

To return to the adventures of the Chase family, who were Gentiles not Mormons though they had wintered at Ft. El Pueblo with Mormons of their name. As we have said they started in the spring of 1847 for the Pacific, somewhat in advance of the main party of Mormons. Following the trail northward they made camp at Black Foot near Running Creek (the source of Box Elder Creek and tributary of the Platte) when they were attacked by some Arapahoes. Old Mr. Chase was wounded and two of his grandchildren killed, their lonely grave to be marked and protected from wolves by a simple cairn on the banks of the creek, where their ashes now rest. His daughter Mary was well nigh taken prisoner by the Indians.

But the girl and the day

were saved by the heroic efforts of the mountain trapper, La Bonté, Mary's long lost ^{with La Bonté} now returned lover, and two other white men, one of whom was Ruxton; the affair ending ~~with~~ in the abandonment of their westward journey by the Chases on their arrival at the Oregon Trail, their return ^{with La Bonté} to Tennessee, ~~accompanied by La Bonté~~, and there a wedding. But we will let Ruxton tell the story in his own words, and will merely preface it by explaining that La Bonté and Mary had in early youth ^{and were "awful ~~kind~~ fond"} been lovers in the country near Memphis; that the girl had, to her consternation, by one thoughtless act of playful coquetry, ~~involvement~~ ~~in a duel with his rival, fatal to the latter; and that La Bonté~~ ~~involved La Bonté~~ ~~in a duel with his rival, fatal to the latter; and that La Bonté~~, after an interview with the heart-broken Mary, had fled to the mountains and taken up the ^{profession} ~~life~~ of a trapper; and that after fifteen years of that hazardous life, when ^{he saw his faithful Mary had him} ~~he had supposed~~ ~~she was dead~~, ~~and he supposed~~ ~~her married~~, the long ^{separated} ~~separated~~ lovers were reunited on the Old Divide Trail, she having ^{virtually} ~~virtually~~ been brought to him in the wilderness from which he had never had faith enough to return to look for her.

"Amongst the Mormons was an old man, named Chase, from Memphis county, state of Tennessee, with a family of a daughter and two sons, the latter with their wives and children. Chase was a wiry old fellow, nearly seventy years of age, but still stout and strong, and wielded an axe or rifle better than many a younger man. If truth be told, he was not a very red-hot Mormon, and had joined them as much for the sake of company to California, whither he had long resolved to emigrate, as from ^{any} implicit credence in the faith. His sons were strapping fellows, of the sterling stuff that the Western pioneers are made of; his daughter Mary, a fine woman of thirty, for whose state of single blessedness there must ~~not~~ doubtless have been sufficient reason; for she was not only remarkably handsome, but was well known in Memphis to be the best-tempered and most industrious young woman in those diggings.

She was known to have received several advantageous offers, all of which she had refused; and report said that it was from having been disappointed in very early life in an affaire du cœur, at an age when such wounds sometimes strike strong and deep, leaving a scar difficult to heal. Neither his daughter nor any of his family had been converted to the Mormon doctrine, but had ever kept themselves aloof, and refused to join or associate with them; and for this reason the family had been very unpopular with the Mormon families on the Arkansas; and hence, probably, one great reason why they now started alone on their journey.

"Spring had arrived, and it was time the Mormons should proceed on their march; but whether already tired of the sample they had had of life in the wilderness, or fearful of encountering the perils of the Indian country, not one amongst them, with the exception of old Chase, seemed inclined to pursue the journey farther. That old backwoodsman, however, was not to be deterred, but declared his intention of setting out alone, with his family, and risking all the dangers to be anticipated.

"One fine summer evening in April of 1847, when the cottonwoods on the banks of the Arkansas began to put forth their buds, and robins and blue-birds — harbingers of spring — were hopping with gaudy plumage through the thickets, three white-tilted Conestoga waggons emerged from the timbered bottom of the river, and rumbled slowly over the prairie, in the direction of the Platte waters. Each waggon was drawn by eight oxen, and contained a portion of the farming implements and household utensils of the Chase family. The teams were driven by the young boys, the men following in ~~the~~ rear with shouldered rifles. Old Chase himself, mounted on an Indian horse, leading the advance. The women were safely housed under the shelter of the waggon tilts, and out of the first the mild face of Mary Chase smiled adieu to many of her old companions who had accompanied them thus far, and now wished them "God-speed" on their long journey. Some mountaineers, too, galloped up, dressed in buckskin, and gave them rough greeting — warning the men to keep their "eyes skinned", and look out for the Arapahos, who were out on the waters of the Platte. Presently all retired, and then the huge waggons and the little company were rolling on their solitary way through the deserted prairies — passing the first of the many thousand miles which lay between them and the "setting sun", as the Indians style the distant regions of the Far West. And on, without casting a look behind him, doggedly and boldly marched old Chase, followed by his sturdy family.

