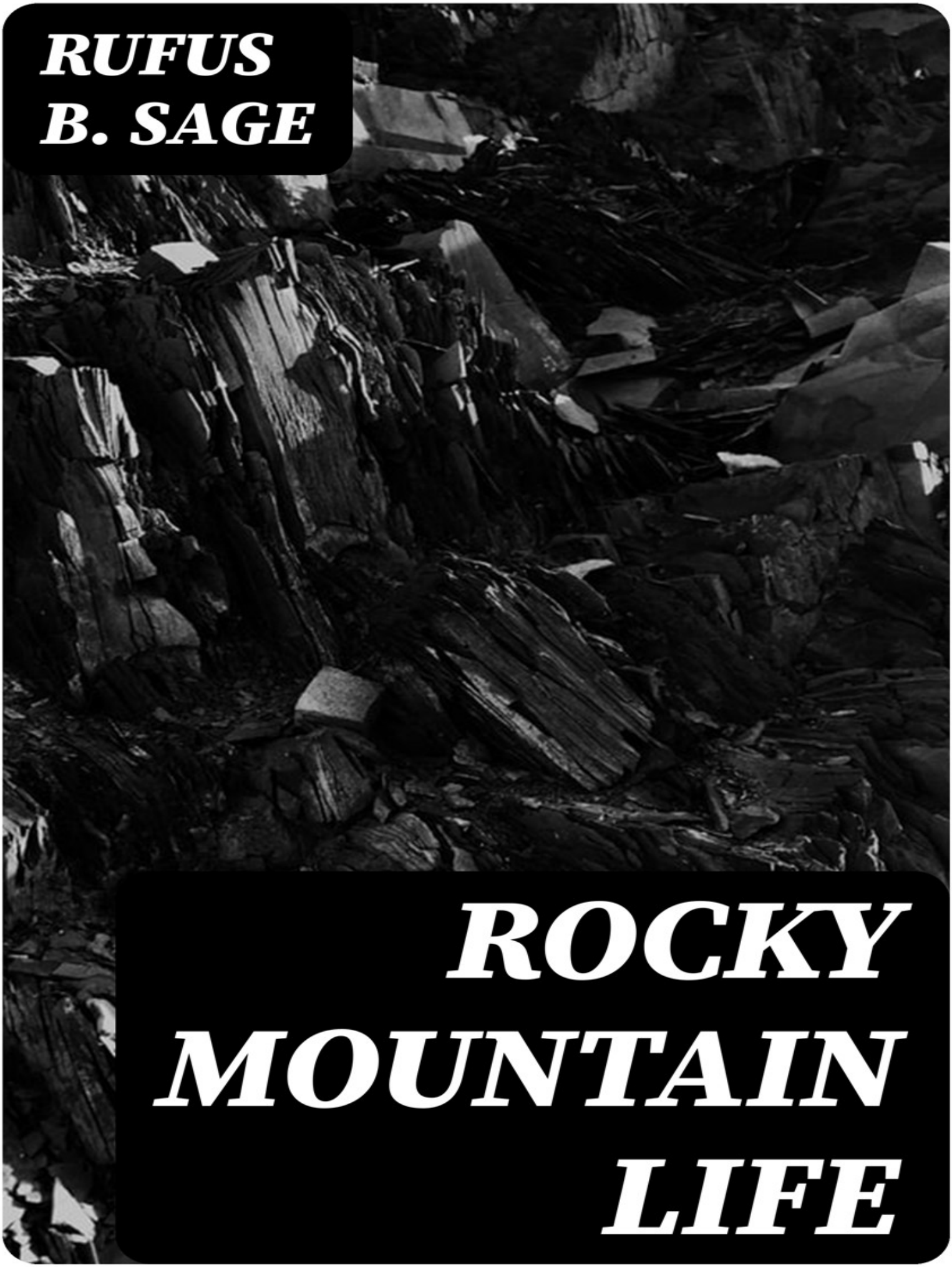
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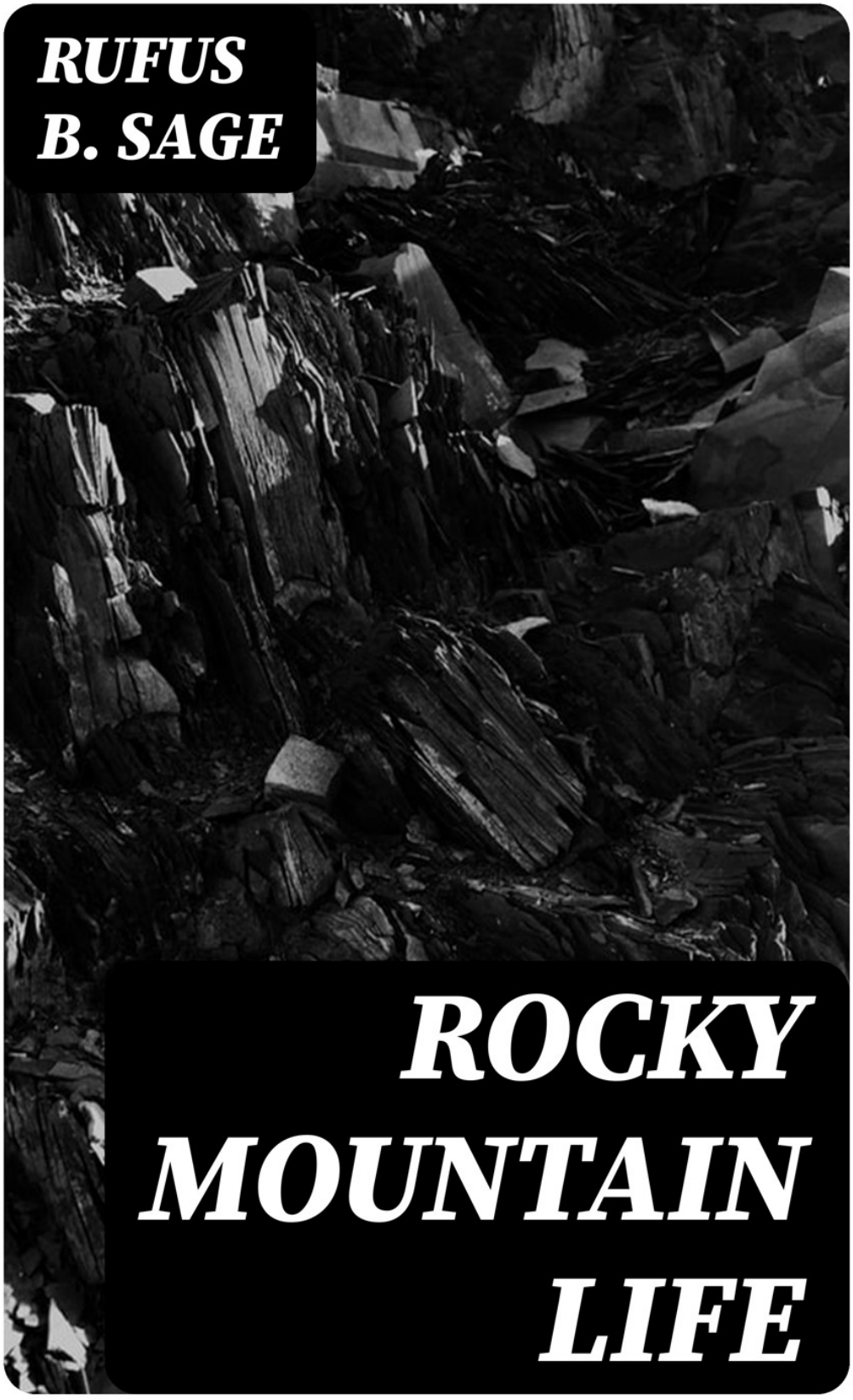
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PREFACE.

