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Author: William Henry Giles Kingston

Illustrator: William H. C. Groome

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AFAR IN THE FOREST ***

W.H.G. Kingston

"Afar in the Forest"

Chapter One.

Our habitation in the forest—My share of the spoils of the day's chase—Uncle Mark commences his narrative—Why my uncles decided to emigrate—Landing in safety, they start up country—Their meeting with Simon Yearsley, an old settler—The settlement is found in ruins—Lily and I rescued—Uncle Mark promises to resume his narrative on the first opportunity—My love of natural history—Uncle Mark continues his narrative—Yearsley goes in pursuit of the indians—The burial of Lily's mother—The return to the waggon—They reach the nearest settlement—Alarm of the settlers upon hearing of the outrage committed by the indians—Uncle Stephen's marriage—Conclusion of Uncle Mark's narrative—Lily and I go berrying—We are attacked by a wolf—Kepenau saves our lives—His present of venison to Aunt Hannah—Kepenau's belief in the goodness of the Great Spirit—The Indian's advice.

"Is Lily not Uncle Stephen's daughter, then?" I asked.

The question was put to my uncle, Mark Tregellis, whom I found seated in front of our hut as I returned one evening from a hunting excursion—it having been my duty that day to go out in search of game for our larder. Uncle Mark had just come in from his day's work, which had been that of felling the tall trees surrounding our habitation. He and I together had cleared an acre and a half since we came to our new location.

It was a wild region in which we had fixed ourselves. Dark forests were on every side of us. To the north and the east was the great chain of lakes which extend a third of the way across North America. Numberless mountain-ranges rose in the distance, with intervening heights,—some rugged and precipitous, others clothed to their summits with vegetation. Numerous rivers and streams ran through the country; one of which, on whose banks we purposed building our future abode, passed close to our hut. Besides the features I have described, there were waterfalls and rapids, deep valleys and narrow gorges penetrating amid the hills; while to the south-west could be seen, from the higher ground near us, the wide prairie, extending away far beyond human ken. Wild indeed it was, for not a single habitation of white men was to be found to the westward; and on the other side, beyond the newly-formed settlement in which Uncle Stephen resided, but few cottages or huts of the hardy pioneers of civilisation,—and these scattered only here and there,—existed for a hundred miles or more.

Uncle Mark, having lighted the fire and put the pot on to boil, had thrown himself down on the ground in front of the hut, with his back to the wall, and was busy contemplating the dark pines which towered up before him, and calculating how long it would take, with his sharp axe, to fell them.

I had brought home a haunch of venison as my share of the spoils of the chase (in which I had joined Uncle Stephen); and it was in consequence of a remark made by him while we were out hunting, that I had somewhat eagerly asked at Uncle Mark the question with which this story opens.

"No; Lily is not Stephen's daughter,—nor even related to him," he answered. "But we will cut some steaks off that haunch and broil them; and while we are discussing our supper, I will tell you all about the matter."

The slices of venison, and flour-cakes baked on the fire, were soon ready; and seated at the door of our hut, with a fire burning before us to keep off the mosquitoes, we commenced our repast, when I reminded my uncle of his promise.

"It is a good many years ago, but even now it is painful to think of those days," he began. "We came from Cornwall, in the 'old country,' where your Uncle Stephen, your mother, and I were born. She had married your father, Michael Penrose, however, and had emigrated to America, when we were mere boys; and we were just out of our apprenticeship (Stephen as a blacksmith and I as a carpenter) when we received a letter from your father and mother

inviting us to join them in America, and setting forth the advantages to be obtained in the new country. We were not long in making up our minds to accept the invitation; and in the spring of the next year we crossed the sea, with well nigh three hundred other emigrants,—some going out to relatives and friends, others bent on seeking their fortunes, trusting alone to their own strong arms and determined will for success.

“We found, on landing, that we had a journey of some hundred miles before us; part of which could be performed in boats up the rivers, but the greater portion was along ‘corduroy’ roads, through dark forests, and over mountains and plains. Our brother-in-law, a bold, determined person, had turned backwoodsman, and, uniting himself with a party of hardy fellows of similar tastes, had pushed on in advance of the old settlers, far to the westward, in spite of the difficulties of obtaining stores and provisions, and the dangers they knew they must encounter from hostile Indians whose territories they were invading. We did not, however, think much of these things, and liked the idea of being ahead, as it seemed to us, of others. The forest was before us. We were to win our way through it, and establish a home for ourselves and our families.

“We had been travelling on for a couple of weeks or so, following the directions your father had given us in order to find his new location, but greatly in doubt as to whether we were going right, when we were fortunate enough to fall in with a settler who knew him, and who was returning with a waggon and team. He readily undertook to be our guide, glad to have our assistance in making way through the forest. We provided ourselves with crowbars to lift the waggon out of the ruts and holes and up the steep ascents; for we had left the ‘corduroy’ roads—or, indeed, any road at all—far behind. Our new acquaintance seemed to be somewhat out of spirits about the prospects of the new settlement; but, notwithstanding, he had determined to chance it with the rest. The Indians, he said, had lately been troublesome, and some of them who had been found prowling about, evidently bent on mischief, had been shot. ‘We have won the ground, and we must keep it against all odds,’ he observed.

“Everything in the country was then new to us. I remember feeling almost awe-struck with the stillness which reigned in the forest. Not a leaf or bough was in motion; nor was a sound heard, except when now and then our ears caught the souging of the wind among the lofty heads of the pine-trees, the tapping of the woodpeckers on the decaying trunks, or the whistling cry of the little chitmonk as it ran from bough to bough.

“I had expected to meet with bears, wolves, raccoons, lynxes, and other animals, and was surprised at encountering so few living creatures. ‘They are here, notwithstanding,’ observed our friend; ‘you will get your eyes sharpened to find them in time. In the course of a year or two you *may* become expert backwoodsmen. You can’t expect to drop into the life all at once.’ By attending to the advice our friend gave us, and keeping our senses wide awake, we gained some knowledge even during that journey.

“We were now approaching the settlement—Weatherford, it was called. It was a long way to the eastward of where we are now, with numerous towns and villages in the neighbourhood. The waggon had gained the last height, from the top of which, our guide told us, we should be able to catch sight of the settlement. We had been working away with our crowbars, helping on the wheels,—our friend being ahead of the team,—and had just reached level ground, when we heard him utter a cry of dismay. Rushing forward, we found him pointing, with distended eyes, into the plain beyond us, from which could be seen, near the bank of a river, thick volumes of smoke ascending, while bright names kept flickering up from below.

“‘The settlement has been surprised by Indians!’ he exclaimed, as soon as he could find words to speak. ‘I know the bloodthirsty nature of the savages. They don’t do things by halves, or allow a single human being to escape, if they can help it. Lads, you will stick by me; though we can do nothing, I fear, but be revenged on the Redskins. I left my wife and children down there, and I know that I shall never see them alive again.’

“He spoke quite calmly, like a man who had made up his mind for the worst.

“‘We cannot leave the waggon here, or the Indians will see it,—if they have not done so already,—and know that we are following them. We will take it down to yonder hollow, and leave it and the oxen. There is pasture enough for them, and they will not stray far. Then we will follow up the Indians’ trail; and maybe some of their braves won’t get back to boast of their victory, if you will only do as I tell you.’

“Of course, we at once agreed to accompany Simon Yearsley—such was our friend’s name—and follow his directions. Quickly turning the waggon round, we got it down to the spot he had indicated, where the oxen were unyoked, and left to crop the grass by the side of a stream flowing from the hill above. Then taking our rifles, with a supply of ammunition, and some food in our wallets, we again set off, Yearsley leading the way.

“We next descended the hill, concealing ourselves as much as possible among the rocks and shrubs until we gained the plain. Although Simon moved at a rapid rate, there was nothing frantic in his gestures. He had made up his mind, should he find his loved ones destroyed, to follow the murderers with deadly vengeance, utterly regardless of the consequences to himself. As none of the intervening country had been cleared except a straight road through the forest, where the trees had been felled, and the stumps grubbed up here and there to allow of a waggon passing between the remainder, we were able to conceal ourselves until we got close to the settlement.

“We now saw that, though the greater number were in flames, two or three huts on one side remained uninjured. Still, not a sound reached us,—neither the cries of the inhabitants nor the shouts of the savages. Nothing was heard save the sharp crackling of the flames.

“‘The Indians have retreated, and the settlers are following. We shall be in time to join them!’ exclaimed Yearsley, dashing forward. ‘But we must first search for any who have survived.’ His previous calmness disappeared as he spoke, and he rushed, through the burning huts, towards one of the buildings.

“Stephen and I were about to follow, when we heard a cry proceeding from one of the huts at hand, which, though the doorway was charred and the burning embers lay around it, had as yet escaped destruction. Hurrying in, I

stumbled over the corpse of a man. His rifle lay on the ground, while his hand grasped an axe, the blade covered with gore. I gazed on his face, and recognised, after a moment's scrutiny, my own brother-in-law. He had fallen while defending his hearth and home. Close to him lay a young boy, who, I guessed, was his eldest child, shot through the head.

"My poor sister! where could she be?"

"Again a cry reached my ear. It came from an inner room. It was Martha, your mother, who had uttered the cry. She was stretched on the ground, holding you in her arms. Her neck was fearfully wounded, her life-blood ebbing fast away.

"I endeavoured to stanch it, telling her meanwhile who I was.

"'Stephen and I have come at your invitation,' I said.

"'Heaven, rather, has sent you, to protect my Roger,' she faintly gasped out, trying to put you in my arms. 'His father and brother are dead; I saw them fall. Hearing voices which I knew to be those of white men, I cried out, that they might come and protect him. Mark! I am dying. You will ever be a father to him?'

"The blood continued to flow; and soon she breathed her last, her head resting on my arm. Your dress and little hands were stained with her blood; but you were too young to understand clearly what had happened, although, as I took you up to carry you from the hut, you cried out lustily to be taken back to your poor mother.

"Thinking it possible that the Indians might return, I hurried out to look for Stephen, so that we might make our escape. I was resolved at all costs to save your life. I tried to comfort you, at the same time, by telling you that I was your uncle, and that your mother had wished me to take care of you.

"Going on a little way, I found another hut, the door of which was open, and smoke coming out of it. The savages had thrown in their firebrands as they quitted the village, and the front part was already on fire.

"While I was shouting for Stephen he rushed out of the hut, with a blanket rolled up in his arms, the end thrown over his own head.

"'I have saved this child, and thank Heaven you are here to take her!' he exclaimed, unfolding the blanket, and putting a little girl into my arms. 'I must try and preserve the mother;' and again throwing the blanket over his head, he dashed in through the flames.

"In another minute he reappeared, struggling along under the heavy burden of a grown-up person wrapped in the blanket. As he reached me he sank down, overcome by the smoke, and I noticed that his clothes and hair were singed.

"On opening the blanket I saw a young woman, her dress partly burned. She too was wounded. The fresh air somewhat revived her; and on opening her eyes and seeing the little girl, she stretched out her arms for her. 'Lilies! my little Lily! she's saved,' she whispered, as she pressed her lips to the child's brow. 'May Heaven reward you!'

"It was the final effort of exhausted nature, and in a few minutes she breathed her last.

"The flames, meantime, had gained the mastery over the building, and we saw that it was impossible to save it.

"But it's time to turn in, Roger," said Uncle Mark. "I'll tell you more about the matter to-morrow."

As Uncle Mark always meant what he said, I knew that there would be no use in trying to get him to go on then, eager as I was to hear more of what had, as may be supposed, so deeply interested me. I accordingly turned into my bunk, and was soon asleep.

I dreamed of shrieking Indians and burning villages; and more than once I started up and listened to the strange unearthly sounds which came from the depths of the forest.

These noises, I may here say, were caused by the wolves; for the savage brutes occasionally came near the settlement, attracted by the sheep and cattle which the inhabitants had brought with them. A bright look-out being kept, however, it was seldom that any of our stock was carried off. Bears also occasionally came into the neighbourhood; and we had already shot two, whose skins supplied us with winter coats. Our intention was to kill as many more as we could meet with, that their skins might serve us for other purposes—especially as coverlets for our beds. And, besides, their flesh was always a welcome addition to our larder.

Next morning we went about our usual work. My uncle with his bright axe commenced felling the trees round our hut—working away from sunrise to sunset, with only an hour's intermission for dinner. I aided him, as far as my strength would allow, for a certain number of hours daily. But my uncle encouraged me to follow the bent of my inclination, which was to get away and observe the habits of the creatures dwelling in the surrounding forest.

I had been a naturalist from my earliest days. The study had been my poor father's hobby—so my uncle told me—and I inherited his love for it. It had, moreover, been developed and encouraged by a visit we had received, some few years back, from a scientific gentleman, who had come over to America to make himself acquainted with the feathered tribes, the quadrupeds, and the reptiles of the New World.

It had been my delight to accompany this gentleman on his excursions while he was with us; and I prized a couple of books he had left with me more than I should have done a lump of gold of the same weight. From him I learned to preserve and stuff the skins of the birds and animals I killed; a knowledge which I turned to profitable account, by my

uncle's advice—as they were sent, when opportunity occurred, to the Eastern States, where they found a ready market.

“It pays very well in its way, Roger,” observed Uncle Mark; “but work is better. If you can combine the two, I have no objection; but you are now too old to play, and, for your own sake, you should do your best to gain your own living. While you were young, I was ready to work for you; and so I should be now, if you could not work for yourself. I want you, however, to understand that it is far nobler for a man to labour for his daily bread, than to allow others to labour for him.”

I fully agreed with Uncle Mark. Indeed, my ambition had long been to support myself. I had an idea, nevertheless, that the skins I preserved brought more immediate profit than did the result of his labours with the axe. But, everything considered, we got on very well together; for I was grateful to him for the affection and care he had bestowed on me during my childhood.

I was hard at work that day preparing a number of birds I had shot in the morning; and when dinnertime came, Uncle Mark, telling me to continue my task, said he would get our meal ready. Having quickly prepared it, he brought out the platters, and set himself down near me. I washed my hands, and speedily despatched my dinner; after which I returned to my work.

“Will you go on with the account you were giving me last night?” I said, observing that he did not seem inclined to move. “You have more than half an hour to rest, and I will then come and help you.”

“Where was I? Oh! I remember,” said my uncle. “In the middle of the burning settlement, with you and Lily in my arms.

“We were wondering what had become of Yearsley, when we caught sight of him rushing out from amid the burning huts.

“‘They are all killed!—all, all, all!’ he shrieked out. ‘Follow me, lads;’ and he pointed with a significant gesture in the direction he supposed the Indians had taken.

“‘But these children, Mr Yearsley! You would not have us desert them! And my brother is too much injured, I fear, to accompany you,’ I observed.

“He looked at the children for a moment.

“‘You are right,’ he answered. ‘Stay by them; or rather, make your way back eastward with them. Ignorant as you are of the habits of the savages, you could aid me but little. If I do not return, the waggon and its contents, with the team, will be yours.’

“Before I had time to reply, or to ask him the name of the poor young woman who lay dead at my feet, he had dashed across the stream, and soon disappeared amid the forest beyond. He had doubtless discovered the trail of the Indians, or of the band of settlers who had gone in pursuit of them; although we at that time were quite unable to perceive what was visible to his more practised eye.

“I told Stephen how I had discovered our sister's house; so we agreed to return to it, and to carry there the body of the poor young woman, that we might bury it with those of our own family. The hut was one of the very few which had escaped the flames, and we found some spades and a pickaxe within. Not knowing how soon we might be interrupted, we at once set to work and dug two graves under a maple-tree at the further end of the garden. One was large enough to hold our brother-in-law and sister, and their boy; and in the other we placed the poor young lady—for a lady she appeared to be, judging from her dress, her ear-rings and brooch, and a ring which she wore on her finger. These trinkets we removed, in order to preserve them for her little daughter; as also a miniature which hung round her neck,—that of a handsome young man, who was doubtless her husband. Stephen told me that the cottage from which he had rescued her, as far as he had time to take notice, seemed to be neatly and tastefully furnished.

