets, cooking utensils and provisions necessary for the trip. We would then strike out afoot in a northerly direction, leading the pony with the packs, and hunt and camp out as long as we wished, and finally when it was time to start for home we would turn to the east and strike the Black Hills branch of the railroad at Rapid City or Buffalo Gap, sell the pony for what he would bring, and come back home by rail.

We did not expect to find game very plentiful, as it was thought that the deer had been greatly thinned out in the country which we proposed to traverse, but it was supposed that there were a few black tail deer left among the rough canyons of Hat Creek, and probably some bands of

antelope on the open plains, and surely there would be sharp-tail grouse and rabbits, even if no larger game should be met with.

Charley decided, against my advice and over my protests, to take his double barrel shot gun instead of borrowing a rifle for the trip. He was an expect at hunting prairie chicken and ducks, but had never used a rifle, nor had he ever seen a wild deer. He believed that in the rough country through which we were to go he could do better work with his shot gun and buck shot, should deer be found, than he could with a rifle. The result proved that he was mistaken.

It was not the intention to take along a tent, or to be encumbered with any unnecessary luggage of any kind. We were going to have a good time roughing it. From home our luggage consisted of two compact bundles, containing our blankets, a coffee pot, an eight quart tin pail with cover, two frying pans, two tin cups, two knives and forks and spoons, a hatchet, a butcher knife, a tin pan, a wash basin, some tin plates, and also such articles as towels, soap, and changes of socks and underwear. These packages did not weigh more than sixty pounds each. Our provisions we would buy at whatever place we were to leave the railroad, and it was estimated that the entire outfit when ready to pack upon the pony would weigh considerably less than two hundred pounds. The guns and our belts filled with cartridges were carried in our hands or on our persons, as were also combs, tooth brushes and matches. Of course our packs contained also a necessary supply of spare ammunition as well as two or three packages of Charley's smoking tobacco. I carried also a very excellent pocket compass, a field glass and a large pocket knife. It should also be stated that we had with us needles, thread, buttons, safety pins, buckskin strings and perhaps some other small articles not now recalled to mind. It was found out after we were away from

the railroad and well established in camp that nothing had been forgotten, and that everything actually necessary for such a trip had been provided.

The railroad trip from Oakdale was uneventful. Chadron was reached about six o'clock the next morning, and here we had to change cars, the passenger train which brought us thus far going on north to the Black Hills. We had to wait at Chadron until after seven o'clock for the train going west into Wyoming. This was a freight train with one passenger coach attached, there being at that date no passenger train west of Chadron, on what is now known as the Lander route. Before leaving Chadron we had decided to go as far west as Glenrock. This conclusion was reached after having consulted with several persons who were acquainted with that country; their advice being that Glenrock was the best point west of Chadron to purchase such things as would be needed for our trip. The engine that drew our train was old and out of repair and it took all day and into the night to reach Glenrock. At one time where there was an up grade I got out and walked for half a mile by the side of the train, and this feat could have been repeated a number of times. From Chadron west the road has an up grade most of the way to Keeline, which is on the summit at the head of the Niobrara river, and which has an elevation of about 5000 feet. From Keeline west it is mostly a down grade to Douglas, where the valley of the North Platte is reached, and from Douglas west to Glenrock it is up hill again. At Douglas the first view was had of the mountains, Laramie Peak being in plain sight about forty miles to the south. Laramie Peak is quite a famous mountain, it being the highest point of what are now known as the Laramie mountains, and it is said to have an elevation of 10,000 feet. It looked to me like an old friend, and I hailed it as such. In the year 1852, in the month of July, I had driven a team of four yoke of cattle wearily along the

old Oregon Trail, going right through the place where Douglas now stands, the grand old Laramie mountain being in plain sight for several days, a broad patch of snow partly covering its northern slope. On this hunting trip, it was at Douglas that we first struck the old Oregon Trail, and Laramie Peak was the first familiar object that was recognized.

The Black Hills and the Laramie mountains are outlying ranges of the Rocky mountains, and are separated therefrom by a high country of broken hills, steep gulches, narrow valleys and level or undulating plains, some of them of considerable size, but much of it sterile and more or less thickly strewn with rocks. What we now call the Black Hills lying partly in South Dakota and partly in Wyoming, north of the North Platte river, and what we call the Laramie mountains, lying south of the North Platte, were until quite recently all called Black Hills. The two ranges in fact do form one continuous range, the North Platte river having ages ago forced its way through a low place in the range, thereby forming what is known as the North Platte canyon.

Arriving at Glenrock about ten o'clock at night, it was decided not to go up town to spend the balance of the night, but instead to find some place to camp until the morning. There was no moon, but the night was starlit and not very dark. Having already eaten luncheon on the train, we shouldered our packs and taking our guns in hand picked our way through the darkness down along the bank of Deer Creek until a level grassy place was found among the trees that lined the banks of the stream. The bed was soon made, and here we spent our first night in camp. The night was clear and cold, but we had plenty of covers and as we removed only our coats and boots before getting into bed we were warm and comfortable throughout the night.

The next morning was clear and very frosty, and as soon as it was fairly daylight, leaving everything in camp

but our guns, we went up town, which was less than a quarter of a mile away, to look around, make inquiries, and hunt for a hot breakfast. There was one hotel in the town and one restaurant. Going to the restaurant for breakfast, it was found to be a large, well equipped place, and the breakfast was already well under way. Having washed, I was standing in front of the glass combing my hair when someone called out: "Hello Leach, what are you doing here?" Looking around I saw Ed Baker, formerly a grocer and grain dealer at Columbus, Neb. I had not seen him since the railroad had come to Antelope county, but in the seventies had sold him many a load of wheat, and had bought of him many times a supply of groceries. He was now one of the leading business men of Glenrock, being secretary of the Deer Creek Coal company. After breakfast Charley soon run on to an old acquaintance of his by the name of Abbott whom he had known at Albion, Neb., Mr. Abbott having been at one time postmaster at that place.

Glenrock was a little village of 400 or 500 people. It had sprung into existence only a few years previously, and was the result of the discovery of the Deer Creek coal mines. The town was made up of a few business men and their families and the coal miners and their families, the miners greatly outnumbering all the others. It was a rough looking and a rough acting place, like all such western towns, but like all such places the people of all classes were friendly, sociable and kindly disposed. Nowhere else will the stranger, if he behaves himself properly, be received with more hearty good will than on our western frontier, whether it be in the new built town or among the settlers or cattle ranchers on the prairies.

Having told our plans to Messrs. Baker and Abbott, they decided at once that they ought to be modified. There was no use they said of buying a pony—Mr. Abbott would loan one to us, and Mr. Baker would lend us a pack saddle.

There was game in the vicinity of Glenrock, so Mr. Baker knew, because the hunters were bringing in deer and antelope for sale every few days. Mr. Abbott had been out into the surrounding country considerably and had hunted some himself . He told us that among the rough hills at the head of Sand creek, about twenty miles north of Glenrock, there were blacktail deer, and although he thought they were not very plentiful, we had better try our luck in that direction—that antelope would be found in great numbers in the smooth country before reaching the hills. We thought their advice good, and at once began to act upon it.

The restaurant furnished us with what bread could be spared and baked up a lot of biscuit, which are better for a camping trip than loaf bread. At one of the stores we bought bacon, sugar, salt, pepper, tea and coffee, and at Charley's suggestion two or three cans of condensed milk. By noon everything was in readiness, and after dinner a dray was engaged to carry our truck across the North Platte river, the pony being tied behind. It was thought best not to load the things on the pony's back until the north bank was reached, lest he might take a notion to lie down in midstream. Arriving at the north bank of the stream the drayman was paid for his services and he returned to Glenrock. The packs were soon arranged on the pony's back, and all covered with a tarpaulin, which Mr. Baker insisted on lending to us. The tarpaulin was to be spread upon the ground at night and the bed to be made upon one half and the other half turned back over the bed and tucked under at the sides, thus keeping out the winds should they happen to blow, which was generally the case.

The North Platte river in this part of Wyoming is about two hundred steps wide, with generally a rocky bottom, and from one to two feet deep where we crossed it, the current being rapid, though probably not more so than it is generally throughout its Nebraska course. We were now on the

north side of the river, at the mouth of Sand Creek, and ready to start out on our trip up the creek valley to the high hills that could be dimly seen to the north, and said to be twenty miles away. Sand Creek is about thirty feet wide, with a sandy bed, low banks, and very shallow water, and at the time we were there entirely dry in places, the water standing often only in occasional pools. It has a valley from one to two miles wide and undulating tracts of land on either side of its valley, the whole rising gradually as one goes north, and becoming rough, broken, high and rocky as the head of the valley is approached. We were now fairly on our way—everything had gone well so far—could not have been better or more to our liking.

Within a mile of the river we flushed a covey of sage hens, and Charley brought down one with each barrel of his gun as they rose to fly. The sage hen is a species of plains grouse about twice as large as the sharp tail grouse. A flock of them reminds one strongly of a flock of half grown wild turkeys. Our supper was now provided for as it seemed, but I had strong doubts about it, as I had become acquainted with the merits of the sage hen many years before. However, we cooked them for supper, but made our meal principally on biscuit, fried bacon and tea, the sage hens having too strong a flavor of their natural food, the leaves and buds of the artemisia or wild sage. It is said that the young ones in August and September, when their food is chiefly grasshoppers and crickets, are excellent eating. It has never been my lot to taste one at that time of year.

About four o'clock, as the November days are short, finding a nice, grassy, sheltered place, we went into camp, gathered a big pile of dry sage brush for fuel, cooked and ate supper, staked out the pony where the grass was good, made down our bed, put on our coats and over these a blanket, for the evening was cool and a moderate north wind

was blowing; then Charley lighted his pipe, and while he smoked we talked and told stories, and laid plans, and looked at the stars and picked out all that we could call by name, every now and then replenishing the fire, until as "slumber began to press the eyelids" we turned in and slept soundly until the morning.

CHAPTER XX.

A Hunting Trip to Wyoming—Continued.

We were up the next morning as soon as daylight began to streak the eastern sky, and while one of us changed the pony to a place where the pasturage was fresh, the other kindled the fire, put over the coffee pot, and began to make ready for breakfast. It does not take long to get breakfast when the bread is already on hand, and only coffee has to be boiled and the bacon fried. We did not use what remained of the sage hens, for what we had for supper was enough for the whole trip. But the breakfast was good and was thoroughly enjoyed. The best staple provisions for the camp are bread, bacon and coffee, and whoever cannot enjoy such a diet, had better not try camping out, excepting in his own dooryard. Our appetites were good, our spirits buoyant and elastic, our hopes high; everything so far having worked to our advantage, and whether the hunt for game was successful or not, we believed, if the weather held good, that our outing would be a grand success. We did not really expect to get much game, and in fact did not care to, but we hoped to get a deer or two just to have a taste of venison, and to add variety and zest to what was already becoming an interesting trip.

That forenoon the only mishap occurred that happened during the whole trip. Something went wrong, we did not know what, and the pony began to buck, and he kept it up in the most strenuous manner, until a part of the pack was scattered around on the ground and the balance, with the saddle, was under his belly. All at once he quit as suddenly as he begun, and standing very quiet, allowed us to rearrange and repack the luggage, which we did this time

with renewed care, as we thought his recent freak was occasioned from some ill adjustment of the load.

We saw no signs of deer, but about noon a few antelope were seen at a distance but not in position to approach. Toward the middle of the afternoon some antelope were seen feeding about half a mile away. We were in the creek valley, partly screened from view by clumps of sage brush —the antelope being on the undulating table land to the west, and apparently not yet having seen us. I went after them, Charley, in the meantime, hiding with the pony, behind a dense bunch of sage brush. The approach was easy by taking advantage of some low knolls and frequent patches of sage brush, and at certain places by lying flat and crawling through the grass. Getting within easy range I got one at a standing shot, and put in a second shot as they ran off. The first one fell after a jump or two, but the second one following the herd a short distance, turned off by itself and was lost. I spent some time looking for it, but had to give it up, and returning to the first one, cut out the hind quarters, and throwing them on my shoulder started back, leaving the fore quarters to the wolves. A day or two later I found the carcass of the second antelope. It had not been found by the wolves, but the meat was spoiled, the weather through the middle of the day having become warm. Even in real cold weather the meat will become more or less tainted unless the intestines and stomach are removed.

So much time had been wasted in hunting for the wounded antelope that it seemed doubtful whether or not the hills toward which we had been traveling all day could be reached before dark. They were now in plain sight not over three miles away, one of which being higher and more prominent than the others, having on its extreme summit a single "lonesome pine." Others hills in the vicinity of this one were partly covered with a growth of scrubby pine trees and altogether it looked very inviting as a camping

ground. But it was too late to get there, and as darkness began to come on we turned aside and made camp in a ravine. It was not a pleasant camp, in fact it was the worst one of the whole trip, the ground being uneven and too sloping for a good place to spread the bed, and the sage-brush, our only fuel, although plentiful was not of thrifty growth. However, the night was fine and we had antelope steak for supper, and so far the trip had been a success, exceeding our anticipations. Charley's pipe was filled and refilled and filled again, and we sat and talked and laid plans for the next day. Charley's tobacco was of good quality, and I took care to sit where I could catch a whiff of its fragrant fumes now and then, and thought I was enjoying it as much as Charley himself. When camping out it is always a pleasure to have a good smoker in camp, provided, of course, that he uses good tobacco. It was arranged that the next morning I should go in the direction of the "lone-some pine," which now was not more than a mile and a half away, and look out a good place for a permanent camp, while Charley with his shot gun, provided with buckshot cartridges, would hunt in the vicinity of the camp for any kind of game that might be found.

I found a good camping place right at the foot of the cliff of the lone pine—it was protected on all sides except-ing the east by steep rocky banks, the place for the bed being grassy and level, with plenty of dry pine wood and sage brush convenient for fuel. There was no water any-where near, the last pool in Sand Creek being as many as three miles down the creek to the south. But we did not need the water, as snow could be melted in the coffee pot and tin pail for all needed purposes. Some time before our arrival there had been a snow storm—the snow had drifted considerably, but was now all melted except the drifts which were frequent, and in places from two to three feet deep. We had melted snow in the tin pail for the pony, but he

did not care for it, but like range ponies in general preferred to quench his thirst by eating snow from the drifts rather than by drinking snow water melted over a fire.

Before noon the camp had been moved and we were established in new and permanent quarters. After dinner I started northwest into the rough hills with the rifle. The hills were not very high, but were exceedingly rough and rocky, and were timbered with a scanty growth of scrubby pine trees, with numerous ravines and pockets filled with a thick growth of red cedar. There were also many patches of ground juniper, a species of cedar that does not grow to be more than a foot or two high but that spreads over the surface of the ground, forming a thick mat. There were fresh tracks of deer, and plenty of game signs. Without question we had found the right place.

I have neglected to state that when we stopped for dinner the day before, I targeted my rifle, not so much to test the rifle, but to test my eyes. I had hunted very little for eight years, and was not sure that my eyesight was keen enough to do good shooting. Charley put up a snow ball about seventy-five yards away, and taking a rest so as to be sure of my aim, I fired and broke the snow ball. Charley said that might have been an accidental hit, and so he put up a second snow ball, which was broken with a second shot. I now felt sure of myself, and wanted only to find the game.

Up to this time the weather had been fine ever since leaving home—the days were invariably sunshiny and bright, warm in the middle of the day, and the nights frosty and cold. Today, however, it began to cloud over in the forenoon, and I had not gotten a mile from camp when it began to snow hard, with a strong wind blowing from the northwest. I waited in a sheltered place, and in a short time it stopped snowing, but the wind continued to blow.

Soon another snow squall came on, harder than the first, and fearing a blizzard, made my way hurriedly back to camp. The weather continued to be squally during the afternoon but it snowed very little and cleared up in the evening.

Next morning we started out early, each going his own way, as we both chose to hunt separately. The best time to hunt black tail deer is early in the morning and late in the afternoon, because they are then up and feeding, excepting in a dark, dreary kind of a day, when they are apt to be abroad at any time. We were in a black tail country and I knew it, because they like a rough country, and this was rough, and because I had seen plenty of signs of their presence the previous day. I went directly into the hills to the northwest. The hills were very rough, rocky and steep and some of them moderately high, timbered in places with a growth of scrubby pine trees and occasional thickets of little young pines, with narrow draws and pockets in the hillsides filled with a thick growth of red cedar. Going up hill and down hill for about a mile, I crossed a narrow valley, then up the side of a low very steep ridge. This ridge was very narrow, covered with rocks of all sizes from that of a pebble to that of a good sized chicken house, and timbered with pine and cedar thickets. Just as the top of the ridge was reached I caught sight of a black tail doe. She was running along the ridge to the southwest and was out of sight before there was any chance to shoot. About a quarter of a mile off in the direction the doe was running, the ridge widened, and joined the main hill, which was at that place quite thickly covered with pine trees, some of them quite large, but without under growth, so that a deer might be seen almost anywhere in the timber. Following on carefully, I had gone about half way to the hill, when I stopped to look and listen, shielded from sight by a big rock that was as high as my shoulders. There was nothing

Black Tail Deer.

in sight—the old doe had doubtless gone on over the hill. I was just ready to follow when there was a slight noise on a side hill some distance to my right. In a moment I saw two black tail bucks traveling slowly along the side hill, one behind the other. They were across a deep ravine, and about forty rods away. I might have taken a shot, but wanted a better chance. They kept on, going slowly, circling gradually to the left, and keeping about the same distance from my position until they came to the timbered hill in front, when they turned and came almost directly towards me. Only my head and arms were in sight and as I kept perfectly still they did not notice me at all. They kept coming on, until when within about seventy-five steps I fired at the one behind. He gave two or three big jumps and fell. The other instead of running off gave a bound or two and turned to look at the fallen deer. I fired, but too hastily and the ball struck too far back. He turned, and running directly toward me, was brought down by a second shot when not more than twenty steps away. I dressed them both, cut off the hind quarters, and inserting a gambrel in each hung the quarters up in a pine tree out of reach of the wolves. Then cutting out of each of the fore quarters the thick meat along the backbone just back of the shoulders and securing it with a buckskin string so that it could be slung over the gun to be carried to camp, was ready to go as soon as my hands had been washed in a near by snow bank.

