

lican river. All that delightful and invigorating day we zealously hunted. We found occasionally small bands of buffaloes here and there among the bluffs and hills along the valley of the Republican. But these animals were generally aged and of inferior quality. Besides such hunting, we found a great quantity of blue-winged and green-winged teal in the waters of the Republican and bagged not a few of them. There is no water-fowl, in my judgment, not even the redheaded duck and canvassback duck, which excels in delicate tissue and flavor the delicious teal.

A DEAD SOVEREIGN.

Just a little before sundown, on the third day of our encampment, by the bluffs land of the Republican, Lieutenant Bush and Mr. Heth in one party, and John Talbot and I in another, were exploring the steep, wooded bluffs which skirted the valley. The timber growing at that time on the sides of these bluffs was, much of it, of very good size and I shall never forget going down a precipitous path along the face of a hill and suddenly coming upon a strange and ghastly sight among the top limbs and branches of an oak tree which sprang from the rich soil of a lower level. The weird object which then impressed itself upon my memory forever was a dead Indian sitting upright in a sort of wicker-work coffin which was secured by thongs to the main trunk of the tree. The robe with which he had been clothed had been torn away by buzzards and only the denuded skeleton sat there. The bleached skull leered and grinned at me as though the savage instinct to repulse an intruder from their hunting grounds still lingered in the fleshless head. Perfectly I recall the long scalplock, floating in the wind, and the sense of dread and repellant fear which, for the startled moment, took possession of me in the presence of this arborially interred Indian whose remains had been stored away in a tree-top instead of having been buried in the ground.

A TURKEY MEET.

Not long after this incident we four came together again down in the valley at a great plum orchard. The plum trees covered an area of several acres; they stood exceedingly close together. The frosts had been just severe enough to drop the fruit onto the ground. Never before nor since have my eyes beheld or my palate tasted as luscious fruit as those large yellow and red plums which were found that afternoon lying in bushels in the valley of the Republican. While we were all seated upon the ground eating plums and praising their succulence and flavor we heard the click-cluck of a turkey. Immediately we laid ourselves flat upon the earth and in the course of ten minutes beheld a procession of at least seventy-five wild turkeys feeding upon plums. We remained moveless and noiseless until

those turkeys had flown up into the tall cottonwood trees standing thereabouts and gone to roost. Then after darkness had settled down upon the face of the earth we faintly discerned the black forms or hummocks of fat turkeys all through the large and leafless limbs of the cottonwoods which had been nearly defoliated by the early frosts of October. It required no deft marksmanship or superior skill to bring down forty of those birds in a single evening. That number we took into camp. In quick time we had turkey roasted, turkey grilled, turkey broiled; and never have I since eaten any turkey so well flavored, so juicy and rich, as that fattened upon the wild plums of the Republican valley in the year 1861.

SATISFIED TO RETURN.

At last, surfeited with hunting and its successes, we set out on our return to Fort Kearney. When about half way across the divide, a sergeant, one of the most experienced soldiers and plainsmen of the party, declared that he saw a small curl of smoke in the hazy distance and a little to the west and south of us. To my untrained eye the smoke was at first invisible, but with a field glass I ultimately discerned a delicate little blue thread hanging in the sky, which the soldiers pronounced smoke ascending from an Indian camp. Readjusting the glasses I soon made out to see three Indians stretched by the fire seemingly asleep, while two were sitting by the embers apparently cooking, eating and drinking. Very soon, however, the two feasters espied our wagons and party. Immediately they came running on foot to meet us; the other three, awakening, followed them; speedily they were in our midst. They proved, however, to be peaceful Pawnees. Mr. John Heth spoke the language of that tribe and I shall never forget the coolness with which these representatives of that nomadic race informed him that Mrs. Heth and his little two-years-of-age daughter, Minnie, were in good health in their wigwam at Fort Kearney; they were sure of it because they had looked into the window of the Heth home the day before and saw them eating and drinking at their noon-day meal.

ANNEXATIONISTS.

These Indians then expressed a wish for some turkey feathers. They were told to help themselves. Immediately they pulled out a vast number of the large feathers of the wings and tails and decorated their own heads with them. The leader of this aboriginal expedition, in conversation with Mr. Heth, informed him that although they were on foot they carried the lariats which we saw hanging from their arms for the purpose of hitching onto and annexing some Cheyenne ponies which they were going south to steal. They walked away from home, but intended to ride back. The barbaric commander in charge

of this larcenous expedition was named "The Fox," and when questioned by Mr. Heth as to the danger of the enterprise, and informed that he might probably lose his life and get no ponies at all, Captain Fox smiled and said grimly that he knew he should ride back to Pawnee village on the Loup the owner of good horses; that only a year or two before that time he had been alone down into the Cheyenne village and got a great many horses safely out and up onto the Loup fork among the Pawnees without losing a single one. "The Fox" admitted, however, that even in an expedition so successful as the one which he recalled there were a great many courage-testing inconveniences and annoyances. But he dwelt particularly upon the fact that the Cheyennes always kept their ponies in a corral which was in the very center of their village. The huts, habitations, tepees, and wigwams, of the owners of the ponies were all constructed around their communal corral in a sort of a circle, but "The Fox" said that he nevertheless, in his individual excursion of which he proudly boasted, crawled during the middle of the night in among the ponies and was about to slip a lariat on the bell-mare without her stirring, when she gave a little jump and the bell on her neck rang out pretty loudly. Then he laid down in the center of the herd and kept still, very still, while the horses walked over him and tramped upon him until he found it very unpleasant. But very soon he saw and heard some of the Cheyennes come out and look and walk about to see if anything was wrong. Then he said he had to stay still and silent under the horses' hoofs and make no noise, or die and surely be scalped. At last, however, the Cheyennes, one after another, all went back into their wigwams to sleep, and then he very slowly and without a sound took the bell off from the mare, put his lariat on her neck quietly, led her out and all the herd of Cheyenne ponies followed. He never stopped until he was safe up north of the Platte river and had all his equine spoils safe in the valley of the Loup fork going towards the Pawnee village where Genoa now stands.

The Fox was an "expansionist" and an annexationist out of sympathy for the oppressed ponies of the Cheyennes.

"The Fox" declared that the number of horses he made requisition for at that time on the stables of the Cheyennes was three hundred. At this statement some incredulity was shown by Mr. Heth, myself, and some others present. Immediately "The Fox" threw back his woollen blanket which was ornamented on the inside with more than two hundred small decorative designs of horses. Among the Pawnees, and likewise, if I remember rightly, among the Otoes and Omahas, robes and blan-