“We concluded that her husband, if he had not been killed when the village was surprised, had followed the savages along with the rest; and he would be able on his return to identify his child, while we should know him by his portrait.

“Before beginning our sad occupation, we had got some water and washed the stains from your hands and clothes, and left you in a room playing with little Lily; and on our return we gave you both some food which we found in the house. By this time, too, you seemed perfectly at home with us.

“At first we thought of remaining in the house until Mr Yearsley and the settlers whom we supposed had gone in pursuit of the savages should return; but Stephen suggested that this might be dangerous, as we should not know what was happening outside. The Indians might come back and surprise us, when we should to a certainty share the fate which had befallen so many others. We agreed, therefore, that our safest course would be to make our way back to the waggon, where we had abundance of provisions, and where we could find shelter for the children who had been committed to us, we felt sure, by Providence.

“They were now our chief care. While I took charge of them, Stephen hurriedly examined the other huts which had escaped destruction; crying out in case any one should be concealed, in order to let them know that we were ready to help them. No answer came, however, and we were soon convinced that every person in the settlement, with the exception of those who had gone in pursuit of the savages, had been slaughtered.

“As soon as we were satisfied as to this, we began our retreat, hoping to get back to the waggon before nightfall. Our intention was to wait there for Mr Yearsley, as we felt sure that, after he had punished the Indians, he would come and look for us where he had left the waggon.

"The sun was setting as we reached the top of the ridge; but we were too far off to distinguish any one moving in the settlement, although we made out the smouldering fire, from which thin wreaths of smoke alone ascended in the calm evening air. On reaching the waggon, we found the cattle grazing quietly beside it. Having removed some packages, among which was one of new blankets, we made up beds for the two children; and after giving them some supper, we placed them, sleeping, side by side.

"We agreed that one of us should watch while the other slept. We also resolved that, in the event of our being attacked by Indians, we should show them fight; for we had a good store of ammunition, and knew well how to handle our weapons. Although we hoped they would not come, yet we knew that they might possibly fall upon our trail and discover our whereabouts. Indeed, had we not thought it our duty to wait for Mr Yearsley, we should have harnessed the cattle, and endeavoured to make our way down the mountain in the dark.

"After we had put you and Lily to bed, and had refreshed ourselves with some supper, I climbed again to the top of the ridge; but I could see no object moving in the plain, nor could I hear the slightest sound to indicate the approach of any one. I therefore returned.

"While Stephen lay down under the waggon, I kept watch, walking up and down with my rifle ready in my hand, and resting occasionally by leaning against the wheel of the waggon. After I had watched thus for about four hours, I called Stephen, who took my place.

"I was again on foot by daybreak, and once more climbed to the top of the ridge to look out. But I had the same report as before to give. The fire had burned itself out, and I could see no one moving. We waited all that day—and might have waited for several more, until our cattle had eaten up the herbage—without being discovered; but Mr Yearsley did not appear, nor could we see any signs of the other settlers.

"We did our best to amuse you and Lily. You asked frequently after your poor mother; and it went to my heart to tell you that you would never see her again.

"Stephen proposed that we should the next morning set out on our journey eastward; but as I thought it possible that Mr Yearsley would by that time have got back to the settlement, I undertook to go and search for him—or to try and find any of the other people, and learn what had become of him. Stephen agreed to this; undertaking to look after the children and guard the waggon during my absence.

"At daybreak I set out, keeping myself concealed, as much as possible, behind bushes and trunks of trees, until I got back to the scene of the catastrophe. I listened; but all was still as death. Excepting the two or three huts around my brother-in-law's abode, the whole ground where the settlement had stood presented only black heaps of ashes, surrounded by palings and trunks of trees charred by the flames. I could see no one moving across the river, either; and the dreadful idea seized me that the settlers who had gone in pursuit of the foe had been cut off, and that Mr Yearsley had in all likelihood shared the same fate. Had it not been for Stephen and the children, I would have watched all day, in the hope of our friend's return; but I had promised not to be longer than I could help.

"I again visited my poor brother-in-law's hut, and packed up such clothes as I saw belonging to you. I also brought away a few other articles, to remind us of your mother; for I thought it probable that the settlement would be revisited by the savages, who would take good care to finish the work they had begun. I then set off on my return to the waggon, looking back every now and then, lest I might be followed by any of the foe.

"On reaching the waggon, Stephen agreed with me that we might safely wait till the next morning. We did so; and poor Yearsley not then appearing, we proceeded with the waggon along the road we had taken in coming, until we reached Watfield, a large settlement which had then been established for three or four years.

"The account we gave of what had happened caused the inhabitants considerable anxiety and alarm. The men at once flew to arms; stockades were put up; and sentries were posted at all points, to watch for the possible approach of the Indians.

"Stephen and I having now no wish to go further east, we determined to remain where we were. As for the waggon and team, though we had no written document to show that Yearsley had given them to us, our statement was believed; and it was agreed that we should be allowed to keep them,—especially as we consented to give them up should the original owner return. But nothing was ever heard of him, or of the other settlers who had gone in pursuit of the retreating foe; and it was generally believed that the whole had been surrounded and murdered by the savages.

"As we could not spare time to look after the children, one of us agreed to marry. Stephen therefore fixed upon your Aunt Hannah, who was, he had discovered, likely to prove a good housewife, and was kind-hearted and gentlemanly. A true mother, too, she has ever proved to our Lily."

Uncle Mark only spoke the truth when he praised Aunt Hannah; for she had been like an affectionate mother to me, as well as to Lily, and much I owed her for the care she had bestowed upon me.

I need not describe my own early days; indeed, several years passed without the occurrence of any incidents which would be especially interesting to others. Gradually the border-village grew into a town, although even then the country continued in almost its original wild state within a mile or two of us. Both Lily and I got a fair amount of schooling; and in the holidays I was able to indulge my taste, by rambling into the forest and increasing my knowledge of the habits of its denizens. Occasionally I got leave for Lily to accompany me, although Aunt Hannah did not much approve of her going so far from home.

One day I had persuaded our aunt to let her accompany me—Lily herself was always ready to go—for the sake of collecting some baskets of berries. "I promise to come back with as many as I can carry, to fill your jam-pots," said I.

There were whortleberries, and thimble-berries, blue-berries, raspberries, and strawberries, and many others which, I reminded her, were now in season. "If we do not get them now, the time will pass. Lily's fingers, too, will pick them quicker than mine, so that we shall get double as many as I should get by myself," I observed.

My arguments prevailed, and Lily and I set out, happy as the red-birds we saw flying in and out among the trees around us.

We had nearly filled our baskets, and I was on my knees picking some strawberries which grew on the bank of a small stream running through an open part of the forest, when Lily, who was at a little distance from me, shrieked out. I was about to spring to my feet and hurry to her assistance—supposing that she had been frightened by some animal—when what was my horror to see, close to me, a huge wolf, with open jaws, ready to seize me! My stick, the only weapon I carried, lay just within my reach; so I put out my hand and instinctively grasped it, determined to fight for my own life and Lily's too—knowing how, if the wolf killed me, it would next attack her.

As I moved the creature snarled, but did not advance any nearer. So, grasping the stick, I sprang to my feet and swung the weapon round with all my might, despair giving energy to my muscles. The savage creature retreated a few paces, astonished at the unexpected blow, snarling, and eyeing me, as if about to make another attack.

Again Lily shrieked.

"Run, run!" I cried; "I will tackle the wolf."

But she did not move; indeed, she saw that the creature was more likely to come off victor than I was.

I stood ready to receive the animal, doubtful whether I ought to make the attack; Lily, in the meantime, continuing to cry aloud for help. The wolf at length seemed to get tired of waiting for his expected prey, and giving a fierce howl, he was on the point of springing at me, when a bullet fired by an unseen hand laid him dead at my feet.

Lily sprang towards me, exclaiming, "You are safe! you are safe, Roger!" and then burst into tears. She scarcely seemed to consider how I had been saved. All she saw was the dead wolf, and that I was unhurt.

On looking round, I observed an Indian advancing towards us from among the trees.

"That must be the man who killed the wolf," I exclaimed. "We must thank him, Lily."

Lily had ever a great dread of Indians. "We must run! we must run, Roger!" she cried. "He may kill us as easily as he did the wolf, or carry us away prisoners."

"We cannot escape him, Lily; and I do not think he will hurt us," I answered in an encouraging tone. "I will go forward and thank him for saving my life. It will not do to show any fear; and if he is disposed to be friendly, he would think it ungrateful if we were to run off without thanking him."

I took Lily's hand as I spoke, and led her towards the Indian. He was dressed in skins, with an axe hanging from his belt, and had long black hair streaming over his shoulders,—unlike most of the Indians I had seen, who wear it tied up and ornamented with feathers. A small silver medal hung from his neck, and I guessed from this that he was a friend to the white men, and had received it as a token for some service he had rendered them.

He made a friendly sign as he saw us approach, and put out his hand.

"We come to thank you for killing the wolf that was about to spring upon me," I said in English, for though I knew a few words of the Indian tongue, I could not at that time speak it sufficiently well to express what I wished to say.

"Kepenau is glad to have done you a service," he answered in English. "I heard the young maiden cry out, and guessed that she would not do so without cause, so I hurried on to help you. But why are you so far from home? It is dangerous for unarmed people to wander in this forest."

"We came out to gather berries, and were about to return," said Lily. "You will not detain us?"

"Not if you wish to go," answered the Indian.

"But come with me, and you shall return with something of more value than these berries."

I felt sure that the Indian would not injure us, so Lily and I followed him, hand in hand.

He moved through the forest faster than we could, and presently stopped near some rocks, amid which lay the body of a deer with huge antlers. Placing himself across the carcass of the animal, he exclaimed with a look of exultation, "See! I have overcome the king of these forests. Once, thousands of these animals wandered here, but since the white man has come they have all disappeared; and now that I have slain him, we must go likewise, and seek for fresh hunting-grounds. Still, Kepenau bears the Whiteskins no malice. He was ever their friend, and intends to remain so. You must take some of the meat and present it to your friends."

Saying this, he commenced skinning the deer, in which operation I assisted him. He then cut off several slices, which he wrapped up in some large leaves and placed in my basket.

"Take the venison to your mother, and say that Kepenau sends it," he observed.

"He has no mother," said Lily.

"Is he not your brother?" asked the Indian.

"No!" said Lily. "His mother was killed by the Redskins long, long ago."

Lily at that time did not know that her own mother had been murdered when mine was.

"You do not bear the red men any malice on that account, I trust?" said Kepenau, turning to me.

"The Great Spirit tells us to forgive our enemies; and there are good and bad Indians."

"You are a good Indian, I am sure," said Lily, looking up at him with more confidence in her manner than she had before shown.

"I wish to become so," he said, smiling. "I have learned to love the Great Spirit, and wish to obey him. But it is time for you to return home. Wait until I have secured the flesh of the deer, and then I will accompany you."

Kepenau quickly cut up the animal, and fastened the more valuable portions to the bough of a tree—out of the reach of the wolves—by means of some lithe creepers which grew at hand; then loading himself with as much of the venison as he could conveniently carry, he said, "We will move on."

Having accompanied us to the edge of the forest, he bade us farewell. "Should there be more wolves in the forest, they will not follow you further than this," he said; "but if they do, remember that it will be better to sacrifice some of the venison, than to allow them to overtake you. Throw them a small bit at a time; and as in all likelihood they will stop to quarrel over it, you will thus have time to escape."

I remembered the Indian's advice, although we did not need to practise it on this occasion.

We reached home before dark, and greatly surprised Aunt Hannah with the present of venison. She had, she told us, been very anxious at our prolonged absence.

Chapter Two.

Greenford settlement—The flying squirrels—Mike Laffan and Tom Quambo—Their dogs, Yelp and Snap—A raccoon-hunt—Mike having seen a bear, we go in chase—Our dogs scent Bruin—Quambo in danger—The bear is killed, and Quambo released—We return to the hut—The logging bee—Uncle Stephen's house—Indian summer—Mike Laffan's Cremona—The night attack of the wolves—We determine to go lumbering for the winter—Mike and I go on ahead—Uncle Mark is attacked by a wolf—Mike saves him, and we proceed onwards.

We had only lately, as I have already said, arrived at our new location. My uncles had been imbued with the restless spirit of backwoodsmen, and Aunt Hannah was ready to do whatever Uncle Stephen wished. So, having grown weary of the life at Watfield, where we had at first been located, they had resolved, along with several other inhabitants of that place, to push westward; and after making their way through forests, rivers, and swamps, and over hills and plains, had formed the new settlement where Uncle Stephen now was, and which they had named Greenford.

To the hut where Uncle Mark and I lived no name had been given; but he expressed his belief that it would one day become the centre of a great city. "Before that day arrives, however, you and I, Roger, will have moved far away westward," he observed.

I used to exercise diligence while I was at work, in order that I might have more time to attend to the study of natural history. My great delight was to get away into the forest and observe the habits of its various inhabitants. Often would I sit on the root of an old tree watching the playful squirrels at their gambols. When I spied a hole in which I knew that a family were likely to have taken up their abode, I would hide myself; and before long I was generally rewarded by seeing a "papa" squirrel poking out his nose. Soon he would give an inaudible sniff, sniff, sniff, then out would come his head, and he would look round to ascertain whether danger was near. Presently I would catch sight of his thick furry body and lovely brush, the tail curling over his head. Then another nose would appear, and large shining eyes; and out another would pop; followed in rapid succession by the whole family. Then, how delightful it was to watch them frolicking about, darting round the trunks, sending the bark rattling down as they chased each other; whisking their tails; darting along the boughs, and bounding fearlessly from branch to branch. One, reaching the end of a bough, would spread out its arms and tail, exhibiting the white fur beneath, and fly down to a lower branch, or to the earth below, followed by its companions; then away they would go along the logs or swinging vines, and up another trunk, quick as lightning. Sometimes I would catch them at their supper, nibbling away at the nuts which they had plucked, or had dug out of the ground with their sharp little paws.

A flying squirrel is indeed a beautiful creature. Its colour is a most delicate grey; the fur thick and short, and as soft as velvet; the eyes large and full. The membrane by which it is enabled to take its flights is of a soft texture, and white, like the fur of the chinchilla. The tail greatly resembles an elegantly-formed broad feather.

One day, as I was wandering along the banks of a stream, for the purpose of observing the habits of a family of beavers that had lately made their abode there, I caught sight of a number of squirrels. They were evidently about some important operation, since they were moving steadily along the branches, and refraining from their usual frisking and playing. Having concealed myself from their view, in order that they might not be disturbed by my presence, I noticed that they went on until they reached the branch of a tree overhanging the stream, at the extreme end of which one, who appeared to be their leader, took post, looking eagerly up the current. In a short time a small log floated near, with a tendency to move over to the opposite side. As it came beneath the leader of the party he dropped down upon it, at the same time uttering a sharp cry. Quick as lightning some others followed his example;

and by holding on to the lower twigs they arrested its progress until the whole party were seated on board, when the log was allowed to float, as they sagaciously knew it would, towards the opposite bank. It seemed to me as if some of them were steering it with their tails; but of that I am not positive. In a short time, after floating some way down the stream it was guided to the shore; when one after the other leaped off, and quickly running along the boughs of the trees, gained a point exactly opposite to that from which they had started; after which they went away into the forest,—bent, I doubted not, on some predatory expedition. They would soon make their presence known, when they reached the pumpkin-grounds or maize-fields of the settlers.

I was not always alone in my rambles through the forest. Lily would have been only too happy to accompany me, but Aunt Hannah judged it prudent to keep her at home; and, indeed, she had plenty of occupation there. My chief companion, therefore, was one of Uncle Stephen's labourers—an Irishman, Mike Laffan by name.