It was not quite noon, but luncheon was eaten before starting out again. I did not care either to hunt for game any more that day, or to go back and spend the whole afternoon in camp, and therefore concluded to do a little exploring. There was a deep ravine on either side of the ridge where the deer were killed—these two ravines coming together less than half a mile to the north formed a little valley in which about a mile away were several cottonwood

trees of good size. This indicated water—I would go and see. There was no water—only the bed of a dried up pool. While exploring around among the cottonwood trees I saw two or three deer about half a mile further down the valley, and looking through the field glass distinctly saw ten or twelve, nearly all lying down, one of them being a large buck with big horns. I wanted those horns. Before going on the trip I had promised to my friends two deers' heads, provided they could be had, which was not very probable. The approach was not difficult, the bottom of the ravine affording good cover. When within a dozen rods of the deer an old doe stepped out in plain sight; it was an easy mark, but she was not wanted. Luckily I was lying flat on the ground and was not seen. Presently she stepped back out of sight, and I continued to crawl along until a big rock about four feet high was reached. I knew the deer were very close, and that I would be seen as soon as I stood up. Such a time, as everyone knows who has hunted big game, is a very interesting moment. It was worth the whole trip just to have one such chance as this, and such a chance does not often come, even to those who make hunting a business. I had debated in my mind while hidden in the bed of the dry creek whether to remain there until the deer got up to feed, or to try to crawl to the rock. I decided to go to the rock, and now I knew that as soon as the deer discovered me they would be off in an instant and probably a running shot would have to be taken with the risk of missing. Making ready to fire, the rifle at my shoulder and finger on the trigger, I slowly raised my head. The old buck was the first deer seen, not more than twenty steps away, only his head and neck visible, and looking my way. He never moved, probably not just knowing what it was. I made a quick shot at his head and he dropped, the others running off and before I hardly knew what I was doing I fired again, bringing down another deer. They ran

only a short distance when they stopped, turned about and looked at me. I took aim at another but put down the rifle without firing—I had enough for the first day's hunting. The buck had a fine set of horns, and I afterward had the head mounted by Sessions & Bell of Norfolk. It is now owned by my oldest daughter. Some years ago it took the premium at the state fair as the finest speciment of the kind on exhibition. This had been my lucky day, only twice in all my hunting experiences have I had better luck than on this day. Once I killed three elk in a day and once two elk and four deer. This day I had killed four deer at five shots. Often I would only get one, if any at five shots.

It took a good part of the next day to get the game into camp and we did no hunting. We then moved camp about a quarter of a mile to a place thought to be more convenient; this, however, not taking up a great deal of time. We then hunted two or three days more with indifferent success. I got in several shots, getting only two deer and doing some very poor shooting. One is apt to get careless in hunting, and even if one tries to be careful, some poor shooting is apt to be done. I got one very fine standing shot at a large doe not more than a hundred yards off, and never touched her. This surprised me so that I did not throw in another cartridge until she was out of reach. At another time I shot at a large buck that was running past within easy range—it ought to have been a dead shot, but the ball struck too far back, and so high up that he could not be followed by the blood. Charley could not coax the deer up close enough to reach them with his shot gun, and he did not have good luck in approaching them, so that in all this time he did not get a shot. However, we had six deer on hand, besides what was left of the antelope—we were about out of bread, and some arrangement must be made to get our game to town. What we did do, and how we did it, will be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXI.

A Hunting Trip to Wyoming—Concluded.

During the evening, while Charley smoked, we talked matters over and concluded what to do. It was decided that next day I should go to town with the pony, get a supply of biscuit and what else might be needed and make arrangements to have a man and team come out to our camp in about a week to haul in the game. It was expected that I could get back to camp about the middle of the afternoon the second day, Charley in the meantime keeping camp and hunting with the shot gun. I offered to take his gun with me and leave the rifle, but he would not do it.

The next morning I got an early start, riding the pony part of the time, and part of the time leading him, as the pack saddle was uncomfortable as a riding saddle, to say the least. About ten o'clock when half way to the river I came across a wagon and a tent pitched by the side of it. There was no one around but soon a man came carrying a 22 calibre rifle with which he had been hunting rabbits. He said that there were three men in the party—that the horses had strayed and the other two men were hunting them—that they hailed from Cheyenne, were out hunting—had been out three weeks and had killed one deer. On hearing my story, he offered to loan me a riding horse and saddle if I would wait until the men came in with the horses. His offer was gladly accepted, and the coffee was put over to boil, and by the time the horses came dinner was ready.

Dinner over I was furnished with a riding horse and saddle, and mounting was soon on the way to Glenrock, leading the pack pony. That afternoon and evening I got the landlady at the hotel to bake a good supply of biscuit,

made the necessary purchases, and started for camp early in the morning. Before noon I was back at the camp of our new found friends from Cheyenne, but found it deserted. The day before I had told them of a pool of water about three miles below our camp, that was in easy reach of our blacktail hunting ground, and advised them to move camp to that place. This had been done, and on reaching the pool I found them already there and the camp nearly made. Leaving the riding horse with many sincere thanks for his use I went on toward our own camp, leading the pack pony. That evening Charley and I visited their camp, remaining until late in the evening. I neglected to state that I did not engage a team to come in a week for our game, because our new found friends had volunteered to haul the game for us.

While we were at their camp that evening I happened to mention that while in Glenrock I had talked with some men who had been prospecting for oil on the head waters of some of the branches of Powder river, about fifty miles northwest of Glenrock, who reported having seen only a week before a large band of elk, and that blacktail deer were also very abundant in that country. This report set our Cheyenne friends wild. They would pull out the next day, go back to Glenrock, get supplies and strike for the Powder river country; and they wanted us to go with them. They offered to carry our luggage, and haul our game, if we would go, provided we would pay half the expense for horse feed and give them half the game we should kill. The plan suited us.

Next morning we pulled out for Glenrock, got the supplies needed and by noon of the following day were ready to start out for our new hunting grounds. Charley and I added to our stock of provisions a supply of flour and baking powder for use in case the biscuit gave out. The owner of the horses offered to let me have the use of the horse

he had loaned to me without charge if I would have him shod all around. I was only too glad to accept the offer. He was a good riding horse, trusty and gentle, not afraid of a gun, and he did excellent service.

While in Glenrock I became acquainted with the county surveyor. He had taken oil claims in the very country to which we were going, and he gave me instructions how to reach the place by the best route, there being no track most of the way. I will not repeat his directions in full, only we were to run by the compass most of the way after crossing the North Platte, until we reached Sand springs where we would strike the road from Casper to Buffalo, then this road was to be followed until we arrived at a desirable hunting ground. Following his directions we got through easily after about two days' travel.

One very interesting thing occurred on this trip—at least interesting to me. Soon after crossing the North Platte we came upon the old Oregon Trail that follows up, along that side of the river. For a mile or two we traveled in, or by the side of the old trail and it looked and seemed so natural that I was carried back to the summer of 1852 and was again in mind, on the overland journey, only then I was driving four yoke of cattle—now I was on horseback. At one place we crossed three or four steep ravines, where I distinctly remembered that the crossing was so bad that it took both my cousin and myself to manage the team, one of us at the heads of the lead cattle, and the other to mind the wheel oxen and manage the brake.

We made a good camp on Salt creek, a tributary to Powder river. The camp was protected from the wind on all sides either by steep banks or by thickets of willows. The water in the little creek was good for drinking, it being the only good water we found in that neighborhood, all the other streams being saline or alkaline water or both.

We now had five men in camp; the newcomers being known as The Old Man, George and Charley. The Old Man owned the outfit of wagon, tent and teams. I have forgotten his name if indeed I ever heard it. He was a railroad builder and having worked all summer on a grading contract was now on a hunting trip for fun, and to get a supply of meat for winter. He tended the camp, and hunted rabbits with a 22 rifle, but never killed anything. George and Charley were mechanics—were both single men, and were out for sport. They both carried new, magazine Winchester rifles, calibre 40-82. Charley was German, his real name being Carl, and hereafter will be known as Carl in this narrative to prevent confusion of names. Neither George nor Carl knew anything about hunting, but Carl was a splendid shot with a rifle. At a distance of twenty paces he would hit a half gallon tin can at nearly every shot when thrown into the air. He did not understand the habits of game, nor know where to find it when hunting, but he was quite successful as a hunter from the fact that he was an expert marksman. They were not the most agreeable people to camp out with, their conversation being on the low order, and their stories and jokes rough to say the least. However, they were friendly and willing to accommodate and we got along first rate.

The country over which we were to hunt was much the same as that already described around our camps at the head of Sand creek, only here, about two miles east of the camp was a high, broken ridge—a divide between two water courses, that assumed the proportions of a mountain range, and contained a good deal of pine and cedar timber, some of the pine trees being of quite large size. From any point on the summit of this ridge, where the view was not obstructed by timber, the Big Horn mountains could plainly be seen to the northwest, and the valley of Salt Fork on which we were camped could be traced to its junction with

the main Powder river valley, as well as a portion of the main valley itself. In the same direction there were a number of high buttes containing layers of colored rocks, their sides being streaked with alternate layers of pink, yellow and green.

I did a good deal of exploring as well as of hunting, and derived at least as much pleasure from this source as from hunting for game. There were many things of interest. Near our camp at the head of Sand creek there were many veins of coal to be seen along the sides of the dry water courses, varying in thickness from a few inches to five feet. There was one hill of iron ore—a piece chipped from the rock would attract the needle of the compass the same as a magnet. There were many birds, especially in the vicinity of our Salt creek camp, the most conspicuous of which were magpies, whisky jacks or Canada jays, and flocks of the beautiful wax wings or cedar birds. The magpies and whisky jacks were annoying; they would pick at the venison when left out for a time before bringing it to camp, mutilating the hams and devouring all they could eat. The whisky jacks were about the camp at all times during the day, becoming very tame and picking up any scraps thrown out from the table. One time some years after this trip, while hunting in the Black Hills, someone in camp had a bottle of whisky, carried probably for snake bites, although it was November and we were camped high up in the mountains above the range of rattlesnakes. Guy Campbell who was along soaked some bread in whisky and placing it in reach of the whisky jacks awaited the result. They devoured the bread eagerly, and two of them getting an overdose were able to fly with difficulty, and could scarcely sit upon a limb, one of them actually turning a sommersault and hanging for a time head downward.

There were range cattle scattered about in little bands all over the country, and in the vicinity of our Salt creek

camp there was a drove of mares and colts, a hundred or more in number led by an old mare with a bell. The cattle were almost as wild as the deer, and would run off on the approach of anyone on foot. There were cattle trails leading to the watering places the same as the buffalo trails of the early days, only they were not so deeply worn. No human habitations were met with anywhere, there being no settlers, and the cattle ranches were few and widely scattered.

The next morning after the camp had been made on Salt creek, we all started out for a hunt except the Old Man, who kept the camp. I hunted faithfully and carefully all day, and was the last one in at night, not reaching camp until it was dusk. I saw nothing bigger than a magpie, although there were plenty of game signs; all the others had seen deer and Carl had killed two, one big one and one small one. Charley was a good cook and supper was ready, consisting of pancakes, broiled venison and tea, and a little fried bacon to furnish gravy for the pancakes. The supper was fine and the evening was pleasantly spent, everybody seeming elated over the prospects except myself. I felt that my reputation was at stake, and was thinking over plans to redeem it the next day.

The next morning I was up and had cooked and eaten breakfast before daylight while the others were asleep. Just as the light began to appear in the east and as the others were beginning to get out, I started out for the day's hunt, and was a mile away from camp before it was light enough to see to shoot. Soon there began to be fresh signs of elk, and going very slowly and carefully, for the elk has a keen nose and is sharp of sight, I found a herd of about forty when not more than two miles from camp. They were mostly lying down, and in a place where it was not very difficult to approach them, although for some distance I had to crawl upon my stomach, and at other places go in a stoop-

ing posture or on my hands and knees. From my position when ready to shoot only three or four could be seen, and from these I picked out the largest cow elk and fired, the bullet striking fair and making a "thud" that could be plainly heard. The herd started to run, and soon bunched as they will nearly always do, when I got in a second shot and hit another cow elk. By this time they were filing off at a lope, and selecting a big buck I fired at and wounded him, but not so but he could keep up with the herd. The first elk ran into a cedar thicket and lay down. Going up within thirty steps I gave her a shot in the head. The two had fallen not more than two hundred steps apart and before noon I had them both dressed, and some snow thrown into the cavity of the body to cool them off quickly, the day being so warm that blow flies were beginning to come around.

It was about a mile further to the top of a high ridge where I stopped and ate luncheon, watching in the meantime for game, being screened from sight by some clumps of brush. While eating I saw five deer about half a mile off —a big buck by himself and a buck, doe and two fawns in another place. After luncheon I went for the buck first, and getting within long range gave him a shot, but it was not immediately fatal. He was shot through the body, but bled very little on the outside. I followed him for about a mile, but the tracking was so slow, I gave it up and went back to try and find the other four deer. They had moved about a half mile, but were easily found, and I got them all, it taking one shot for the old doe, one for one of the fawns and two each for the buck and the other fawn. It was dark when I got into camp, but it was the greatest day's hunt I had ever had. I had killed two elk and four deer and had used eleven cartridges. Carl had come across the same herd of elk later in the day, and had brought down one of the bucks. These were the first elk he had ever seen and

he felt greatly elated as well he might. Carl and George on going with pack horses for the two deer that Carl had killed the day before could only find the large deer. The two had fallen about a quarter of a mile apart, and some animal, probably a grizzly, had found and carried off the small deer.

In a few days, having a full load of game we went back to Glenrock. During the hunt, I had killed in all twelve deer, two elk and three antelope, not counting any that were wounded and lost. I have never made a more successful hunt, either before or since that time. At Glenrock, we arranged with Mr. Baker to ship our game to Oakdale with the first load of coal billed for that place. While waiting at Glenrock for the car that was to carry the game, Charley borrowed a rifle, and going into the country south of Glenrock, he killed two antelope at one shot. He probably has not to this day ceased to regret that he did not take a rifle for the trip.

We left a liberal supply of venison with our friends at Glenrock, and bidding good bye, started for home on the next train that carried passengers, after having shipped the game. The game came through safely to Mr. Truesdale, who was then the coal dealer at Oakdale. Charley and I divided with our neighbors, sending a mess of venison to forty-two families in Oakdale and vicinity. Our friend, Ed. Baker at Glenrock, did not care for any venison himself, as he was boarding at the restaurant, but at his request, I sent by express the hind quarters of a deer to his relatives in Ohio, and later received from his niece a letter of acknowledgement. We were gone from home about four weeks.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Black Hills.

What we now call the Black Hills consists of an extensive tract of mountainous country lying chiefly in western South Dakota, but extending also from twenty to thirty miles into eastern Wyoming. This tract is enclosed, excepting on the west, by the north and south forks of Cheyenne river, the north fork being known also as the Belle Fourche river. It is a broad tract, covering four entire counties in South Dakota, namely, Lawrence, Meade, Pennington and Custer, and also a portion of the northern part of Fall River county, besides a tract of considerable size in Wyoming. They extend a hundred miles from southeast to northwest, and in the broadest part are eighty miles wide. A hundred years ago, what we now call the Black Hills was an unknown region—what was then called Black Hills, or sometimes Black Mountains, lies in central Wyoming, south of the North Platte river, and is now known as the Laramie Mountains. The Black Hills of South Dakota almost touch our own state of Nebraska; in fact our own mountainous country in western and northwestern Nebraska, known as Pine Ridge and the Wild Cat Range, is but a continuation on a smaller scale of the real Black Hills country of South Dakota.

The Black Hills were so named, so we are told in the old books describing the early explorations in the western country, on account of their dark color, owing to the forest growth of evergreen timber covering their sides; this timber, consisting of pine, spruce and cedar. This name is appropriate because it is descriptive in so far as it applies to color, but why they were called hills instead of mountains is not so clear. In some of the old books, and especially Irving's

Bonneville, the word hills seldom, if ever, occurs in this connection—they are spoken of as the Black Mountains. They are really a superb aggregation of mountain ridges and peaks, rivaling in height the White Mountains of New Hampshire and the Alleghanies of western North Carolina, and greatly exceeding in height the entire Appalachian chain as a whole. The highest points are over 7000 feet in height, and a great number of peaks and ridges are more than 6000 feet high. However, the name Black Hills has caught, and will hold fast, and, while not exactly appropriate, it has become endeared in the memories of thousands of those who live within or near this mountainous region, and of those who have visited it for the purpose of hunting, fishing and camping. There are scores upon scores of prominent peaks, some of the most noted being Harney's peak, Buckhorn mountain, Terry's peak, Custer's peak, Bear Lodge, Inyan Kara, Bear Butte, Warren's peak, Round Top, and very many others.

