

Featherstonhaugh, George William

1844 Excursion Through the Slave States, From Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico; with Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices. Two volumes. London: John Murray.

In early November, 1834 G. W. Featherstonhaugh and his son traversed the area of Powers Phase in a wagon pulled by a horse named Missouri. Travelling from St. Louis toward Little Rock, the two departed from Farmington, Missouri November 3, 1834 (vol. I, p. 320). They travelled sixteen miles to the old French settlement of Mine La Motte, where the elder Featherstonhaugh examined the mines before continuing the four miles to Frederictown (vol. I, p. 326). The two proceeded to the farm of a man named M'Faddin, a half-mile east of the St. Francis River and about twenty-five miles from Frederictown. From M'Faddin's they went to Greenville, and fifteen miles further took them to the Stevenson farm, a half-mile from the Big Black River, probably near where the present-day highway 67 crosses that river (vol. I, p. 335).

After crossing the Big Black the Featherstonhaughs proceeded fourteen miles across the ridgy country around present-day Poplar Bluff, coming to the Eppes plantation, probably on Cane Creek (vol. I, p. 346). Then they headed westward across Little Black River (vol. I, p. 348), fifteen miles from which they reached the cabin of the widowed Mrs. Harris, likely near present-day Harris Creek (vol. I, p. 353). Eight miles southward they descended to and crossed Current River, near the present Arkansas line (vol. I, p. 356). Fourteen miles further they crossed "Fourche de Mas" (vol. II, p. 2), and followed the "Military Road" to the Russel home. Then they crossed Eleven-mile Point River (now simply Eleven Point River), and rode to a town called Jackson, near Spring River. Fourteen miles from there they reached widow Newland's (vol. II, p. 4), from where they went to the Meriwethers', ten miles from Strawberry River (vol. II, p. 6). They arrived at the Tucker place November 11, 1834.

The exact dates between Farmington and Tucker's are not given. One night's stay is apparently missing from the following table, which present the itinerary and corresponding page numbers:

Morning of Departure	Place of Departure	Volume No.	Page No.	
Nov. 3	Farmington	I	320	
Nov. 4	} Frederictown Stevenson farm Little Black River Harris cabin Russel cabin Newland cabin Meriwether cabin	I	331	
Nov. 5		I	342	
Nov. 6		I	351	
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Nov. 8		II	3	
Nov. 9		II	4	
Nov. 10		II	14	
Nov. 11		II	14	
Nov. 12		Tucker cabin	II	24

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CHAPTER XXII.

Big Black River—First appearance of Parroquets—Elk and Buffalo—Little Black River—A Disaster and a Night in the Woods—Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, and one of the Sovereign People unable to hold the reins of Government—A Forest on Fire—The Currant River.

At the break of day I left my uncomfortable bed, and having refreshed myself at the well, examined a ravine not far from the house, in the banks of which I found some very long and curious stalactitic rods of oxide of iron. Veins of micaceous oxide are very abundant in this neighbourhood, and some hunters who frequent the mountains inform me that it is in the greatest profusion in various localities there. Pursuing our journey, we came to Big Black River, a broad limpid stream, with a rapid current moving down so swiftly that our horse, after taking us one-third of the distance across, became alarmed, and I was afraid we were going to have a scene with him. We found it impossible to get him to move without compromising the safety of our vehicle and luggage; so, after trying in vain to get him on for a quarter of an hour, it became at length necessary for one of us to get into the river and try to lead

him. My son accordingly got into the water and led him a few steps, whilst I plied him with the whip to prevent his stopping. On nearing the shore we found the water almost took him off his legs, and my son, finding it too deep to walk, let him go. In this dilemma, and every moment expecting to come to a grand stand-still, I happily reached the bank, but with the waggon full of water, and my son scrambled out of the river as well as he could. It had been a severe frost during the past night, the water was bitterly cold, and he suffered a good deal; so we stopped on getting to dry land, and soon got up a cheerful fire for him to change his clothes at. We now perceived that, if we had taken a different period for passing these mountains, we could not have proceeded, for in the rainy periods these fords are impracticable for wheels, as well as many of the bayous and creeks.