Although Mike had no great knowledge of natural history, he was as fond of searching for animals as I was, and consequently was always ready to accompany me when he had the chance. He was an honest fellow; a thorough Patlander in look, manners, language, and ideas. When he could, he used to press Tom Quambo, an old free negro, into the service; and Quambo enjoyed the fun as much as Mike did. Each possessed a dog, of which they were very proud, ugly as the animals were to look at.

"Den, you see, massa, if Yelp not 'ansome, he know eberyting," Quambo used to remark. "He braver dan painter (meaning the puma), and run like greased lightning."

It was difficult to say whether Yelp or Mike's dog was the ugliest; but both masters were equally proud of their canine friends.

I too had a dog, which, if not a beauty, was certainly handsomer than either of his two acquaintances. He was clever enough in his way, but more useful in watching the hut than in hunting; indeed, when I went out by myself for the purpose of observing the habits of the denizens of the forest, I never took him, knowing that he would only interfere with their sports.

On one occasion I had been over to see my Uncle Stephen, and as I was returning home Mike Laffan met me.

"Would you loike to be afther looking for a 'coon to-night, Masther Roger?" he asked. "Quambo says he can come; and Yelp and Snap are moighty ager for the sport."

I at once agreed to meet my two friends, accompanied by my dog Pop.

Accordingly, at the time appointed, the day's work being over, Mike and Quambo made their appearance at the hut; while running at their heels were their two dogs, who were soon warmly greeted by Pop.

Setting out, we took our way along the banks of the river, near which we fully expected to fall in with several raccoons. We had our guns, and were provided with torches and the means of lighting them. We had not gone far before we heard voices, and soon we were joined by three lads from the settlement, who had got notice of the expedition. As they had brought their dogs, we had a full pack of mongrels of high and low degree, but united by one feeling,—that of deadly enmity to raccoons.

On we went, while the dogs, who had just then scented one of their foes, yelled in chorus. Over huge logs and rotten trunks, through the brush and dead trees and briars, we went at full speed; and sometimes wading across bogs, sometimes climbing up banks, and occasionally tumbling over on our noses, we continued to make our way at the heels of the dogs, until old Quambo, waving his torch above his head, and suddenly stopping short, shouted out, "De 'coon's treed!"

He had made a mistake, however, for the dogs bayed loudly and continued their course.

"Dat a mighty old 'coon," cried Quambo. "He know what he about."

The raccoon, if it had got up the tree, had come down again, and was still ahead. Some of the party were almost in despair; but I knew the habits of the creature too well not to feel sure that we should get it at last, so I encouraged my friends, while we dashed on as before.

Yelp and Snap, having kept well ahead of the other dogs, were now heard baying under a big tree, and no doubt remained that the raccoon had taken refuge amid its branches. Our difficulty was to get it down. As the others hesitated to encounter the fierce little animal amid the boughs, Mike, for the honour of "Old Ireland," offered to make his way up. Without more ado, then, he got on Quambo's shoulders, sprang to a branch within his reach, and was soon lost to sight among the foliage.

"I see him!" he shouted at last; and bits of bark, leaves, and rotten twigs came rattling down, while the loud whacks of his stick reached our ears. Presently there was a "flop;" the raccoon had been compelled to evacuate its stronghold. The dogs once more gave chase; and I, torch in hand, followed them. In less than a minute I came up with the dogs, and found the creature at bay, its eyes flashing fire, while it bravely faced the pack, which, with gnashing growls and savage yells, were about to dash upon it, though each seemed unwilling to receive the first bite from its sharp teeth. But, hearing the voices of their masters, they gained courage, and in another instant had the poor animal struggling vainly in their midst; while our blows came rattling down, to finish its sufferings, and prevent them tearing its skin to pieces.

Such was one of several raccoon-hunts in which I took part.

The raccoon is about the size of a spaniel, and its colour is a blackish grey. Its tail is short and bushy, and is marked

with five or six blackish rings on a grey ground. When the animal walks slowly, or sits, it plants the soles of its feet upon the ground; but when in a hurry it runs along on the tips of its toes. It hunts for its prey chiefly at night, when it devours any small animals it can catch. It has no objection, however, to a vegetable diet; and, indeed, its teeth show that it is capable of feeding on both descriptions of food.

I once caught a young raccoon, which soon became domesticated—being quite as tame as a dog. It possessed, however, a habit of which I could not cure it; that of seizing any fowls it set eyes on, and biting off their heads. It having treated two or three of Aunt Hannah's in this way, I was compelled to carry it into the forest and set it at liberty. It enjoyed its freedom but a short time, however, as it was soon afterwards hunted and killed by some of our boys.

Having got so far from home, our party were not inclined to return without something in addition to the unfortunate animal we had slaughtered. Mike, too, announced to us that he had seen a brown bear at a spot a little further on; so it was at once agreed that we should "knock up the quarters of Mr Bruin."

It was necessary to proceed with caution; for though the "musquaw" or brown bear will seldom attack a human being unless first assaulted, our friend, if unceremoniously disturbed at night, would probably not be in a good-humour. Our three well-trained dogs kept at our heels, but the other curs went yelping away through the forest; nor could their masters' voices succeed in calling them back. We feared, therefore, that they would rouse up the bear, and thus give it time to escape before we could reach its dwelling.

"Faix, though, I am not sure that the noise outside won't make the old gentleman keep quiet in his den," observed Mike. "He will be after saying to his wife, 'Sure, what would be the use, Molly, of turning out to go hunting thim noisy spalpeens of dogs? I'll sit snug and quiet till they come to the door; and thin, sure, it will be toime enough to axe thim what they want.'"

Mike's notion encouraged us to go on; and at length Pop, Snap, and Yelp gave signs of uneasiness, and showed a decided inclination to rush forward.

"Let dem go!" exclaimed Quambo.

"Off with you!" we cried at once; and the dogs darted on, barking furiously, until they stopped before the decayed trunk of a huge tree, round which several smaller trees, once saplings, had grown up—a well-selected natural fortification. As the light of our torches fell on it, we fully expected to see Mr Bruin stalk forth and inquire what we wanted.

Quambo proposed that we should light a fire in the neighbourhood, so that, did our enemy appear, we might be better able to attack him and defend ourselves. We followed the black's advice; but still nothing appeared. The dogs, however, showed they were convinced that some animal or other was concealed within the trunk.

At last, growing impatient, we approached and thrust our long sticks into the hollow, feeling about in every direction.

"I am sure that mine has struck something soft!" I exclaimed; and scarcely had I uttered the words when a low growl reached our ears. A dark body next appeared for an instant among the stems of the trees surrounding the hollow trunk, and then out rushed a bear through an opening which we had not perceived.

The dogs gave chase, and so did we. Bruin had but a short start; and although he must have been well acquainted with the locality, we, scorning all impediments, soon overtook him—the dogs having already commenced biting at his hind feet. This was too much for his equanimity, so, suddenly turning round, he struck two or three of them with his fore paws, sending them sprawling to a distance. As he did so the glare of our torches dazzled his eyes, and so perplexed him that he seemed not to know what to do. Of one thing only he must have been convinced,—that he was in for a fight; and, brave bear as he was, he sat up on his hind legs and prepared to receive us.

Mike fired, but only wounded him in the shoulder. This stirred up Bruin's anger to a pitch of fury, and, with a growl like thunder, he dashed forward at his opponent. Mike, however, nimbly skipped on one side, and the bear's eye fell on Quambo, who had lifted his rifle to fire. But scarcely had he pulled the trigger when the bear was upon him, and both rolled over together.

For an instant I thought that the black was killed, but his voice shouting to us to drag off the bear reassured me; and Mike's hunting-knife quickly finished the animal, which was struggling in the agonies of death. Happily, his teeth had only torn Quambo's jacket; and on our dragging away the dead body the black sprang to his feet.

"Berry good sport," he observed, shaking himself. "I'se wonder wedder Mrs Bear not remain behind! and piccaninny bears too, perhaps! We look as we go by. Howeber, we now make ready dis gen'leman to carry home." He and Mike then fastened the bear's feet together, and hung the animal to a long pole, which they cut from a sapling growing near. Then having placed it on their shoulders, with short pieces at right angles at either end to prevent it slipping, they announced that they were ready to set off; so, while they led the way with our prize, we commenced our homeward journey.

Whether Mrs Bruin had occupied part of the trunk, we could not positively ascertain. Quambo expressed his belief that she had been there, but had taken the opportunity, while we went in chase of her spouse, to make her escape with her offspring. We possibly might have found her; but, with her young to defend, she would have proved a dangerous foe, and, as our torches were almost burnt out, we should have had to encounter her in the dark. We therefore considered it prudent to proceed on our way.

I remained at the hut while the rest of the party went back to the settlement. Aunt Hannah was well pleased to obtain so valuable a prize; and she sent us, some weeks afterwards, a smoked bear's ham as our share of the spoil.

I can give but a very brief account of the adventures of those days; indeed, sometimes weeks went by during which I was hard at work without intermission, either assisting Uncle Mark, or joining in one or other of the "bees" got up for various purposes—when we went to help others, as our neighbours, when required, came to help us.

Sometimes we joined what was called a "logging bee," which I may explain thus:—When a new hut was to be erected, we and others united to drag the logs out of the forest, and to hew them into proper lengths to form the walls of the hut. These are placed, not upright, but horizontally, one above another. The length of the outside walls is first determined; whereupon the lowest log is let a little way into the earth, and a groove is cut on the upper side with a deep notch at each end. The next log is placed on the top of it, each end being so cut as to dovetail into the others at right angles; thus one log is placed upon another until the destined height of the wall is reached. Doors and windows are afterwards sawed out; and the rafters are fixed on in the usual fashion. The roof is formed of rough slabs of wood called shingles; the interstices being filled up with clay. A big iron stove, the flues running from one end to the other, keeps the hut thoroughly warm in winter; while the thickness of the walls causes it to be cool in summer.

Many of the settlers had large houses of this description; but stores, and buildings where warmth was not of so much consequence, had their walls merely of planks nailed on to the framework. Uncle Stephen's house was built of logs raised on a platform above the ground, with steps leading to it, and a broad verandah in front. It contained a sitting-room, several bedrooms, and a kitchen; the verandah being painted a bright green, with stripes of pink, while the window-frames and doors were yellow. I used to think it a beautiful mansion, but perhaps that was on account of those who lived within. The abode of Lily was of necessity, to my mind, charming.

The autumn of that year was now approaching its close. There is in North America, at that period of the year, what is called the "Indian summer." The air is balmy, but fresh, and mere existence to those in health is delightful; a light gauze-like mist pervades the atmosphere, preventing the rays of the sun, beaming forth from an unclouded sky, from proving over-oppressive. Already the forest has assumed its particoloured tints. The maple has put on a dress of every hue,—of yellow, red, pink, and green. The leaves of the beeches become of a golden tinge, and those of the oak appear as if turned into bronze, while numerous creepers present the richest reds.

We settlers, however, had but little time in which to admire the beauties of Nature, for we knew that every day was rapidly bringing us to the period when all agricultural labour must cease, and the ground would be covered with a sheet of snow. Not that we were then doomed to idleness, however, for we had abundance of out-of-door work during the winter, in felling trees; and, as soon as the snow had hardened, dragging them over it,—either to form huge heaps, where they could be burned, or to be placed in the spots where they were required for putting up buildings or fences.

Uncle Stephen having engaged some new hands,—who, being fresh from the "old country," were unwilling, as they were unfit, to go further into the forest,—allowed Mike and Quambo to come to us. We therefore put up a room for them next to our own, and which could be heated in winter by the same stove. We were thus able to get on much more rapidly with our task of clearing the ground. Mike, indeed, was a great acquisition to our party; for, besides singing a good Irish song, he had learned to play the fiddle,—and, of course, he had brought his "Cremona," of which he was justly proud, along with him. He beguiled the long winter evenings with many a merry tune, and not unfrequently set old Quambo dancing. Sometimes we would look in; and we found it great fun to see Quambo, in the confined space of the cabin, coming the "double shuffle"—bounding up and down, and whirling round and round, snapping his fingers and stamping his feet, until the perspiration streamed down his sooty cheeks. Mike would continue bobbing his head, meanwhile, and applauding with voice and gesture, though keeping his countenance, and looking as grave as a judge while listening to the counsel for a prisoner.

We had now made an opening which enabled us to see the river from our hut; and Mike declared that we were getting quite civilised, and were beginning to look like being in the midst of a great city, barring the houses, and streets, and people.

"Sure, they'll be afther coming one of these days," he added.

"When that happens, it will be time for us to think of moving further westward," observed Uncle Mark.

A violent storm, which sent the boughs and leaves flying about our heads, brought the "Indian summer" to a conclusion, and the frost set in soon afterwards.

One evening, after the day's work was over, and supper had been finished, we were sitting in our hut employed in various occupations before turning in for the night, when a low howl reached our ears.

"What is that?" I exclaimed.

Before Uncle Mark could make answer, the howl was answered by another; and presently, others joining in, the whole forest reverberated with a melancholy and spirit-depressing chorus.

"Wolves!" said Uncle Mark. "The frost has driven them from the high ground, and they are contemplating a raid on our porkers and cattle. We must send them to the right-about, or they will become audacious."

Calling to Mike and Quambo, we put on our coats and sallied forth, armed with guns and sticks. The moon was shining brightly, so we required no torches. We made our way over the fallen trunks and rough rocks which formed the bank of the river, but after a while the howls appeared to come from a still greater distance than before.

Uncle Mark now called a halt. "The brutes hear us, and are retreating," he said. "Keep silence for a few minutes, and maybe we shall catch sight of them."

Under his directions I seated myself on the trunk of a tree, while he and the two men stayed near. Presently I caught

sight of a pair of glaring eyeballs, and soon another wolf came into view.

"Get your rifles ready," whispered Uncle Mark. "You, Roger, shoot the one to the left. I will aim at the next. Mike and Quambo, you take two others. Unless they run off, we may give a good account of the whole pack."

As he finished speaking I fired, followed by Uncle Mark and the other men; and, as the result, four wolves rolled over dead. The rest of them, however, disappointed us by turning tail and scampering off to a safe distance, from whence only their howls reached us. Uncle Mark, however, did not consider it prudent to follow them. Indeed, had they heard us approaching they would probably have retreated out of shot; for wolves, though they will follow a fugitive, like other savage animals, will generally try to escape when pursued. So, having secured the skins of those we had killed, although they were of no great value, we returned homewards.

After this we had alternately rain and frost, with a few fine days, till the snow came down, and the winter commenced in earnest. But we were all pretty well inured to it. Indeed, except when the wind blew, we were in the habit of hewing in the forest with our coats off; and even then we often found it hot work.

Mike came back one day from the settlement—where he had been sent for a few stores and powder and shot—with the information that a party of lumberers had commenced operations some miles up a river which ran into the great lake, and that the "boss" had sent a ganger to hire hands, more of whom were wanted.

"A few dollars of ready cash would be very acceptable," observed Uncle Mark. "What say you, Roger? We'll start away, and spend a month or so with them. We can take Mike with us, while Quambo will look after the hut, the cattle, and pigs."

I was ready, of course; and so, as my uncle was a man of action, he determined to set off the next morning. We were all good skaters; and although, during the first part of our journey, we should be unable to make use of our skates, we settled to carry them with us.

At daybreak, then, we were up, and having taken breakfast, were ready to start,—our provisions consisting of flour-cakes and cold pork, with a pot and pannikins. Mike also carried his fiddle hung around his neck.

"It will help to amuse the gossoons—and maybe put a few dollars in my pocket," he remarked with a wink. "Bedad! I'll keep their feet going, when the work is over for the day, and they are afther sharpening their axes."

We had but one gun with us, which Mike carried, as we wished to travel with as little encumbrance as possible.

But just as we were starting off, Uncle Mark recollected that he had forgotten to write to Uncle Stephen upon a matter of importance.

"You, Roger, and Mike, can go on ahead," he said, "while I finish my letter, which I will leave with Quambo to be forwarded; and I will soon overtake you."