On the southwestern side there is a detached unbroken ridge sixty miles long, and separated from the main mountain chain by a series of narrow flats and valleys, and running from Edgemont in South Dakota almost to Newcastle, Wyoming, that has been named Elk Mountain. It is covered with timber from bottom to top, the mountain, in some places, running up to a narrow, sharp ridge, and in other places widening out at the top to level or undulating tracts half a mile or more in width. In places the ascent is, at least part of the way, quite easy and gradual, in others steep and difficult to climb. On this mountain a good deal of lumbering has been done in the past, and most of the large timber has been cut off.

Another prominent ridge is called the Limestone. The Limestone runs from northwest to southeast through a large portion of the mountainous tract, and is the backbone of the

system, its greatest height being 7100 feet, which, however, is not quite as high, so I have been informed, as some of the outlying peaks. From both sides of the Limestone slopes, there are hundreds of springs of cold pure water that break out from among the rocks, and start on their journey in the form of little rivulets to join the larger streams at the foot of the mountain. Some of these springs, however, and indeed a good many of them, flow only a short distance, a half mile or so, and sink into the ground, probably to again break out lower down the mountain slope.

This whole mass of mountains, a hundred or more miles long, and from forty to eighty miles in width, has for its base from which it rises, an elevated plateau or table-land. This table-land is of itself from 3200 to 4000 feet high. Because this is spoken of as a table-land or plateau, do not conculde that it is one great broad level tract. It is far from being level. In places it is level, or nearly so, for miles, but even then it is cut here and there by streams or dry canyons, these often having rough, rocky and steep sides, and in other places traversed by ridges of moderate hills, and in some places there may be found a single butte or maybe a group of buttes running up with steep rocky slopes to the height of two or three hundred feet or more. Still the whole country, outside of the mountains is spoken of as a plateau or table-land, even though it has, in general, a very uneven surface.

The Black Hills holds two noted summer resorts—Hot Springs in the southeastern part, and Spearfish canyon in the northern part. Long before the white people ever heard of the Hot Springs and the healing virtues of its waters, the Indians made use of it as medicine waters. The Sioux or Dakota Indians called the springs Minne-Katah, or water warm. It is a peculiarity of the Dakota language that the qualifying adjective always follows the noun which it modifies; as Weah-washtay, woman good; Minne-sela, water red;

Kongra-tongra, crow big. However, those people who visit the Hot Springs of South Dakota for their health, or who take a trip to Wind Cave, or who camp for a week or two in Spearfish Canyon for an outing, see little of the Black Hills and know little about them on their return. If you would really know the Black Hills, leave the beaten trails—do not go where everyone else goes, but go where no one else goes, or, at any rate, where few others go. By so doing you will learn to know the Black Hills.

Although the Black Hills are so nearly completely covered with a growth of evergreen timber as to give them, when seen at a distance, a deep dark color, there is yet much of the surface that is treeless. In the lower parts of the hills the timber is confined chiefly to the canyons, the side ravines and pockets in the hillsides, and the north slopes—the level tracts and the south slopes being nearly treeless. As higher elevations are reached the timber becomes denser and heavier, and thickets of quaking aspen and second-growth groves of pine and spruce appear, making dense thickets in many places. At an elevation of 5000 to 6000 feet the surface is mostly covered with timber, but even then it is greatly diversified by many open treeless tracts called parks, covered only with grass and containing anywhere from an acre or two up to hundreds of acres of open country. These parklike tracts, surrounded with dense forest are extremely attractive. Sometimes these parks take the form of open glades, a quarter or a half mile long, and only a few rods wide, covered with densely growing grass a foot or so high, with an abundant variety of bright colored flowers.

Do not conclude that the Black Hills country is all of it made up of rough, rocky ragged hills and canyons—some of it is, much of it in fact, but there are hundreds of tracts of smooth, undulating, or sloping land, varying from a few acres to hundreds of acres in a tract. There are wagon trails leading through in many places, these, of course, hold-

ing to the easiest grades. One can travel through the mountains from east to west, or from south to north in some places with a team,or can go in most places on horseback, or anywhere he pleases on foot. Altogether I consider it about the most delightful camping grounds I have ever visited. Firewood and shelter for the camp, grass for the horses, and good water can be found everywhere after the mountains are once entered. Some of the streams of the foothills, and also a little way up in the mountains are impregnated with gypsum or other minerals, making the water bad, but once in the mountains the water is all pure and fine. Nearly or quite all the streams are stocked with trout. These trout were planted there within the last twenty years. Originally, it is claimed, that there were no trout on the eastern slope of the Rocky mountains, but they were abundant on the western side. At any rate, this is in accordance with the opinions of the first explorers, and of the early writers. I also know for myself that when I followed the Overland Trail across the plains in 1852, the fishermen in our party caught no trout in the Sweet Water, nor in any other branches of the Platte, but as soon as the creeks flowing into Green and Snake rivers were reached they got trout in plenty.

The Black Hills region is a beautiful, romantic, attractive place—we ought to get better acquainted with it.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Two Black Hills Bear Stories.

No. 1.

All of the stories written thus far are recollections of my own past experiences, and are true to the letter in every respect—this story, with the one to follow, will be told as told to me by others who took part in the things that occurred but will, I believe, be true and faithful descriptions of the events related.

This is to be a bear story. I cannot tell a bear story from my own knowledge because it never has been my good fortune to have had any experience in hunting bears. Hence it is necessary to give this story at second hand, or leave it out altogether.

Along about 1882, or may be, somewhat later, there was a man living in the vicinity of Tilden by the name of William Smith. Many of the Tilden people will no doubt remember him—he run a threshing machine for two or three years for Allen Hopkins, and while doing threshing for the farmers I became acquainted with him. Later he moved to the Black Hills, and squatted on a tract of land at the eastern foot of Elk mountain in extreme western South Dakota. I have passed in sight of his place several times while on hunting trips to the Hills, and once made him a neighborly call, for old acquaintance sake, and by invitation stayed to dinner. He told me all about the bear hunt that will be here related, and showed me the tanned skins of the three bears that were killed upon that occasion. I did not take down notes of our conversation at the time, as I then had no idea of writing out the story. However, about a year ago I thought of put-

ting an account of it on paper, and in order to refresh my memory I called on D. V. Coe, who now lives in Neligh, and got the main facts from him, jotting down notes of our talk at the time. Mr. Coe was a near neighbor of Mr. Smith in the Black Hills country and knew all about the facts at the time they occurred.

In the fall of 1890 a man by the name of Leavitt, who I think was boarding at Smith's ranch, while hunting came across what seemed to be a bear's den. It was late in the season, and winter was close at hand, it being about the time of year for the bears to den up for the winter. It is the habit of the bears of the United States, both the grizzly and the black kind, to go into winter quarters on the approach of very cold weather, where they hibernate, as it is called, until spring. They become very fat during the fall months, and at the proper time going into their winter dens, they sleep through the cold winter, eating nothing during the time. In the spring they come out poor and ravenously hungry. This, however, is not the habit of the white bears of the Arctic regions—they do not hibernate, but roam abroad the whole of the Arctic winter. These explanations are made for the younger readers, who are not supposed to be as well posted in these matters as the older ones.

Mr. Leavitt looked the ground over until satisfied that it was really a den occupied by two or more bears. Returning to the ranch without disturbing the bears, if indeed they were at home, at the time, and reporting to Mr. Smith, they determined to go after them without delay.

The den was in a ledge of rocks in Hell's canyon, up in the rough mountains ten or twelve miles northeast of Smith's place. Several years afterwards I made quite a careful survey of the place, going several miles out of my way to see a real bear's den.

Hell's Canyon—I do not know why so named, unless it is because it is the deepest, roughest, biggest canyon in all that part of the Hills—is about twenty-five miles long with very high, steep, shelving sides, with perpendicular walls in many places, the bottom in some places filled with a tangle of brush, and piles of big rocks that have rolled down from the steep rocky hillsides. The adjacent mountain sides are more or less thickly covered with evergreen timber. If the roughest spot possible is a good place for a bear's den then Hell's Canyon ought to furnish any number of them.

In this case the den itself was formed by a rock and earth slide from the steep hillside above to a wide ledge of flat rocks which had arrested the slide so that it was piled up in such way as to form a hollow inside the rocks of several feet in extent with an opening out to the rock ledge, thus forming a den or cave, protected from the wind and storms of winter. In front of the opening or entrance to the den there was, first, a flat, level surface of rock for eight or ten feet, then a perpendicular fall of perhaps eight feet, and next a very steep slope of fifty to seventy-five feet to the bottom of the canyon.

When Smith and Leavitt went after the bears, they got two other men to go with them—Smith and the two men being armed with repeating rifles, Leavitt having only a large caliber revolver. Arriving at the den the first thing to be done was to find whether or not the bears were at home. It was arranged that Leavitt should carefully approach to the front of the den and find out if he could whether the bears were inside, but it was not intended that they should be disturbed until he had time to withdraw to a safe distance. Leavitt made the reconnoissance all right, and finding the bears at home, instead of quickly retiring he shouted, "Come on boys, they are here." The bears were not asleep, but instead were very much awake, and probably taking the shout

for a challenge, the largest one at once made a charge at Leavitt, and before he had any chance to shoot or run, she seized him by the shoulder, and together they fell over the ledge and then rolled for fifty or more feet down the steep incline to the bottom. The men had no chance to fire at the bear for fear of hitting Leavitt. Smith ran or slid down the hill and as soon as there was a chance, putting the rifle close to the bear while it was biting away at Leavitt, shot it dead. There were two other bears that followed the first one out, and these started at once to run off.

And now a singular thing happened. As the two bears were running away the one in the lead was shot in the body —this did not bring it down, but did make it mad, and turning about it charged the other bear with great fury. It is said that this is not a very unusual thing for a bear to do when hit by a bullet if in company with other bears. The two bears were easily killed. The large bear that had attacked Leavitt was an old she one, the other two much smaller, and were supposed to have been a year old the previous spring, as they were much too large for mere cubs.

Leavitt was seriously hurt, having been bitten hard and badly clawed up, but no bones were broken. It is a wonder he was not killed outright. Probably the bear had little chance to do any fighting while rolling down the hill, and Smith came on in good time to save the man's life. It seems incredible that a man would be so rash as to do as Leavitt did in front of a bear's den.

These bears were grizzlies, the most dangerous animal on the American continent, excepting only the white bear of the Arctic regions, or perhaps also the great bear of western Alaska and of the Alaskan islands, which is a first cousin of the grizzly.

Some time after the bear hunt described above, Mr. Smith with the aid of his dog killed a mountain lion. These

animals were, and probably now are very plentiful in the rougher and wilder parts of the Black Hills. A number of times while hunting deer in the Hills I have seen their tracks in the snow but never came across any of the animals themselves, their hunting for game being done almost wholly in the night. Like other animals of the cat kind they can see in the dark. I have called the animal a mountain lion, although it is in no sense a lion. The animal goes under different names in different parts of the country. In the eastern and middle states it is variously called panther, painter, catamount and cougar—in Canada it is known as the cougar—in New and Old Mexico and Arizona it is called the puma, and in the Pacific, the mountain and plains states it is called generally mountain lion. There are only three species of wild animals of the cat kind within the borders of the United States proper—the one just named above—the others being the Canada lynx and the wildcat or bob cat.

The mountain lion killed by Mr. Smith was chased by his dog, a small courageous little house dog, into a hole in the rocks. He was driven from his retreat by smoke, and shot by Mr. Smith as he came out.

No. 2.

Theodore Roosevelt spent a number of years as a ranchman on the Little Missouri river in western North Dakota when that country was very new and wild, and while it was occupied only by cattlemen and hunters. While living the life of a ranchman, he also did a good deal of hunting, and from his experiences as a game hunter during that time he has written four very interesting and instructive books, entitled "Hunting Trips of a Ranchman," "Hunting Trips on the Prairie," Hunting the Grizzly" and "The Wilderness Hunter." These four books are without exception the best hunting stories I have ever read. They are far more inter-

esting to me than his "African Game Trails," probably from the fact that they treat of the game found, and of hunting done in our own country.

Mr. Roosevelt's style as a writer is very clear, concise, direct and attractive, which, of course, tends to make his books all the more readable. Besides he sticks to the facts and is accurate in what he has to say. If any young friends really want the best hunting stories published, they should get these four volumes, or, if they cannot afford them all, get the "Wilderness Hunter," which, to me, is the best of them all.

Once he made a trip to the Black Hills which lie two or three hundred miles south of his ranch, and, although he did little or no hunting there, he speaks of them in one of his books as "fairly swarming with game." He also mentions one man, Col. Roger D. Williams of Lexington, Ky., who spent the entire winter of 1875 hunting in the Black Hills, with his men, horses and hounds. His method was to hunt on horseback, turning his greyhounds loose whenever game was sighted, and racing after them with the horses. According to the account given they got a great many wolves and antelopes. Probably they could get few, if any, deer, owing to the rough character of the ground, and the frequent dense thickets where deer would be found. I can readily believe from what I know of the Black Hills, that no place in the United States at that date, or say up to the year 1890, surpassed the Black Hills region as a game country. On the plateau or table-land surrounding the Hills there were thousands on thousands of antelope—from the rough foothills to the high timbered tracts in the interior of the mountains there were thousands of black tail deer—white tail deer were found everywhere in the timber and among the brush thickets, at an altitude of 5000 to 6000 feet. Still higher up among the rough crags of the summits of the mountains there were droves of mountain sheep, while herds of elk

roamed everywhere throughout that region. Besides these there were wolves, mountain lions and grizzly bears, and in the timbered parts there were black bears. Not farther back than 1875, there were also great herds of buffalo all through that country. Now it is different. The buffalo, the elk and the mountain sheep have entirely disappeared. There are antelope on the plains, but in greatly diminished numbers—the black and grizzly bears and mountain lions are confined to the rough interior parts of the mountains, and the big gray wolves are very scarce. Black tail deer are still quite plentiful in the very rough parts best suited to their nature, and there are still a good many white tail deer high up where there is much timber and many thickets of brush that afford them cover. Both kinds of deer will probably always be found in the mountains, and there will still be antelope on the plains, because these are now all protected by very strict laws. The bears, mountain lions and wolves will finally be killed off, and they ought to be, because they destroy farmers' stock as well as weaker wild animals.

Thus far this has nothing to do with the bear story to follow, but it is written because it is well for us all to know of, and to hold in mind the conditions that existed in a large tract of country so very near to us only a single generation ago.

In the fall of 1891 there was a man by the name of Mason who owned and run a sawmill in Weston county, Wyoming, just on the western side of the Black Hills. His mill was located on the bank of a stream called Beaver creek, and near the saw mill was a plank bridge spanning the stream. Mr. Mason kept a yoke of oxen that were used in hauling logs to the mill, and when not in use these oxen ran at large with some other cattle. There had been some trouble from the wild animals infesting the nearby hills, but as yet no serious losses. One night Mr. Mason was awakened by the cattle running past, either up or down the

valley, but he did not go out to make any investigation. It is not easy for a grizzly bear to catch a young, active steer or heifer in a fair race—it could be done by wolves, but wolves would not be very likely to come so near the buildings for that purpose, while a mountain lion would probably lie concealed and spring upon its prey, taking it unawares. Mr. Mason, thinking that probably the cattle could take care of themselves, did not go out to look after them until morning. In the morning he found one of the oxen mired down in the creek under the bridge. Three or four bridge planks had been torn up and pushed to one side, and some animal, standing on the bridge, had made a meal off the back of the ox, literally eating him alive. The ox, though almost dead, was still breathing when found. Of course, it was a grizzly bear, as no other wild animal had half strength enough to tear up the planks of the bridge, in order to get at the ox. The ox, when chased in the night, evidently not being able to outrun the bear, had taken refuge under the bridge, and the bear, by the use of his immense strength, tore off the bridge planks and, thus, easily getting at his helpless prey, partook of his supper at leisure.

It was thought that the bear would be likely to return the next night for another meal, and it was determined to lie in wait for him. Accordingly Mr. Mason sent for Sam Coe to help him as he watched for the bear the next night.

Sam Coe is an Antelope county product, having been raised to manhood in the Grecian Bend neighborhood, but at the time these things happened he was living with his father's family only a few miles from Mason's sawmill. Sam was, and still is, a crack shot and an expert hunter, having more than a local reputation in that line throughout the Black Hills country.

But the bear did not come back, or if he did, he took their scent and made off without showing himself. The

next night after this, there was a snow, but still the bear did not come back, and Mr. Mason determined to take a turn in the hills and see if he could find signs of him. He found the bear, all right, but he did not live to tell of it.

As Mason did not return when expected, his wife, becoming uneasy about him, took his track and following it into the hills only a mile or so from the house, found his dead and mangled body lying in the snow by the side of a log. Help was summoned and the body brought in and cared for.

The rest of this story is gathered from the tell-tale tracks in the snow which gave a very clear and concise account of what happened.

Within a mile or less of home Mr. Mason had come upon the fresh tracks of the bear, and following them into a dense thicket of brush and trees, had suddenly come upon the bear, which immediately charged him. Mason fired at close range, giving the bear a wound that would finally have proved mortal, but which did not hinder him from making a furious charge. The rifle was found in the snow with an empty shell jammed in the magazine. Finding that he could not reload, Mason threw down the gun and started to climb a tree. When up ten or twelve feet from the ground the bear seized him by one heel, pulled him to the ground and continued to bite and maul him until he seemed to be dead. The bear then left his victim and retired into the brush some distance away and lay down to nurse his own wound. How long Mason lay where the bear left him is not known, but he did finally come to himself again, and started towards home. He went a short distance, however, when coming to a log, he sat down upon it to dress his wounded heel, which was terribly lacerated by the bite given by the bear when pulling him down from the tree. Mason took off both his outside and undershirt, and putting the outer shirt on again, tore up the undershirt into strips and began to do up his heel, when he was attacked by the

bear and this time was killed. All this was made plain to those who afterward investigated the matter.