After travelling some distance through the forest, we got upon an extensive bottom, where we again found the country on fire, the leaves and twigs all burnt up, and every thing as black as soot. At length we reached a place where fire had not passed, and as there was a small clear running stream close by, we determined to make this our breakfast parlour. Whilst my son attended to our horse, I collected materials for a fire; and after many vain attempts to light it with some pretended English matches I had procured in Baltimore, I succeeded. The next thing was to set our new tin

tea-kettle that we had procured at St. Louis on the fire, and bring it to boiling heat. All this I did with so much dispatch and apparent cleverness, that I could not help calling to my companion to observe my rare dispositions in the culinary line. Unfortunately, I was too soon obliged to put a much lower estimate upon them than I at first thought they deserved, for my son, coming to the fire, communicated the alarming information that I had made a veteran of the new kettle on its very first performance. The fact was that I had left it a few minutes, and the fire burning up fiercely had made it completely black with smoke, and what was worse, and was a serious misfortune, had melted all the soldering from both the spout and the handle, so that we were immensely puzzled how to take hold of it and convey it to the teapot. We, nevertheless, made a cheerful and hearty breakfast. Mrs. Stevenson had managed to put us up a bottle of new milk before we came away, we had good black tea, nice loaf sugar, some biscuit and buffalo tongue, and were in capital spirits. As we were breakfasting, four beautiful crested wood-ducks alighted in the stream not far from us, but they became alarmed before we succeeded in getting a shot at them. Just before we left the place, we perceived that our fire was creeping through the leaves, and that, if not extinguished, it might produce a serious conflagration. Thinking it right to leave Nature as clean as we found her, we spent

about a quarter of an hour in bringing pails of water from the stream until the fire was out. Many careless persons do not take so much trouble; they kindle a fire, and then leave it unextinguished; the consequence of which frequently is, that many thousands of acres are burnt over, the mast upon which the deer and bears would have fed is destroyed, the buildings of the farmer endangered, his fences burnt down, and his corn-fields injured. The hunters, too, sometimes, with the intention of driving the game to a particular quarter, will purposely fire the country in various places, indifferent to the devastation and inconvenience they cause; and all this merely to get a few deer with greater dispatch than they would do by going a little farther into the country. It is vain to remonstrate with these men; they live by getting deer, and as they look upon the farmer as an intruder, have little or no sympathy for him.

A few miles from this place we came to a shallow ravine, or dry bayou, with a little stagnant water at the bottom. The bank was very steep; and when we got down our wheels stuck fast in a mud-hole, from which our horse with all his efforts could not extricate them. After many futile attempts, we were obliged to take him out, unload the carriage, cut poles and logs to place before the horse as a bridge for him to stand on, and using others as levers, finally, after three hours' hard work, succeeded in successfully assisting Missouri to get us out of the bayou. We now reloaded and pursued our journey,

and after travelling a few miles over a kind of ridgy country, sometimes upon calcareo-siliceous beds, at others upon siliceous rocks, came to one small ridge which we found almost composed of millions of tons of the very best gun-flint, equal in quality to the chalk-flint of Europe; a substance unknown in the United States, there being no chalk beds hitherto discovered there.

Descending to the south we came to some very beautiful situations of fine dry undulating land, easy of access, the slopes exceedingly gentle, and beautiful woodland trees scattered about as they are seen in the charming park scenery of England. Having made about fourteen miles we stopped to feed our horse at a Mr. Eppes's, who has a plantation on a very fertile bottom, and here we saw the first appearance of a cane-brake (*Miegia macrosperma*): this plant is always indicative of good soil, and in some portions of the southern States pushes up its jointed stem amidst the forest trees so thickly that a chicken would sometimes find it difficult to creep betwixt the plants. We had also other indications of a Southern latitude here: small flocks of parrots were wheeling and screaming about in the bright sun, and showing their brilliant colours to the greatest advantage.