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The following work was written immediately after the author had returned from the perilous and eventful expedition which is here narrated. The intense interest which every citizen of the Union feels in relation to that vast region of our country lying between the Mississippi and the Pacific Ocean, will, it is believed, render the publication of a volume like this of more than usual importance at the present time. The lofty cliffs of the Rocky Mountains are soon to echo to the tread of advancing civilization, as symbolized in the Pacific railway, which will, in a few years, speed the iron horse and his living freight from Boston to San Francisco, forming a bond of social and commercial intercourse across the continent.

CHAPTER I.

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Objects of a proposed excursion. Primary plans and movements. A Digression. Rendezvous for Oregon emigrants and Santa Fe traders. Sensations on a first visit to the border Prairies. Frontier Indians. MY purpose in visiting the Rocky Mountains, and countries adjacent, having hitherto proved a fruitful source of inquiry to the many persons I meet, when aware of my having devoted three years to travel in those remote regions, and I am so plied with almost numberless other questions, I know of no better way to dispose of them satisfactorily, than by doing what I had thought of at the outset, to wit: writing a book. But, says one, more books have been already written upon subjects of a kindred nature, than will ever find readers. True, indeed; yet I must venture one more; and this much I promise at the start: it shall be different, in most respects, from all that have preceded it; and if I fail to produce an agreeable variety of adventures, interwoven with a large fund of valuable information, then I shall not have accomplished my purpose. Yet, why did I go? —what was my object? Let me explain: Dame Nature bestowed upon me lavishly that innate curiosity, and fondness for things strange and new, of which every one is more or less possessed. Phrenologists would declare my organ of Inquisitiveness to be largely developed; and, certain it is, I have a great liking to tread upon unfrequented ground, and mingle among scenes at once novel and romantic. Love of adventure, then, was the great prompter, while an