"They made but a few miles that evening, for the first day the "start" is all that is effected; and nearly the whole morning is taken up in getting fairly under weigh. The loose stock had been sent off earlier, for they had been collected and corralled the previous night; ~~and~~ and, after a twelve hours fast, it was necessary they should reach the end of the day's journey betimes. They found the herd grazing in the bottom of the Arkansas, at a point previously fixed upon for their first camp. Here the oxen were unyoked, and the wagons drawn up so as to form the three sides of a small square. The women then descended from their seats, and prepared the evening meal. A huge fire was kindled before the wagons, and round this the whole party collected; whilst large kettles of coffee boiled on it, and hoe-cakes baked upon the embers.

"The women were sadly downhearted, as well they might be, with the dreary prospect before them; and poor Mary, when she saw the Mormon encampment shut out from her sight by the rolling bluffs, and nothing before her but the bleak barren prairie, could not divest herself of the idea that she had looked for the last time on civilised fellow-creatures, and fairly burst into tears.

"In the morning the heavy wagons rolled on again across the upland prairies, to strike ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{trail} [Old Divide Trail] used by the traders in passing from the south fork of the Platte to the Arkansas. They had for guide a Canadian voyageur, who had been in the service of the Indian traders and knew the route well, and who had agreed to pilot them to Fort Lancaster* on the [south*] fork of the Platte. Their course led

*The trading ^{the company of} post of Lancaster P. Lupton, then, like ~~with~~ the other posts on the South Platte, deserted since several years. It was called by Fremont, "Lupton's Fort", and in later times was ordinarily called Fort Lupton. — F.W.C.

*Misprinted "north". — F.W.C.

for about thirty miles up the Boiling Spring River [Fountain creek ^{to where the town of Fountain}] whence they pursued a northeasterly course ~~to~~ [east Jimmy Camp, where they probably encamped] to the dividing ridge which separates the waters of the Platte and Arkansas. Their progress was slow, for the ground was saturated ^{with wet} and exceedingly heavy for the cattle, and they scarcely advanced more than ten miles a-day.

"At the camp-fire at night, Antoine, the Canadian guide*, amused

*Possibly Antoine Janise, who like his father before him, had been a trapper in the Rocky mountains, and who subsequently lived for a number of years at the old French hamlet of La Porte (earlier Colona), Colorado, on the Cache à la Poudre, a few miles above Fort Collins.

them with tales of the wild life and perilous adventures of the hunter and trappers who make the mountains their home; often extorting a *ld* scream from the women by the description of some scene of Indian fight and slaughter, or beguiling them of a commiserating tear by the narrative of the sufferings and privations endured by those hardy hunters in their arduous life.

Mary listened with the greater interest, since she remembered that such was the life which had been led by one very dear to her — by one, long supposed to be dead, of whom she had never but once, since his departure, nearly fifteen years before, heard a syllable. Her imagination pictured him as the bravest and most daring of these adventurous hunters, and conjured up his figure charging through the midst of

whooping savages, or stretched on the ground perishing from wounds, or cold, or famine.

Amongst the characters who figured in Antoine's stories, a hunter named La Bonté^{was} made conspicuous for deeds of hardiness and daring. The first mention of the name caused the blood to rush to Mary's face; not that she for a moment imagined it was her La Bonté, for she knew the name was a common one; but, associated with feelings which she had never got the better of, it recalled a sad epoch in her former life, to which she could not look back without mingled pain and pleasure.

Once only, and about two years after his departure, had she ever received tidings of her former lover. A mountaineer had returned from the Far West to settle in his native state, and had found his way to the neighbourhood of old Chase's farm. Meeting him by accident, Mary, hearing him speak of the mountain hunters, had inquired, tremblingly, after La Bonté. Her informant knew him well — had trapped in company with him — and had heard at the trading fort, whence he had taken his departure from the settlements, that La Bonté had been killed on the Yellow Stone by Blackfeet; which report was confirmed by some Indians of that nation. This was all she had ever learned of the lover of her youth.

Now, upon hearing the name of La Bonté so often mentioned by Antoine, a vague hope was raised in her breast that he was still alive; and she took an opportunity of questioning the Canadian closely on the subject.

"Who was this La Bonté, Antoine, who you say was so brave a mountaineer?" she asked one day.