Upon the wall of the cabin where the family lived was a frame upon which the skin of an elk was stretched that Mr. Eppes had killed the day before. Learning that he was in a corn-field about

half a mile distant, I walked there and found him, when he confirmed to me what I had before heard, that in the "Big Swamp," which bordered his plantation on the east, and which extended about twenty miles to the river St. Francis, there were still a great many elk and buffalo, the only situation in which these animals are to be found east of the most advanced settlements of the whites, it being favourable to them from the great extent of the swamp, the luxuriance of the wild grass, and the absence of man. Mr. Eppes related to me that two or three days ago he and his son had entered the Big Swamp to hunt up some young horses they had turned into it in the spring to thrive upon the leaves of the miegia, which granivorous animals are very fond of; that wandering about in the mazes of the swamp, and tearing their clothes to rags amongst the green briars (*smilax*), the supple jacks (*Enoplia volubilis*), saw briar (*Schrankia horridula*), and all sorts of pests of their kind, they had lost themselves, and knowing of no method to find out where they were, but going to the river to observe the direction of the current, they crossed a broad "sign" or track of buffalo, where at least forty of them had recently passed. This they knew by their dung, the marks of their hoofs, and the peculiar tracks these animals make when they travel. Soon afterwards they crossed a "sign" of numerous elk, and whilst they were deliberating what to do, three large ones came trotting up and stood still at

no great distance from them. Mr. Eppes fired and one of the elk dropped; the others stood some time by their fallen companion, but made off before he had time to load again. He said they were about the size of a large Spanish mule, and that they looked extremely well with their branching antlers when they first came boldly up. Having skinned the animal they left the carcase behind, and soon after, coming upon their own trail, proceeded home.

From hence we proceeded through some pleasant open woods, consisting principally of oak-trees growing on a very fertile soil; and some time after night heard the murmuring sound of Little Black River before us. I hesitated a moment whether or not to stop and bivouack here—our experience of the last ford we had passed did not afford much encouragement for a similar adventure in the dark; but Mr. Eppes had assured us the ford was an easy one, Missouri seemed very willing, and I thought I would proceed a few miles farther through the thick woods, where we could have seen nothing by daylight; so whipping on our horse, away we went literally, for, in making a sort of turn to go down the bank, the high wheels, which we could not see, got on a hummock of land, and the whole concern, including the unsuspecting Missouri, made a complete turn over, luggage and all, leaving the waggon bottom upwards. We both of us jumped out, as we felt we were coming to a "fix," and thought with dismay

upon this most disastrous occurrence. Our fine-tempered horse behaved extremely well; instead of kicking up a rumpus in the dark, and making things worse, which would have been a very natural step for him to take, he laid still, and permitted us to take the waggon to pieces as well as we could, and to unbuckle and unstrap him before he stirred: he seemed almost to comprehend us as we patted and comforted him; and it was not until he could neither hurt the waggon nor himself, that, a little aided by us, he made an effort, and with a plunge arose from the very awkward position in which he lay with his back down hill.

We were now brought to a "nonplush;" it was dark, our luggage, our axes, our hammers, our rifles, our everything that we had in the world, was scattered on the beach, and we had nothing to do but make the best of what had happened, and endeavour to look cheerfully forward rather than to look sorrowfully back. Our first care was to tie up our horse, our next to regain the bank, choose a level and open place in the wood, and make a good fire. All this being successfully done, we gave Missouri his corn in the pail, and secured him for the night with a long rope that admitted of his having a limited range to pick up the wild grass in. We next made a small fire on the beach, and by its aid collected and put together the parts of our waggon—not one of which was broken—and drew it to a safe place beyond the danger of a sudden rise of the

stream. We then gathered together our luggage, our provision-basket, and all the articles we could see, leaving my loose specimens and other small matters on the beach until morning. Things being made as snug as circumstances admitted of our making them, we got a warm cup of tea and a mouthful to eat, and then proceeded to lay in a supply of logs for our fire.

It was a very cold night, and unfortunately dead wood was not plentiful where our camp was pitched; having, therefore, collected all that was at hand, we went to work and cut down some young trees, a laborious operation that made our hands sore. The last thing was to spread our buffalo-hides on the ground, put our large blanket coats on, and lie with our feet to the fire, my son taking the first watch. Making my pillow of some minerals that were tied up in a bag, I tried to compose myself to sleep, and looking upwards at the brilliant stars of heaven through the tops of the trees, waited until the oblivious moment should come upon me, which at length it did, and dreams of other scenes came and went in my wandering imagination. Besides the rigour of the weather, the damp from the river fell heavily upon us, so that we were constantly obliged to replenish our fire, and twice had to get up and cut more wood. During the night various animals, attracted no doubt by the fire, came rustling through the leaves and alarmed our horse; the whooping of the owls was disagreeably frequent; the howling of the wolves