enfeebled state of health sensibly admonished me to seek in other parts that invigorating air and climate denied by the diseased atmosphere of a populous country. I also wished to acquaint myself with the geography of those comparatively unexplored regions, —their geological character, curiosities, resources, and natural advantages, together with their real condition, present inhabitants, inducements to emigrants, and most favorable localities for settlements, to enable me to speak from personal knowledge upon subjects so interesting to the public wind, at the present time, as are the above. Here, then, were objects every way worthy of attention, and vested with an importance that would render my excursion not a mere idle jaunt for the gratification of selfish curiosity. This much by way of prelude, —now to the task in hand. While yet undecided as to the most advisable mode of prosecuting my intended enterprise, on learning that a party of adventurers were rendezvoused at Westport, Mo., preparatory to their long and arduous journey to the new-formed settlements of the Columbia river, I hastened to that place, where I arrived in the month of May, 1841, with the design of becoming one of their number. In this, however, I was doomed to disappointment by being too late. A few weeks subsequent marked the return of several fur companies, from their annual excursions to the Indian tribes inhabiting the regions adjacent to the head-waters of the Platte and Arkansas rivers, whose outward trips are performed in the fall months. Impatient at delay and despairing of a more eligible opportunity, for at least some time to come, I made prompt arrangements with one of them, to accompany it, en route, as far as the Rocky

Mountains, intending to proceed thereafter as circumstances or inclination might suggest. This plan of travelling was adhered to, notwithstanding the detention of some three months, which retarded its prosecution. I would here beg indulgence of the reader to a seeming digression. The peculiar locality of the places to whose vicinity he is now introduced, owing to the deep interest cherished in the public mind relative to the Oregon country, will doubtless call for more than a mere passing notice: I allude to the towns of Independence and Westport. Situated as they are, at the utmost verge of civilization, and upon the direct route to Oregon and regions adjacent, they must retain and command, as the great starting points for emigrants and traders, that importance already assumed by general consent. Their facilities of access from all parts of the Union, both by land and water, are nowhere exceeded. The proud Missouri rolls its turbid waves within six miles of either place, opening the highway of steam communication, while numberless prime roads that converge from every direction, point to them as their common focus. Thus, the staid New Englander may exchange his native hills for the frontier prairies in the short interval of two weeks; and in half that time the citizen of the sunny South may reach the appointed rendezvous; and, nearer by, the hardy emigrant may commence his long overland journey, from his own door, fully supplied with all the necessaries for its successful termination. Independence is the seat of justice for Jackson county, Mo., about four hundred miles west by north of St. Louis, and contains a population of nearly two thousand. Westport is a small town in the same county, near the

mouth of the Kansas river, —three miles from the Indian territory, and thirty below the U.S. Dragoon station at Fort Leavenworth. The regular routes to Santa Fe and Oregon date their commencement at these places. The country in this vicinity is beginning to be generally settled by thrifty farmers, from whom all the articles necessary for travellers and traders, may be procured upon reasonable terms. Starting from either of the above points, a short ride bears the adventurer across the state line, and affords him the opportunity of taking his initiatory lessons amid the realities of prairie life. Here, most of the trading and emigrant companies remain encamped for several weeks, to recruit their animals and complete the needful arrangements, prior to undertaking the toilsome and dangerous journey before them. The scenery of this neighborhood is truly delightful. It seems indeed like one Nature's favored spots, where Flora presides in all her regal splendor, and with the fragrance of wild flowers, perfumes the breath of spring and lades the summer breeze with willing incense;— now, sporting beside her fountains and revelling in her dales, —then, smiling from her hill-tops, or luxurating beneath her groves. I shall never forget the pleasing sensations produced by my first visit to the border-prairies. It was in the month of June, soon after my arrival at Westport. The day was clear and beautiful. A gentle shower the preceding night had purified the atmosphere, and the laughing flowerets, newly invigorated from the nectarine draught, seemed to vie with each other in the exhalation of their sweetest odors. The blushing strawberry, scarce yet divested of its rich burden of fruit, kissed my every step. The butter-cup, tulip, pink, violet, and

daisy, with a variety of other beauties, unknown to the choicest collections of civilized life, on every side captivated the eye and delighted the fancy. The ground was clothed with luxuriant herbage. The grass, where left uncropped by grazing herds of cattle and horses, had attained a surprising growth. The landscape brought within the scope of vision a most magnificent prospect. The groves, clad in their gayest foliage and nodding to the wind, ever and anon, crowned the gentle acclivities or reared their heads from the valleys, as if planted by the hand of art to point the way farer to Elysian retreats. The gushing fountains, softly breathing their untaught melody, before and on either hand, at short intervals, greeted the ear and tempted the taste. The lark, linnet, and martin, uniting with other feathered songsters, poured forth heir sweetest strains in one grand concert, and made the air vocal with their warblings; and the brown-plumed grouse, witless of the approach of man, till dangerously near, would here and there emerge well-nigh from under foot, and whiz through the air with almost lightning speed, leaving me half frightened at her unlooked for presence and sudden exit. Hither and yon, truant bands of horses and cattle, from the less inviting pastures of the settlements, were seen in the distance, cropping the choice herbage before them, or gambolling in all the pride of native freedom. Amid such scenes I delight to wander, and often, at this late day, will my thoughts return, unbidden, to converse with them anew. There is a charm in the loneliness —an enchantment in the solitude—a witching variety in the sameness, that must ever impress the traveller, when, for the first time, he enters within the confines of the great