As there was now light enough for us to see our way through the forest, we commenced our tramp. There was no risk of our taking the wrong road, seeing there was but one—along the course of the stream, which ran into the larger river; and it was now frozen in such a manner as to afford us a good highway. Mike was always amusing, and I was glad of his company; besides which, as we had had a good start of my uncle, I was in hopes that we might have time to get a shot at something.

We had accomplished three or four miles, and I had begun to wonder why Uncle Mark had not overtaken us, as he was a quick walker, and intended to carry only his axe, and a small skin bag over his shoulder containing some necessaries. We were looking about us, in the hope of catching sight of a raccoon or opossum, or some larger game, when a howl, such as had aroused us one night a short time before, sounded through the forest.

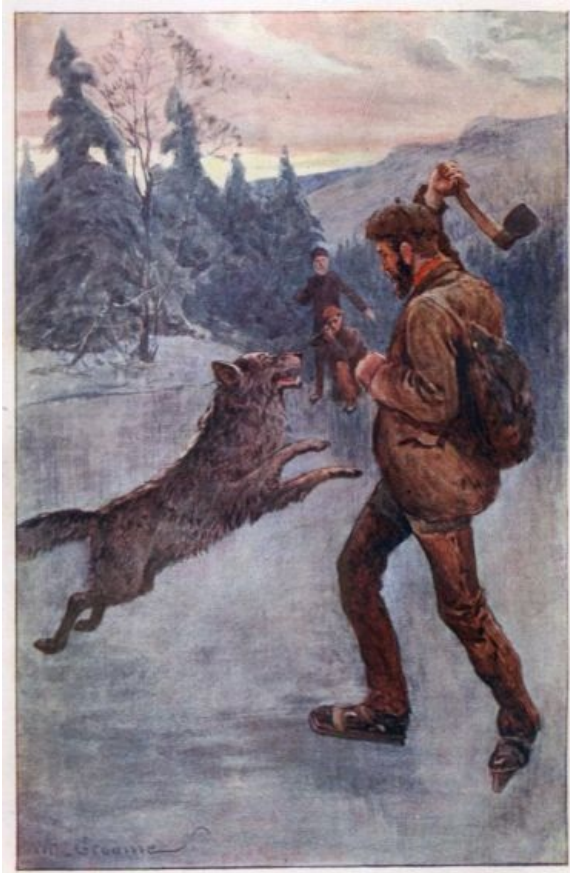
"Sure, that comes from a pack of wolves," observed Mike. "But no! I believe one of the brutes is capable of making that noise. We have heard the echoes among the trees. I hope that there are not many of them, as they might take it into their heads to attack us, and that would not be pleasant."

We went on, however, troubling ourselves very little about the wolf, for I felt sure that there was only one, or a couple at the most. The stream, as we proceeded, became wider, running round the foot of some hills, with larches scattered on either side, their boughs bent down by the snow which had frozen hard on them. The sky had become cloudy by this time, too, and there was every appearance of a fresh fall.

"Surely Uncle Mark will be up with us soon, Mike!" I observed.

But scarcely had I spoken when I heard my uncle shouting to us. He was in the middle of the frozen stream, and was hurrying towards us, axe in hand. He had good reason to keep it there, for just then we saw a huge wolf rush out from behind a clump of trees close at hand. He stopped to receive his assailant, which, probably well nigh famished, seemed bent on his destruction.

Mike, without saying a word, had unslung the gun and dropped on his knee, for there was not a moment to be lost. In another instant the fierce wolf would have sprung at my uncle's throat, and might have taken his life; or, at all events, have severely injured him, and that before we could get near enough to render him any assistance. It all



"He fired; and the brute, the moment that it was making its spring, fell over, snarling and hissing."

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depended on Mike's steady aim, therefore; and although I was shot, still I was thankful that he had the gun.

He fired; and the brute, the moment that it was making its spring, fell over, snarling and hissing, with its shoulder broken. A blow on the head from my uncle's axe finished its existence.

"You have rendered me good service, Laffan," said my uncle, when we got up to him. "Had you not taken steady aim, that brute's fangs would have been at my throat in another moment."

"Faix, thin, Mr Mark, it is only what I would have wished to be done," answered Mike. "And if you ever catch sight of a bear about to give me a hug, or such a brute as this at my heels,"—and he gave the dead wolf a kick—"you will be afther shooting him, sure enough!"

"Well, Mike, we shall then be quits. In the meantime I am your debtor," answered my uncle, laughing. Notwithstanding the danger he had been in, he was quite unmoved. His cheek had not lost its ruddy glow, nor did a limb tremble.

We quickly skinned the wolf, and hung the hide up to the branch of a tree a little way from the bank, where it would be concealed from any passers-by. We did not wish to encumber ourselves with it in the meantime, and we hoped to find it on our return. We were not likely to forget the spot, any more than those boys in the "old country" would do, who, as I have heard, are taken to certain landmarks and whipped, in order that they may afterwards bear them duly in mind.

We were thankful that the wolf which had attacked my uncle was alone, as it would have been unpleasant to find ourselves followed by a howling pack; and we now regretted that we had not all of us brought our guns.

Trudging on some miles further, we came upon a part of the river which had not been frozen over until after the snow fell. Here, the ice being clear, we put on our skates, and glided merrily along towards the spot where we understood the lumberers were at work.

Chapter Three.

A terrific snowstorm—Kepenau's timely appearance—We visit Kepenau's camp—His hospitality—An Indian's dread of the "fire water"—We bid adieu to our Indian friends—Our arrival at the logging encampment—Jacques Michaud takes a fancy to Mike—Jacques' raft story—My uncle and I start on our return—We are attacked by a fierce pack of wolves, and are saved by Kepenau and his men—Mike Laffan in a difficulty—We rescue him—Ashatea, Kepenau's daughter—My visit to Lily—Mr and Mrs Claxton—Dora and Reuben—Reuben visits our hut—The marten and porcupine—An opossum-hunt.

The snow had for some time been falling lightly, but the wind which had arisen blew it off the ice, and thus it did not impede our progress; but that same wind, which was now by a turn of the river brought directly ahead of us, soon increased in strength, and drove the particles of snow, sharp as needles, into our faces. Indeed, the cold every instant became more intense, while the snow fell more thickly.

"Faix, and it's mighty loike a shower of penknives, mixed with needles and pins!" cried Mike. "It's a hard matther to keep the eyes open. What will we be afther doing, Mr Mark, if it gets worse?"

"We'll go on till it does get worse," said Uncle Mark. "It would not do to turn back now."

Mike said no more, but, bending down his head, worked away manfully with might and main.

I did my best to keep up, but I may say that seldom have I endured such suffering. At last I felt that I could stand it no longer; so I proposed to my uncle that we should make for the shore, and there build a hut, light a fire, and wait till the storm was over.

He was, however, bent upon going on. "We should be half-frozen before we could get up a wigwam," he answered.

Just then I heard a voice hailing us in gruff tones, and I guessed it was that of an Indian; but we had no reason to dread the Indians of these parts. As we looked about to see from whence it proceeded, I caught sight of the tops of two or three wigwams just peeping out from a cedar-bush at a little distance from the shore.

"Friends, come here!" exclaimed some one, and we observed an Indian making towards us; whereupon we turned round and skated up to him.

"Ah, friends! I know you," he said. "You cannot face the storm, which will soon blow stronger still. Come to my wigwam, where you shall have shelter till it has passed by."

As he spoke I recognised my old friend Kepenau, whom I had not seen since we had come to our present location. I had so grown, too, that he did not at first recognise me.

Having taken off our skates, we followed him to his camp, where he introduced us to several other Indians and their squaws, among whom were a number of children of all ages.

The thick cedar-bushes sheltered the spot completely from the wind, and the fire which burned in the centre afforded us a welcome warmth; for, in spite of the exercise we had gone through, our blood was chilled by the piercing snowstorm. The Indians were dressed partly in skins, and partly in garments made of blankets, received from the white men; most of the squaws wore a large blanket over their heads, forming a cloak in which they were shrouded. The wigwams were constructed of long thin poles, fastened at the top, and spread out in a conical form, the whole being covered thickly with slabs of birch-bark.

Our red-skinned hosts put us at once at our ease; and I asked Kepenau how he came to be in that part of the country.

"The white men compelled us to move westward," he answered. "They have planted on our lands, and shot the game on which we subsisted; and though I should have been content to remain among them and adopt their customs, yet my people wished to live as our fathers have lived; and I would not desert them. My desire is to instruct them in the truths I have myself learned; and it is only by dwelling with them, and showing them that I love them, that I can hope to do that."

We had much interesting conversation with Kepenau, and I was surprised at the amount of information on religious subjects which he possessed; indeed, I confess that he put us all to shame.

Uncle Mark looked grave, and sighed. "I used once to read my Bible, and listen gladly to God's Word read and preached, when I lived with my good father and mother in the 'old country,' though I have sadly neglected it since I came out here," he said; "but I will do so no longer. You have reminded me of my duty, friend Kepenau."

"What you say makes me glad. Keep to your resolve, for you cannot do God's will without reading his Word, to know what that will is," remarked Kepenau.

Our host gave up one of the wigwams for our special use, in the centre of which a fire burned, prevented from spreading by a circle of stones. The ground around the sides was covered with thick rushes which served as our beds, and we lay with our feet towards the fire. Severe as was the cold outside, and thin as appeared the walls, the heat from the fire kept us thoroughly warm; and I never slept more soundly in my life, for, although our hosts were Redskins, we felt as secure as in our own hut. Notwithstanding that the storm raged without, the wigwams were so well protected by the cedar-bushes that the fierce wind failed to reach us.

In the morning, when we came out of our wigwam we found that the squaws had prepared breakfast; which consisted of dried venison, cakes made from Indian corn, and fish which had been caught before the frost set in, and had remained hard-frozen ever since.

"You can now continue your journey, for the storm has ceased; and may the Great Spirit protect you!" observed Kepenau, looking up at the sky, across which the clouds were now scarcely moving.

Uncle Mark inquired why he did not bring his camp nearer the settlement.

"I will tell you," answered Kepenau. "Though I have been ever friendly with the white men, and value the advantages to be obtained from them, there is one thing for which I fear them,—their accursed 'fire water.' Already it has slain thousands of my people, or reduced them to a state lower than the brutes which perish; and I know not whether my young men would resist the temptation were it placed in their way."

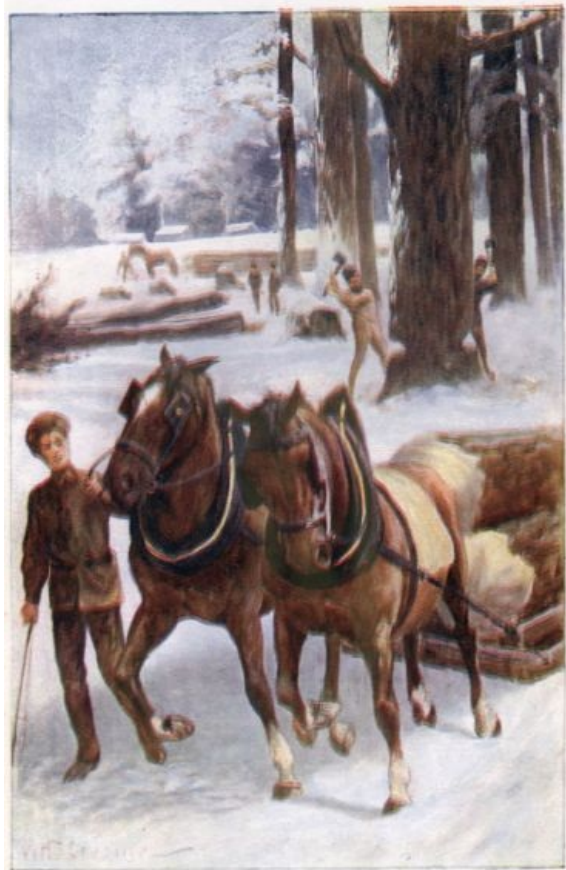
"But all the white men do not sell the 'fire water' of which you speak," observed Uncle Mark. "I have none in my hut."

"But while one among you possesses the poison, and is ready to barter it with my people, the harm may be done,"

answered Kepenau. "Until I am sure that none of the 'fire water' exists in your settlement, I will not allow my people to come near it."

"I am afraid, then, that you will fail to civilise them, as you desire," observed Uncle Mark.

"Do you call it civilising them, to teach them the vices of the white men?" exclaimed the Indian in a tone of scorn. "If so, then I would rather that they remained savages, as you call them, than obtain knowledge at such a price."



"Some engaged in felling trees, others with horses dragging the trunks, placed on sleighs, over the hard snow." Page 61.

"I believe that you are right," answered Uncle Mark, as we bade our host and his family good-bye; "and I have learned more than one lesson from you."

Mark, as we bade our

Kepenau accompanied us to the bank of the river; where we put on our skates, and continued our course without interruption till we caught sight of several thin wreaths of smoke above the tops of the trees.

"Sure, that smoke must come from the lumberers' fires," observed Mike.

"Such is probably the case; but it is just possible that it may proceed from a camp of Indians, who might not be so friendly as those we left this morning," said my uncle.

Still we were not to be stopped, and on we skated. Even should we meet enemies, we had not much cause to fear them, unless they possessed firearms. On we went, I say, gliding along at the rate of ten or twelve miles an hour; and as I had never before had an opportunity of performing so great a distance, I enjoyed it amazingly.

As we advanced we caught sight of numerous logs of timber hauled out into the middle of the stream. Shortly afterwards the sound of voices reached our ears, and we saw a number of men scattered about—some engaged, with gleaming axes, in felling trees; others with horses dragging the trunks, placed on sleighs, over the hard snow on to the ice. They were there arranged alongside each other, and bound together so as to form numerous small rafts. Here they would remain until the giving way of the frost; when, on the disappearance of the ice, they would be floated down towards the mouth of the river and towed across the lake to the various saw-mills on its banks.

We were glad to be welcomed by the "boss;" who at once engaged Uncle Mark and Mike to hew, while I was to undertake the less onerous task of driving a team.

The shores of the river had been already pretty well cleared of large timber, so that I had to bring the trunks from some distance.

Uncle Mark and Laffan soon showed that they were well practised axemen.

Our companions were to spend some months engaged in the occupation I have described; till the return of spring, in fact, when, the rafts being put together, they would descend the river till rapids or cataracts were reached. The rafts would then be separated, and each log of timber, or two or three together at most, would be allowed to make their way as they best could down the fall, till they reached calm water at the foot of it; when they would be again put together, and navigated by the raftsmen guiding them with long poles. In some places, where rough rocks exist in the rapids by which the timber might be injured, slides had been formed. These slides are channels, or rather canals, as they are open at the top; and are constructed of thick boards—just as much water being allowed to rush down

them as will drive on the logs. Some of these slides are two hundred feet long; others reach even to the length of seven hundred feet. The timbers are placed on cribs,—which are frames to fit the slides,—then, with a couple of men on them to guide their course, when they get through they shoot away at a furious rate down the inclined plane, and without the slightest risk of injury.

When evening approached we all assembled in a huge shanty, which had been built under the shelter of the thick bush. Round it were arranged rows of bunks, with the cooking-stove in the centre, which was kept burning at all hours, and served thoroughly to warm our abode. On each side of the stove were tables, with benches round them. Here we took our meals; which, although sufficient, were not too delicate,—salt pork being the chief dish. Rough as were the men, too, they were tolerably well-behaved; but quarrels occasionally took place, as might have been expected among such a motley crowd.

On the first evening of our arrival Mike's fiddle attracted universal attention, and he was, of course, asked to play a tune.

"Why thin, sure, I will play one with all the pleasure in life," he answered. "And, sure, some of you gentlemen will be afther loiking to take a dance;" and without more ado he seated himself on the top of a bench at the further end of the shanty, and began to scrape away with might and main, nodding his head and kicking his heels to keep time. The effect was electrical. The tables were quickly removed to the sides of the shanty; and every man, from the "boss" downwards, began shuffling away, circling round his neighbour, leaping from the ground, and shrieking at the top of his voice.