and barking of the foxes were more amusing. But there was one animal, however, most resolutely and mischievously curious, and which we could not drive away. What it was we could not see exactly, as it did not come very near to the fire, but kept constantly hovering and prowling about: sometimes, when we attempted to drive it away, it would cross the stream, but ere long would come tramping back again. Missouri, who was tethered close to us, would prick up his ears and arch his neck, and look at us in a very expressive manner, whenever he heard this intruder in motion. As to ourselves, the worst apprehensions we entertained from this visitor were that it would trample our things to pieces that lay scattered on the beach. Neither of us being able to sleep much, we were glad when the dawn came, and hastening to replenish our fire, and take a hasty cup of tea, we collected our *disjecta membra* and prepared to start. I missed, however, a large towel I had used the preceding evening, which I remembered well having spread out over a bush before I supped; and my son assuring me that he had not removed it, we came to the unavoidable conclusion that our nocturnal visitor must have taken it. Just before we turned down the bank to go to the river, looking up the woodland road we had travelled, I saw something like a parcel lying at a distance on the ground, and going to it, found it was my towel, quite wet and rolled up in a very odd manner. Casting my eyes round, I saw

a cow in the woods looking at me, the identical animal that had annoyed us during the night: she had taken the towel and amused herself with chewing it, until she found she could make nothing but a towel of it, and had then dropped it. These animals sometimes stray to great distances from the settlements. I was glad to find my towel; and having washed it well at the river, and made up a little fire to dry it, we finally crossed the stream and pursued our journey.

We soon rose again to the table-land, and got upon our old ground, the calcareo-siliceous rock: it was a fine open country, and very extensive; and the trees were so far asunder from each other that we could have imagined ourselves travelling through some park. Here we saw the first ivory-billed woodpeckers (*Picus principalis*), a beautiful bird, not found farther north than this part of the country. About 10 A.M. we came up with a sorry-looking horse, with a saddle on his back, grazing without a rider; and two miles farther found a man, with a gun by his side, bleeding, and lying apparently senseless on the ground. At first we thought he had fractured his skull by a fall from his horse, and began to consider what we could do for him; but we soon found that he was beastly drunk, and had probably fallen from his horse because he was unable to keep his seat. We therefore left him to get sober, as probably his horse and himself were accustomed to freaks of this sort. Towards noon

we were evidently advancing to a part of the country which was on fire, and soon became enveloped in a dense and distressing smoke. Our eyes became so sore that it was very difficult to drive, and the horse suffered as well as ourselves. Many of the dead trees had been burnt so near to the ground, that they had fallen in various places across the path, which obliged us to wind about as well as we could amongst the tall trees on fire—that were here rather too thick for our safety—under constant apprehension that some of them would fall upon us. The severe nervous headache I got during this morning's drive was almost insupportable; the smoke was black and dense, and filled our eyes and our nostrils.

Worn out with pain and fatigue, we reached Mrs. Harris's in the afternoon, and were glad to remain here the rest of the day, although we had only made fifteen miles. She was a widow, with some sons and daughters, and we were kindly received, but all that they had to offer us was bad fried bits of pork, with worse bread, and no milk. Towards night the fire gained upon the country so fast, that the family became alarmed for their fences and buildings, and all hands were turned out to occupy themselves in what they called "fighting the fire." Night having fallen, we could see a fiery horizon through the forest in every direction, and hear the crackling of the advancing conflagration. It was a most interesting spec-

tacle, and, notwithstanding my indisposition, I was out until a late hour observing it. We were upon an elevated table-land, covered with dry autumnal leaves, grass, and sticks, upon which stood numerous dead and dry trees killed by previous fires. Not a quarter of a mile from the house was a narrow edging of bright crackling fire, sometimes not more than two inches broad, but much wider when it met with large quantities of combustible matter. On it came in a waving line, consuming every thing before it, and setting fire to the dead trees, that, like so many burning masts, illuminated the scorched and gloomy background behind, and over which the wind—against which the fire was advancing—drove the smoke. Every now and then one of the flaming trees would come to the ground; and the noise thus produced, the constant crackling of the devouring element, the brilliancy of the conflagration, and the great extent of the spectacle, formed a picture that neither description nor painting could do justice to. The wild turn our minds had caught from the scenes we were daily passing through was singularly increased by this adventure, and amidst many exclamations of admiration we retired late in the night to the house. I measured the progress of the fire, and found that it advanced at the rate of about a foot a minute, leaving every thing incinerated behind it, and casting a beautiful warm light into the forest in front where we stood. To "fight the fire" means to beat this edging of

flame out with sticks, which it is not difficult to do when it first begins; but when it has extended itself several hundred yards, it is generally beyond the power of a very few individuals to accomplish. Upon this occasion the line of fire in front of the buildings was extinguished, but not without great exertions.