western prairies. One thing further and I will have done with this digression. Connected with the foregoing, it may not be deemed amiss to say something in relation to the Indian tribes inhabiting the territory adjacent to this common camping-place. The nearest native settlement is some twelve miles distant, and belongs to the Shawnees. This nation numbers in all fourteen or fifteen hundred men, women and children. Their immediate neighbors are the Delawares and Wyandotts, —the former claiming a population of eleven hundred, and the latter, three or four hundred. Many connected with these tribes outstrip the nearer whites, in point of civilization and refinement, — excelling them both in honesty and morality, and all that elevates and ennobles the human character. Their wild habits have become in a great measure subdued by the restraining influences of Christianity, and they themselves transformed into industrious cultivators of the soil, — occupying neat mansions with smiling fields around them. Nor are they altogether neglectful of the means of education. The mission schools are generally well attended by ready pupils, in no respect less backward than the more favored ones of other lands. It is not rare even, considering the smallness of their number, to meet among them with persons of liberal education and accomplishments. Their mode of dress assimilates that of the whites, though, as yet, fashion has made comparatively but small inroads. The unsophisticated eye would find prolific source for amusement in the uncouth appearance of their females on public occasions. Perchance a gay Indian maiden comes flaunting past, with a huge fur-hat awkwardly placed upon

her head, —embanded by broad strips of figured tin, instead of ribbons, —and ears distended with large flattened rings of silver, reaching to her shoulders; and here another, solely habited in a long woolen under-dress, obtrudes to view, and skips along in all the pride and pomposity of a regular city belle! Such are sights by no means uncommon. These tribes have a regular civil government of their own, and all laws instituted for the general welfare are duly respected. They are, also, becoming more temperate in their habits, fully convinced that ardent spirits have hitherto proved the greatest enemy to the red man. The churches of various Christian denominations, established among them, are in a flourishing condition, and include with their members many whose lives of exemplary piety adorn their professions. Taken as a whole, the several Indian tribes, occupying this beautiful and fertile section of country, are living witnesses to the softening and benign influences of enlightened Christian effort, and furnish indubitable evidence of the susceptibility of the Aborigine for civilization and improvement.

CHAPTER II.

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Preparations for leaving. Scenes at Camp. Things as they appeared. Simplicity of mountaineers. Sleep in the open air. Character, habits, and costume of mountaineers. Heterogeneous ingredients of Company. The commandant. En route. Comical exhibition and adventure with a Spanish company. Grouse. Elm Grove. A storm. Santa Fe traders. Indian battle. AFTER many vexatious delays and disappointments, the time was at length fixed for our departure, and leaving Independance on the 2d of September, I proceeded to join the encampment without the state line. It was nearly night before I reached my destination, and the camp-fires were already lighted, in front of which the officiating cook was busily engaged in preparing the evening repast. To the windward were the dusky forms of ten or fifteen men, —some standing, others sitting a la Turk, and others half-reclining or quietly extended at full length upon the ground, —watching the operative of the culinary department with great seeming interest. Enchairing myself upon a small log, I began to survey the surrounding objects. In the back ground stood four large Connestoga waggons, with ample canvass tops, and one dearborn, all tastefully drawn up in crescent form. To the right a small pyramid-shaped tent, with its snow-white covering, disclosed itself to the eye, and presented an air of comfort. To the left the caravan animals, securely picketed, at regular distances of some fifteen yards apart, occupied an area of several acres. Close at hand a crystal

streamlet traced its course, murmuring adown the valley; and still beyond, a lovely grove waved its branches in the breeze, and contributed its willing mite to enliven and beautify the scene. The camp-fires in front, formed a kind of gateway to a small enclosure, shut in as above described. Here were congregated the company, or at least, that portion of it yet arrived. Some had already spread their easily adjusted couches upon the ground, in readiness for the coming night, and seemed only awaiting supper to forget their cares and troubles in the sweet embrace of sleep. Every thing presented such an air of primitive simplicity not altogether estranged to comfort, I began to think it nowise marvellous that this mode of life should afford such strong attractions to those inured to it. Supper disposed of, the area within camp soon became tenanted by the devotees of slumber, —some snoring away most melodiously, and others conversing in an animated tone, now jovial, now grave, and at intervals, causing the night-air to resound with merry peals of laughter. At length the sleep-god began to assert his wonted supremacy, and silence in some measure reigned throughout camp. The bed of a mountaineer is an article neither complex in its nature nor difficult in its adjustment. A single buffalo robe folded double and spread upon the ground, with a rock, or knoll, or some like substitute for a pillow, furnishes the sole base-work upon which the sleeper reclines, and, enveloped in an additional blanket or robe, contentedly enjoys his rest. Wishing to initiate myself to the new mode of life before me, I was not slow to imitate the example of the promiscuous throng, and the lapse of a few moments found me in a fair