When Mike's fiddle was not going, our lumbering companions were wont to spin long yarns, as we sat at the supper-table. Several of them had worked up the northern rivers of Canada, where the winter lasts much longer than it does in the district I am describing; and among these was a fine old French Canadian, Jacques Michaud by name, who had come south with a party, tempted by the prospect of obtaining a pocketful of dollars. He stood six feet two inches in his stockings; and his strength was in proportion to his size. At the same time, he was one of the most good-natured and kind-hearted men I ever met.

Among our party were several rough characters; and it happened that one evening two of them fell out. They were about to draw their knives, when Jacques seized each of them in his vice-like grasp, and, holding them at arm's-length, gradually lifted them off the ground. There he kept them; mildly expostulating,—now smiling at one, and now at the other,—till they had consented to settle their dispute amicably; he then set them on their legs again, and made them shake hands.

This man took a great fancy to Mike. "Ah, I do wish all your countrymen were like you," he observed, smiling benignantly on him; "but they are generally very different, especially when they get the grog on board: then they often lose their lives,—and all their own fault, too.

"I had come down the Ottawa with several rafts, some two hundred miles or more. My own raft was manned by Canadians,—steady boys, who stuck to our laws, whatever they do to those of other people, and kept sober till they brought their raft safe into dock. Another raft was manned chiefly by Irishmen,—who, although I warned them, would indulge in strong drink. We were nearing the Chaudiere Falls, and I had brought my raft safe to shore, where it was taken to pieces, so that the logs might be sent down the slide. I had gone on to a point where I could watch this being done, when I heard loud cries; and on looking up the river I saw that part of another raft, with four men on it, had got adrift, and, to my horror, was hurrying towards the most dangerous part of the rapids. I saw at once that in a few moments it must be dashed to pieces, and, as I thought, the fate of the four unfortunates on it was surely sealed.

"On it hurried, whirling round and round amid the foaming waters. The next instant dashing against the rocks, it separated into as many fragments as there were timbers, each of which was whirled down towards the falls. Three of the poor wretches soon disappeared among the tossing waves; but the fourth clung to the end of a piece of timber with the grasp of despair—to that end which reached nearly to the edge of the cataract. A fearful position! Still, the Irishman held on. I was almost sure that the next moment would be his last; but just then the current turned the log, so that the opposite end pointed to the fall. On it went, with even greater rapidity than at first; then balancing for an instant on the brink, the end to which he held was lifted up high in the air, and he was sent from it as from a catapult, far out into the calm water below the caldron! I never expected again to see him, but he rose uninjured to the surface; and being a good swimmer, struck out boldly till he was picked up by one of several canoes which put off instantly to his assistance. Tim Nolan, I have a notion, was the first man who ever came over those terrific falls and lived; and I would not advise any of you young fellows to try the experiment, for, in my opinion, he is the last who will ever do so and escape destruction."

Such was one of the many anecdotes I heard from the lips of old Jacques and our other associates.

I was not sorry when, after some weeks, Uncle Mark told me that he had made up his mind to return home. Mike had agreed to finish a job which would occupy him a day or so longer; but as Uncle Mark was anxious to be off, it was settled that he and I should start together, leaving the rifle with Mike, as he would have to come on alone. We believed that no animals were likely at that season to attack two people; besides, Uncle Mark had purchased a pair of pistols from Jacques Michaud, which he considered would be sufficient for our defence. Accordingly, pocketing our dollars and slinging our wolf-skin knapsacks over our backs, we put on our skates and commenced our journey.

We got on famously, for the air was calm, although the cold was intense. We found our friend Kepenau, too, encamped where we had left him; and stopping for a short time, we took our mid-day meal with him. As we had made such good progress during the morning, we hoped to reach the hut before midnight, for the moon was up, and we could not miss our way. Uncle Mark was in good spirits, well satisfied with the result of our expedition, and we laughed and chatted as we glided over the smooth ice.

"We must not forget our wolf-skin," I observed. "We shall get up to the spot before daylight is over, and I would rather carry it on my back than leave it behind."

"I shall not let you do that," answered my uncle. "It will weigh less on my shoulders than on yours."

We were approaching a part of the river where, the ice having formed before the snow fell, we should be compelled to take off our skates and travel on foot. I had just remarked that I supposed the wolves had gone off to some other district, where game was more abundant than with us, when a howl reached our ears, coming down the stream, from the very direction in which we were going. Another and another followed. Presently we heard the full chorus of a whole pack, and soon we caught sight of numerous dark spots on the white snow in the distance.

Uncle Mark watched them for an instant or two. "We must beat a retreat, Roger, or the brutes will be upon us. We cannot hope to fight our way through them. Off we go!" and turning round, we skated away for dear life in the direction from whence we had come.

We hoped soon to distance the savage creatures; in which case, losing sight and scent of us, they might turn off into the forest and leave the road clear. As we went on, however, we heard their cries becoming more and more distinct; and casting a glance over our shoulders, we saw, to our horror, that they had already gained considerably on us; for with their light bodies they ran very quickly over the hard-frozen snow.

Forward we dashed, faster than I had ever skated before; but nearer and nearer grew those terrible sounds. When once, however, the wolves reached the smooth ice, they were no longer able to run so fast as before; still, they gradually gained on us, and we felt sure that ere long they must be at our heels, as they were not now likely to give up the chase.

"Never give up while life remains! Keep on, keep on, Roger!" cried Uncle Mark. "My pistols will do for two of their leaders; our sticks must knock over some of the others; and we must hope that the rest of the pack will stop to devour their carcasses."

It might have been a quarter of an hour after this, although the time appeared longer, when, looking round, I saw a dozen wolves at least within twenty yards of us.

"We must try a dodge I have heard of," said Uncle Mark. "When they get near us we must wheel rapidly round, and as they cannot turn on the ice so fast as we can, we shall gain on them."

We waited until the wolves were almost up to us, then we followed the proposed plan. The brutes, after rushing on a short distance, tried to turn also. In doing so, those behind tumbled over their leaders, and we skated on as before. We did this several times, until the cunning wolves, perceiving our object, instead of turning kept straight forward. Uncle Mark now drew one of his pistols, and as he skated round shot the leading wolf. It rolled over dead. The next he treated in the same manner. We then brought our sticks down on the heads of several others.

As we had expected, their followers instantly began tearing away at the dead bodies, and this enabled us to get some distance ahead of them. I was in hopes that they would be content with this feast, and allow us to proceed unmolested; but before long our ears were again saluted with their abominable howls, and we saw the survivors of the pack coming along in full chase.

As we skated on Uncle Mark deliberately reloaded his pistols, observing, "We shall have to play the same game over again, and I hope we shall play it as well."

The wolves, however, seemed resolved not to let us escape. They nearly overtook us; and though we turned, skating away now to the right and now to the left bank of the river, they declined imitating our example.

"Our best chance is to keep straight on," said Uncle Mark. "Don't give in, whatever you do. Our legs are as strong as theirs, and they will begin to get tired at last."

I was not so sure of that till, looking back for a moment, I saw that the pack was drawn out into a long line, showing that some, at all events—probably the younger animals—were losing wind. If, however, only one brute had succeeded in catching hold of our legs, it would have been all up with us.

Fearfully depressing indeed were their howls; as they sounded close behind us, they almost took the life out of me. Two of the largest of the brutes were not five yards from us, and I was already beginning to feel as if their sharp fangs were fixed in the calves of my legs, when I saw several figures in the distance, and faint shouts were borne on the breeze towards us.

"Courage, Roger! courage!" cried Uncle Mark. "Put forth all your strength, and we shall be saved. Those are friends."

As we moved on we perceived Kepenau and a number of Indians rushing towards us, flourishing sticks, and shouting at the top of their voices. Kepenau himself, and three others, were armed with rifles.

"Turn on one side," he shouted, "and let us aim at the wolves."

We followed his advice; when four rifle-shots sent over as many of the howling brutes. The rest, frightened by the shouts of the Indians as much probably as by the death of their companions, turned off on one side, and allowed us to escape. Instead, however, of going back, they continued their course down the river. Probably they had been bound in that direction when they first winded us.

We were saved; but so overcome were we by our long-continued violent exertions, that, had not our Indian friends caught us in their arms, we should have sunk exhausted on the ice. Taking off our skates, they supported us between

their arms to their camp. Here, seated on mats, with our feet before the fire, we were kindly tended by the squaws, who rubbed our ankles and legs, and bathed our feet in water. Some warm broth—we did not examine too minutely the ingredients—quickly restored us; and we were able to give an account of our adventure.

It was now too late to think of continuing our journey that night, so the Indians pressed us to remain with them till the next morning; promising to ascertain the direction taken by the pack of wolves, so that we might not run the risk of again falling in with the hungry brutes.

Kepenau would not allow us to use our own provisions,—observing that we might want them the next day,—and he insisted on supplying us with everything needful.

We slept soundly, but when I tried to get up next morning I felt little able to continue the journey. I did not so much feel the effects of the exercise as of the anxiety I had so long endured. Even Uncle Mark was very stiff, and seemed inclined to enjoy a longer rest.

The Indians told us that during the night the wolves had come back; probably to devour the carcasses of their slain companions. It was thought probable that they had returned up the river. One of the men went out to ascertain this, and on coming back told us that the first surmise was correct—that the pack had indeed gone up the river, but that it had afterwards gone down again, as was evident from the bloody marks left by their feet.

Suddenly my uncle exclaimed: “By-the-by, Mike will be on his way home some time to-day; and if so, it is more than possible that he may fall in with the wolves! Though he has a gun, it will go hard with him should they follow his trail.”

My uncle accordingly expressed his fears to Kepenau.

“Then we must set out to meet your white friend,” said the Indian; “for should he be coming over the ice to-day, the wolves are certain to espy him.”

Mike had told me that he would visit our Indian friends on the way, and spend the night with them, should he start too late to perform the whole distance in one day. The recollection of this increased my apprehension for his safety.

Kepenau said that he and four of the best-armed of his people would set out early in the afternoon to look for our friend. Of course, we insisted on accompanying them; and being pretty well rested, we started at the hour proposed. We put on our skates, but the Indians kept pace with us by running.

We went on and on, but no sign could we see of Mike. It was already getting dusk when Kepenau stopped and examined the ice.

“A man has passed this way,” he said, “and has turned off to the right.”

Telling one of his people to follow up the trail, he proceeded onwards, narrowly scrutinising the ice.

“It is as I thought,” he observed; “he was coming along on foot when he saw a pack of wolves following him, and instead of continuing on the ice he made his way for the shore, to try and reach a tree into which he could climb—the wisest thing he could do.”

Having made this remark, he led the way in the direction the other Indian had taken. He soon overtook him; but as darkness was increasing we had to proceed slowly, so as not to lose the trail, which I was utterly unable to perceive. The banks here were of a low, marshy nature, so that there were few trees about up which the fugitive could have escaped. I did not confidently expect to meet Mike on this occasion, for he, I thought, would have come along on his skates, whereas this person, the Indian said, was on foot.

We had not gone far when Kepenau stopped. “That is the howl of wolves,” he observed; “but it is accompanied by a curious sound, and they are not howling in their usual fashion.”

Advancing further, I could clearly distinguish the howling of the wolves, accompanied by another sound.

“Why, as I am alive, those are the tones of Mike Laffan’s fiddle!” exclaimed Uncle Mark. “He is safe, at all events—that is one comfort; but it is a curious place to be playing in.”

Kepenau now told us that the path we were following would lead us to the ruins of an old fort, erected by the early French settlers, and that he had little doubt our friend had found his way to it for refuge from the wolves; but they had followed him, and were certainly not far off.

We hurried on, and as the sounds of the fiddle became more distinct, the full moon rose from behind a dark mass which proved to be a ruined wall of the building; and immediately afterwards, directly in front of us, we discovered Mike Laffan seated on one of the time-worn and rickety beams which had once formed part of the fort. There he was, bow in hand, fiddling with might and main; while below him were a whole pack of wolves, their mouths open, singing an inharmonious chorus to his music. So entranced were they, that the brutes actually did not discover us; nor, so far as we could see, were they making any attempt to reach Mike.

At a sign from Kepenau we stopped; but Mike, though he had perceived us, went on fiddling. Presently he changed the tune to one of extraordinary rapidity: this evidently astonished his vulpine audience, which began to leap about. Suddenly he exclaimed, “Now! shout, friends, shout! and we shall put the spalpeens of wolves to flight.” As we raised our voices he made his instrument produce the most fearful shrieks and cries, while he uttered at the same time a true Irish howl.

Mike's plan had the desired effect. The wolves, bewildered by the strange sounds, were seized with terror, and off they scampered like a pack of curs, howling and biting at each other as they rushed along towards the forest, in which they soon disappeared.

Mike on this jumped down from his perch, laughing heartily, and thanked us all for having come to his assistance. Of course, our opportune appearance had very much astonished him; but we soon explained matters, and expressed our hope that he was none the worse for his adventure.

"Sorra a bit," he answered, "except that I am mighty cowl'd, sitting up there among the snow for so long; but I'll soon be afther warming my limbs."

Saying this he set off with us, and at a rapid rate we retraced our steps to the Indian camp. We were all glad enough to turn in; and next morning our friends, after examining the country around, assured us that the wolves were not likely to follow our footsteps.

My uncle had taken a great liking to Kepenau, and invited him to come and pitch his camp near us; promising to supply him with powder and shot, and also to assist him in trading with the white men so that no risk might be run of whisky being given in exchange for game and furs. Kepenau said he would think about the matter.

One of the young squaws who happened to be present was his daughter. On hearing of the invitation, she begged her father to accept it. She was far superior to the other Indian women in appearance; and although not so old as Lily, she was taller than any of them. Her complexion was of the lightest olive, through which rich colour could be seen on her cheeks. She was, indeed, fairer than many Europeans. Her figure was extremely graceful, too. I did not, however, observe this when I first saw her, for she was then dressed in her thick blanket robe. Her name was Ashatea, or "White Poplar;" a very suitable name, as I thought. She had seen Lily, I found, two or three times, before they had moved westward; and she longed, she told me, to meet her again, and begged that I would tell Lily so when I returned home. It was this that made her so anxious that her father and his tribe should come and camp near us.

Before we started, Kepenau had almost promised to come, though he would not bind himself to do so. "Circumstances might change," he observed. "He was well located where his camp was pitched, and it was trying work to change quarters at that season of the year."

Ashatea accompanied us, with her people, down to the ice. "Do not forget," she said, "my message to your sister Lily."

"You may trust me," I answered, making her a bow—for I felt that she was a lady, although an Indian squaw; then off we set, hoping this time to reach home before nightfall. Having completely recovered from our fatigue, we got on famously. Mike did not forget to secure the wolf-skin; and just as the sun sank behind the trees, we were saluted by the sharp, joyous barking of Snap, Yelp, and Pop, and by the gruffer tones of Quambo, who rushed out of the hut to welcome us home.

We had plenty of work to do after we returned home, but I managed to make a run over to the settlement to pay a visit to my uncle and aunt and Lily. I did not fail to give her Ashatea's message; and she was much pleased to hear of her.

"I do hope they will come into our neighbourhood; I should be so glad to see her again," said Lily. "Ashatea promised to take me out in her canoe; for, you know, she is as expert as any of the men in paddling one. She wished to show me how the Indians catch fish. And then she said that when the rice was ripe we should go to the rice-lake to collect it. I hope that Aunt Hannah won't object. It would be very interesting; and there could be no possible danger, as all the Indians in this part of the country are friendly. But, to tell you the truth, Roger, I am quite jealous of you, as you are now able to go out into the forest by yourself, and meet with all sorts of adventures; whilst I, alas! am compelled to stay at home, with no other amusement than occasionally a 'sewing' or an 'apple bee.'"

I, of course, sympathised with Lily, and said that I wished Aunt Hannah would let her come out with me, and that I should take very great care of her.

"I am afraid that she thinks we are now too old to run about together as we used to do, when you were a boy and I was a girl," she answered.