" 'J'ne sais pas; he vas un beau garçon, mais he pas not care a dam for les sauvages, pe gar. He shoot de centare avec his carabine, and ride de cheval comme one Comanche. He trap heap castor, (what you call beavers,) and get plenty dollare — mais he open hand vare wide — and got none too. Den, he hont vid de Blackfoot and avec de Cheyenne, and all round de montaignes he hont dam sight. '

" 'But, Antoine, what became of him at last? and why did he not come home, when he made so many dollars?' asked poor Mary.

" 'Enfant de garce, mais pourquoi he come home? Pe gar, de montaigne-man, he love de montaigne and de prairie more better dan he love ~~des~~ de grandes villes — même de Saint Louis ou de Montreal. Wagh! La Bonté, well, he one montaigne-man, wagh! He love de buffaloe and de chevreaux plus que de boeuf and de mouton, may be. Mais now he go ondare, ~~et~~ on dit. He vas go to de Californie, may be to steal de hosa and de mule — pe gar, and de Espagnols rub him out, and take his hair, so he mort. '

" 'But are you sure of this?' she asked, trembling with grief.

" 'Ah, now, j'ne suis pas sûr; mais I tink you know dis La Bonté. Enfant de garce, maybe you de gal in Missouri he love, and not love him Pe gar! 'Enfant de garce! fort beau garçon, dis La Bonté: pourquoi you ne l'aimez pas? Maybe he not go ondare. Maybe he turn op, autrefois. De trappares, dey go ondare tree, four, ten times; but dey turn op twenty time. De sauvage not able for kill La Bonté, ni de dam Espagnols. Ah, non! ne craignez pas; he gar, he not gone ondare encore. '

"Spite of the good-natured attempts of the Canadian, poor Mary burst into a flood of tears: not that the information took her un-ware, for she long had believed her lover dead; but because the very mention of his name awoke the strongest feelings within her breast, and taught her how deep was the affection she had felt for him whose loss and violent fate she now bewailed.

"As the waggons of the lone caravan roll on towards the Platte, we return to the camp where La Bonte, Killbuck*, and the stranger*, were

*Ruxton's fictitious name for an interesting old trapper from Kentucky, who had ~~and~~ been in the mountains much ~~longer~~ longer than La Bonté, and had been for many years the latter's "compañero" in quest of the beaver, and in lonely wanderings and in dangers from wild beasts, Indians and Indians, from Taos, ~~and~~ Fort Laramie and the Yellowstone, to California; whose identity the present writer, for one, would much like to know, but has hitherto been unable to discover.

— F. W. C.

*"The stranger", was Ruxton, — F.W.C.

sitting before the fire when last we saw them: [in the canon of Fountain creek]. Killbuck loquitor:—

"The doings of them Mormon fools can't be beat by Spaniards, stranger. Their mummums and thummums you speak of won't 'shine' whar Infuns are about; nor pint out a trail, whar nothin crossed but rattlerenakes since fust it snow'd on old Pike's Peak. If they pack along them profits, as you tell of, who can make it rain hump-ribs and marrow-guts* when the crowd gets out of the buifler range, they are 'some' now, that's a fact. But this child dont believe it. I'd laugh to get a sight on these darned Mormonites, I would. They're 'no account', I guess; and its the 'meanest' kind of action to haul their women critters and their young 'uns to such a starving country as the Californya'.

"They are not all Mormons in the crowd", said the strange hunter; 'and there's one family amongst them with some smartish boys and girls, I tell you. Their name's ~~McCarthy~~ Chase'.

"La Bonté looked up from the lock of his rifle, which he was cleaningⁿ— but either didn't hear, or, hearing, didn't heed, for he continued his work.

"And they are going to part company', ~~he~~ continued the stranger, 'and put out alone for Platte and the South Pass'.

"They'll lose their hair, I'm thinking', said Killbuck, 'if the Repahos are out there'.

"I hope not', continued the other, 'for there's a girl amongst ~~them~~ them worth more than that'.

"Poor beaver!' said La Bonté, locking up from his work. 'I'd hate to see any white gal in the hands of Infuns, and of Repahos worse than all. Where does she come from, stranger?'

"Down below St. Louis, from Tennessee. I've heard them say'.

"Tennessee', cried La Bonté, — 'hurrah for the old state! What's her name, stran-----' At this moment Killbuck's old mule pricked up her ears and snuffed the air, which action catching La Bonté's eye, he rose abruptly, without waiting a reply to his question, and exclaimed, 'The old mule smells Infuns, or I'm a Spaniard!'

"The hunter did the old mule justice, and she well maintained her reputation as the best 'guard' in the mountains; for in two minutes an Indian stalked into the camp, dressed in a cloth capote, and in odds and ends of civilised attire.

