THE SANTA FE TRAIL.

By MRS. J. K. HUDSON.

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IV.

It is glad that Jenny is by his side.

At Fort Dodge the soldiers left the train. So left our uncle there. The captain said he thought it better to push on, as no quick time had been had at Fort Dodge.

At the fort the trail left the Arkansas and struck across the country in a more southwesterly direction toward the Cimarron river. Day after day the heavy train rolled on, slowly and creakingly to the far west.

It was an agreeable diversion said in these monotonous days—as it is in all places and conditions of human life—to have a part of the time in the company and the confidence of the captain, and Janet were watched with angry jealousy by the interested soldier. Their little tête-a-têtes were soon back, their long walks in the twilight after the corral was formed and the tender glances they often passed swiftly between them were all noted but these things did not save the wearer excessive pity. Time and Time, however, and a job for engineers had been offered by the captain further than what he said on the night he came to their aid at Pawnee Rock—that she was his promised wife.

The reader will recall how the road where it reached the Cimarron was up the stream for a considerable distance and that the trail, next to the Cottonwoods at Fort Mignel. It now by turnpike a more broken country. The trains and the living stock of the wagoners are all into the adjacent country for many miles, and through the plains and the effect is very wild and picturesque. Numerous streams running down toward the valley of the great river that feed the "Father of Waters" palmed of verdure that here lent their green against the tawny prickly cactus and the Spanish bayonet and from time to time on the high elevations and along the sides of some of the sandhills are passed, and then the distant outlines of the mountains in the distance—first the Raton range to the north, and then the Sierra Blanca, the grand, perpetually snow covered divide appearing in the low distance like a silvery line on a blue haze.

Each day's travel increased the altitude, and the nights grew cool, but the days were delightful. New life filled the boats as well as the men as they gained the higher atmosphere, and all pressed on. Up and down again, yet always ascending. Now following the tortuous course of a stream, skirting the base of a spectacular hill, now leaving it to take their course through the sparkling springs, and again and again pointing out to the uninitiated passengers the painted cliffs of the mirage. How well there is a table of hills, stretching between the foothills, showed the miracle of light and intensified in and half dwelling over the sand. Or, a view from some high point that the campers had almost reached, would show a lake, a river, a forest, pillars, pillar domes and discovered the "false peaks" and spectral wind towers from that they and seemingly passed by without knowing it. The curious conformation of the ground from under the mountain range appear to be flowing up hill to meet the travelers, and then as the trail bent sharply around upon itself the bubbling water would disappear in a rock and plunge down a precipice and a dark, green fringed basin or a curious crack of the canyon.

But springs boiled from one of the mountain sides and were walled around with the sediment of the overflow of ages, presenting grotesque shapes and bizarre gems, the consequence of unique strata laboratories. To step over these long growing crests and look for the first time into the bubbling waters, to feel their living motion with the hand, to wonder whence they had come through all the ages since the upheaval of the mountains let loose their bottomless beds, to where descendants they took their rise, what fires warmed them, whence they gathered their salts and their sparkle, and what force brings them forever and forever upward—that was a rare sensation. The waters still effervesce, and their healing warmth has not diminished a degree, but the wonder is gone.

When the Santa Fe train reached Las Vegas springs they found the lodge of several old and decrepit Indian families who had come, as their forefathers had for generations before them, to have their wounds healed and their wounds healed in the waters. With them were three or four miserable Mexicans, who had traveled over the range from Santa Fe after some train, and who, behind their backs, were ridiculed by their own patrons. All had faith that the waters of the mountain would cure their ills, and were happy. They greeted the train people cordially, yet demanded large tribute in anything they could get to eat and drink.

While the caravan was at the springs place Captain King called the men together and said to them:

"I want to be fair with you, partners, so I want tell you that at San Miguel we shall have to part company. We will be mustered there, nothing his head toward Jenny, "by the father of the maiden, and from there we will go to my ranch up in the northern. You will be but fifty miles from Santa Fe then, and I think there can be little doubt of your safe arrival. It does not look quite the square thing to leave you on the way after you have honored me by acting as our pilot, but I hope you will forgive that. It may be, partners, that I have nearly as good a reason for resigning as old Joe had—I hope it will be all right!"

An answer's silence on a medium held the tongues of the mariners, but presently several of them spoke up saying:

"All right, old man, why, of course it will be all right, only we'll be sorry to lose you, cuz if you're a-goin to call near-hand that's enough reason for any man."

"Yes, certainly; certainly we'll be you off and wish you luck wherever you go," said another, and all good wishes were raised generally around the camp.

It was nearly sundown when the train reached the little Frenchy ranch on the line of San Miguel. The old cabin house was a long, low affair, with a painting in the geometric style. The "fine" of the mission came forth to greet the weary band, and with spacious hand extended, the tawny hosts and gave them all his blessing.