"I wish, then, that we were young again!" I exclaimed; "although I should not then be able to take as much care of you as I can now. I would sooner die, Lily, than allow any harm to happen to you."

"That I am sure you would, Roger," she said; "and I should not be afraid to trust myself with you anywhere."

We were not very old even then, I should remark: but I was feeling myself a man, and was ready to do all sorts of manly things.

"By-the-by," observed Lily, "we have become intimate with a family among the settlers who arrived last fall,—Mr and Mrs Claxton, and Dora their daughter, a very nice girl of my age, and a great friend of mine. Dora has a brother called Reuben, and I think you will like him. Although he is younger than you are, he seems to be a fine fellow, and has your taste for natural history and sporting."

"I shall be very glad to meet with him; but I have not time to look him up now, as I must get back to the hut. But you may tell him about me; and say that, if he will come over, I shall be happy to take him out into the forest, where we can have a hunt together."

Although I had said that I must go immediately, I lingered for some time with Lily, for I never was in a hurry to leave

her. It was consequently quite dark before I got half-way to the hut; still, I knew the path—indeed, there was only one. The snow, however, thickly covered the ground, and I had to guide myself by feeling the scores on the trunks of the trees. Had every tree been thus marked, there would have been no great difficulty; but, of course, they were scored only at intervals, and sometimes I was uncertain whether I had not somehow got out of the direct line. I knew that, did I once go wrong, it would be a hard matter, if not impossible, to find my way back again. There might be wolves prowling about, too; or I might by chance find myself in the grasp of a hungry bear, bent on a visit to the hog-pens in the settlement. Intending to return early, I had left without my gun—an act of folly I resolved not to repeat. Should I lose myself, I should have no means of making a signal, and I might very possibly be frozen to death before the morning.

I had gone some distance without finding a score, and I began to fear that I really had lost myself; but it would not do to stand still, so I walked on; and greatly to my relief, as I touched tree after tree, I at length felt a scored one, and knew that I was in the right direction. Presently a light appeared ahead. I ran towards it, shouting at the top of my voice. A welcome halloo came from Mike, who was standing, with a pine torch in his hand, at the door of the hut.

Two days after this, a tall lad, of fair complexion, made his appearance at the hut, gun in hand, and introduced himself as Reuben Claxton. "Miss Lily, who is a great friend of my sister Dora, told me that you would be glad to see me; and so I have come, and I should much like to have a hunt with you in the forest," he said abruptly.

It was his way, I found. He always went directly to the point, whether in talking or in doing anything: and I liked him the better for that.

Uncle Mark invited him to stay with us.

"I said that I would if you asked me, so they will not be expecting me at home again," he answered.

In ten minutes we were on as friendly terms as if we had known each other all our lives. Next day we started with our guns, accompanied by Mike and Quambo, and our three dogs. The sky was bright, the air calm, and, except for the snow and the leafless trees, we might have supposed ourselves to have been in the middle of summer.

We had not gone far when we caught sight of an animal making its way along the trunk of a fallen tree. I soon recognised it to be a marten, and was just going to fire, when I perceived another creature coming out of a hole hard by. The former animal was evidently bent on attacking the latter. The marten immediately stopped, and carefully eyed the hermit, the character of which I could not at first make out on account of the distance it was from us. Quambo would probably have known, but he and Mike were some way behind us. Of the marten I had no doubt; I recognised it by its agile and graceful movements, by its length, which was about a foot and a half, with a bushy tail somewhat under a foot long, and by its dark tawny coat and white throat, its pointed muzzle, and bright and lively eyes. We stopped to watch what would take place, keeping back the dogs, which were about to rush forward and seize the animals.

The marten soon made up its mind to assault its opponent, which, instead of retreating into its hole, came boldly forward and ascended the fallen trunk. I at once saw that it was an "urson," or porcupine; although my companion supposed it to be another animal, as he could not see the long quills with which the English porcupine is armed. This creature was fully two feet long. Its back was covered with thick hair of a dusky brown colour; its head was short, and its nose blunt; it had small round ears, very powerful teeth, short limbs, and feet armed with strong crooked claws. These particulars I was afterwards able to exhibit to him.

The porcupine stood eyeing its opponent for nearly a minute; then the marten began the attack by showing its teeth, erecting its hairs, and springing forward with graceful bounds. At the same time the porcupine, erecting an armour of quills, which had till then been concealed under its thick hair, appeared all at once to become twice its former size. The marten had too much impetus to stop its attempt to seize the porcupine by the snout; but the latter, suddenly whisking round, dealt the marten a tremendous blow with its tail, filling its body with short darts, and sending it off the trunk sprawling among the snow.

The marten was now animated by rage as well as by the desire to capture its foe. It again sprang up, ran along the boughs of the fallen tree, and advanced once more towards the porcupine; but its courage and agility did not avail it. Another blow from that formidable tail cast it once more into the snow; while the porcupine looked down with contempt on its defeated antagonist. Reuben, taking good aim with his rifle, put the marten out of misery; while I killed the victorious porcupine. The dogs then rushed forward; but Snap, the most eager, had reason to repent his eagerness, as before we could keep him off the animal he had received several sharp quills in his jaws. These we immediately extracted, but he never again attempted to seize either a living or a dead porcupine.

We killed another marten and some squirrels, and were returning home just at sundown, when we met Uncle Mark, who had followed our trail—no difficult thing to do over the snow, even for a white man. He had just before caught sight of an opossum, which had escaped him. It had evidently paid a visit to our poultry-yard a short time previously, and having succeeded in carrying off one of the inhabitants, was making its way with its prey to its mate or hungry family when Uncle Mark overtook it. He had knocked it over with his stick, and supposed it dying or dead, as it lay with open mouth, extended tongue, and dim eyes. At that moment he had caught sight of a marten or some other animal moving through the forest. The creature thereupon proved that it was only "'possuming;" for the instant his eye was withdrawn it sprang up, and set off at a rate which showed that its powers of locomotion, at least, had not been impaired by the blows it had received.

He was telling us this, when the dogs began to yelp, and presently right ahead of us appeared a creature of the size of a large cat.

"Dere a 'possum," exclaimed Quambo; and we hurried after it with the dogs.

"Master 'Possum" was not going to be caught so easily, however. In an instant it was up a tree, and lost to sight amid the branches, while the dogs yelped around it.

"The creature is lost," cried Reuben.

"No fear ob dat," answered Quambo. "We soon find him out."

Then he and Mike, with the rest of us, began to collect all the decayed branches to be found above the snow. We soon had enough wood for a fire; when Quambo striking a light, it quickly blazed up, and the flames exhibited the opossum making its way along one of the branches. The dogs leaped about, and yelped loudly. Quambo had thrown himself on the ground to watch the animal's proceedings; for the moment we had attempted to take aim, it had nimbly sprung round to the dark side, apparently watching us as eagerly as we were watching it. Mike on this hurried off to a little distance and lifted his rifle. He fired, and down came the opossum.

The dogs seized it, and in a few moments life was extinct. There was no shamming now, though the Irishman gave it another blow, after we had taken off the dogs, just to make sure. He having slung it over his back, we put out the fire to prevent the risk of igniting the trees, and proceeded homewards well content with our evening's sport.

It was the last idle day we had for some time, for we had an abundance of work to get through before the return of spring, which was now rapidly approaching. It was the least pleasant time of the year, too; for we had thaws of two or three days at a time, during which the hardened snow was turned into slush. Then frost would come on again, and hold the timber with such a grasp that we could not move it. We occupied the time in putting up sheds, and in such other work as could be done before the ground was clear. No one, however, complained; for we knew that the snow would soon disappear, that the leaves would again come forth, and that the rivers would be open, when we should be able to move about much more rapidly in our canoes than we had done over the frozen ground.

Chapter Four.

Uncle Mark's good opinion of Reuben—Mike Laffan's fiddle—The beaver—Reuben's desire to turn trapper—Quambo takes a pipe—Kepenau's canoe—Ashatea paddles Reuben home—Kepenau's sagacity—Uncle Mark welcomes Kepenau and his daughter—The old trapper—Reuben carries Samson's pack—Ashatea is taught English by Lily and Dora—Martin Godfrey's visit to the settlement—Kepenau's and Ashatea's departure—Sandy McColl, the half-breed—A visit to Kepenau—Portaging.

The summer had now come. The trees were all decked with their rich and varied foliage; the notes of the feathered inhabitants were heard in the forest; and numerous animals which had either gone south during the winter, or had concealed themselves in sheltered places, were moving about. There had been too much ploughing and sowing to allow of my indulging in my favourite pursuits. All I could do was to run over and pay my uncle and aunt a visit; but it may be that Lily was the chief attraction.

I found her friend Dora with her one day. She was certainly a very nice girl, although not equal to Lily by a long way, in my opinion. They inquired whether we had seen anything of Kepenau and his daughter Ashatea.

"They have not yet appeared," I answered; "nor have we received any tidings of them."

"Dora wants to make the acquaintance of a real Indian girl, fit to be a heroine," said Lily, laughing. "She has hitherto only seen the wretched squaws who appear in the Eastern States. She can scarcely believe that Ashatea is the interesting creature I describe her."

I said that I would try to communicate with Kepenau, if I could learn his whereabouts from any passing Indians.

"Oh do!" said Lily; "and let him understand how glad we shall be to see him and his daughter again."

While we were talking Reuben came in, and offered to accompany me back to the hut. He, like me, had been very busy all the spring. He certainly did not look well suited for hard labour; but his face was more bronzed than heretofore, and he seemed perfectly well. Wishing the girls good-bye, we shouldered our guns, and commenced the walk to the hut. There was no risk of losing our way at this time, for the days were long, and there was a bright moon that evening.

Uncle Mark welcomed Reuben, whom he liked for his straightforward character and honesty.

"I am glad you have got such a companion as that young fellow," he said to me. "When two harum-scarum fellows associate, they are sure to get into trouble; but you two will help each other out of difficulties, should you unexpectedly fall into them."

Mike amused us that evening with a tune on his fiddle; and Quambo diverted us still more by a dance he performed to the music, which made Reuben, who was not addicted to laughing, almost split his sides.

We agreed to have a long ramble into the forest next day, my uncle giving me leave of absence. He could not spare Mike, but he allowed Quambo to accompany us.

"We can cook our dinner without him," I said; "though, to be sure, we cannot expect to dress it as well as he would."

"Ah! Massa Mark, poor black fellow do one t'ing well; you do ebry t'ing well," observed Quambo, with a grimace, by which he intended to show that he was paying a deserved compliment.

We carried our guns, with provisions in our knapsacks to last us for a day, although we expected to kill more game than we should want. As we wished to make a long excursion, we started at daybreak; that is to say, Reuben, Quambo, and I, with the dogs. Reuben had a great desire to see a beaver settlement which I had once visited when we first came into that part of the country; and I thought that I could find my way to it. Quambo amused us, as we walked along, with all sorts of tales about beavers, raccoons, opossums, bears, and other animals, with the habits of which he was well acquainted.

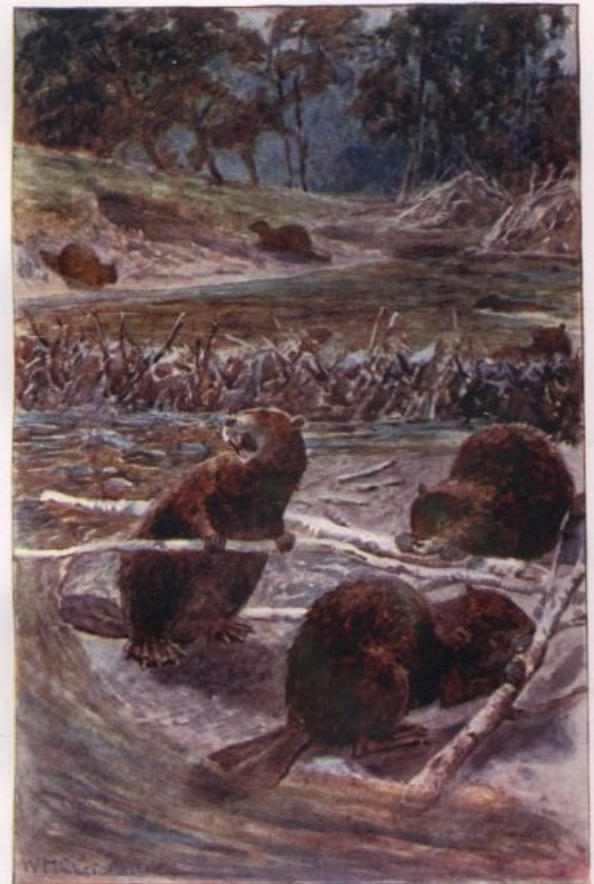
The beaver is a good-sized animal, being two and a half feet long exclusive of the tail, which is one foot more. It is of a deep chestnut colour; the hair very fine, smooth, and glossy. The Indians use its incisor teeth, which are very large and hard, to cut the bone or horn with which they tip their spears. It is a rodent, or gnawing animal. It has a broad, horizontal, flattened tail, nearly of an oval form, which is covered with scales. The hind feet are webbed, and, with the aid of the tail, which acts as a rudder, enable it to swim through the water with ease and rapidity. Except in one respect, I do not know that it can be considered a sagacious animal; but it is a marvellous engineer, its faculties being employed in building houses, and in forming dams for the protection of its village.

One of its chief characteristics is the power it possesses of producing a substance termed "castor,"—which is contained in two bags, each about the size of a hen's egg. This castor is peculiarly attractive to beavers. They scent it at a distance, and invariably make their way towards it. No sooner does the beaver discover the delicious odour than he sits upright, sniffs about in every direction, and squeals with excitement until he can get up to it. The trapper, knowing this, always carries a supply of castor, or bark-stone; and when he reaches a stream or any other water near which he believes beavers may be found, he sets his trap, about six inches under the water. He then chews the end of a twig, dips it in the castor, and sticks it in with the scented end uppermost, just a little above the water. The nearest beaver, on discovering the scent, hurries up to the spot; and, if a young animal, is nearly certain to be caught by the trap. The older beavers are more knowing and cautious, and frequently bite off the end of the twig without entangling themselves.

Another curious circumstance connected with this "castoreum" is, that as soon as one beaver has deposited any of it on the ground, the beavers from another lodge go to the spot, and after covering it with earth and leaves, deposit their own "castoreum" on it. When they have gone away, others in turn perform the same operation; and thus the process goes on till a heap four or five feet in height has been raised. No one has as yet been able to ascertain the object of this proceeding. It gives the trapper, however, the means of catching the poor creatures—means which they would undoubtedly withhold, if they had the power. Like human beings, they are sufferers from their own acts.

The teeth of the beavers are sharp and powerful, and their jaws possess an extraordinary amount of strength. This enables them to bite through wood, tear the bark from trees, and chew vegetable substances of all sorts. During summer they regale themselves on fruits and plants of various descriptions; but their winter stock of food consists of the bark of the birch, plane, and other trees—and even of the young wood itself, which they steep in water before devouring it.

Their favourite resort is a stream or a pool near trees. Here they will assemble to the number of some hundreds, living in communities, and working together. They select, when they can, a stream with a current, because it affords them the means of conveying wood and other materials for their habitations. They choose such parts as will afford



"They build a dam across the stream."

them depth of water sufficient to resist the frost in winter, and prevent it freezing to the bottom. When, however, they find that there is not depth enough for this purpose, they

build a dam across the stream, at a convenient distance below their habitations. If the current is gentle, the dam is made perfectly straight; but if rapid, it is constructed with a considerable curve, the convex side being towards the upper part of the stream. The materials employed are drift wood, green willows, birch, and poplar; these are placed horizontally, and kept down by mud and stones. So strong do these dams become, that they are capable of resisting a considerable force both of water and ice; for generally the wood, taking root, shoots upwards, and forms ultimately a thick hedge. In some cases even trees sprout up, in the branches of which the birds form their nests.