The bear was too badly hurt to go very far. He retreated a short distance into a deep canyon that was filled with a dense growth of brush, and bounded by perpendicular rock walls on either side. The men who followed him up did not venture into the canyon, but keeping up on the rocks where they could see what was going on below, they sent in two dogs on the track. He was soon routed out of his bed, but put up a good fight, and killed one of the dogs before being shot from above by one of the men. His skin was mounted by a taxidermist and placed on exhibition in Newcastle, Wyoming. Twice, when in Newcastle, I went to see it. He stood erect upon his hind feet, his fore paws resting on a pole, the top of his head being about seven feet from the floor. He surely was a big fellow. He was of the variety of the grizzly bear known as the silvertip. His weight I could not exactly ascertain, but it was somewhere between 900 and 1000 pounds.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Hunting Stories and Habits of the Wild Animals.

My whole life from infancy to the present time has been spent either on or near the frontier. This country, right here in Antelope county, which has now been settled forty-seven years, is the oldest settled place that I have ever lived in. Although it is still a new country here, or at least is so regarded, it is taking on, or rather has already taken on the appearance, and customs, and peculiarities of an old settled country. However, if there is still a frontier country anywhere in the United States, which perhaps is questionable, we who live here in Antelope county are living close neighbor to it. Large portions of the western part of Nebraska are still about as new as any part of the United States proper, excepting, of course, desert and mountainous tracts unfit for settlement. It is not at all strange that one who has spent nearly the whole of a long life amid the scenes common to the frontier, should look back longingly to the former days, after such changes have taken place about him as to remove all traces of those primitive surroundings that were once so familiar and attractive. Rather would it be strange if he did not look back to those times and scenes of long ago with a feeling of regret akin to homesickness.

It is probable that not a few of the pioneers of Antelope county who have been spared to the present time, would pull out and go to a new country a thousand miles away, if such a place could be found as rich in soil, and as attractive in appearance, and in every way as inviting as was Antelope county in the early days—that is, of course, if they had health and strength to do so. The fascination of frontier

life never entirely dies out when once it has taken possession of one's being. It is this love and longing for the olden times that is one of the incentives to the writing of these articles.

During thirty or more years of my frontier life, I hunted some, at least every year—not that I was a professional hunter, making hunting a business, for I was not, but because at first we needed the meat for food, and later partly for the fun of it, and partly because we had become very fond of fresh venison, and longed for it every fall if we did not have it.

This story, unlike the most of those that have preceded it, will not be an account of a single hunting trip, but instead, will tell of some of the rather unusual things that sometimes befall a hunter or a traveler in a wild unsettled country, and at the same time it will, to a certain degree, show off the habits of the wild animals as seen in their native haunts.

A very attractive way to study the habits of the deer, antelope, elk and other wild denizens of the prairie and of the woods is to watch them unobserved, either from a distance with a field glass, or nearby when screened from their sight. I have done this many times—sometimes when tracing the section lines over the prairie with a compass; sometimes when carrying a gun, but when game was not needed, and therefore the gun was not used, and sometimes, when hunting, I have lain concealel for several minutes watching the actions of the game before taking a shot. Upon one or two occasions I waited too long before shooting and lost the chance altogether.

This happened at one time when I was hunting with D. E. Beckwith in Wheeler and Garfield counties. We had gone into camp in the western part of Wheeler county at a place where there were some high sand hills, known as

the Tumbledumps. One of these hills was a big, deep blow-out, the sand having been scooped out by the wind on the northwestern side to a depth of twenty or more feet, and in the bottom of the cavity thus formed, there was always a pool of fresh, clear water, excepting only in a very dry season. It was a good camping place, there being water, shelter from the wind, afforded by the big hills, and plenty of grass nearby for the horses. The only drawback was a scarcity of fuel for the campfire. There was no timber nor brush anywhere near, but there were the dead, dry roots of the red root shrub that had been uncovered by the wind, which made an excellent fire, but which were not plentiful at this camp. The horses having been put out on picket ropes, Dan busied himself fixing up the camp while I struck out to gather up an armful of red roots for the fire. While gathering the fuel, I noticed across the valley, a mile to the northeast, a big herd of elk, feeding just at the edge of the sand dunes beyond the valley. They were headed toward the northwest—the wind coming from that direction. Elk are always very cautious, and travel either into or across the wind, and when they stop feeding to lie down, they choose a place where the wind will bring the scent of danger from one direction, and where they can see an enemy approaching from any other direction. When disturbed they invariably run into the wind. We concluded it was too late to go after them that evening. There was no danger that the elk would get our scent and leave during the night unless the wind should change to the south, which was not at all likely. We therefore felt pretty sure of getting an elk or two next day, and that would have been the result, if I had not become more interested in studying the elk, than in shooting them.

The next morning the elk were still in plain sight across the valley, not having moved more than half a mile during the night. We had an early breakfast and were

ready to start as soon as it was light. Dan gave the elk up to me, saying, "They are yours by right of discovery," and shouldering his rifle started off in an opposite direction. It did not make much difference at that early day, and in that part of the country where one hunted—there was game to be found almost every day, though it could not always be brought down.

It was not very difficult to approach the elk, but it took a long time, as a distance of at least three miles had to be traversed to reach them, although the elk were not much, if any, more than a mile away to the west of north, they still being on the north edge of an intervening valley about a mile wide. First, I followed down the valley to the southeast about a half mile, hidden by a low ridge, then crossed the valley to the northeast, about a mile from the elk, but most of the time in sight of them. Much of the way in the valley the grass was tall enough to partially screen one from sight. At that distance, however, either elk or deer do not seem to notice a man walking—antelope would probably have seen me and would have run down within a quarter of a mile, or so, to make an investigation. After gaining the low rolls of sand hills and knolls on the north side of the valley the rest of the approach was quite easy. When within fifty or sixty rods of the game there was an intervening tract of low wet ground with coarse grass, crisscrossed by game trails and in places covered with ice. This had to be crossed by crawling on hands and knees. The weather had been moderate enough for the ice to melt somewhat, making it wet and sloppy part of the way. Before getting near enough to shoot, my mittens were wet through and my feet and legs were wet to the knees. However, similar, or even worse, conditions are not uncommon in hunting. One cannot choose the place where the game will be found, and if he cannot undergo some unpleasant phases, such as wet feet,

cold weather, bad storms, ill luck, poor camping places and the like, he had better stay at home and hunt rabbits.

The elk were feeding very near to, and on the southwest side of this partly swampy tract. By screening myself behind a big bunch of grass I could easily take in the situation. They were quite closely together, none were lying down, most of them were feeding, but several of the smaller ones were playing together like young colts. They would stamp and strike at each other, and once two of them reared up on their hind feet, standing almost straight up, and striking at each other with their fore feet. I became interested and forgot to shoot, although two or three times, picking out a fine cow elk and taking aim, I neglected to pull the trigger. They could not possibly smell me as the wind was in my favor, but once in a while I got a good strong smell of them. A big herd of elk can easily be scented a quarter of a mile away when the wind is favorable.

After watching them for some time—ten minutes, anyway, or perhaps a quarter of an hour, I thought it about time to take a shot, and was in the act of trying to get two cow elk in range, so as to bring down two at once, if possible, when all at once they threw up their heads and started to run, going directly northwest into the wind. I was sure they had neither seen nor winded me, and was puzzled. They did not run far before they bunched and stopped. They were still near enough for a chance shot, which, however, I did not care to take. Their noses now all pointed southward and looking in that direction about a quarter of a mile off I saw Jake Gier on one knee in the act of firing his rifle. The shot only scared them, however, and they were soon out of sight in the sand hills.

Meeting with Jake, I found that he and someone else were out on a hunt and were camped about two miles away. I told Jake he could have my interest in those elk—I would

go back and move camp. The experience, however, was on the whole pleasant and profitable. I have never had a better chance upon any occasion to study the habits of a herd of elk.

Jake Gier may have been a good marksman, I do not know as to that, but he surely was no hunter or he never would have tried to approach the elk across an open valley that afforded almost no cover to shield him from sight.

That afternoon we moved camp and finally crossed the Cedar river in Garfield county, camping among the willows in the edge of the sand hills. Here I had rather an unusual experience hunting black tail deer which will form the chief subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXV.

Hunting Stories and Habits of Wild Animals—Continued.

After losing my chances at the elk, as related in the last chapter, I went straight back to camp, and as soon as Dan came in, we struck camp, loaded up and pulled out in a southwest course for Cedar river, about twelve miles away. We did not stop to hunt at all on the way—in fact this was not really a hunting trip as will be hereafter explained, but we did want to get a few deer to take back home to give our families a first feed of venison for the season.

As has been explained in Chapter XIV, only twice did I ever kill any game for market, my hunting with those two exceptions having been done to get food for the family, and to furnish for a few days each year the most exciting and pleasurable recreation for myself. It is proper also to add that for two seasons, 1872 and 1873, while in the employ of the land department of the B. & M. R. R. Co., I hunted to supply the surveyors' camp with venison. For this I got no extra pay, as I was employed by the railroad company at a certain price per month as surveyor, and most of the game for the camp was killed while about my regular work. A few times however, when the camp was short of meat I was delegated to take a day or two off for the purpose of hunting.

At the suggestion of Mr. George Clother, proprietor of the Clother House of Columbus, Neb., we—that is, Mr. D. E. Beckwith and myself—were intending later in the season to kill a load of game for the Columbus market. It was too early as yet in the season to kill game for market since the weather should be cold enough to freeze the game quickly, and to keep it frozen until offered for sale.

We were now out on a scouting trip, looking for the best hunting grounds, where a few weeks later we would be likely to get a big load of game in the shortest possible time. It was the last of October, or possibly the very first of November. There had as yet been no snow at all, and, although the nights were sharp and frosty, the days were mostly warm, as is generally the way in our Nebraska climate at that season of the year. We wanted to find a place where black tail deer were the most plentiful, and where there would likely be a herd or two of elk—white tail deer we knew would be found everywhere along the streams and level bottom lands where there were willow thickets and big grass. We therefore spent most of the time going from place to place, stopping generally only a single night at one camping ground.

Not liking the camping place on the northeast side of the Cedar, the stream was forded, and following up along the southwest side several miles a good camp was made among the willows on a little tributary stream. We were now camped well up toward the head of Cedar river in what was afterward called Garfield county, but was then a part of Wheeler county. West of us there was a large tract of country, several miles in extent, of exceedingly rough sand hills and ridges, without valleys of any considerable size. It was thought best to explore this rough tract in order to determine whether or not it should be the place for our contemplated hunt later in the season.

The next morning, leaving the horses in camp, we struck out afoot, going in different directions, as we both preferred to hunt separately. Up to this time we had not hunted much, and the game killed was only one deer apiece —thanks to my negligence in letting the herd of elk get away without firing a shot. This proved to be a very bad day for hunting. It did not storm, but there was a fierce northwest wind all day long. Game does not move about

much at such a time, and there is little chance of finding it unless one stumbles on it by accident. However it proved to be my lucky day, and something very unusual happened. It is, as before stated, for the purpose of telling some of the unusual and surprising things that sometimes happen to a hunter that some of these stories are written.

I had gone perhaps two miles from camp in a northwesterly direction, following the general course of the stream, but working gradually into the sand hills, when I saw directly ahead, and about a quarter of a mile away, a bunch of black tail deer . There were ten or twelve of them, all lying down under the lee of a high sand ridge, well up towards its top. Dropping down quickly into the grass I watched them for some time, partly to discover, if possible, whether they had seen me or not, and partly to find out the best way of approach. Nearby, a short distance to my left, was a small blow-out, and at its base were several clumps of ash trees. Crawling through the grass to the cover thus afforded, I was able to walk toward the game for some distance, as there was then one or two other little hills in range with the deer that also furnished shelter from their sight. As I was passing the blow-out a black tail buck very deliberately walked out of it over its northern rim within twenty steps of where I was standing. He did not see me until the motion of throwing the rifle to my shoulder drew his attention, when he stopped, turned his head towards me, but did not seem to be at all afraid. How many times since have I thought, what a picture that would have made had I been armed with a camera instead of a rifle. My conscience almost smites me even today, when there comes to my mind the thought of the time after time that I have been guilty of taking advantage of those innocent animals when they were utterly unaware of danger. Even at one time I shot a black tail deer when he was asleep and nodding, exactly as a drowsy person will do. Possibly I may tell of it some

time in another story. But there was no chance to consider the question at that time. The aim was caught, the trigger pulled, and the hair was seen to curl where the bullet struck just back of the shoulder. The deer turned, and giving one strong bound in an instant was out of sight in the blow-out. Another cartridge was thrown in, and I was just at the point of taking a step toward the blow-out, when another deer came out on the jump, saw me and stopped to look. Again I fired, but so quickly that I could not tell whether the deer was struck or not. He, like the first one, turned, and with one big jump landed out of sight in the blow-out. I had not taken more than a step or two when out came another deer, or one of the same that had already appeared, I could not tell which, they all looked just alike. I supposed however that it was the second one shot at, for it seemed certain that the first one was hard hit, while it was uncertain whether the second one was hit at all or not. This last one, however, kept on running but was tumbled over before he was sixty steps away. I now looked about to see what had happened. I found one dead deer lying in the blow-out, and another, the last one, where he fell about sixty steps further north. Taking care of the two deer as quickly as possible, and washing my hands in a pool of clear water at the bottom of the blow-out, and shouldering the rifle I started north to see what had become of the herd of a dozen or so that I was creeping up to when I accidentally found the two just killed. To my surprise they were in the same place they were in when first seen. The wind was so strong from the north that either they did not hear the crack of the rifle, or else the sound was so deadened by the wind that they did not notice it. It was easy to approach within seventy-five or eighty steps, and lying flat on the ground, the rifle resting on a little hummock of earth on top of a knoll and taking careful aim I fired and missed. I never had a fairer shot and, as I thought, never took more careful aim. The

deer was a big doe, lying down, breast toward me. The shot went too low, just cutting out a bunch of hair at the lower point of the brisket, the bullet burying itself in the sand underneath the deer. They all went over the hill in an instant. Among them was a very large buck with wide spreading horns. I did not see these deer again, but going on I got two shots at white tail deer, missing one clear, and slightly wounding another.

By this time it was well past noon, and the day being so disagreeable I turned back toward camp. I found too that I had only one cartridge left. At that time I did not own a cartridge belt, but carried the cartridges loose in my pockets. The rifle used was not a magazine gun but the single-shot, breech-loading Sharps carbine mentioned in some of the previous articles. I think it was the only time in all my hunting experiences that I failed to take along ammunition enough to last through the day.

On the way back to camp I got to thinking about the two black tail bucks killed at the little blow-out, and all at once it came to my mind that perhaps there might have been three deer instead of two. Changing my course slightly I went back to look the ground over again. On arriving at the rim of the blow-out, sure enough there were fresh tracks where a deer had gone out at a low place on the southwest side of the blow-out. Following the tracks in the sand there soon began to be blood on either side, and within a hundred steps the deer was seen lying down. He jumped up and started to run, but it was plain that he was badly hurt. I gave him the last cartridge, which only made a flesh wound, but did not help matters at all. I studied it over a little while as to what it was best to do, whether to leave him for the present, or to run him down afoot, and decided to try the latter. Taking off my coat and leaving it with the gun I started in on the race. I had read that the Apache Indians,

by relieving each other every few hours by several fresh relays, will run down a well deer and I had plenty of confidence that I could easily outrun this badly wounded one. But I soon found out my mistake—he outwinded me. In a quarter of an hour or so, I gave it up, concluding I had had enough exercise for one day. The next morning we moved camp early to the place where the three deer had been shot. The wounded one was found dead very near where I had left him the preceding day.

These three were all young deer, probably two years old the previous spring. They all looked exactly alike and were of the same size. Doubtless they had been driven from the herd by the master buck, and were thus keeping together for company. Such is the habit of both elk and black tail deer—the younger bucks when driven out will herd in twos and threes, but an old fellow who has himself been the boss of the herd, and has been overcome in battle always goes by himself.

I have never seen a battle between two deer or two elk, but I once killed a black tail buck in Logan township not more than four miles from where Elgin now stands, that had gotten the worst of it in battle. His hide was pricked full of holes in several places by the sharp horns of his rival, and in two places these had become running sores. I left him lying on the ground where he fell, not even saving the hide.

We remained two nights at this camp, and what a camp it was! How pleasant to call to mind the comfort, the pleasure, the satisfaction, with which we spent the two remaining days before starting for home. There was our little warm tepee of straight ash poles with an old carpet for a cover, a bright warm camp fire of ash wood, shelter from the wind under the lee of the big hills, clear water for the camp, and good pasture for the horses, plenty of provisions brought

from home— bread, biscuits, butter, baked beans, flour and baking powder for flapjacks, a jug of home-made sorghum, salt and pepper for the fresh venison, doughnuts to be eaten with the coffee, appetites that never failed us, weather the best ever afforded by our splendid Nebraska climate, neither too warm nor too cold—just sharp enough to make vigorous exercise a pleasure, and lastly Dan's pipe and tobacco, for Dan was a good smoker.