Fires of this kind are much dreaded by the agricultural settler. If his buildings and fences are burnt, his cattle and swine destroy what little crop he has, and at any rate, the advancing fire destroys the mast about the country, upon which many depend for the subsistence of their stock, which often have nothing else to eat: for the small settlers have no fields, with the exception of one or two in which they raise their Indian corn; they raise no wheat, no rye, no oats; they have no meadows, and, of course, no hay or straw; the little fodder they have they save from the leaves of their corn-stalks; and there being nothing for the cattle at the homestead, they roam about the country to pick up the mast; the which if it fails, they get so little to eat at the farm that few of them survive the winter. Those who live near the corn-brakes are more fortunate, the leaves of the miegia being always green, and affording a good deal of nourishment.

Mrs. Harris's cabin was a double one, and of course had two rooms; a very proper arrangement, as there were both males and females in the family, and in one of these rooms were two beds. When

we came in from "fighting the fire," she pointed to one of the beds and said it was for me; and my son, taking it for granted that the other was for himself, immediately turned down the clothes, a movement which he was not long in discovering was somewhat premature, for our hostess told him that was her own bed, and that she was going to sleep there. We had no ground for contesting the matter, so lay down in our great coats as we were frequently in the habit of doing, Mrs. Harris honouring us with her company in the adjoining bed, her two sons lying down on the floor, whilst the young ladies very properly kept the other room exclusively to themselves. In the morning the good old lady asked me if I could give her some tobacco, as she was fond of smoking a pipe, and appeared very much disappointed when I told her I never used tobacco in any form. Take them altogether, they were an amiable and good family of people, and not without the means of living comfortably if they only knew how to set about it.

From this place we drove about eight miles and descended to the valley through which the *Currant* River flows, a beautiful pellucid stream of from 70 to 80 yards wide, in the territory of Arkansas. This river is deep, and contains a great variety of fine fish; salmon from 20 to 30 lbs. weight, large red horse suckers (*Catostomus?*) 10 to 15 lbs., buffalo, drum (*Corvina?*), perch, and large catfish of excellent quality. The water

of this river, coming from the siliceous country to the north-west, is so limpid that fish are seldom caught except in the night-time. Having crossed the river in a ferry-boat, we stopped a short time at a very decent house of entertainment, where with the aid of our own tea and sugar we made a tolerable breakfast. On the banks of the stream I found non-fossiliferous beds of horizontal limestone with a good deal of chert in them, and was fortunate enough to get a few rare specimens of the genus *unio*.*

* The following fact, which is illustrative of the economy of nature, may be found interesting to conchologists. Towards the sources of those streams which take their rise in and flow exclusively over siliceous minerals, or where calcareous matter is comparatively scarce, I found that many of those varieties of the shells belonging to the genus *Unio*, which have been considered by some zealous conchologists as *distinct species*, were wanting, with the exception of a few that conformed in their external appearance to those simple types found in the Schuylkill of Pennsylvania, the Rappahannock of Virginia, and other Atlantic streams. But where the streams, after leaving the siliceous beds, had penetrated deeply into the hills amongst the calcareous beds, or had risen almost amongst the calcareous beds at the eastern sloping of the highlands, as some of them do, there numbers of those beautiful varieties wanting in the siliceous districts, and which abound in the Cumberland and Ohio Rivers, were always found. To minds not indoctrinated in the mystery of specie making, it appears probable that the external arrangement of a testaceous covering, which is so much relied on by specie makers for establishing species in the place of varieties, may, in a very great number of cases, be due to the presence or absence of calcareous matter.

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ERRATUM. Vol. II. p. 79.