way to pass quite pleasantly my first night's repose in the open air. With the first gray of morning I arose refreshed and invigorated, nor even suffered the slightest ill effect from my unusual exposure to a humid and unwholesome night-air. The whole camp, soon after, began to disclose a scene of cheerfulness and animation. The cattle and horses, unloosed from their fastenings, and accompanied by keepers, were again permitted to roam at large, and in a short time were most industriously engaged in administering to the calls of appetite. After breakfast I improved the opportunity to look about and scan more closely the appearance of my compagnons de voyage. This opened to view a new field for the study of men and manners. A mountain company generally comprises some quaint specimens of human nature, and, perhaps, few more so than the one to which I here introduce the reader. To particularize would exceed my limits, nor could I do full justice to the subject in hand by dealing in generalities;—how ever, I yield to the latter. There are many crude originals mixed with the prime ingredients of these companies. A genuine mountaineer is a problem hard to solve. He seems a kind of sui genus, an oddity, both in dress, language, and appearance, from the rest of mankind. Associated with nature in her most simple forms by habit and manner of life, he gradually learns to despise the restraints of civilization, and assimilates himself to the rude and unpolished character of the scenes with which he is most conversant. Frank and open in his manners and generous in his disposition, he is, at the same time, cautious and reserved. In his frankness he will allow no one to

acquire an undue advantage of him, though in his generosity, he will oftentimes expend the last cent to assist a fellow in need. Implacable in his hatred, he is also steadfast in his friendship, and knows no sacrifice too great for the benefit of those he esteems. Free as the pure air he breathes, and proudly conscious of his own independence, he will neither tyrannize over others, nor submit to be trampled upon, —and is always prepared to meet the perils he may chance to encounter, with an undaunted front. Inured to hardship and deprivation, his wants are few, and he is the last to repine at the misfortunes which so often befall him. Patience becomes as it were interwoven with his very nature, and he submits to the greatest disasters without a murmur. His powers of endurance, from frequent exercise, attain a strength and capacity almost incredible, such as are altogether unknown to the more delicately nurtured. His is a trade, to become master of which requires a long and faithful apprenticeship. Of this none seems more conscious than himself, and woe to the "greenhorn" who too prematurely assumes to be "journeyman." His ideas, his arguments, his illustrations, all partake of the unpolished simplicity of his associations; though abounding often in the most vivid imagery, pointed inferences, and luminous expositions, they need a key to make them intelligible to the novice. His dress and appearance are equally singular. His skin, from constant exposure, assumes a hue almost as dark as that of the Aborigine, and his features and physical structure attain a rough and hardy cast. His hair, through inattention, becomes long, coarse, and bushy, and loosely dangles upon his shoulders. His head is surmounted by a

low crowned wool-hat, or a rude substitute of his own manufacture. His clothes are of buckskin, gaily fringed at the seams with strings of the same material, cut and made in a fashion peculiar to himself and associates. The deer and buffalo furnish him the required covering for his feet, which he fabricates at the impulse of want. His waist is encircled with a belt of leather, holding encased his butcher-knife and pistols—while from his neck is suspended a bullet-pouch securely fastened to the belt in front, and beneath the right arm hangs a powder-horn transversely from his shoulder, behind which, upon the strap attached to it, are affixed his bullet-mould, ball-screw, wiper, awl, &c. With a gun-stick made of some hard wood, and a good rifle placed in his hands, carrying from thirty to thirty-five balls to the pound, the reader will have before him a correct likeness of a genuine mountaineer, when fully equipped. This costume prevails not only in the mountains proper, but also in the less settled portions of Oregon and California. The mountaineer is his own manufacturer, tailor, shoemaker, and butcher; and, fully accoutered and supplied with ammunition in a good game country, he can always feed and clothe himself, and enjoy all the comforts his situation affords. No wonder, then, his proud spirit, expanding with the intuitive knowledge of noble independence, becomes devotedly attached to those regions and habits that permit him to stalk forth, a sovereign amid nature's loveliest works. Our company, however, were not all mountaineers; some were only "entered apprentices," and others mere "greenhorns"— taking every thing into consideration, perhaps, it was quite as agreeably composed as