It makes me homesick. Ring down the curtain!

CHAPTER XXVI.

Hunting Stories and Habits of Wild Animals—Concluded.

It was the first week in September 1873 that we were in camp on Elm creek in Valley county, just at the north side of the valley of the North Loup river, and about three miles northeast of the place where the city of Ord now stands. At that early date, however, there was no Ord, and the settlements of Valley county were confined chiefly to the immediate valley of the North Loup river, although there were three or four settlers located in the valley of the Middle Loup, near the present site of Arcadia, and two or three on Myra creek, just west of the present site of North Loup village. In fact, at that date, Valley, Greeley and Sherman counties were only just beginning to settle up, and that only in the valleys of the larger streams. The great mass of the territory of these counties just mentioned, together with all of Custer county, was as yet as primitive a wilderness as it was when Lewis and Clark made their memorable journey of exploration up the Missouri river, and across the continent to Oregon in 1804-6.

At that time the counties of Wheeler, Greeley, Valley, Sherman, Custer, Loup and Blaine were alive with big game—elk, white tail deer, black tail deer and antelope. I hunted in all the counties named above more or less from 1871 to 1880, and I have never seen anywhere a better game country. Game of all the kinds just mentioned was also abundant in Boone, Antelope, Holt and Howard counties, but not so very plentiful as in the counties first named. The antelope held to the level and undulating tracts of high land, and to the smooth wide bottoms of the large streams, where they could both see and be seen, but they avoided the ex-

tremely rough lands, the patches of timber and brush along the streams, and the tracts of half swampy land that occurred in some places and that were covered with big grass, rushes, reeds and patches of willow brush. The places avoided by the antelope were just the very places that afforded a home for the white tail deer, excepting the very rough land which they did not often visit. Where the land was the roughest and most broken into canyons and deep ravines, there the black tail deer were at home. They were also plentiful in the great sand hill country, wherever it was found in the counties named above, and also in the sand hill country farther west. The elk were at home anywhere and everywhere, roaming at will throughout all the territory mentioned above. There were also as late as 1873, a few straggling buffalo left in that country. It was not my good luck to find any of them, but I did see their tracks, and their beds where they had lain in the grass on two or three occasions. It surely was a great game country where one could take his choice as to whether he would hunt antelope or either kind of deer, and where he was liable any day to run across a band of elk. Besides it was so near to our own home in Antelope county that it could easily be reached by team, and if game should not be found in the near vicinity of home, it was never more than one or two days' drive away.

Our camp was made up of seven men, four of whom were surveyors, two teamsters and camp helpers, and one a cook. There were two tents, one a large one, in which the surveyors and teamsters slept, and where the meals were served, and a smaller one used as a kitchen, and which was occupied by Sam, the negro cook. In fine weather the table was set, and the meals eaten frequently out of doors in front of the big tent. That fall, 1873, we were finishing up the examination and platting of the B. & M. R. R. lands. The outfit was in charge of J. N. Livingston of Lincoln, Neb., and all the men were from the south Platte country except-

ing myself. They had just completed the work in Webster and Franklin counties, south of the Platte, and had moved the outfit across the country to Valley county where we were now in camp as already stated. We had been at this camp about a week, and one day more would finish the work in that neighborhood. As I was the only one of the company acquainted with the country, Mr. Livingston put it upon me to select the place for the next camp, and for each succeeding camp, and to guide the outfit as it was moved from place to place. They had worked all summer in a country where deer were scarce, and where there were no elk, and antelope were hard to get, consequently they had had no game excepting one wild turkey that one of the men killed in the timber on the Republican river, and an occasional mess of prairie chickens. They all began to talk venison to me as soon as I joined the company, and as I struck out early in the morning on horseback to look up the location for a new camp, Mr. Livingston wished I might bring home a deer when I came back in the evening.

Our next work would be in Greeley county, and the camp would have to be located on the head of Wallace creek, as far up the creek as water could be found. It was about fifteen miles in a direct line to the place where the next camp would be located, but as it was extremely hilly and rough part of the way, it would be necessary to travel about twenty miles with the wagons in moving camp. The country was new and unsettled all the way, and as it was a good place for black tail deer and elk, I felt pretty sure of being able to comply with Mr. Livingston's wish. I was riding Flora—the best and most trusty riding animal I ever owned. Anywhere, I could jump off her back, throw the reins down over her head, and she would go to feeding at once, and wait for my return. If the bridle rein was left over the horn of the saddle, she would follow behind like a dog. She was not afraid of game ,and would carry any kind upon

her back, and was not in the least gun shy. I found the game all right and got it, and besides had a day of unusual experiences the relating of which, I hope, will be a pleasure to those who read it. I had gone five or six miles in a northeast direction and had reached the summit of the ridge dividing the waters of Elm from those of Wallace creek, when I reined up the mare to take a good look ahead for game. To my left about a quarter of a mile away was a rather deep ravine lined with oak and ash trees of small size and an undergrowth of choke cherry and plum brush. A half mile away to the east it run out, spreading itself out in a weed patch as it joined the level flat land. It was a fine resort for black tail deer, and in a moment or two I saw two feeding part way down the bank, on the north side. Slipping off the mare and leading her back out of sight I threw down the bridle reins and left her to feed. It was necessary to make quite a detour in order to keep out of sight. The place near where the deer were I had marked by a large clump of oak grubs, ten or twelve feet high, that offered a good screen. Arriving at the place, cocking my rifle and making ready to shoot quickly, I watched for the game several minutes, but could see nothing of it. Then I whistled several times and finally, seeing nothing, was about to give it up, thinking the deer had gone either up or down the ravine. When, just as I was about to turn, one of them jumped out of the weeds within ten steps of where I was standing, and springing about half way up the steep slope on the other side, stopped stock still, turning its head to look at me. I was too much surprised to take a safe shot, but pointing the gun in that direction, I fired, the shot hitting the bank about a foot above the game. The deer made a little start but did not run. I fired again, this time taking aim, and shot it through the lungs. It made a jump or two, landing in the weeds in the ravine, where it fell. The second deer sprang out, went half way up the bank and stopped to look at the

first deer, which now lay kicking in the weeds. Again I fired the gun in the direction of the deer, and plainly saw where the ball struck over its back in the bank. This second deer did not stir except to start, but kept watching the first one. The second shot brought it down, the two falling not more than three or four steps apart. I had killed a good many deer before this, and thought I could always keep cool enough to take accurate aim. Well, this time I had learned something new about my ability and my failings as a hunter.

These deer were young, probably yearlings, were very tame, and it is likely, had never seen a man before. Dressing the deer, laying them in a shady place and covering them over with choke cherry bushes, I went on. In two or three hours more I had found a pool of clear water at the very head of Wallace creek, where there was an abundance of dry elm wood and some ash for camp fires, and plenty of good grass for the horses. Having seen fresh signs of elk, I thought it best to try to get one on my way back to camp. Taking a long circuit to the north of the course followed on my way out, I sighted a herd of about twenty-five about two o'clock in the afternoon. They were feeding in a rather flat sandy country where there were some low knolls and an occasional patch of plum bushes, so that it was not hard to get near enough for a shot, and besides the wind was favorable. Leaving Flora where she would be out of sight I approached them on foot. When near enough for a long shot, I lay in the grass to wait and watch, as they were working along across the wind, and gradually coming nearer. My hat was trimmed with grass, and as I lay on my stomach, resting on my elbows, this brought my head high enough so that the elk were in plain sight through the scattering stalks of blue stem. What a sight that was! It was too early in the season for the young bucks to be driven out of the herd, although the old master buck was there with his big branching antlers. There were several, probably five

or six younger bucks, not so large as the big one, but yet of good size, and there were also cows, calves and yearlings. Some were feeding, some playing, and all were moving slowly along to the south—the wind being in the west. Among those in the lead were two young bucks, probably two years old, that were butting and pushing each other and rattling their horns together.

It was time to pick out my elk and do some shooting. They were now not over seventy-five steps away. There was no excuse for a careless aim this time. Selecting one of the young bucks of fair size, but not large, and taking careful aim, I fired, the ball striking low down just back of the shoulder. He made two or three jumps and fell. The herd started to run, but soon bunched and stopped to look back. It was easy to get another, but we did not need it, and I had never made a practice of killing game when it was not wanted. Dressing the elk—a very fine fat one—skinning out one ham and cutting the meat from the bone in as large pieces as possible, putting it in each end of a grain sack in which had been carried oats for Flora's dinner, tying the sack behind the saddle and mounting Flora, I went back to camp. When within hearing of the cook's tent, I listened to Sam who had just begun to get supper. He was singing his favorite love ditty the chorus of which ran thus:

"Ten thousand miles away,
Ten thousand miles away,
O, I will go to my true love,
Ten thousand miles away."

Sam was a splendid cook—he did his best that night. We were all hungry—we were all happy—we had elk steak for supper.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Hunting Stories—Lying In Wait for Game.

Every person who has done much hunting for large game, has found out that often the best way to get a shot is to lie in wait for the game to approach. This is equally true whether the hunting is done on the prairie or in the timber. All kinds of game travel about a great deal.

The elk do not seem to have any particular section of the country that is home to them, but they roam from one part to another, going wherever the feed is good, and where water is not far away, because they must have a drink at least once in every twenty-four hours. It is their nature when feeding or traveling to follow a course that will take them either into or across the wind, as they depend upon the nose more than upon their eyesight to warn them of danger. A band of elk that is found in a certain place at one time, will very likely be twenty or thirty miles away in a few days or weeks.

With both kinds of deer it is different. They travel about a great deal, but confine their roaming generally to a certain territory, a few miles across, within some part of which they are pretty sure to be found if it is thoroughly hunted. They, too, visit some watering place generally once a day.

The antelope are different both from the elk and from the deer. During the season when the fawns are brought forth they stick pretty closely to one locality, where they remain in little scattered bands until the fawns are half or two-thirds grown, when they begin to get together in large droves, and soon thereafter journey to the place chosen for winter quarters. The winter feeding grounds consist of a

large tract of level, undulating, or rolling, but not rough country. In such a place they will stay all winter if not too much disturbed. Theodore Roosevelt says that no matter how far the antelope are from water they go to it once a day. I think he is mistaken on that point, however. I believe they go several days without water, especially if there is dew or an occasional shower, enough to wet the grass.

Those who read these articles will bear in mind that I am speaking from experience gained in Nebraska, where nearly all of my observations have been made. Further west where climatic and other conditions are not the same, the habits of all these animals may be somewhat different.

All of these different kinds of animals travel about a great deal, either while feeding, or going to or from the watering places, or to shun some place of fancied danger, or without any apparent object in view, other than to keep moving.

The reader can readily see that on the prairie, when game is sighted at a distance, moving along in a certain direction, it may often be an easy matter for the hunter to intercept the line of travel and secrete himself so as to get a shot as the game is passing by. In the timber the same course can be followed, provided the growth is not very dense.

The elk, and both kinds of deer are not likely to pay any attention to a man who is hidden in the grass, or behind a knoll or clump of bushes, even if his head is in sight, provided his hat is trimmed with grass, and provided he does not stir, for the least movement will attract attention. Neither is it difficult to approach elk, or either kind of deer by lying flat and crawling through the grass, if the grass is high enough and thick enough to afford a tolerable shelter. At such a time they are very apt to watch and wait until satisfied as to whether there is danger or not. Some-

times, even, they will come part way to meet the hunter. Of course on all such occasions the wind must be favorable. But an antelope cannot be fooled in that way, excepting in a remote place where they have not been hunted. They are suspicious of any unusual object, and will keep at a safe distance. The only way to approach an antelope is to keep entirely out of sight, unless they may be blinded by looking toward the sun, when it is only a little way above the horizon.

Of course I am stating these things as I have learned them from my own observations. The experiences of others may vary a good deal from my own.

One more word in regard to the habits of these different kinds of wild animals as to whether they visit the watering places once a day or not.

In the early days, here in Antelope county, there were many more antelope than deer and elk together, and yet it was seldom that an antelope was seen to visit a watering place, while the deer were very often seen at, or going to, or from the water. Besides where there was a pond or pool on the prairie distant from any other watering place, it would show many more tracks of deer than antelope, and if a herd of elk had recently been in the neighborhood, it would be all trampled up by them.

One time in the early eighties—it must have been in 1883 or 1884—I made my last hunt in Wheeler county. There had been only a few deer in Antelope county since the hard winter of 1880, but there were still a good many white tail and a few black tail deer left in Wheeler county, especially in the western part about the head of Beaver creek. My nephew, W. H. Whitmore, who had never been out on a hunt, was very anxious to make one try at it before the game all disappeared from this part of the state. A full account of the hunt will not be given in detail for the reason

that this story is to conform chiefly to the title—"Lying in wait for game."

We were caught in a blizzard the first night after reaching our hunting grounds, and were glad to retrace our steps three miles the next morning to the sod house of a settler. Here we stayed through the storm, helping to twist hay for the stove, for they used hay for fuel; but the sod house was warm and comfortable, and twisting hay was good exercise. After the storm we went out and had the good luck to kill a white tail doe the first day, which kept the family of the settler and ourselves eating while we were there.

The next day we went west into the rough hills, hoping to find a few black tail deer, but there were no signs not even a track. The weather was intensely cold, and my companion froze his nose before we had been out an hour. Toward noon we found shelter from the keen northwest wind in an old blow-out that had become grassed over, and gathering up a big pile of red roots, we built a fire and were making ourselves comfortable and were just beginning to thaw out our luncheon, which had frozen in our pockets, when looking over the narrow rim of the blow-out I saw something moving that looked like a deer, about a mile away to the north. With a field glass I could make out three white tails just coming out of a range of low sand hills. They were traveling toward us, sometimes loping for a little way, then walking and stopping to feed, then loping again. We hastily covered the fire with loose sand so as to prevent the smoke from being seen by the game, and then, as my nephew insisted that I should do the shooting, I made ready in case they should come near enough. They came on straight toward us, and we both kept peering over the rim, showing only our heads, and moving as little as possible. When about forty rods away they veered a little to the west and were passing within easy range when I fired at the largest and brought it down. I doubt if they had seen us

at all as yet, for the other two, instead of looking toward us, ran off a few rods and stopped to watch the fallen deer. Another shot brought down the second deer. I believe I might have gotten the third one, but in changing my position to get a better chance it saw me and immediately ran away, a long distance parting shot failing to hit. We hunted one more day without success, and as the weather continued very cold and somewhat stormy, we pulled out for home.

One day in 1872, I was hunting in Greeley county to get some game for our surveyors' outfit when I got a black tail doe by lying in wait. I had nearly crossed a valley and was making for some rough hills about half a mile to the north, when I distinctly heard three or four shots in quick succession. Watching in the direction of the sound, I soon saw a black tail doe coming out through a narrow gap in the hills, and making directly toward me. There was no chance to hide from her as the ground was perfectly level where I was standing, and the grass was short. Crouching down as low as possible and still be in a position to shoot, I made ready in case she came near. She was running fast, and without noticing me at all, she was passing within a dozen rods, when aiming well ahead of her breast I pulled the trigger. She fell at the crack of the rifle, shot through both hips, the passage of the ball spoiling quite a bit of the best part of the meat. Had I aimed at the shoulders the ball would have gone entirely behind her.

In November, 1871, Mr. E. R. Palmer of Cedar creek and myself were hunting in Greeley county in company with C. P. Mathewson, John S. McClary and W. H. Lowe of Norfolk, and a man by the name of Porter (I think that is the name) of Dakota City, when I had quite an experience with an elk for which I lay in wait. A company of six is too large to do successful hunting, but as the weather was good, and game was plenty and tame, we were having pretty

good luck, and were having a good time. All had killed some game excepting Lowe and Porter. Lowe had an old Spencer carbine that was worthless and he gave up hunting and looked after the camp. Porter had a good double barrel shot gun, but had been unable to get in a shot at close range. He thought he could surely get some game if he had a rifle. As we were to move camp the next day, and as it fell to my lot, as usual, to act as guide to the team in moving, and I could therefore do little or no hunting, I offered to trade guns with Porter for the day. He was glad enough to make the exchange. We were to move about fifteen miles, Mr. McClary and Lowe keeping with the team, while I, acting as guide, would either go ahead or off some distance to one side in search of game. We had gone perhaps two miles when I came across a spike horn white tail buck, in a little grove of box elder trees. He did not offer to run, but stood watching me, not over ten rods away. I fired, nearly every buck shot taking effect, and he fell without hardly making a jump. Loading on the deer, I directed those with the team to follow up a certain ridge, and, if I did not overtake them to wait near a hill about two miles distant but in plain sight.

Striking off toward the left, and gradually increasing the distance from the wagon, I had not gone much more than half a mile, and was following up along the side of a ravine, when I saw an elk coming over a hill about half a mile away. He entered the same ravine I was following and was coming down to meet me on a fast trot. There was not the least shelter or screen of any kind near me, not even any grass, for just there the fire had crossed the ravine and burned everything off. I knelt down on one knee and waited, thinking the elk would surely see me and turn off in some other direction. He came on without paying the least attention to me, and was passing within thirty steps when I fired one barrel and as he turned, gave him the other

one. There was a cut bank six or seven feet high in the direction in which he was trying to go, over which he fell, striking on his head, and breaking off one horn. Two of his legs were broken by the shot, and one buck shot went through his heart.

Porter came to camp at dusk mourning over his bad luck and regretting that he did not hang to his shot gun—he missed with the rifle, an elk's head, not more than fifteen steps away—the body being hidden by some bushes.