For Tot inter valles mugientium, read Aut in reducta valle mugientium.

TRAVELS IN THE SLAVE STATES

OF

NORTH AMERICA.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The "Military Road"—Eleven-Mile Point River—Obliging con-
duct of Widow Newland—The advantages of "camping out"
—Our front and hind Wheels quarrel; the hind Wheels turn
back—Mr. and Mrs. Meriwether—Two suspicious Travellers
—Murder of Mr. Childers—Extraordinary Spectacle produced
by wild Pigeons—Bury the remains of Mr. Childers.

From this place we were happy to learn that a road
had been cut out, through the territory of
Arkansas, by authority of the government of the
United States, called the "Military Road." Enter-
ing upon it, we found the trees had been razed close
to the ground, and that the road was distinguished
by blazes cut into some of the trees standing on the
road-side, so that it could not be mistaken; a great
comfort to travellers in such a wilderness. For a
few miles we pursued it through a fine bottom, then
got upon the horizontal limestone we had seen at
the Currant—which is probably the equivalent of
that at Herculaneum—and at length rose to the
level of our old friend the calcareo-siliceous rock,

where many rocky knolls appeared, altogether petro-siliceous. Fourteen miles from the Currant we crossed "Fourche de Thomas," a deep fourche, or creek in the forest, but passing here by the name of "Fourche de Mas," according to the French method of abbreviation. We passed it by an excellent wooden bridge constructed in the best style, and had a good view of the ledges of horizontal limestone cropping out on the bank, which a little farther on we found was overlaid by the siliceous rocks, that soon presented nothing but quartz, hornstone, chert, and opaque and agatized flints. One or more settlers here having quarrelled about the direction of the Military Road, have taken the liberty to cut roads resembling it, and blazed the trees, to their own cabins; in consequence of this we got out of our way, and after driving sixteen miles, reached at a late hour a Mr. Russel's, who moved his family in here about twenty-four years ago, amongst the earliest Americans who came to the territory of Arkansas. As we were approaching the place, we saw two wild-looking urchins of boys trailing a beeve's head through the woods to bait a wolf-trap; that animal abounding about here, and being frequently caught in that way.

Last night we had the pleasure of Mrs. Harris's company in our bed-room, and this night, soon after we had retired, old Mrs. Russel, a discreet matron of at least seventy, accompanied by a sickly, unhappy-looking girl, of, perhaps, eighteen, came

into our room, where there were three beds, upon one of which I was laid down, and my son upon the other. Without uttering a word, these amiable ladies very deliberately went through the ceremony of unrobing and getting into the other bed. This to be sure was an unexpected treat; I thought my son would never have done laughing, and certainly I never saw anything done with more nonchalance.

Pursuing our journey the next morning, we found an undulating country, the horizontal non-fossiliferous limestone always in the valleys, and the siliceous rocks on the high lands. We found no fossils here; it would almost seem as if the waters which deposited all these beds had been too hot to admit of animal life existing in the mineral matter. At Eleven-mile Point River, another beautifully pellucid stream about 130 yards broad, running through a fertile bottom, we stopped to breakfast upon our own provender, in a sorry hovel. There was no man to attend the ferry, and we were obliged to cross the stream in an awkward flat boat conducted by a girl about 16: the landing was an exceedingly bad one, and in making it we barely escaped ruining both horse and carriage. The country from hence was rough and hilly for six miles to Jackson, a wretched place which passes for the county town, and which is situated—why I know not—at the inconvenient distance of a mile from a beautiful transparent stream called Spring River. From hence we drove fourteen miles over a

country somewhat less hilly, and part of it in open woods, to a widow Newland's, where we were most miserably provided for, and shown to a wretched flock-bed, neither long enough nor wide enough for two to lie down upon; which, perhaps, was the reason why the good, considerate old lady did not favour us with her company.

Early in the morning we gladly started again; we had passed a bad night and got nothing to eat, and it was clear we should have fared much better if from the first we had relied entirely upon ourselves, and had "camped out" at nights. We could have purchased meal and chickens at some of the farm-houses, and could have made a hearty repast of them at the end of the day. "Camping out" to be sure is not always as comfortable as sleeping under a roof, having in the winter season many disadvantages; still even then there is much to be said in its favour, and at any rate you don't find old widows every night in the woods: but it was important to consider our horse; he wanted food and a stable at night, and we were obliged to seek one for him.