*Hump-ribs, ^{or steak} cut from the hump of the buffalo, through which hump run the rib-like spinous processes of the anterior dorsal vertebrae, were considered the choicest of "cuts" by the mountain men. The "marrow-guts" were small intestines, which, when cleaned and stuffed with tender bits of buffalo meat, and then roasted, formed a sort of sausage which the French Canadians, and after them the American mountaineers called boudins, and which were said to be very delectable eating. — F. W. C.

" 'Arapaho', cried Killbuck, as soon as he saw him; and the Indian catching the word, struck his hand upon his breast, and exclaimed, in broken Spanish and English mixed, 'Si, si, me Arapaho, white man amigo. Come to camp — eat heap carne — me amigo white man. Come from Pueblo — hunt cibola* — me gun break — no puedo matar nada:

*Buffalo. — F. W. C.]

mucho hambre, (very hungry,) — heap eat'.

"Killbuck offered his pipe to the Indian, and spoke to him in his own language, which both he and La Bonté well understood. They learned that he was married to a Mexican woman, and lived with some hunters at the Pueblo fort on the Arkansas. He volunteered the information that a war party of his people were out on the Platte trail to intercept the Indian traders on their return from the North Fork; and as some 'Mormons' had just started with three waggons in that direction, he said his people would make a 'raid'. Being my amigo himself to the whites, he cautioned his present companions from crossing ^{to} the 'divide', as the 'braves', he said, were a 'heap' mad, and their hearts were 'big', and nothing in the shape of white skin would live

" 'Wagh!' exclaimed Killbuck, 'the Rapahoe know me, I'm thinking; and small gain they've made against this child. I've knowed the time when my gun-cover couldn't hold more of their scalps'.

"The Indian was provided with some powder, of which he stood in need; and after gorging as much meat as his capacious stomach would hold, he left the camp, and started into the mountain.*

"The next day our hunters started on their journey down the river, travelling leisurely, and stopping wherever good grass presented itself. One morning they suddenly struck a wheel trail, which left the creek banks* and pursued a course at right angles to it, in the direction of the 'divide'. Killbuck pronounced it but a few hours old,

*That is, up Ute Pass. [S]

* This was near ~~Mountain~~ the present town of Fountain. — F. W. C.
and that of three waggons drawn by oxen.

" 'Wagh!' he exclaimed, 'if them poor devils of Mormonites ain't going head first into the Rapahoe trap. They'll be 'gone beaver' afore long'.

" 'Ay', said the ^{hunter} stranger, 'these are the waggons belonging to old Chase, and he has started alone for Laramie. I hope nothing will happen to them'.

" 'Chase!', muttered La Bonté. 'I knowed that name mighty well once, years agone; and should hate the worst kind that mischief happened to any one who bore it. This trail's as fresh as paint; and it goes against me to let these simple critters help the Rapahos to their own hair. This child feels like helping 'em out of the scrape. What do you say, old hos?'

" 'I think with you, boy', answered Killbuck, 'and go in for following this wagon trail, and telling the poor critters that thar's danger ahead of them. What's your talk, stranger?'

" 'I go with you', shortly answered the latter; and both followed quickly after La Bonté, who was already trotting smartly on the trail.

"Meanwhile the ^{three} waggons, containing the household gods of the Chase family, rumbled slowly over the rolling prairie, and towards the upland ridge of the 'divide', which, studded with dwarf pine and cedar thicket, rose gradually before them. They travelled with considerable caution, for ~~xxx~~ already the quick eye of Antoine had discovered recent Indian sign upon the trail, and, with mountain quickness, had at once made it out to be that of a war party; for there were no horses with them, and, after one or two of the mocassin tracks, the mark of a rope which trailed upon the ground was sufficient to show him that the Indians were provided with the usual lasso of skin, with which to secure the horses stolen in the expedition. The men of the party were consequently all mounted and thoroughly armed, the waggons moved in a line abreast, and a sharp look-out was kept on all sides. The women and children were all consigned to the anterior of the waggons; and the latter had also guns in readiness, to take their part in the defence, should an attack be made.

"However, they had seen no Indians, and no fresh sign for two days after they left the Boiling Spring River*, and they began to think they were well out of their neighbourhood. One evening they camped on a creek called Black Horse ^[a slip of memory for] Black Squirrel], and, as usual, had corralled the waggons, and fortified as well as circumstances would permit, when three or four Indians suddenly appeared on a bluff ^{side} at a little distance, and making signals of peaceable intentions, approached the camp. Most of the men were absent at the time, attending to the ^{about three miles west} cattle or collecting fuel, and only old ~~xx~~ Chase and one of his young grandchildren, about fourteen years old, remained in camp.

* Fountain Creek; Two days travel thence by ox-team brought them to a point on Black Squirrel Creek about three miles west of Eastonville. F.W.C.