circumstances would well admit of. In glancing over the crowd, I remarked several countenances sinister and malign, but consented to suspend judgment till the character of each should be proven by his conduct. Hence, in the succeeding pages, I shall only speak of characters as I have occasion to speak of men. As a whole, the party before me presented a choice collection of local varieties, —here was the native of France, of Canada, of England, of Hudson Bay, of Connecticut, of Pennsylvania, of New York, of Kentucky, of Illinois, of Missouri, and of the Rocky Mountain all congregated to act in unison for a specified purpose. It might well require the pencil of Hogarth to picture such a motley group. Our company had not as yet attained its full numerical strength; a small division of it was some distance in advance, another behind, and at least two days would be necessary to complete the arrangements prior to leaving. The idea of spending two days in camp, notwithstanding the beauty of its location, was by no means agreeable; but as the case was beyond remedy, I quietly submitted, and managed to while away the tedious interval as best I could. A brief acquaintance with our commandant, found him a man of small stature and gentlemanly deportment, though savoring somewhat of arrogance and self-sufficiency, —faults, by the way, not uncommon in little men. He had been engaged in the Indian trade for several years past, and had seen many "ups and downs" in former life. Graduating from West Point in his younger days, he soon after received the commission of Lieutenant of Dragoons, in the U.S. Army, and served in that capacity for some six or eight years, on the frontier and at Forts Gibson and Leavenworth. Possessed

of the confidence of his men, his subsequent resignation was the occasion of much regret with those he had been accustomed to command. The private soldier loved him for his generous frankness and readiness to overlook minor offences, even upon the first show of penitence. Such unbounded popularity at length excited the jealousy of his brother officers, and gave birth to a combination against him, which nothing could appease short of his removal from the army. Aware of his ardent temperament and strong party notions as a politician, and equally violent upon the opposite side, they managed to inveigle him into a discussion of the measures and plans of the then administration of national affairs. Arguing in the excitement of feeling, he made use of an unguarded expression, denouncing the Chief Magistrate. This was immediately noted down, and charges were promptly preferred against him, for "abuse of a superior officer!" The whole affair was then referred to a Court Martial, composed exclusively of political opponents. The evidence was so strong he had little to expect from their hands, and consequently threw up his commission, to avert the disgrace of being cashiered, since which he has been engaged in his present business. He appeared to be a man of general information, and well versed in science and literature. Indeed, I felt highly gratified in making an acquaintance so far congenial to my own taste. An accession of two waggons and four men having completed our number, the morning of September 4th was ushered in with the din of preparations for an immediate start. The lading of the waggons was then severally overhauled and more compactly adjusted, and our

arms were deposited with other freight until such time as circumstances should call for them. All was hurry and confusion, and oft-times the sharp tone of angry dispute arose above the jargon of the tumultuous throng. At length the word was given to advance, and in an instant the whole caravan was in motion; those disconnected with the waggons, mounted upon horseback, led the van, followed by the teams and their attendants in Indian file, as the loose cattle and horses brought up the rear. The scene to me portrayed a novelty quite amusing. I began to think a more comical-looking set could scarcely be found any where; but the events of the day soon convinced me of my mistake. Travelling leisurely along for some six or eight miles, strange objects were seen in the distance, which, on nearer approach, proved a company of Mexican traders, on their way to Independence for an equipment of goods. As they filed past us, I had full scope for the exercise of my risibilities. If a mountaineer and a mountain company are laughable objects, a Mexican and a Mexican company are triply so. The first thing that excites attention upon meeting one of this mongrel race, is his ludicrous apology for pantaloons. This is generally made of deer or buffalo skin, similar to our present fashion, except the legs, which are left unsewed from the thigh downwards; a loose pair of cotton drawers, cut and made in like manner, and worn beneath, imparts to his every movements a most grotesque appearance, leaving at each step of the wearer his denuded leg, with that of his pantaloons on one side, and drawers on the other fluttering in the breeze! The next thing that meets the gaze, is his black, slouching, broad-brimmed hat,

(sombrero) though little darker than the features it obscures, and far less so than the coarse, jet-colored hair that protrudes from beneath it, and falls confusedly upon his shoulders. Next, if the weather tolerates the habit, a coarse parti-colored blanket (charape) envelopes the body, from his shoulders downwards, fixed to its place by an aperture in the centre through which the head is thrust, and securely girted at pleasure by a waist-band of leather. His arms, if arms he has, consist of a rude bow and arrows slung to his back, or an old fusee, not unfrequently without flint, lock, or ammunition; but doubly armed, and proudly, too, is he who can carry a good rifle with powder and lead—even if he be ignorant of their use. Thus appearing, these creatures, some mounted upon mules, with heavy spurs attached to their heels, (bearing gaffs an inch and a half in length, jingling in response to the rolling motions of the wearer,) ensconced in bungling Spanish saddles, (finished with such ample leather skirts as almost hid the diminutive animal that bore them, and large wooden stirrups, some three inches broad,) were riding at their ease; while others, half naked, were trudging along on foot, driving their teams, or following the erratic mules of the caravan, to heap upon them the ready maledictions of their prolific vocabulary. Passing on, we were accosted: "Como lo pasa, cabelleros?" The salutation was returned by a simple nod. Habla la lengua Espanola, senors?" A shake of the head was the only response. "Es esta el camino de Independenca?" No reply. "Carraho! Que quantos jornadas tenemos en la camino de Independenca?" Still no one answered. "Scha! Maldijo tualmas! Los Americanos esta dijabelo!" By this time the crowd had