Jogging along we came to a rather deep and dry bayou, with a very steep descent down into it, and this part of the business we achieved exceedingly well with both of us in the waggon; but Missouri being rather too confident made a dash to get up the opposite bank, and my son who had the reins aiding him lustily with the whip to get out of the

bayou, the horse, just at the edge of the bank, made a desperate effort, and successfully carried my son, the shafts, and the front wheels for some short distance on our route; as to myself, I philosophically took the part of the hind wheels, which, released from all restraint, incontinently retreated back again with me to the bottom of the bayou. It would have amused a third person to have observed us when we met again, looking at each other upon the occasion of so melancholy a dismemberment of the machine that we so much depended upon. But our discomfiture was so palpable that no room was left for doubt or hesitation, and we came instantly to the conclusion that all other business must give place to waggon-mending; so setting resolutely to work, we dragged the hind wheels up the bank, cut some stout stuff to splice our shafts, that were broken clean from the axle-tree, and making use of the ropes that we had happily furnished ourselves with, in about three hours we got under way, though in such a crippled state, that we were now obliged to walk, a punishment too light for having been so inconsiderate as to sit in the waggon whilst the horse was drawing it out of the bayou. Luckily the fore and hind wheels kept upon tolerably good terms during the rest of the day, except occasionally when we were going down hill.

We were now on rather a flattish country with open woods, and flocks of parroquets screaming around us. Being in advance about a mile, and

very near the bank of *Strawberry River*, I heard the cry of a wild goose, and getting a glimpse of him through the bushes, as he was trumpeting on the other side of the stream, I took it for granted he was calling us to breakfast, and firing at him put a ball into his neck close to his head, a lucky shot that I could not have made perhaps once in twenty times. I immediately rushed through a ripple of the river to secure my prize, and seeing a cabin not far off went there to wait for my son and inquire if they had any meal, but the people were steeped in poverty and broken down by fever and ague. We however made a breakfast of what we had, and were too glad to procure a feed of corn for our horse. Before leaving the place I went down to the river again, and collected a great many unios resembling those of the Cumberland, but with a deeper flesh-coloured nacre inside. After breakfast I drove the horse, my son preferring to walk, and proceeding through a fertile flat country, a very heavy rain set in; the old saying, that it never rains difficulties but it pours, was now verified, for in ascending a hill the coupling pin of the fore part of the carriage came out, and the front and hinder wheels again separated, and brought us to a stand. This was a day of great trouble: we contrived, however, soaked through as we were, to drag our waggon on with various luck, and in the evening took shelter at a settler's called Meriwether, ten miles from the Strawberry.

Mr. Meriwether's log-cabin was at the top of a hill a short distance from the main-road; he seemed to be a hearty good-fellow, for he assisted us with great alacrity to get our things out of the rain, and to take care of our poor horse, who was very much jaded. On going into the house we were made acquainted with a person he called Mrs. Meriwether, but who from her great height, which was six feet two inches, an extraordinary dark, bony, hairy face, and trimmings to match, I should have taken for some South American grenadier in women's clothes. Here, seated before a rousing fire, we soon contrived to dry ourselves, and with the aid of some of their milk, corn meal, and fried pork, and our tea and sugar, managed to make a hearty supper. Our appearance was the greatest godsend imaginable to these worthy people; they were two of the greatest talkers I ever heard, had not seen any travellers for a long time, and now a fine opportunity occurred of delivering everything they had to say. The only great difficulty they laboured under was, that both wanted to talk at the same time. When Mr. Meriwether had fairly entered upon one of his yarns, she would cut in upon him with "Well, but, John, I've heer'n that so often now;" upon which he would say, "Jist give me a chance to git through, and I swar you shall have a chance too; ride and tie, you know, that's fair."