One other unusual thing happened during this hunting trip, that will here be related, although it does not properly come under the head of "Lying in wait for game." It is one of the curious and uncommon things that one will occasionally meet with if he spends much time among the wild animals of the woods and prairies.

Two or three days before we moved camp, as referred to above, I was hunting in company with Charley Mathewson. I suppose he was without a rival as a hunter in all this part of the country. At any rate he was the best at a running shot of any man with whom I ever hunted. We were running ravines together—that is, he would take one side of a ravine, and I would take the other, and keeping well up near the top of the bank, we would thus trace the whole length of it, and if a deer jumped out of the brush or weeds, one of us, and perhaps both would be pretty sure to get a shot. We had followed one ravine in this manner to its head without seing any game except two deer that crossed our course ahead of us, then, striking another ravine farther west we began following it down to the valley. We had not gone far before I saw a black tail buck lying down near the bottom of the ravine. He was lying with his head from me, in plain sight, and not more than seventy-five steps away. Mr. Mathewson was on the other side of a small, but deep side draw, and not in position to see the

game, or to take any part in the shooting if I happened to miss, or if there should be more than one deer. I therefore motioned for him to go farther down and take position on a high point, that would give him a better chance. It often happens that while only one deer is in sight, there may be several near by, hidden in the brush or weeds. While Mr. Mathewson was taking his position, which took probably three minutes, I had a chance to study my deer. He was asleep, and was nodding. It is the only time I ever saw anything of the kind. He would raise up his head, then it would begin to nod, nod, two or three times, then come up again. As soon as my comrade was in position I took aim and fired, the ball striking between the shoulders and coming out at the sticking place.

Those men who pride themselves on being true sportsmen and boast of it, will say that this was not sportsman like—that the deer should have been routed out and given a chance for his life. I did not stop to moralize—for five years after we settled in Antelope county, if we had any meat at all in the family, it came from killing game—this year, 1871, was one of the five years.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Hunting Stories—Lying in Wait for Game—Concluded.

This chapter, like the previous one, will give some of my experiences in watching and waiting for game to approach within shooting distance, after it had been discovered when some distance away, and the direction in which it was traveling had been determined. I have never had any good luck in watching at a run-way, or in lying in wait at one end of a swamp or of a bushy ravine, while others undertook to drive the game towards me. In every such instance the game, if started at all, either turned off in some other direction, or else broke cover too far away from my station for a shot. But a good many times while hunting in Nebraska and South Dakota, I have discovered game at a considerable distance, anywhere from a quarter of a mile to a mile away, and by noting which way it was traveling, have been able to secrete myself in such a position as to get a good shot.

Generally, when hunting, I have carried a field glass, and with its help have found game when it was so far off that it probably would not have been seen with the naked eye. Many times also when something was seen at a distance that might or might not be game, the field glass would quickly solve the question. I remember one time while working on the head of Wallace creek in Greeley county; I had been running section lines all day and making plats of railroad lands. I was making for camp as fast as I could walk, as it was almost night, when I saw a dark object at the foot of a clay bank about eighty rods away that looked very much like a black tail deer lying down. I thought, what a chance to get a good shot if that was only a deer.

However, I had no gun with me, and did not really think it could be a deer, but supposed it to be a weed or a bunch of grass. When passing within about two hundred steps of the clay bank, the spot got up, stretched itself, looked at me for a second, and bounded away around the point of the bluff. Had I been hunting at the time and had with me a glass, the question as to whether the object was a deer or not could have been quickly solved, and most likely a fair shot could have been secured. Something quite similar has happened many times when I have been out on a hunt, and at such a time, and at very many such times in fact, a field glass was very convenient. When game is seen traveling at the distance of a half mile or more away, one can determine the exact course it is taking much better with, than without a glass.

After the year 1888, all the hunting done by me was done in the Black Hills, mostly in South Dakota, but to some extent in Wyoming. Hunting in the Black Hills was very pleasant; not that game was any plentier than it was on the Loup Fork river and its tributaries in the early days, but because of the enchanting wildness and wonderful diversity and magnificence of the scenery. Whether game was killed or not, a hunting and camping trip in the Black Hills was always a source of unalloyed pleasure. In fact, I never had quite as good luck in getting game in the Black Hills as I have had in the country west and southwest of Antelope county, but in the Black Hills the best of camping places could be found everywhere, with good water, perfect shelter, and for the camp fires, fuel without end. In the Black Hills one forgets that he is there to hunt for game, and is likely to put in the time climbing the steep rugged peaks to enjoy the grand scenery, or wandering through the pine and spruce forests, or skirting the splendid open parks and glades that are so numerous.

After the year 1888 game was too scarce in our old hunting grounds in Nebraska to make it at all enticing to those fond of the sport, and the Black Hills country was the nearest place where large game could be found in any great quantity. I believe, if my memory has not failed me, that I made five excursions to the Black Hills during the nineties, four in the fall of the year for hunting, and one in the summer for camping and trout fishing. It is not the intention to give in this story a full account of these hunting trips, but to tell of four different times, when game was killed by lying in wait for it to approach near enough for a shot.

I was hunting with Sam Coe—this was on my first hunting trip to the Hills—had been having fairly good luck, for although I had missed several shots, I had brought down two deer at a shot for each, a black tail and a white tail doe. Sam had done much better, for he was a better shot and a much better hunter than I, and besides he was used to hunting in the timber, but I was not. However, it is probable that I was enjoying the sport as much if not more than he.

We struck out from camp as soon as it was fairly light, my course taking me almost directly west, through rather thick timber and brush at first, then for a mile or so through open timber with occasional thickets where deer would likely be in hiding, and where two or three were routed out of their beds, but without giving any chance for a shot. The country was beautiful, not rough excepting in a few places, timbered with the western mountain pine, with open parks and glades, and occasional thickets of second growth pines standing very thick and from five or six, to twelve or fifteen feet high. It was the first time I had ever been fairly into the Hills, and I was so charmed with the scenery that I nearly forgot to look for game. About two miles from camp, after passing through a narrow strip of timber, I came out upon the edge of an open glade, traversed through its center by

a shallow ravine. There were a few pine trees of quite large size scattered along the borders of the open ground, and just in front of where I was standing there was a clump of pines, a dozen or more growing close together near the bottom of the ravine. In general, however, the country was open up and down the glade both ways, so that a good view could be had for half a mile each way. Stopping for a few minutes, I looked the country over each way, but there was nothing in sight. Going on, I had just reached the clump of pines in front when, half a mile off to the south, a black tail buck was seen just coming into the open ground. He stopped and looked for an instant, and then putting his nose to the ground, walked along a few rods as if following a track. No doubt he was tracking up another deer. He was coming almost directly toward me, alternately sniffing at the ground and then loping for a few rods. I kept perfectly still, with the rifle at a ready, partly shielded from sight by the trees. On he came until within about twenty rods, when he turned slightly to the right, and began to gradually climb the gentle east slope of the ravine. He passed within sixty steps without noticing me at all, and while his head was down smelling at the track I fired, the ball passing through both shoulders. He fell after running a dozen rods. He was a fair sized deer, but with a poor set of horns. Had I been walking, instead of standing perfectly still, it is probable that he would have seen me and would not have come within easy gun shot.

The next fall I took another hunt in the Hills in company with John Hunt, Jep Hopkins and Sam Coe. We hunted well up in the mountains, the game being scarce lower down. It was a fine company to be out with—Hunt and Hopkins were old campaigners, both having done time in the federal army during the war of the Rebellion, and Sam. although a young man, was old in experience as a

hunter, and knew every part of the Hills well, and knew the habits of the game and where to find it.

It is a pleasure to hunt with old soldiers. They know how to select a camp, how to pitch a tent, how to cook, how to build a camp fire, and they never can be drained dry of good stories; and besides they are always ready to do their part of the camp work. I submit with regret to the fact that never again can it be possible to take another such trip, with such companions.

I had been having poor luck—all the others were killing game—I was getting none. Either luck was with them and against me, or they were better hunters than I—the latter doubtless being the true reason. But if one sticks faithfully to his job in hunting his luck is pretty sure to turn. Before my luck turned I lost a deer by a very curious miss. I saw two black tail deer lying down within easy range, one of them with breast toward me, and just at the edge of a thick body of timber. I took careful aim and fired expecting surely to strike the deer in the center of the breast. To my surprise the deer sprang up at a bound and ran into the timber unhurt, and it was not possible to get another shot. On going to the place where the deer had lain, I found a small gray rock of the same color as the deer, imbedded in the ground and projecting seven or eight inches, that was exactly in range with my aim, and not more than six inches from the deer's breast. This had caught the bullet, and although considerably shattered and splintered it had saved the deer. The bullet had melted, and portions of it were found on the ground near the rock.

A day or two later I got a deer by waiting for it to come to me. There were six or eight inches of snow on the ground, which had thawed some and then had frozen, forming a crust that made noisy walking. This made it necessary to go carefully, and to stop frequently to look and listen. I had just come to the edge of a little park of four or

five acres, in which there was not a tree, but which was surrounded by timber, some of it being quite dense. I had stopped perhaps five minutes to look around, and was about to go on again when I heard a bunch of deer approaching on the run. They would run for a little way, then stop and listen then run again. They kept coming nearer, making a good deal of noise in breaking through the crust. They saw me as soon as I saw them and stopped in the edge of the timber where there was no chance for a fair shot. However, I took my chance and missed. They scattered somewhat, but three or four ran through an open place in the trees, among them a large doe at which I fired. I did not know whether she was hit or not, but following the tracks soon found blood, and within forty rods I found her lying dead. I do not know how many deer there were in the herd, but certainly there were a dozen or more.

A day or two later I was standing in an open place, looking and listening, when I heard three or four shots not very far away. I was in a little valley, probably twenty rods wide, with steep rocky ledges on either side. If these shots were at deer, and any of the deer came my way, it was pretty certain that they would pass through this valley. I therefore, as quickly as possible, climbed up among the rocks on one side and getting ready, waited. I did not have to wait long before two black tail does came through the gap on the run, passing within seventy-five steps of where I was hidden. I got one at a single shot, but missed the other.

This was on Thanksgiving day, and our outfit was moving camp. We made the new camp within a mile of the spot where the deer was killed, and there we cooked and ate our Thanksgiving dinner. Our camp was in a very thick grove of pine timber, plenty of dry wood all around, a fine spring near by, an open glade close at hand that furnished grass for the horses, although they had to paw the snow away to get to the grass, flour and baking powder for

the pancakes, abundance of fat fresh venison, bread, butter, cake and special nick-nacks put up by Mrs. Coe for Thanksgiving, coffee, sugar and syrup, weather frosty but not too cold, good, jolly, agreeable companions—what could have been better or more to our liking? We can all look back to a bright spot here and there in our lives—this is one in mine.

The next day I got another deer by waiting for him. I first saw him about half a mile away coming toward me in a wide open glade that had a little stream winding along down its center, and willows growing along the banks of the stream. It was destitute of trees or brush, excepting the fringe of willows. Back at some distance there was timber, some of which had been killed by fire, the blackened stumps still standing. The deer came on directly towards me, and acting exactly like the first one described in this article. He was evidently following the track of another deer. I took position among some stumps and fallen trees, on the west side of the glade, thinking he would follow the open glade, and so come within reach. He did not do this, however, but turned short off to the west when about sixty rods away. However, he kept coming a little nearer, and when about forty rods off, as I judged the distance, I fired, but shot under. He gave two or three jumps and stopped perfectly still. This gave a better chance, and aiming high so as not to undershoot I fired, the ball going through the lungs. He ran some distance, at least forty rods, before he fell. He was a white tail of good size with a fine set of horns. I got one more deer during the trip, making four in all, three of them by waiting for them to come and be shot. I look back to this hunting trip with feelings of unmixed pleasure.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Hunting Stories—Hunting Without a Gun.

I cannot tell which affords the greater pleasure, hunting with or without a gun. It has fallen to my lot to do quite a bit of both kinds. My hunting without a gun has been done either for the purpose of capturing young animals, or to watch the wild animals in their native haunts for the purpose of studying their habits. This country in the early days afforded ample opportunity to those disposed to hunt without a gun for either of the above purposes. When one hunts for the purpose of studying the habits of the wild animals, if he is careful in his observations, he will be pretty apt to have some of his early opinions that were formed from reading works of travel, or even works on natural history completely upset, as the result of what he learns from actual personal observation.

For example: Sixty years ago almost every man and woman who was in the habit of reading, believed that the prairie dogs, rattlesnakes and burrowing owls all lived amicably together as one family in the same burrow. Some people even today believe it, because perhaps, that they have read it in some old book, although the silly idea has been long since disproved by careful investigation. Many years ago I believed it myself, because I had read it many times, and supposed it must be so, of course. I have found out, that the rattlesnakes occupy only the old deserted portions of the prairie dog towns—the owls occupy other deserted parts, and the prairie dogs live by themselves in their own community. After a time the prairie dogs ruin and kill out the grass within the limits of their villages, making it necessary to spread out in other directions. I have seen deserted parts of a prairie dog town that covered hundreds of

acres of land, and here is where the rattlesnakes are most likely to be found, and it is also where they den up for the winter. In such a place also they were found, formerly in great numbers when going to their dens in the fall, or when coming out in the spring, but they were not so numerous there throughout the summer. Although I have seen hundreds of prairie dog towns, I have never yet seen a rattlesnake nor a burrowing owl within the limits of the inhabited part of such a town, but many times I have found both in the old deserted dog towns. I have also killed a good many rattlesnakes in the immediate neighborhood of an inhabited dog town, but as stated before never within its limits.

I have also read that a buck antelope sheds his horns annually exactly like a deer or elk, and also that he does not shed his horns at all. Of course I knew not which statement to believe until I found out from experience that neither was correct. The shedding process takes place all right in the spring of the year, but, unlike the process in other animals, the new horn grows inside the old one, and pushes the old shell off as explained in a previous chapter. These statements go to prove the value of the old adage, which might be paraphrased to read thus: "An ounce of experience is worth a pound of conjecture."

The most of my hunting without a gun has been done when tracing lines with a compass, or when looking the country over for a tract of good government land, and sometimes also when carrying a gun when there was no need of killing game.

I was tracing a section line with my compass—it was the last of May or the first of June—the country was all new, the prairie being covered with a bright green carpet of grass, purple here and there with blossoms of the wild pea and patches of spider lilies, and the air fragrant with the blossoms of the wild prairie rose. My work, although important, was light and congenial, and I was happy or glad, prob-

ably both. Coming to the brow of a small hill that sloped gently to a little valley before me, I placed the tripod in position, adjusted the levels, reversed the instrument so as to get a back sight in order to correct my bearings, then taking a peep ahead upon the line I was tracing I noticed for the first time a doe antelope not more than thirty steps away, and directly upon the line I was following. Probably she had been lying down in the grass and did not get up until I had adjusted the compass. She turned her head and looked at me, and then instantly looked in another direction and began to stamp one of her fore feet. Her actions puzzled me, for I had never seen anything just like it before. I watched her probably five minutes before I could make out what the trouble was. Occasionally she would look toward me, but most of the time she seemed to be watching some thing beyond in the grass. Finally I saw something moving in the grass, in the direction she was looking, but could not tell what it was. Leaving the compass I approached the antelope, but when I had covered about half the distance between us, she bounded away, but did not go far before she stopped and turned to look. Where she had been standing was a little fawn which could not have been more than half an hour old for it was not as yet fully dried off. Beyond in the grass in the direction the antelope had been looking, a skunk was at work digging for grubs. I undertook to drive him away, but this did not work well. However, I succeeded after a while in getting him to chase me, finally leaving him twenty or more rods away from the young antelope. The old one did not go back to her fawn again while I was in sight, but watched from the top of a little knoll not far away. Evidently she feared the skunk more than she feared me. I have been told by old plainsmen that an antelope will kill a rattlesnake by jumping on it with its fore feet. I do not know whether this is true or not, but I do believe, judging from the actions of this antelope, that it would have attacked the skunk had it approached the fawn.

Two or three times I tried to capture young antelope by watching with a field glass from the top of a hill that commanded a good view in all directions. I had been told by a man who tried the plan, that by watching the old does when they visit their young, the place where the young ones are hidden can thus be found. The young of the deer, antelope and elk do not follow the mother at first, but lie hidden most of the time for several days. The young antelope lie out in the open prairie, partly screened by the grass, but deer and elk hide their fawns in thickets of brush, or in tall weeds or grass. As stated I tried two or three times to find where the young antelope were by watching the old ones. I could see antelope all the time from my position, generally in five or six different places, many of them being does. but I did not succeed in seeing a single one when in the act of visiting the young ones. It was too tedious a process, and after watching for two or three hours each time, I gave it up. It is probable that these visits to their young are made both late in the afternoon and early in the morning. In fact there is plenty of evidence that such is the case. I have found young antelope several times, but always when accidentally I came upon them as in the case related above.

At one time in Greeley county I saw four or five deer feeding in a little narrow valley not more than a quarter of a mile away. It was early in the spring and the grass was just beginning to be green, the prairie having been burned over the previous fall. They were near a steep bank along which grew clumps of box elder, and masses of choke cherry bushes. I thought I would see how close I could approach without frightening them. By going around some distance I could walk to within a dozen rods of them, and still keep out of sight, and then could crawl right up to the edge of the steep bank. I had no difficulty in getting within twenty steps of them and from my position, lying flat on the ground, could see them plainly through the screen of

bushes. It was curious to see how very careful and watchful they were all the time. They were all feeding, but some of them had their heads up in the air and were looking around all the time. One would put its head down, take three or four bites of grass and then raise its head and look about. All at once an old doe nearest to me gave a sort of whistle, or signal of alarm and away they went, turning to look back after they had gone about thirty rods, then again raising their white tails they went over the hill out of sight. The most striking feature of the actions of the deer, elk and antelope is their extreme watchfulness. They are on the lookout for danger all the time.