passed and left us no longer annoyed by its presence. The conclusion irresistibly forced itself upon my mind," if these are true specimens of Mexicans, it is no wonder they incite both the pity and contempt of the rest of the world." Subsequent intercourse with them, however, has served to convince me that first impressions, in this case, instead of exceeding the reality, fell far short of the true mark! Continuing our course, we saw large numbers of prairie-hens, and succeeded in killing several. These birds assimilate the English grouse in appearance, and are of a dusky-brown color, — with short tails, and narrow-peaked wings, —and little less in size than the domestic fowl. Their flesh is tender and of superior flavor. When alarmed, they start with a cackling noise, and whiz through the air not unlike the partridge. They are very numerous on the frontier prairies, and extend to the Rocky Mountains, Oregon, California and New Mexico. About sundown we reached a small creek known as Elm Grove, and encamped for the night, with every indication of an approaching storm. Strict orders were accordingly given for securing the animals, and the process of "picketing" was speedily under way. This consisted in driving small stakes ("pickets") firmly into the ground, at proper distances apart, to which the animals were severally tied by strong cords, —a plan that should find nightly practice among all travellers of the grand prairies, to prevent those losses which, despite the utmost precaution, will not unfrequently occur. Timber proved quite scarce in this vicinity, and it was with great difficulty we procured sufficient for cooking purposes. The men now began to prepare for the coming storm. Some disposed of themselves

in, and others under, the waggons, making barricades to the windward; others erected shantees, by means of slender sticks, planted in parallel rows five or six feet apart, and interwoven at the tops, so as to form an arch of suitable height, over which was spread a roofage of robes or blankets, while others, snugly ensconced beneath the ready pitched tent, bade defiance to wind and weather. Being one of those selecting a place under the waggons, I retired at an early hour to snooze away the night; and despite the anticipations of an unpleasant time, I soon lost myself in a sweet slumber, utterly unconscious of every thing around me. In thoughts I wandered back to the home of my childhood, to converse with friends whose names and features fond memory has chained to my heart, while imagination roamed with delight amid those scenes endeared to me by earliest and most cherished recollections. But all the sweet pencillings of fancy were at once spoiled by the uncivil intrusion of a full torrent of water, that came pouring from the hill-side and forced its impetuous way into the valley below, —deluging me from head to foot in its descent. My condition, as the reader may well suppose, was far from being enviable. However, resolved to make the best of a bad thing, after wringing the water from my drenched bedding, I selected another spot and again adjusted myself to pass the dreary interval till morning; this I succeeded in doing, —how or in what manner, it is unnecessary to say. Sleep was utterly out of the question, and I am quite sure I never hailed the welcome morn with greater delight than on this occasion. Others of the company fared almost as bad as myself, and

there was scarcely a dry bed in camp. But the little concern evinced by the mountaineers for their mishap, surprised me most. They crawled from their beds, reeking with wet, as good humoredly as though their nocturnal bath had in no wise disturbed their equanimity, or impaired their comfort. The morning proved so disagreeable two of our party, who were accompanying us for the purpose of adventure, concluding this a kind of adventure they were unwilling to meet, wisely resolved to take the back track, and accordingly left for home. Towards night the rain ceased, and, the clouds having dispersed, we were again en route. Travelling on till late, we encamped in the open prairie, and early the next morning resumed our course. Having reached a small creek, about 10 o'clock, we halted for breakfast, where another Santa Fe company came up. This proved a party of Americans, with some six or eight waggons and a large number of horses and mules, on their homeward journey. They had also in their possession an elk nearly full grown, two black-tailed deer,1 an antelope and a white-tailed fawn. Through them we received intelligence of a battle recently fought between the Pawnee and Arapaho Indians, at the lower Cimarone Springs, south of the Arkansas. The former had been defeated with great slaughter, —losing their horses and seventy-two of their bravest warriors, to increase the trophies and enliven the scalp-dances of their enemies. This action occurred directly upon the Santa Fe trail, and the dead yet bestrewed the prairie, as our informants passed, half devoured by wolves, and filling the air with noisome stench as they wasted beneath the influence of a scorching sun. An approving

murmur ran through the crowd while listening to the recital, and all united to denounce the Pawnees as a dangerous and villainous set, and wished for their utter extermination. 1 The black-tailed deer are larger than the common deer, and are found only in the snow-mountains. For a description of them the reader is referred to subsequent pages.

CHAPTER III.