Our host said that he had been once a soldier, and that he was a relative of Captain Meriwether

Lewis, the associate of the venerable Captain Clarke of St. Louis, in the exploration of the country west of the Rocky Mountains, and that he was with Captain Lewis when he destroyed himself in Tennessee. He told me that he had led an adventurous and merry life, had not laid up a dollar, and was one of the earliest settlers in Arkansas, where he got along as well as he could by hunting, and trading, and raising a patch of corn. He said that the track by which we had come to his cabin from the main-road, was part of the ancient Indian path or trail from Vincennes on the Wabash to Nachitoches in Mexico, and had been adopted as the general road by white people moving in that direction. This was the reason why so many desperate men from all quarters, Spaniards, Frenchmen, Americans, and other outlaws, had settled near it, and that the greater part of the deserted cabins we had seen had been inhabited by them. There, under the pretence of entertaining travellers, they got them into their cabins, and often murdered them if they had anything to be plundered of.

Whilst he was thus entertaining us his dogs began to bark, and going to the door he found a tall, thin, pale young man, with a dirty blanket coat on, and a rifle in his hand, who asked if he could get any milk and bread. He was very reluctant to enter the house, but at length came in, and certainly his appearance was very forlorn. His

story was, that himself and a companion, with the intention of hunting a few hours, had separated from the waggons, bound from Illinois to Texas, in which their relatives were, and that they had never been able to find them again. This happened three weeks ago after leaving St. Louis. Herculaneum was the only place he could name as one which they had passed through, but of the names of the rivers and creeks he did not remember one. Upon asking where his companion was, he said he had left him at the foot of the hill. Our host gave him a small quantity of sweet potatoes; and upon his saying that they had no money, I gave him half a dollar to pay their ferry over White River, which was not far off. When he was gone, old Meriwether and his wife thought the story a very unsatisfactory one; they could not conceive how they could have crossed the St. Francis, the Carrant, and Strawberry rivers, without hearing their names, and therefore pronounced them to be a couple of vagabonds, who had seen us on the road, and were now dogging us with evil intentions. I was not quite convinced of this, but listened willingly to the advice of our host to us to be vigilant. He said that although there were a great many respectable settlers in the country now, yet there was "a heap of villains" in it; and mentioned a place on the Mississippi, called *Helena*, which was in the territory of Arkansas, where all sorts of "negur runners," "counterfeiters," "horse-stealers," "murderers, and sich

like," took shelter "agin the law." Nothing was easier, he said, than for two fellows that were good marksmen to pick off, with their rifles, two travellers like us when we were not thinking of it. These monitions he followed with a relation of the story of a Mr. Childers, which was harrowing enough.

This person, it appears, was an old bachelor, and a man of some property; a few years ago, being on a journey, he slept at a man's on the south side of White River, whose name was *Couch*, and pursuing his journey the next morning, was dogged to within two miles of Meriwether's cabin, and murdered when he was asleep at his bivouac; "and there the old man's bones are to this day," said Meriwether. I expressed here in strong terms my surprise to him, that knowing these things he had not given the remains a decent burial. He replied that he had often thought of it, but had never done it.

The hour of rest being come, we were shown to a part of the cabin which was quite out of repair, and where the weather came in freely enough, for it rained in torrents the whole night. We were, however, alone, and did not neglect our host's advice to be vigilant. The appearance of Mr., and especially of Mrs. Meriwether, would have done credit to any melodrama; that of the pale-faced young fellow was quite in keeping, and these stories of outlaws, murders, and especially the admitted fact that the remains of a murdered man were yet

unburied in the neighbourhood, all made me thoughtful and careful too. I had heard of *Helena* when in Tennessee; it had been described to me as a sink of crime and infamy, and we were now not far from it. Placing, therefore, our trunks against the door, we prepared ourselves as well as we could for any emergency before we laid down to sleep; but daylight broke with a clear sky, and on going into the kitchen we found our two hosts just as talkative and obliging as ever. I therefore soon got over my suspicions; and finding that Meriwether was not only able but willing to mend our waggon, I restored him entirely to my good opinion.

A new and very interesting spectacle now presented itself, in the incredible quantities of wild pigeons that were abroad; flocks of them many miles long came across the country, one flight succeeding to another, obscuring the daylight, and in their swift motion creating a wind, and producing a rushing and startling sound, that cataracts of the first class might be proud of. These flights of wild pigeons constitute one of the most remarkable phenomena of the western country. I remember once, when amongst the Indians, seeing the woods loaded from top to bottom with their nests for a great number of miles, the heaviest branches of the trees broken and fallen to the ground, which was strewed with young birds dead and alive, that the Indians in great numbers were picking up to