Once when tracing a section line I came upon a herd of black tail deer on a hillside. There were thirteen of them in sight, all lying down in the sunshine—whether there were more than that number in the drove or not I do not know, as I did not disturb them. I watched them for some time, for it was a very interesting sight. Among them was a big buck with wide spreading antlers. The place where they were lying was well chosen for safety, because the lay of the land, and the direction of the wind were such that it would not have been easy for a hunter to approach within shooting distance without being discovered.

It is remarkable how sagacious both the elk and black tail deer are in selecting a safe place to lie down to rest. They do not seek to hide themselves in dense cover as do white tail deer, but they lie out in the open where the surroundings are such that they can either see or smell an approaching enemy; especially is this true of the elk, and to quite an extent of black tail deer. If the wind changes a herd of elk will immediately begin to sniff the air, and will at once change their position for a safer one. This I saw a herd of elk do at one time in southern Holt county. The instant the wind shifted, up went their noses into the air, and they at once began to move off.

It is easy to get a chance to watch elk and black tail deer while they are lying down, on account of their habit of lying in the open, but the opposite is true of white tail deer because of their habit of hiding. It is not often one can get a good view of a white tail deer, excepting when they are feeding or traveling.

The coyote is often called in books the barking wolf, because its bark resembles somewhat the barking of a small dog. One time when making hay, I laid aside the pitchfork and went to a nearby spring for a drink of cold water. Having satisfied my thirst, I lay down for a little while under a bunch of tall sunflowers that afforded some shade from the hot August sun. While lying in the shade, well screened from sight, I saw a coyote coming toward me, and it proved to be the best chance ever offered me to watch one unobserved. When first seen he was about eighty rods away, but he kept gradually coming nearer until finally he passed within ten rods of where I was lying without noticing me at all. A coyote is as sharp of sight as any animal that I know of, not even excepting the antelope, but as I was pretty well hidden and scarcely moved at all, he did not see me. His actions in every respect were like those of a dog. When not more than a dozen rods away he sat down upon his haunches, and pointing his nose up toward the sky gave a series of coyote yip, yip, yips, which is familiar to almost all the rural inhabitants of Nebraska.

The raccoon of Nebraska is an animal found almost exclusively along the streams where there is more or less timber. I have come across them several times, either when hunting or when tracing lines, and always they were on or near the bank of a stream where there was more or less timber. Once I saw one in the bottom of a little creek where there were several springs coming out from under a bank that was thickly covered with trees and brush. I lay down on top of the bank twenty or thirty feet above him and where

it was plain to see what he was about, and watched him for some time. He was digging in the black mud just inside and at the border of the little rivulets made by the springs, and I think was eating the roots of some kind of water plant. At any rate he was making his dinner off something he found in the mud. After watching him for a time I threw down some little pieces of earth, which struck in the water near him. He stopped and looked about for half a minute then went on with his work again. Finally I threw down a larger piece, which startled him so much that he ran into the brush out of sight.

The red fox has always been rare here but in the early days one was sometimes seen, and there may still be a few left in the wooded belts bordering the Missouri and Niobrara rivers, for it is a hard animal to exterminate. I have only seen one live one west of the Missouri river, and that was in the Black Hills. I was trailing a deer through a tract of country where there was a good deal of fallen timber. The track was winding about in a very crooked way, indicating that the deer was looking for a good place to lie down, consequently I was going very slowly, keeping a sharp lookout ahead. All at once I saw a red fox, standing still, not more than a dozen rods ahead, and looking at me. I put the rifle to my shoulder—it was already cocked—and drew a bead at his head, and then put down the gun—I was hunting deer, not foxes. I watched him a moment and then took the track again which led directly toward the fox. As I started toward him he trotted on again, but getting a little way ahead stopped and waited, this time turning broadside and looking back. Again I took aim, and again neglected to shoot. I do not remember how many times he turned to look at me but certainly three or four. He was very tame, and very impudent. I know of only two animals that have as much impudence as a red fox, they are the weasel and the chicaree or red squirrel. The fox soon turned off to

the right, and within two hundred steps I found the deer, but only saw him bounding away among the trees, giving no chance to shoot. Then I wished I had saved the fox skin.

CHAPTER XXX.

Hunting Stories—My Last Big Hunt in Wheeler and Garfield Counties.

In the summer of 1868 antelope were often seen on the tableland between Maple and Pebble creeks in Dodge county, and sometimes even they were found between Maple creek and the Platte river within a dozen miles of Fremont. That summer I shot two antelope north of Maple creek and not more than four miles south of the place where Scribner now stands. In the winter of 1868 quite a good many white tail deer lived along the Platte river and Maple creek in Dodge county, hiding through the day time in the weedy ravines that either make south to the Platte or north to Maple creek. Two or three times I went with other men after them, and every time we saw from two or three up to half a dozen, but they were wild and cautious, and we never even got a shot.

In May 1869 I came with S. S. King to what is now Antelope county looking for land. We started from Pebble creek within a mile of where Scribner now is; following the creek for ten or twelve miles, thence going west over the divide to Maple creek, striking it in the northeastern part of Colfax county, thence following a branch of Maple creek well up into Stanton county, thence northwest over the divide and down into the Elkhorn valley, coming to the Elkhorn river just below the mouth of Union creek. The country was unsettled, and we saw white tail deer very often, and antelope everywhere. We camped on Cedar creek in the southern part of Oakdale township about a week, exploring the country and running lines. We went all over Cedar township, and all of Oakdale and Burnett townships south of the Elkhorn, and the north tier of sections in Grant town-

ship. We saw white tail deer almost every day—they were found all along the timbered streams and weedy ravines, and often were seen traveling from one patch of timber or brush to another. Antelope were never out of sight when we were on high land where a distant view could be had. There were numerous signs of elk in several places, but not very fresh. They had been here not very long before in good big herds.

From the time of the first settlement of Antelope county in the early fall of 1868 up to the month of April 1873, white tail deer and antelope were very numerous. There were also frequent herds of elk, and in the rough parts of the county not a few black tail deer. The April storm of 1873—the most destructive storm ever known since the settlement of Nebraska began—killed off thousands of the wild animals. They were never as numerous afterward. When the storm came on, I was at work in Sherman county examining and appraising land for the B. & M. railroad company. After the storm was over so I could get to work again, I found one elk, and scores of antelope and white tail deer that were killed by the storm. There were also many birds killed, especially robins, larks, blackbirds and prairie chickens. I do not believe that wild animals and birds, were ever so plentiful again in Nebraska after that storm as they were before. However, they multiplied to quite an extent, so that by the middle of the seventies there were a great many elk and deer of both kinds in the counties west and southwest of Antelope county, but antelope gradually became more scarce, apparently having forsaken this country as a breeding ground.

The winter of 1880 was a hard one on the wild animals. It began about the middle of October, snow-storm succeeding snow-storm throughout the winter months, and leaving large drifts well into May. That winter nearly used up what were left of the deer. There were almost none left in Antelope county and very few farther west. I made three

hunting trips to western Wheeler and eastern Garfield counties in the early eighties with poor success; once getting nothing at all, and only three white tail deer each of the other two times, with not a sign of elk in a country where a few years before they were so numerous.

As I look back over the past forty-eight years, there is nothing else that brings such a feeling of regret—even more than regret—a feeling akin to sadness, as the total disappearance of the elk, the antelope and the deer, and the thinning out almost to extinction of the prairie chickens, the plover, the curlew and the wild geese.

In the fall of 1878 Mr. D. E. Beckwith and myself had made arrangements to kill a load of game, if we could, for the Columbus market, and had made a preliminary scouting trip, as told in a previous chapter, for the purpose of locating a good place for the coming hunt. My youngest son, DeWitt C. Leach, commonly known as Deede Leach, and Mr. Beckwith's second son, Roy, were to go with us. Deede and Roy were known as the twins, since as it happened, they were both born on the same day. They were great chums, and, if permitted, were always together. It was to be their first regular hunting trip, and judging from remarks they still are in the habit of making, it has so far been the most important event of their lives. When we were about ready to start Mr. Beckwith sent word that owing to sickness in his family, he would have to delay starting, but for us to go on, and he and Roy would join us as soon as his folks were better.

It was well along in November when the start was made but the weather was mild, and there had been but very little snow. We took along our little tepee, made of an old rag carpet for a tent, plenty of oats and a pair of blankets for the horses, and provisions for ourselves for a two weeks' trip. Of course we expected to be well supplied with venison after

two or three days. We made camp the second night at the Tumbledumps in the western part of Wheeler county, and here we expected to find game.

My rifle on this occasion was a Sharps carbine which has been mentioned often heretofore, while Deede carried a Smith and Wesson rifle using a 32-short cartridge. It was an accurate, spiteful little gun, but was short range.

While in camp at the Tumbledumps we sighted a herd of elk and went after them, with the result that after following them all day and getting two or three shots, all of which were misses, we drove them out of that part of the country. Going back to camp and targeting my rifle I found the front sight was out of place, and that this had caused the bad shooting. Leaving the elk, with the hope of finding them again on our way back, we went on west into the big rough sand hills between the head of Beaver creek and the Cedar river, where we were to make our permanent hunting camp. When moving camp Deede drove the team while I went ahead to act as pilot and to keep a sharp lookout for game, as we were likely to come onto black tail deer at any time after reaching the rough hills. We did find game even sooner than we expected. I kept about twenty rods ahead of the team, traveling slowly and keeping a sharp lookout ahead, and on rising a hill being very careful to only show my head until the country had been well looked over. On coming to the top of a ridge I saw two black tail does, lying down beyond a narrow valley and near the top of the next ridge. Motioning for the team to stop, I got down out of sight and waited for Deede to come up. It was safe to leave the team by setting the brake, and fastening the lines. We crawled as near as possible and then made ready to shoot. The deer had seen us and were standing up looking our way, but evidently could not make out what we were. At the count of three we fired, my deer falling after a jump or two, but the distance was too great for the little gun, and the shot

fell short. The second deer bounded away, but I felt sure it would soon stop for its mate, and I waited, as the distance was too far to risk a running shot. It did stop, and turned broadside to look back. Aiming at the very upper tip of the shoulders I fired and the deer fell, but recovering it hobbled over the ridge out of sight. It was well that the aim was high, for the ball fell so that it broke both fore legs above the knees. Deede soon found and gave it a final shot while I dressed the first deer. These deer were both young, probably a year old the previous spring, and were in fine condition. Bringing up the team we made camp here for the remainder of the day and the following night.

After taking care of the team and eating dinner we went northwest into the hills looking for a place for a permanent camp. We had gone probably two miles and were traveling across a sand hill valley that was perhaps forty rods wide, bounded by ridges on either side, when we saw two white tail deer coming down the valley and not more than a quarter of a mile away. The grass was high affording a good screen and dropping on hands and knees we made for a little knoll that was four or five feet high behind which we lay and waited for the deer. It was always understood that when two were hunting together the one on the right should shoot at the right hand deer, and the one on the left should take the left hand one at the count of three. When the count was made the two deer were nearly opposite each other, the right hand one having its head down feeding. We both fired, my shot going through the shoulders and lungs of the deer aimed at, and Deede's shot breaking the neck of his deer, and going on it passed through the heart of the second deer, lodging in the skin on the further side of the body. If my gun had missed fire, Deede's shot would have killed both deer. These two deer were both white tail does, one large, and the other a yearling.

We found a fine place to camp in an old blowout completely grassed over, and where in previous years the wind had so shaped the sand hills when in a drifting condition as to form a perfect shelter from the wind. Nearby was a pond of water, and a dead cottonwood tree, and plenty of red roots for fuel.

The next day we moved to our new camping ground, brought in the game, pitched the tent, hauled up a wagon box full of red roots, and planted a pole with a grain sack for a signal on a high sand hill about a quarter of a mile from camp, for our little tepee was completely hidden from sight in the old blowout.

The next day we tried again for the elk, and we found them all right, but all the good it did us was the gaining of a little new experience. They were on a great flat that was covered with big grass. The only way to get near them was to crawl on hands and knees for nearly or quite half a mile. The wind, if there was any, was baffling. Time and again I tried it by gathering a handful of fuzzy grass seeds, letting them sift through the fingers and watch to see which way they drifted. What wind there was seemed to come from the southeast. The elk were about a mile east of us. We therefore worked around further north and approached from the northwest. When within a long distance shot, their noses suddenly went up in the air—they bunched together, and then quickly started off on a fast gallop. They had not seen us, but rising to our feet we found that the wind had changed to the northwest and they had taken our scent.

It was night when we got to camp, and it was turning cold. However we did not mind the cold, our tepee was warm, the horses were well blanketed, we had plenty of fuel, and the shelter was excellent. We gave up the elk for good, and the next day, although it was cold and somewhat

stormy, we hunted to the west in the rough hills for black tail deer. We had eaten luncheon and were working slowly into the northwest wind when we came in sight of a big drove of black tail deer. I do not know how many there were, as we did not count them, but there must have been eighteen or twenty. They were at rest in a patch of rough, but not very high sand hills, some of them standing up, but most of them lying down, and where it was easy to get a good, but not a close shot. Again we fired at the count, and again Deede's rifle fell short, while mine brought down a buck after it had made a few jumps. They seemed confused, and it appeared as if they could not tell from which way the sound came. They bunched and stood still and looked for an instant while I got in another shot which brought down another buck. However he did not fall at once but ran perhaps a dozen rods before falling, the others following him. This brought them somewhat nearer than at first, and as they were passing I got a doe, a very fine large one at another shot. I sent the fourth shot after the bunch but missed. It was late when we got to camp, and we came near missing it, as darkness began to fall when we were a mile away, and it was snowing. This made seven deer that we had gotten very easily, which in part made up for our bad luck with the elk.

The next day Mr. Beckwith and Roy came, having located the camp from the signal on the hill. It took them some little time however to find the tent, it being so completely hidden by the nearby hills. The two boys from this time on hunted in company, and each killed his deer, while Dan and I hunted separately. We remained at this camp until we had killen seven more deer, making fourteen in all, when we pulled out for home.

Our tepee was too small for all to sleep in comfortably, and the boys with the spade and ax made a dugout in the side of a steep little hill, covering the front with a blanket,

and having a chimney and fire place in the back end. They killed one of the biggest, fattest badgers that I ever saw, and warmed and lighted the dugout with a fire of red roots and the fat of the badger, a piece of which would be thrown into the fire as often as needed. The weather became very cold—the mercury going down to twenty-two minus by our thermometer at home; but we were entirely comfortable, and were living high all the time.

On our way back we camped again at the Tumble-dumps, and just as we were going into camp here came our herd of elk again in plain sight about a mile to the south. Dan and I went after them while the boys fixed the camp and took care of the horses. It was not difficult to get near enough for a shot for the reason that they were among some low sand knolls, behind which we could crawl to within easy distance. Dan did the counting because he had lost his hearing in the army. At the word three I fired and got a cow elk—Dan had in a bad cartridge and his gun snapped. He has never recovered from the disappointing effects of that untoward incident. However fourteen deer and one elk—it was enough.

It was our farewell hunt for elk in Nebraska.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Looking Backward.

No. 1.

It is a truth that "Truth is stranger than fiction." I am led to this conclusion by looking backward less than two and a half generations. Most of the great inventions that have placed the progressive people of the world away ahead of anything thought of, or dreamed of three generations ago, are the results of investigation and research of the last eighty years, and chiefly also of the last forty years. Friction matches were invented in 1829, and the machinery for making them was patented in 1842, but they did not come into general use until about the year 1846, or later. The knowledge of photography as it now exists was acquired in 1835, but it was not used extensively until about fifteen years later. The first practical mowing machine was invented in 1833, but it was twenty years before mowing machines and reapers came into general use. The first sewing machine that was practical and successful was made in 1846. The first ocean steamship to carry passengers and freight, crossed the Atlantic in 1838. The first practical use of the telegraph was in 1844, when the line from Baltimore to Washington was opened for messages on May 27 of that year.

Let us go back to the year 1840, just seventy-six years from the present time. Here is an inventory of some of the things that people did not have seventy-six years ago, although the list is by no means complete. There are many things in general use now not included in the annexed list, that people never had heard of seventy-six years ago. Seventy-six years ago there were no friction matches, sewing machines, washing machines, mowing machines, reapers,

threshing machines, gang plows, riding plows, modern style harrows, disk harrows, horse rakes, horse cultivators, kerosene oil, gasoline, no power machines of any kind on the farm, no electrical appliances of any kind, no telegraphs, telephones, phonographs nor moving pictures, no bicycles, automobiles, sleeping nor dining cars, no breech loading guns nor fixed ammunition, no photographs, and in general no knowledge of photography, no refined sugar excepting what was known as loaf sugar, no evaporated fruits, no canned fruits, vegetables, meats or fish, no packing houses, no cured meat products excepting those cured on the farm, no creameries, no incubators, no cold storage plants. In the common school rooms no blackboards, no uniformity of text books, no systematic arrangement of classes, and in most states no county superintendents. No anesthetics for use in surgery, and no knowledge of the germ theory of diseases. No greenbacks nor national currency. No monopolies, no great trusts nor combinations to control capital or products.