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The Pottowatomies. Crossing the Wakarousha. Adventure at the Springs. The Caw chief. Kansas river and Indians. Pleading for whiskey. Hickory timber. Prairie tea. Scenes at the N. Fork of Blue. Wild honey. Return party. Mountaineers in California. Adventure with a buffalo. Indian atrocities. Liquor and the Fur Trade. Strict guard. High prices. CONTINUING our course, we bore to the right, and struck the northern or Platte trail, and, after travelling eight or ten miles, made camp upon a small creek skirted with heavy timber, called Black Jack. An early start the next morning brought us to the Wakarousha, a considerable tributary of the Kansas, where a junction was formed with our advance party. The territory lying upon this stream as far south as Council Grove, (a noted place on the Mexican trail, 144 miles west from Independence,) belongs to the Pottowatomies. These Indians are very wealthy and are partially civilized, —the most of them being tillers of the ground. Their dwellings are of very simple construction, — large strips of bark firmly tied to a frame-work of poles with small apertures to admit light, furnishing the exterior, while the interior is finished by the suspension of two or three blankets between the apartments, as partitions, and erecting a few scaffolds for bedsteads. The fire-place in warm weather is out of doors, but in the winter it occupies the centre of the building, from which the smoke — unaided by jamb or chimney—is left to find its way through an opening in the roof. Some, however, are beginning to

improve in their style of architecture, and now and then we find a tolerably spacious and comfortable house among them. The Catholics have several missionaries with this tribe, and are using great exertions, if not to ameliorate their condition, at least, to proselyte them to their own peculiar faith. The missionaries of other christian denominations are also devoting themselves for their benefit, and not unfrequently with gratifying success. The remainder of the day was occupied in crossing the creek—a task by no means easy, —its banks being so precipitous we were compelled to lower our waggons by means of ropes. In so doing it required the utmost caution to prevent them from oversetting or becoming broken in the abrupt descent. The night following was passed upon the opposite bank. After travelling some twelve miles the next day, we encamped a short distance to the right of the trail at a place known as the Springs. Scarcely had we halted when two footmen appeared from an opposite direction—one of them leading a horse—whom a nearer advance proved to be a white man and an Indian. The former was immediately recognized by our engagés as an old acquaintance, by the name of Brown, who had been their recent compagnon de voyage from the mountains. His story was soon told. A few days subsequent to his arrival in the States. a difficulty had occurred between him and another person, who received a severe wound from a knife by the hand of Brown during the affray, when the latter was necessitated to consult his own safety by a hurried flight. He accordingly bade farewell both to enemies and law, and left for the Indian country — travelling most of the way by night. Two weeks afterwards

he arrived in the Kansas nation, and remained with the Indian now accompanying him, to await our return. Having listened to his story, I began to survey his strange companion. He was a village chief of the Kansas (Caw) tribe, and the first of his race I had ever seen so nearly dressed in his native costume. In person he was tall and stout-built, — with broad shoulders and chest, brawny arms and legs, and features evincing the uncontaminated blood of the Aborigine. His hair was closely shaved to the scalp, with the exception of a narrow tuft centrewise from forehead to crown, so trimmed it stood on end like the bristles of a warring hog; then his whole head and face were so lavishly bedaubed with vermilion, our experienced city belles would doubtless have considered it an unpardonable waste of that useful material! A string of bears'-claws, tastefully arranged, encircled his neck, while ample folds of brass wire above the wrists and elbows furnished his armillary, and from his ears hung rude ornaments, — some of silver, others of brass or iron —cruelly distending the flexible members that bore them. A dirty white blanket drawn closely around the shoulders enveloped the body, which, with a breech-cloth and leggins, formed his sole covering. A bow and arrows, slung to his back by a strap passing over the left shoulder and under the right arm, were his only weapons. A belt, begirting the waist, sustained his tobacco-pouch and butcher-knife, and completed his attire and armament. Thus habited appeared before us the Caw chief, holding in one hand the lead-rope of his horse, and in the other the wing of a wild turkey, with a long-stemmed pipe, carved from a hard red stone, handsomely wrought and finely polished. Taken

altogether, he presented an amusing spectacle — a real curiosity. Having shaken hands with the company and turned his horse to graze, in a few moments his pipe was subjected to its destined use, and, as the inhaled fumes merrily curved from his mouth and nostrils, he ever and anon presented it for the indulgence of the bystanders. His knowledge of English was limited to the simple monosyllable "good," which he took occasion to pronounce at intervals as he thought proper. Sept. 8th. Continuing on, we encamped towards night at a small creek within six miles of the crossing of the Kansas river. Here a bevy of our chief's villagers, rigged in their rude fashion, came flocking up, apparently to gratify their curiosity in gazing at us, but really in expectation of some trilling presents, or in quest of a favorable opportunity for indulging their innate propensities for theft. However, they found little encouragement, as the vigilance of our guards more than equalled the cunning of our visitors. During their stay we were frequently solicited for donations of tobacco and ammunition, (as they expressed it,) in payment for passing through their country. This was individually demanded with all the assurance of government revenue officers, or the keepers of regular toll-bridges, strongly reminding one of the petty nations upon the borders of Canaan that required tribute of the Israelites passing through them to possess the land of their forefathers. Sept. 9th. Early in the forenoon we came to the Kansas, and were employed till nearly night in effecting a ford. This proved rather difficult, as the water was deep and the bottom sandy;— the course, bearing directly across, till near midway of the river, follows the