Beavers build their houses of the same materials as their dams, and of various sizes, according to the number of the inmates. These, however, do not often exceed four or eight old ones, and from six to fourteen young ones. The houses are of a circular form, elevated some feet above the surface of the water; but the entrance is always low down beneath it. They are more rudely constructed than the dams, too. The wood is laid nearly horizontally, and crosswise; the branches, which project inwards, they cut off with their teeth. First there is a layer of wood, and then one of mud and stones; and so they work on till a sufficient height is gained, when the roof, of rough branches, is placed on the top, and plastered down with mud and stones.

Such was the interesting account which Quambo gave us as we walked along.

No event worthy of description occurred during our walk, though it took us some hours to reach the spot for which I was directing our course.

I was not disappointed. As we approached it cautiously, we caught sight of several beavers running about on the banks of the stream, some nibbling away at the trunks of saplings and small trees which they were engaged in felling. Had we fired, we might have killed two or three; but the rest would have disappeared, and we should then have lost the opportunity of observing them. We therefore crept on, concealing ourselves among the thick underwood.

At length I was afraid, should we get closer, that we might make some noise and alarm the animals. I therefore made a sign to my companions to stop; and looking down, we could discern one of the dams I have spoken of carried across the stream from one side to the other, and apparently not quite finished. Though several beavers were running about it, they were not at work; indeed, all their operations are carried on during darkness. Nature, of course, has given them the instinct to work at this time, which saves them the destruction that would otherwise probably overtake them, both from men and beasts.

After watching them for some time, I wished to retire and let them amuse themselves undisturbed; but Quambo took it into his head to give a loud shout, when in an instant the startled creatures scampered off, and dived under the water. Our chance of seeing more of them was gone; they were evidently on the watch for us, for now and then I saw a snout popping up above the surface, to ascertain if we had taken our departure.

We made our way along the banks of the stream for some distance, till we saw before us a broad expanse of water; and we discovered that it was a shallow lake or pond, bordered by reeds, and with numerous dead trees rising up out of the water near its shores. It struck me that this lake had been produced by the beaver-dams; and on our proceeding downwards towards what appeared to be its outlet, we found what had the appearance of being a long bank, of a convex form, stretched directly across the stream. This, on further examination, I had no doubt was the work of beavers. Alders and willows, and other water-loving trees of considerable size, were growing out of it; and digging down to a slight depth, we found that it consisted of lengths of the trunks of young trees, now rapidly decaying and turning into a vegetable mould, thus affording nourishment to all sorts of plants.

Above the surface of the lake were numerous beaver-houses, and after we had concealed ourselves for some time we caught sight of the inhabitants coming forth and swimming about; while one or two knowing old fellows climbed to the roof of their houses, to keep a look-out, as we supposed, and give notice of approaching danger. We might have shot several, but without the dogs we should not have been able to recover them. Indeed, their skins would have been of much less value than those caught in traps. After watching them for some time, then, we agreed that we ought to be on our homeward way, or we should certainly be benighted. Though we had found the path easily enough in daylight, it would be a hard matter to do so in the dark.

"I should very much like to turn trapper," said Reuben to me as we walked along. "I once heard a good deal about the lives the trappers lead, from a fine old man who stopped at our house one night, on his way to dispose of his packs of skins at one of the fur-traders' posts."

"I suspect that it must be a very hard life, and you would soon get tired of it, Reuben," I answered.

"As to that, I fancy that when I got accustomed to the hardships I should like it more and more; but I would be a trapper on my own hook—have my own animals and traps, hunt where I chose, and sell my peltries to whom I pleased. Our old friend had a horse and two mules. He rode the horse, and the mules served to carry his packs. He had six traps, which he carried in a leathern bag called his trap-sack. I was particularly struck by his appearance as he rode up to our cottage. His costume was a hunting-shirt of dressed buckskin, ornamented with long fringes; pantaloons of the same material, decorated with porcupine-quills hanging down the outside of the leg. He wore moccasins on his feet, and a flexible felt hat upon his head. Under his right arm, and suspended from his left shoulder, hung his powder-horn and bullet-pouch, in which he carried balls, flint, and steel. His long knife, in a sheath of buffalo, hung from a belt round his waist—made fast to it by a steel chain. Also, he carried a tomahawk; and slung over his shoulder was his long heavy rifle; while from his neck hung his pipe-holder, garnished with beads and porcupine-quills.

"He had come many hundreds of miles from the west, having trapped as far off as the Rocky Mountains, and had met with all sorts of adventures among the Indians, from whom he had often narrowly escaped with his life. He said that he would take me with him, as he much wanted a companion, and would answer for my life with his own; though I

should run no more risk than he did, if I only followed his directions. But my father would not hear of it, and was quite angry with the old man for putting the idea into my head; so, of course, I had to give it up.

“‘Well, Reuben, my boy,’ he said as he rode away, ‘should your father change his mind, and you hold fast to yours, when I come back I will take you with me.’

“But he never has come back since.”

I laughed at Reuben’s notion; for, knowing him as I did, I saw that he was utterly unfit for the sort of life he proposed to lead, and would be heartily sick of it before long. He had a fertile imagination, and had pictured a trapper’s life as something very delightful, although I was sure he would in reality hate it. And I believe that is the case with many other boys,—especially with those who take it into their head to go to sea, and who have never been on board a ship, and know nothing whatever of sea-life.

We had now performed the greater part of our journey home, and had reached the bank of the larger river, where it extended into lake-like dimensions, narrowing again shortly to its former width. Here several rocks were seen rising out of it—the waters rushing between them with great force, and forming a cataract, down which I should have thought it impossible for the strongest boat to make its way without being dashed to pieces.

At this point we sat down on the bank to rest and take some refreshment, when Quambo pulled out his pipe.

“You no smoke, young gen’lemen; but ole neegur, he fond of baccy, and you no object,” said Quambo.

Quambo was always a pattern of politeness. We begged him to smoke as much as he liked, although we had not taken to it ourselves.

When Quambo was enjoying his pipe, he was never in a hurry to move, so we sat on longer than we should otherwise have done. I considered, at length, that it was time to move; when, looking up the stream, across the broad expanse I have mentioned, I caught sight of a light canoe skimming rapidly over the surface. It was approaching us; so, prompted by curiosity, we agreed to wait its arrival at the shore—for it did not occur to us it could possibly descend the rapids. It kept, however, in the middle of the current, and before we had got far from where we had been sitting I saw that it was about to make its way amid the tumbling waters.

“These people must be strangers, and cannot be aware of the danger they are running,” I observed. “Their canoe will be destroyed, and we must do our best to save them.”

We accordingly hurried back. As the canoe approached, I saw that there were four people in her: one in the stern, and two in the bows paddling; the other, who appeared to be a female, sitting near the after end, was also dexterously using a paddle, now on one side and now on the other. On looking again, I felt nearly sure that the Indian in the stern was our friend Kepenau, and that the female was his daughter Ashatea.

I shouted, but it was too late to warn him to turn back; indeed, from the calm way in which he sat, I was convinced that he well knew where he was going: and almost before I had time to think much about the danger my friends were running, they had passed it, and their canoe was floating in the calm water at the foot of the rapids.

My shout attracted the notice of Kepenau, who at once recognised me, and steered his canoe for the bank. He and Ashatea stepped on shore, and seemed much pleased at seeing me. I introduced Reuben, who made as polite a bow to the Indian girl as he would have done to a princess. She put out her hand, and in her broken language inquired if he had a sister. On his replying that such was the case, Ashatea expressed a hope that she would become a friend to her, as Lily was.

Kepenau told me that they were on their way to visit our settlement, according to his promise. “I thought it wisest,” he said “to keep my people at a distance, so we have fixed our camp on the banks of a stream some miles to the westward; and as the rivers are now open, we can easily hold communication with you. At the same time, as there are several intervening rapids and waterfalls, the white men are not likely to find their way often to us, or to bring the ‘fire water’ which I so much dread.”

On hearing that we were on our way home, he offered to accompany us; observing that Ashatea could steer the canoe as well as he could, and though the distance by the river was greater, she would not be long after us. “There are no more rapids or waterfalls to be passed, so that the remainder of the voyage can be performed without danger,” he observed.

Reuben, on hearing this, asked leave to take his place, saying that he should much like the trip by the river.

“But you cannot use a paddle,” said Kepenau.

“Not very well,” answered Reuben.

“Then don’t make the attempt, or you may upset the canoe, or lose your paddle. If you go, you must sit perfectly quiet,” said Kepenau.

Reuben promised to obey orders. Ashatea smiled, and appeared to be highly amused at the idea of having a white man as her passenger.

As we had no time to lose, Ashatea resumed her seat in the stern of the canoe.

“Now, take care,” she said, laughing, as she saw Reuben about to step in, “else you will tumble over on the other side, or make a hole in the canoe and go through it.”

Reuben looked somewhat alarmed, and in his eagerness was very nearly doing both the things against which he was being warned. Kepenau, however taking his arm, helped him in.

"Now, don't move till you reach the end of your voyage," said the Indian. "Perhaps we shall be there to help you out."

Ashatea gave a flourish with her paddle as a farewell signal, and striking the water, away the canoe shot down the stream. We meanwhile took the path homewards, and as we were anxious to arrive before the canoe we hurried forward.

Kepenau told me that his daughter had so much wished to see Lily,—or my sister, as he called her,—that he had consented to bring her, and to leave her for two or three days, if my friends would allow it.

I said that I was sure they would.

He desired, he told me, to make some trade arrangements for disposing of the peltries which he and his people obtained; his object, at the same time, being to keep them away from the white men, for fear of the "fire water." This subject was continually on his mind. He had seen it prove the destruction of so many of his countrymen, that he dreaded its introduction among his own tribe, who had hitherto been kept free from it. However, as my uncles and Mr Claxton were men who never touched liquor, he was not afraid of dealing with them.

I remarked, as we walked along, that his eyes were constantly turning in every direction,—now on the ground, now on the trees and hushes on either side,—as if he was on the look-out for game, or fancied that an enemy was lurking near. I at last inquired why he did this.

"It is the habit of my people," he answered. "We never can tell whether our foes may be before us or tracking our footsteps. I noticed that some one besides you and your young friend and the black has passed this way lately. He wore moccasins, and may therefore be a red man and an enemy; but I have just discovered that he is one of your people, and has a load on his shoulders. Observe that soft ground; his feet sank deeper into it than would have been the case had he been unencumbered. He is either an old man, or overcome with fatigue. He cannot be very far before us, and is going in the direction of your hut." Kepenau pointed as he spoke to some mossy ground, where I could just distinguish a faint outline of the footsteps of a man; but I should have been unable to read anything beyond that fact from the marks left behind.

Quambo, who saw them, thought that they might have been, after all, only the footsteps of Uncle Mark or Mike, who might have come out thus far in search of game; but Kepenau laughed when this was said.

"No, no," he answered; "these are moccasins. You will see that I am right."

We hurried on, for the sun was getting low, and already the gloom had settled down in the recesses of the forest.

As we emerged into more open ground near the banks of the river, the rays of the sun glancing along it sparkled on the flakes of foam, as the stream hurried rippling along the banks. Nearing the hut, we caught sight of three figures standing in front of it.

"I told you so," observed Kepenau. "Yonder is the man whose trail I discovered. A trapper, who has come east with his peltries. He is an old man, too, as I thought, and carried a heavy load."

Before even our friends saw us, the canoe shot into view down the stream; and after helping Ashatea and Reuben to land—or rather the latter, for the Indian girl sprang lightly on shore without assistance—we proceeded to the hut.

Uncle Mark advanced to meet us. "All friends are welcome," he said, taking Kepenau's hand, and then greeting the young girl in his kind, friendly way. "You will, however, have to submit to pretty close stowage, if, as I hope you intend to do, you will remain the night with us."

"We can quickly put up sufficient shelter for this time of the year for ourselves, so that we need not crowd you, my friend," answered the Indian. "And our aged brother there, I doubt not, is as well accustomed to the open air as we are."

"Many days and nights have passed since I slept under a roof," observed the old hunter, who, hearing himself mentioned, now came forward. "We have met before, brother," he added, looking at the Indian; "ay, and fought and hunted together! Don't you recollect me?"

"Ay, that I do. You saved my life when the Apaches were about to take my scalp, and enabled me to reach my horse and escape," answered Kepenau.

"Ah! I have a faint recollection of that; but I remember more clearly how, when I was hunted by a party of Araphoes, you and your people came sweeping down to my assistance, and put them to flight," replied the old trapper.

"I recollect the event," observed Kepenau; "but I have long since buried the war-hatchet, and now strive to live at peace with my neighbours, if they will let me."

While the Indian and the old trapper had been speaking, I had been looking at the latter. I had no doubt, from the description Reuben had given of the visitor to his father's house, that this was the same person; and I was therefore not surprised to see him and Reuben shaking hands as old acquaintances.

Quambo, knowing that food would be required for our guests, lost no time, with the assistance of Mike, in lighting a fire, and immediately set about cooking whatever his larder supplied. Though we had killed but little game on our excursion, Uncle Mark and Mike had been more fortunate during our absence, and there was no lack of food.

In the meantime Kepenau had called up his people from the canoe, and they set to work to collect materials for two small wigwams, which, though they were more rudely constructed than usual, served the purpose intended. One was for the accommodation of Ashatea, and the other for the chief—his men contenting themselves with a rough lean-to.

The whole party joined us in the hut at supper, which, thanks to the diligence of Mike and Quambo, was quickly prepared. The old trapper had many anecdotes to tell, and many a wild adventure to recount, which, I saw, was greatly interesting to Reuben. Ashatea spoke but little, though I could see, by her quick glance, that she understood much, if not all, that was said.

At night the chief and his daughter retired to their wigwams, while the old trapper accepted a shakedown in the corner of our hut. He smiled when Uncle Mark offered him a bed. "For many a long year I have not slept in one," he answered; "and I possibly may never again put my head on a pillow softer than my saddle or a pack of skins."

Without taking off his clothes, and merely unbuckling his belt, he lay down, and was soon fast asleep. Reuben and I, after a few minutes' talk, did the same. Before I closed my eyes, however, I saw that Uncle Mark was sitting at the table, resting his head upon his hands, apparently lost in thought.

At break of day the next morning our Indian friends were on foot, and we turned out to receive them. As our hut was close, we had our breakfast spread on a grassy spot beneath the trees, where we could enjoy fresh air, which was certainly more suited to their taste.

Ashatea looked handsomer than ever. She was eager to set out to see Lily. Reuben offered to accompany her, and show the way: at which Kepenau laughed, observing that an Indian never required a guide through his own country; but, for all that, he should be happy to have the white stranger's society.

Kepenau had brought several packages of skins, which it was his object to dispose of.

"My friend," said the old trapper, touching him on the shoulder, "let me sell them for you. I know how the white men will treat you if they think that they are yours: they will offer a third of the value, and then insist on your taking articles you do not require."

"I wish to open a fair trade with the white men," answered Kepenau. "I will let them understand that I have more skins to bring."

"The greater reason they will have for putting a small value on them," observed the old trapper.

"I would advise you to accept Samson Micklan's offer," said Uncle Mark, turning to the Indian.

Kepenau considered the matter for some time. "I will do as you advise," he said at length. "I know that I can trust you. When you have fixed a price, I will not consent to sell under it. I intend, nevertheless, to go to the settlement."

The old trapper, whose name I now for the first time heard, appeared to be in no hurry to continue his journey. When at length he declared that he was ready to start, Reuben offered to carry his pack.

Old Samson smiled. "It may make your young shoulders ache more than you suppose," he observed.

"Let me try," answered Reuben; and I helped him to place it on his shoulders. In doing so I was able to judge of its weight.

"If my uncle can spare me, I will assist you," I said; "for I doubt very much whether you will be able to carry it all the way."

Reuben, however, had made up his mind to fulfil his promise. I saw a twinkle in the old man's eyes when he trudged off trying to look as if he did not feel the weight. My uncle told me I might go too, so we set off. Kepenau and Samson led the way, talking together. Reuben, as I expected, dropped alongside Ashatea; and I followed. The other Indians brought up the rear, carrying Kepenau's packs.