How did people live? That is just what this article is for—to tell how. Let us see—we go back seventy-six years, at which time I was six years old. This story will be leaves torn from my book of experience.

In this narrative many things well remembered will be passed over, those only being chosen that have left the deepest impressions on the tablet of the memory, or that best illustrate the manner of life of the people of those times.

My father had an old flint lock musket, of the pattern used by the Americans in the war of 1812, which he seemed to think a great deal of, probably because it was like the one he had used while serving in the army. It was my delight to play with the gun, and in this my father indulged me, allowing me to pull back the hammer, and watch the sparks as the flint fastened in the hammer came in contact with

the steel pan of the lock. Most of the guns in use at that time were of the flint lock pattern. All the guns in use were muzzle loaders, and while percussion guns, that is those fired with a percussion cap or percussion pill were coming into use, the flint locks were preferred by many because of the extra cost of percussion primers. The powder was carried in a horn, and the bullets or shot in a pouch, none of the ammunition being fixed. The bullets both for rifles and muskets were round—elongated bullets never having been thought of at that time. The rifles were finely sighted and were accurate shooters, but were of short range. When I was sixteen years old I owned my first gun. It was a single barrel shotgun, with a long barrel, full curly maple stock, and pill lock. The gun was loaded by pouring the powder into the muzzle from a small measure, called a charger, on top of the powder was placed a wad of tow firmly rammed down with the ramrod, next a charge of loose shot, also measured, and lastly another wad of tow was pressed down with the ramrod to hold the shot in place. The hammer had a long point of steel, not unlike the bill of a woodpecker, that when the trigger was pulled, struck into a little hollow at the base of the barrel containing the primer. The primer was a little pill of percussion about the size of a radish seed, and was held in its place by a slight covering of tallow, which also protected it from dampness. I have used many shotguns since, but never handled a better one, and seldom one as good, but, of course, it was slow work reloading, and seldom gave a chance for more than one shot, and besides the primer was liable to get damp or fall out and therefore the gun frequently missed fire. But this was all the better for the game and gave it a chance for life that is now denied it with our quick firing, long range guns.

The dwelling houses and school houses were all warmed by the open fire-place. I never saw a stove until I was ten

years old. In the west end of our old log school house was a fire place that took up about a third of the end of the building. The fire-place and hearth were of stone, the hearth being of large flat stones, and the chimney built of small, split oak sticks, heavily plastered on the inside with clay to protect the wood from taking fire. The old school house was very comfortable and the great open fire, built of logs four feet long and some of them a foot in diameter was very cheerful and pleasant. When the new red school house was built, a box stove was put in for heating and we did not like it, at least for a time, nearly as well as the old fire-place. It is hard to get used to new things—I am not sure but I would still keep the old fire-place if fuel was as plenty and easy to get as it was then.

I remember well what branches were taught—reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, geography, grammar, and United States History. The history was taught chiefly as a reading lesson, sometimes the class being questioned as to what the lesson contained, but not always. The writing books were made at home of cap paper, the copies being written by the teacher, and as a rule whenever a change was made in teachers there was a change in the style of penmanship. The pens were made of goose quills and required mending, or "sharpening", as it was called, at the beginning of every writing lesson. Most of the teachers were poorly qualified and closely followed the text books in hearing recitations. I remember one teacher who required us to commit to memory the names of all the counties in all the states, and to give the names of all the rivers from Maine to Louisiana, telling where they took their rise, in what direction they flowed and where they emptied. She did this notwithstanding the fact that in a foot note it stated that this part could be omitted if the teacher thought best. Every rule in grammar and in arithmetic had to be committed to memory, and all of the rules for spelling had to be studied

and the most important ones learned by heart. I have wondered if the practice of memorizing so extensively practiced was not really one of the best things required in the schools of that day. The spelling lessons were required to be studied thoroughly, and every two weeks, on Saturday afternoon (as there was school every other Saturday) there was a spelling match, and every two weeks through the winter there was an evening spelling school, in which the pupils of other districts took part. These spelling matches were the life of the schools every winter. The school children of those days were better in spelling than those of the present day—the only thing in which they excelled—in all other respects our modern schools are away in advance of those of the olden time.

The schools were supported by a very small public school fund furnished by the state and by an assessment made upon the patrons of the school in proportion to the number of days their children attended. This method was an extremely bad one, as many poor people with large families kept their children at home because they were not able to pay the "rate bill," and men of property who had no children were exempt from school tax. Finally when a law was enacted allowing each school district at the annual meeting to vote a tax on all the property of the district to support a free school, the thing was fought at every annual metting by many of the voters of the district, and especially by those having large property interests with small families or no family at all. Such men are not all dead yet—we have plenty of people who cannot with an unbiased mind look into any question that affects the public good, because in some way it involves their own pocketbook.

As stated the houses were all warmed by the open fire place, and in these fire places all the cooking was done. An iron crane was fastened in one side of the fire place, from

which were suspended by iron hooks, the pots and kettles containing the things to be boiled. This crane could be swung out away from the fire, the vessel suspended, and then swung back again over the fire. Baking of wheat bread, pies and cakes was mostly done in a tin reflector called a "baker." This was open faced at one side with a shelf in the center, this open side being placed to the fire, the baking was done by the bright tin reflecting, both from above and below, the rays of heat, thus throwing them upon the bread. Great loaves of corn bread, or of corn meal and rye flour mixed, were baked in a large iron kettle with straight or slightly flaring sides, having a cast iron cover with a phlange to hold the coals. This was placed on the stone hearth, coals put underneath and on top, and allowed to remain ten or twelve hours, cooking slowly with very little fire. Some farmers had an oven out of doors built of brick, or of brick and stone, with an iron door, and a little chimney. At baking time a fire was built in this, and when sufficiently heated the fire was all raked out, the bread pushed in with a flat shovel, the door and chimney closed and the baking left to itself until done.

Every farmer kept sheep—there were no exceptions, and a part of the wool was worked up at home, and many raised flax for the fibre, prepared it for spinning, and thus the materials were at hand for home made clothing. Every family had its large spinning wheel for wool, and many had the smaller one for flax.

Let us see—what was there in my mother's house that we do not find in the houses of today? There was the little wheel, worked by foot power similar to a sewing machine of today, with its distaff, its spindle and its pliers, on which she spun the linen thread to be woven into fine linen cloth for the table and other uses, and also the coarser linen thread from the tow or coarser fibre which would later be made

into tow cloth for summer pants for the boys; and there was the big wheel for spinning woolen yarn for socks, stockings and mittens, and for cloth for winter wear both for the boys and for the girls; and there was the quill wheel, the reel and the swifts and the warping bars and the cards and the loom with its reeds, its shuttles and its bobbins; and out in the woodshed, probably, would be found the break, the swingle, and the hatchels of different sizes for separating the flax fibre from the woody part. Every family manufactured at least a part of the cloth for clothing both for the old and young members of the family and all the woolen yarn for stockings and mittens. There was not a loom in every family, but there were generally two or three in every neighborhood. Some of the wool raised was sold on the market, but much of it was worked up at home. There were carding machines and fulling mills run by water power in many places, where the wool was cleansed and carded into rolls and sent back to the owner to be spun and woven and afterward returned to the mill to be colored, fulled, dressed, pressed and finished off, ready to be cut and made into garments.

The tools on the farm were a cast iron plow with wood handles and beam, a harrow shaped like a letter V with a cross bar connecting the sides to keep it from spreading, a cradle for cutting grain, scythes, axes, spades, mattocks, hand rakes and pitchforks with two tines only. All the hay and grain was cut and handled by hand, and most of it was put into barns instead of being stacked in the field. As far back as my memory goes all the corn was hoed by hand, but after a few years a double shovel plow was invented, to be worked with one horse, men with hoes following it. The first threshing machine I ever saw was when I was about twelve years old. It was a wonder to us then, and it would be a wonder now. There was no separator—the grain, chaff and straw all coming out at one place, it keeping one man

busy to rake away the straw from the grain, another with rake and shovel to remove the grain from before the machine, so as to keep the space in front clear. Every half hour or so the machine would stop, to give the men a chance to "cave up," as it was called—that is, to shovel the grain out of the way to one side. After the threshing was over the grain was run through a fanning mill to separate it from the chaff. Some of the threshing was done in the barn in the winter time with flails, but some was threshed by spreading it out on the big barn floor, turning in the horses and colts loose, and keeping them going around in a circle until the work was done.

Lumber was cheap. Good pine lumber was worth at the saw mills $4.00 per thousand, while timbers for the frame and stone for the foundation could be had without cost except the labor of getting it out. Almost every farmer had a good big barn, large enough for his hay and grain, and open sheds for his cattle and sheep.

Money was scarce, and much of the farm produce could not be sold for cash, but could generally be bartered at the stores, or exchanges could be made with other farmers for something needed. Some things would always sell for cash, and among these were cranberries, grass and clover seed, hides and pelts, furs, beeswax and potash.

Wages were low—when I got old enough to do a man's work on the farm I was paid $10.00 per month, and at teaching school I received $12.00 per month and board, boarding with each family according to the number of children sent by them to school.

Were the people happy then? Just as happy as now—there were not so many unnecessary things lying around in sight as now, therefore they did not want as much as people want nowadays.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Looking Backward.

No. 2.

Someone may possibly ask this question: "As you had no matches in those days, what did you do when the fire went out?" That is easy. In the first place the fire did not often go out, in the summer, and never in the winter. In the winter time there was always a good fire in the big, old fire place through the day, and when bed-time came a lot of live coals were piled up against the backlog, a blazing brand of hardwood placed on top of the coals, and the whole covered up with ashes. In the morning the ashes were raked off, the red hot coals opened out, the brand having all burned to a coal by that time, more wood was piled on, the finest and dryest being placed next to the coals, and in ten minutes there was a roaring big fire in the fire place, warming and lighting up the whole room, and breakfast was under way. Oh! it makes me homesick even now when I think of and write about these things. What comfort we children used to take sitting around the old fire-place winter evenings! We used to take our spelling books home and study the spelling lesson for the next day, and the probable lessons for the next spelling school, by the light of the fire; every now and then throwing on a piece of hickory bark which would light up the whole room for a few minutes. Then when there was company of an evening we would get out the hickory nuts, the black walnuts, the beechnuts, the hazel nuts, and the butternuts for a feast, someone telling a story or singing a song while the others were cracking the nuts and getting them ready to be eaten. And then afterward we would gather in a semicircle around the big fire-

place and play "Button, button, who's got the button?" Or, if there was an old soldier present—and there were old soldiers then same as now, only they were soldiers of the war of 1812, he would perhaps be prevailed upon to tell a story of the war, or my mother might tell how her father was taken prisoner at the battle of Long Island during the war of the Revolution—how he was kept on board a prison ship for six weeks in New York harbor, and finally when exchanged, was made by his British captors to pass directly by a man who was all broken out with small pox. This man was sitting right by the gangway where all the prisoners as they came up from the hold of the ship, had to pass within a foot or so of him. How many of them took the disease it is not known, but my grandfather caught it and came near dying after he returned home. Stories of the Revolutionary war and of the war of 1812 were very popular in those days. The old hatred against Great Britain on account of the war of the Revolution and of 1812 had not then died out to any great extent and the children were taught by their fathers, especially if the fathers were old soldiers, to hate the "red coats" as the British soldiers were called.

But to come back to the subject. Sometimes in summer the fire went out, in spite of pains taken to keep it alive, and then fire had to be borrowed from a neighbor. Neighbors were plenty and some of them were near. As I remember it, there were eleven families living within a mile of my mother's, when I was ten years old. As I was the oldest of the younger boys, it generally fell to my lot to go for fire whenever it went out. It never happened, in so far as I remember, that more than one fire in the neighborhood went out at the same time—so there was no difficulty in borrowing fire. But supposing a family lived two or three miles from the nearest neighbor, what would be done in that case? They would take great care that the fire should not go out. If it did go out they would have a way

to make fire. There were several ways to do this. In those days many men who smoked carried in the vest pocket a "burning glass" as it was then called—that is, a double convex lens, about an inch and a half in diameter. The pipe would be filled with tobacco and the lens held in such a way as to focus the sun's rays upon the tobacco in the pipe, and after two or three puffs the tobacco would take fire and the pipe would be lighted. With the burning glass a fire could be quickly kindled by bringing the sun's rays to a focus upon some dry, rotten wood or some very fine shavings. Of course this could only be done when the sun was shining brightly.

Many people kept a tinder box, and a flint and steel. I carried these implements in my pockets as play things when I was a boy. The steel was an oval steel ring perhaps three eights of an inch thick that would slip easily over two or three fingers of the right hand—the tinder was linen cloth burned or charred until it was brown, and was carried in a tin box called a tinder box—the flint was any common flint stone with a sharp edge. When necessary to make a fire, the tinder box was placed on the hearth or on the ground, with the cover off so as to expose the tinder, the flint was held over it with the left hand in such a way that when struck by the steel the sparks would fall upon the tinder thus setting it on fire. A fire could then be quickly kindled with the aid of dry, rotten wood or of tow and fine shavings. I believe I thought more of my flint, steel and tinder box, than boys of today do of their bat and ball, or of their marbles.

I have also kindled a fire several times with a pistol, gunpowder and tow. This was done by loading the pistol with a very small charge of powder—only a pinch in fact, and placing loosely on top of the powder a large wad of very dry tow that had been first sprinkled all through lightly with gunpowder, and then firing the wad into a bunch of fine shavings. The gunpowder would ignite the tow and

the tow would set the shavings afire. We never used to worry about the fire going out—it was easily remedied if it did. It was not inconvenient in those days to do without matches, because we knew nothing about them.

For lighting the houses, the firelight from the big fireplace, and tallow candles, either those known as "tallow dips" or those cast in candle moulds, were the only lights used. "Tallow dips" were made by dipping the cotton wick into melted tallow, and repeating the operation until sufficient tallow adhered to form a candle. I said those just named were the only lights used, and in general this was true, but lamps that burned either whale oil, or sunflower seed oil were used to some extent by those who could afford it. Later burning fluids of different kinds came into use, but candles continued to be the main stay until kerosene was introduced.

Among the amazing changes that have taken place in the last seventy-six years are the laws and regulations relating to our postal facilities. Going back seventy-six years we find that the postal laws enacted by congress in 1816 were still in force. Under these laws, to send a letter weighing a half ounce 30 miles or less cost 6¼ cents, over 30 miles and under 80 it cost 10 cents, over 80 miles and under 150 it cost 12½ cents, over 150 miles and under 400 it cost 18¾ cents, and over 400 miles 25 cents. In the year 1845 congress changed the postal laws as follows: For a letter weighing a half ounce 300 miles or under, 5 cents, over 300 miles 10 cents. There were no postage stamps or envelopes. Letters were marked "paid" or "due" as the case might be, as under the laws then existing the postage could be prepaid or collected at the end of the route. Postage stamps and envelopes did not come into use until the year 1852. Letter paper was made in double sheets, on three pages of which the letter could be written, the fourth page being left blank, and it was then so folded that a part of the blank page

formed the outside of the letter which was used for the address. The letter was sealed either with sealing wax or by applying some kind of paste. Papers and magazines were also sent through the mails, but there were no regulations for sending seeds, cuttings, merchandise, etc., as at present. In those early days daily newspapers were rare, and were seldom taken by any except residents of the cities. Some of our neighbors took a weekly newspaper, but more of them took no paper at all. However, there was one very commendable plan that was carried out, and that supplied in part the lack of newspapers. Under our laws then existing we had in each township a town library and a township librarian, and in each school district, a district librarian. Every school district in the township could draw from the township library a certain number of books, the number being prorated according to the number of scholars in the district, and when these had been read, they could be exchanged for others. I read very many of these library books, and obtained from them much of the knowledge that I today possess of such subjects as were treated by them. I can say of our old township library what cannot be said of some of the libraries today, both public and private, that I do not believe it contained a single cheap, trashy volume. I doubt if today there is any other one thing that exerts so baleful an influence upon the minds of our young people as the reading of worthless books; and this is all the more to be regretted because the full force of this evil habit does not seem to be fully comprehended by the parents.

Again I have wandered. But to come back to the subject: Transportation facilities were almost entirely wanting, excepting to those who lived on or near a navigable waterway. Until after I was eighteen years old it was thirty-two miles to the nearest railroad and that railroad was not worthy of the name as compared with the railroads of today. There was almost no shipping of products excepting

such things as could be easily transported. I have known fruit to be so plentiful as to have no market value whatever. Hogs and cattle were not shipped to market as now but to some extent were butchered at home in the winter time and the carcasses hauled in sleighs either to the lumber woods or to Detroit, a distance of sixty miles. I do not remember that there was any grain shipped from our part of the country.

There were many kinds of small manufacturing establishments in existence then that we do not have now. Every village had its cabinet shop, its cooper shop, its wagon shop and its blacksmith shop, where bureaus, bedsteads, chairs, wagons and carriages, pork barrels, flour barrels, washtubs, churns, axes and many other kinds of tools and furniture were made wholly at home. There were also frequent manufactories of "earthen ware" as it was called, where crocks of all kinds and sizes as well as jugs, churns, etc., were made. In fact, the people of those times could have almost anything needed on the farm or in the house made at home. There were almost no farming tools brought in from the outside for sale excepting scythes, cradles, shovels, spades and pitchforks, and even the pitchforks were often made by the village blacksmith. The people of those days were self-reliant and independent, in which two desirable characteristics there has been no advancement to the present time.