Jenny was a good Catholic and her wedding took place in the father's house, with nearly all of her companions on the overland journey and many of the natives of San Miguel as witnesses. John Brown could not believe in the faith that was inherited by Janey from her French forefathers (the only one known to the Spanish Sentinels of the frontier), but he had been instilled in his youth in the Methodist faith, and he had not yet, and the marriage was not delayed. Away from all the scenes and ties of her previous life a woman must feel the ceremonies of her wedded words, and it was truly a solemn hour for the bride, and it was a pleasure to John King a whispered for all time. Not that she hesitated an instant her course in the face of difficulty had proved her love not lovely beyond a doubt, but the ceremony, and the recall of the scenes of home and friends are very dear to a woman's heart at such a time, and even plain little Jenny thought with a sigh of the gown and the gifts, the music and the flowers, and the glory of the bridal day of her dreams. The same day saw the wedded pair start on their way westward—to just what point nobody knew.

From the village the Santa Fe Trail here sharply to the northward, the just through the mouth of a little point leaving a little to the left south of Santa Fe. The Rio Pecos, a sparkling, snow water stream, traverses the fertile valley which is cultivated by the natives, and the adventuring mountaineers look down on the valley and have done so for two or three hundred years in his behalf the government outpost of New Mexico Catholic strongholds.

Hemmed in by a crooked ranchero and a rocky mesa, which for the greater part of the time again and had come from Santa Fe to meet the trains, the train moved on through the broken range, and for several days toiled up and down the rocky ridges and moved the mountain ranges before the tired men made the last up hill and cut the table land overlooking the capital.

Here a halt was made for the purpose of making preparations for the "grand entrance." Knots of men wended their way and the Mexicans donned their best black hair and a mass, while the American pilgrimes made a portion of something other and so spent everything by putting on a white shirt. The crowd of white men, who almost daily to fill apart they had become so dry, were ground gone and everything put in the most presentable condition. All were excited and impatient, and every man was anxious to be the leader, cautious and operations utterly urged. When the start to the city was finally made pandemonium broke loose, and the wagons rolled down the hill with the still laden and screaming crew.

The entire population was out to see the caravan arrive, the captain general, the customs officers, people of all the grades, and the black eyed senoras and senoritas peeped through the latticed windows or waved vociferously their fans half hidden by the waving plumes or less scantily. Santa Fe was immediately transformed, the old town seemed to wake from a long sleep and become alive. On every side were heard the cries, "Los Americanos!" "Los entrada de la caravana!" "Los ganos!" and there was hurrying to and fro to the mounted soldiers, all decked out in their brilliant and jingling trappings.

Through the main street the long line of wagons is seen, strung out, the drivers shouting their loudest and goading the jaded beasts to a lively pace. The crack of whips resembles like a Parisian, and in more worthwhile, or to show their activity, their whitened sides the blood spurt from the sides of the cows, or strike a hector in the face until he reels and staggers. Here and there and beg pain follow after until the head of the plaza is made, and then comes the general scramble for the custom house, the closer of the interpreters and Governor of the country trades, and the long line of wagons is at a stand.

Not quite so easy.

In the first throng, yet somewhat apart, stands a Mexican who wears the fancy of the newly arrived men. They are attracted to him and behold the individuality of the black browed fellow. Presently, with a gesture of impatience, he turns to one near him and asks in broken English:

"Who's Kingfisher? Wasn't there a driver of a wagon master in the train by the name of Kingfisher? Where is he?"

"No, I don't know no such a man."

"A big man, not talk much, American, joined the train at Westport?"

"No I tell you. No such man in train among us. Captain King was the biggest man in the crowd. We heard him speaks after old Joe was dead."

"Blue eyes and yellow hair and never talk speakers?"

"Yes, I reckon that's about the size of him. Where is your business?"

A valley of smile and mortified cause was the answer to this question. A change of mind, either partial or total, then ensued, and it was a time that the Mexican knew better than to trust a man's title as a means of identification. He no longer doubted that "Captain King" was the man he wanted. Neither did he doubt that, in the language of his time, he had "raised his mind" home, his anger. But suddenly he ceased cursing his luck and dove his brows down in thought. Then crossing again to the man as he made to demanded in a voice without with suppressed rage:

"Where did this 'Captain King,' as you call him, leave the train?"

"At San Miguel."

"If you are lying to me I'll cut your heart out for it!"

"What object have I in lying to you about Captain King? He is as at San Miguel, I tell you!"

"Which way did he go?"

"Mexico," the Indian said.

"To Mexico city?" muttered the "greaser" between his almost teeth. "I knew it he thinks he will get there—and with a score of miles, half Frenchmen and half Spanish, dwelling in the plaza, he turned out of the whole business, sprang upon his mustang beneath and galloped clattering up the street toward the hill, the dogs barking at his heels and the street scamps half gamboling that some disgraceful deed would be done if Parnassus Barnes rode like that with some dog fleeing from his crew.

"Who is that—Mexico?" questioned the tradesman of those who had strayed out of the house in the street and turned to look out. "He is trying to find a man in the name of Kingfisher—thought he was with the train."

"Right!" growled a grizzly half bred, who was burning cow packages, "he's around his man! Kingfisher is too many for him. He's the man that caught Marine stealing cattle down in Mexico and had him jailed for it. Marine always said it was Kingfisher—he swore he would be even with the man."

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