Before long, I saw that Reuben was walking with difficulty, and putting his hands behind his back to try and lift the pack off his shoulders. I ranged up to him.

"You had better let me carry that a little way for you," I said. "Or suppose we sling it on our sticks! we shall then get along more easily, and neither of us will feel the weight too much."

Still Reuben declared that he could carry it.

Ashatea looked at him, evidently understanding the matter as well as I did. "You better let your friend do as he says," she observed.

At length Reuben, who was getting very hot, and had stumbled more than once, said, "Well, I do think it will be the best way. I am much obliged to you, Roger."

We soon had the pack slung to the sticks, and poor Reuben stepped along much more easily than before.

We soon reached Uncle Stephen's house, when the old trapper turned round to Reuben. "You are a brave lad," he said; "I like your pluck. In a few years, when you get more muscle in your limbs, you will laugh at a pack twice the weight of that."

Lily was delighted to see Ashatea, and we left them together while we went on to Mr Claxton's, where old Samson

intended to stay. He had arranged with Kepenau to sell his peltries, and the next day they were all disposed of at a price which greatly astonished and delighted our Indian friend. He made an arrangement with Uncle Stephen to sell all the produce of the chase which he might bring, and to purchase for him such articles as he required.

Reuben brought his sister Dora over to see Ashatea, and the three girls seemed very happy together. The Indian girl was as eager to learn English as Lily and Dora were to instruct her; and she got on rapidly.

Old Samson had suffered more from his long tramp on foot than he was at first willing to confess, and a fit of illness was the consequence. He was well cared for, however, by the Claxtons, who treated him as kindly as if he had been a relation. He was grateful in his way; but it struck me that there was something hard and unsympathising in his character. He spoke of his fights with the Indians, of the scalps he had taken, of his hairbreadth escapes; but he never uttered a word which showed that he had any religious feeling. Indeed, he seemed to me to be as much of a heathen as the Indians among whom he had lived so long. It appeared strange to me that an old man should be so hardened. I was not aware, at the time, that when people once begin to give up trusting God they go further and further from him; and thus, of course, as they advance in years they think less and less of their souls, and, in fact, become more dead with regard to all spiritual matters.

I had been accustomed to see Uncle Stephen read the Bible to his family, and offer up prayers morning and night; while he never did any work, except such as necessity demanded, on the Sabbath. Uncle Mark had been less exact in these respects, although even he was accustomed to read the Bible on the Sabbath, and to refrain from work; and occasionally we went over to Uncle Stephen's on that day and joined his family at worship. Most of the people of the settlement, however, paid but little attention to the day, though they ceased from all rough work, and made a sort of holiday of it. There was no church or chapel of any description in the neighbourhood, and few paid any attention to what are called religious duties.

The day after I went to stay with Uncle Stephen, some little time before sunset I saw a horseman approaching the house from the eastward. He was a middle-aged man, dressed in a suit of dark grey, with his legs encased in strong leather gaiters, and a broad-brimmed hat on his head; a pair of huge saddle-bags, too, were thrown across the hardy-looking mustang he bestrode. He had neither gun over his shoulder nor sword by his side; but he carried a thick staff of considerable length in his hand.

"Canst tell me, young friend, if yonder house is the abode of Stephen Tregellis?" he asked as I advanced towards him.

"Yes, sir. He is my uncle," I answered, offering to hold his nag's head while he dismounted.

He threw himself from the saddle with the activity of a young man.

"I hope, then, that I shall not intrude, for I have come far, and should like to spend a few days with one who, if I am not wrongly informed, will receive me as a brother Christian," he said.

"Uncle Stephen will be glad to see you, sir," I answered, feeling sure that I was only saying what was the case.

"Well, then, young man, go in and tell him that Martin Godfrey has come to claim his hospitality."

As my uncle had just reached home, I hurried in and gave him the message. He immediately came out and welcomed the stranger, with whom he had a short conversation, which I did not hear, as I was holding the pony at a little distance. I only caught the words, uttered by my uncle, "We will make ready a small upper room, and to that you shall be welcome as long as you remain in these parts."

He then told me to take the mustang round to the stable, to rub him down, and feed him well, and to bring the minister's saddle-bags into the house. When I returned, after having obeyed these orders, I found the stranger seated at table—on which Aunt Hannah and Lily had spread supper—talking cheerfully; and from what he said I gathered that he had visited a number of outlying settlements, accompanied by several young ministers, one of whom he had left at each.

"I had no one to bring on here, and was unwilling to leave you without the 'bread of life,' so I was fain to come on myself," he observed.

I wondered what he could mean. Aunt Hannah explained, after he and Uncle Mark had gone out, that he was one of those energetic Gospellers who had done so much for the back settlements of America; that he was an overseer among them—his duty being to move from place to place to form new congregations where none existed, and to strengthen and encourage the older ones.

He had much conversation with Kepenau and Ashatea, with whom he could converse in their own language. They were evidently deeply interested in what he said, and I saw him frequently produce his Bible and refer to it to strengthen what he was saying. Kepenau had, as I have already said, some knowledge of Christianity, and he and his daughter very gladly received the instruction which the missionary afforded them.

Uncle Stephen went out and succeeded in bringing in three or four of our neighbours, among whom were Mr Claxton and Reuben, and we had a regular service in the cottage,—the first of the sort I can recollect. The Bible was read, prayers were offered up, and the missionary gave an address; after which some of Wesley's hymns were sung by Lily and Dora—Ashatea occasionally joining in, with a very sweet voice, although she had never heard them before.

Mr Claxton afterwards begged the missionary to come and visit old Samson. He gladly complied; but I heard him next day tell Uncle Stephen that he feared no impression had been made on the old trapper's heart. "Still, I do not despair," he added. "It may be as hard as iron, or stone; but iron can be melted by the fire, and stone worn away by

the constant dripping of water. One thing I know,—that nothing is too difficult for God to accomplish; though we, his instruments, are obliged to confess our own weakness.”

I must not, however, dwell further on the various events which took place at this time.

Martin Godfrey spent some days with Uncle Stephen, preaching every evening in the open air, and three times on the Sabbath; and he promised the people, if they would put up a chapel, that he would ere long find a minister for them. Having distributed some Bibles and other books contained in his saddle-bags, he at length mounted his mustang and went his way.

I remember Uncle Stephen asking him if he was not afraid of travelling without firearms.

“I trust to One well able to protect me,” he answered, smiling. “Whenever I have to employ the arm of flesh, I find my trusty stick sufficient to defend myself against hostile Indians or savage beasts;” and as he whisked it round his head with a rapidity which dazzled the eyes, I could easily understand how it would prove a formidable weapon against either bears or wolves—a tap of it on their skulls being sufficient to stun them; while it seemed to me that he might be able to ward off either the arrows or the tomahawks of hostile Indians.

Kepenau and Ashatea returned to their settlement; and the old trapper, who had now recovered, began to make preparations for his departure. He had again invited Reuben to join him, but Mr Claxton, very wisely, would not hear of his son going away with the old man.

“It is more than likely we shall never see him again,” he observed. “Whatever his fate may be, you would probably share it; either to be killed by Indians, or starved, or drowned, or frozen to death, or torn to pieces by bears or wolves.”

Reuben was inclined to complain. “Father thinks I cannot take care of myself,” he said to me. “As old Samson has spent so many years out trapping by himself, why should not I have as good a chance of escaping from danger?”

“There is an old saying, ‘That the water-pot which goes often to the well, gets broken at last,’” I observed. “Such may be the case with regard to old Samson; and you know nothing of the country, or of the cunning of the Redskins, and would be very sure to lose your life if he lost his.”

The old man, who had set his heart on obtaining a companion of some sort, succeeded in persuading a half-breed to accompany him. This was a man named Sandy McColl, whose father was a Scotchman and his mother an Indian, and who had long been accustomed to the wild life of the prairies. He had come to the settlement intending to remain, and had built a hut and begun to cultivate a garden, with the intention, as was supposed, of taking unto himself a wife; but the damsel on whom he had set his affections had refused him. Sandy after this became very downcast; he neglected his garden, and spent most of his time wandering about gun in hand, shooting any game he could come across. He had few associates, and was of a morose disposition. People, indeed, whispered that he had been guilty of some crime or other, and was forced to leave the part of the country where he had before resided. Uncle Stephen, who occasionally exchanged a few words with him, did not believe that this was the case, and declared that Sandy, in spite of his taciturnity and love of solitude, was an honest fellow. Be that as it may, Samson was satisfied with him, and the two agreed to start together.

Soon after the old man’s arrival, he had asked Reuben and me to make a journey to the place where he had left his other packs of skins hidden away; and he described the spot so exactly, that we believed we should have no difficulty in finding it. My uncle said I might go with Mike Laffan. Reuben, too, got leave from his father; and Sandy volunteered to accompany us. Without him we should, I believe, have lost our way, for he knew the country much better than we did.

We had to proceed cautiously during the latter part of the journey for fear of Indians, as we were far in advance of the territory claimed by the white men. But I do not give an account of the expedition, because, in reality, we met with no adventure worthy of notice. Thanks to Sandy, we discovered the packs, and succeeded in bringing them back safe to their owner; for which Samson was very grateful, and rewarded us handsomely. With the proceeds he purchased two mustangs, six beaver-traps, a supply of powder and shot, and other articles. Sandy had the means of obtaining another mustang, and such supplies as he required.

After this old Samson quickly recovered. As soon as he was well enough he and Sandy mounted their ponies, reserving a third animal to carry their goods; and having bidden us all good-bye, they set off into the wilderness—going to the westward, intending to push forward to the spurs of the Rocky Mountains, where, they said, game in abundance was to be found. Reuben, who was really a very good fellow, soon got reconciled to remaining at home and attending to his duty.

Kepenau had made me promise to come and visit him, and had agreed to send one of his people with a canoe to take me to his lodges; and at last the Indian arrived at our hut.

Kepenau, he said, had sent but a small canoe, as we might thus more easily make our way up the stream, and pass the several portages we should have to go over.

I knew that Reuben would take delight in the excursion, so I hurried to the settlement to see if he could come. His father was very willing to give him leave, as it might turn his thoughts from the wilder and more dangerous adventures on which he was set. He had, some time before this, obtained a birch-bark canoe, which Kepenau, and sometimes Ashatea, had taught him how to use; and as he was constantly practising, he was by this time well able to employ his paddle. We obtained leave to take Mike Laffan with us, too; and thus, with the Indian, we made a party of four in the two canoes.

We carried our guns and axes and the usual woodmen's knives, a pot and pan for cooking our meals, some tin cups, and a few small bales of cloths and coloured calicoes with which to pay the Indians for any peltries they might have to sell—for our expedition was on business as well as pleasure. We enjoyed the thoughts of it all the more on that account. We expected also to get some hunting, and to come back with a supply of dried venison, as well as some skins.

The Indian told us that his name was Kakaik, or the "Small Hawk;" he let us understand that he was a great hunter, but as he could speak no English, and as we understood but a few words of his language, we could not carry on much conversation with him. However, we managed to understand each other very well by means of signs.

The first part of the voyage was along the main river, with which we were well acquainted. We afterwards struck off up one of its tributaries, which varied greatly in width; sometimes it expanded into a lake-like form, and at other parts it contracted into narrow dimensions, where the current ran with great force, and we had hard work to stem it.

At length we reached a waterfall of nearly thirty feet in height, where the river rushed over the rocks and fell down perpendicularly in masses of foam. Kakaik made signs to us that we must land and carry our canoes for some distance through the wood. This is what is called making a "portage." Accordingly we unloaded them, and piled up our goods at the foot of the fall. We then lifted the canoes out of the water; Kakaik taking one bottom upwards on his shoulders and walking off with it. Mike imitated his example, as one man could get between the trees better than two, and the canoes were so light that they could be carried with ease. Reuben, shouldering a portion of the goods, followed the Indian; and I, with another bale on my shoulders and the paddles and gun under my arm, kept close after Mike—leaving the remainder of the things for a second trip.

The ground was rough in the extreme, and it was some way up a steep bank among rocks. My fear was lest Mike should knock the canoe against the branches of the overhanging trees and make a hole in her bottom, so I sang out to him to be cautious.

"Faix! Masther Roger, it's that same I intind to be," he answered. "I have no fancy to walk all the way back again, or forward either, if this is the sort of ground we should have to pass over."

We had to traverse a quarter of a mile or more till we saw the stream ahead of us, running placid as before. Kakaik, going down into the water, placed his canoe gently on the surface, and then helped to take Mike's off his shoulders. The goods we had brought were next placed in them, and the Indian sat down on the bank to watch them while we went back for the remainder.

"Suppose some hostile Indians or prowling bear should have paid a visit to the landing-place, and carried off our property," said Reuben.

"We will hope for the best," I answered, laughing; "but I will take my gun, in case of accidents."

Chapter Five.

An intruder—We arrive at Kepenau's camp—Ashatea inquires kindly after Lily and Dora—Deer-hunting—The strange Indians—Kepenau's precautions—Mike amuses the camp with his fiddle—Our farewell—Kakaik's advice with regard to rapid-shooting—The treacherous Indian on shore—Mike and I paddle desperately—The canoe is upset—Carried down the stream—A natural place of concealment in a hollow trunk—My terror on perceiving the Indians—Forced by hunger to leave my concealment, I am taken prisoner by four Indians.

On arriving at the foot of the falls we found our goods safe; but just as we were about to shoulder them we heard a rustling among the bushes. Advancing cautiously towards the spot, not knowing what might be there, I caught sight of a dark hairy form. It was a brown bear, which in another minute would in all likelihood have been examining our property with no delicate fingers. I hesitated to fire, for I was sure that I should be unable to hit any vital part; and as even a brown bear, if wounded, will turn furiously on his pursuers, before I could have reloaded the beast might have been upon me. In another instant Bruin had plunged in among the thick underwood, and was concealed from view; but I heard him making his way rapidly from us, doubtless considering that discretion was the better part of valour.

Having taken up our goods, and looked carefully round to see that nothing was left behind, we set off towards the canoes. Kakaik by this time had them both secured alongside the bank, so that we quickly reloaded them and recommenced our voyage up the stream.

I asked Mike to sing one of his Irish songs: this he was never loath to do, and he soon made the banks echo with his melody. As soon as he had ceased, the Indian took up the strain with one of his native songs. It was melancholy in the extreme, and contrasted greatly with Mike's joyous notes.

"Faix! if it's tears he wants to draw from our eyes, I can bate him there," observed Mike, when Kakaik had ceased; and he began one of those sad ditties descriptive of the death of some Irish heroine. Though the Indian could not understand the meaning, he appeared to be much affected, and it was some time before he began another song. From the few words we could make out, we supposed him to be recounting the misfortunes of his people, and their departure from the hunting-grounds of their fathers.

Mike had brought his fiddle, but of course he could not play it while paddling.

"When we get to Kepenau's, I'll show the people what I can do, and set them all jigging away, and laughing till they split their sides," he observed.

The scenery amid which we passed was wild in the extreme. Not a sign of a human being, or a habitation of any sort, was visible. Sometimes dark rocks rose up in precipitous cliffs on both sides of us, and at other times the trees of the forest overhung the water. We had several portages to make, as it was easier to carry the canoes over the land than to drag them up the rapids, but Kakaik signified that on our return we might shoot them without danger.

At last, in the far-off distance, we caught sight of a wreath of smoke ascending from near the bank, and from the gestures of the Indian we understood that we were now approaching Kepenau's camp. In a short time shouts were heard, and we saw several wigwams erected on the greensward in a recess of the forest, surrounded by trees which sheltered them completely from the wind.

A canoe immediately put off and came paddling out towards us; then turned round and accompanied us back to the bank, on which Kepenau, with Ashatea and other members of his family, stood ready to receive us. As we shook hands he told us how glad he was to see us; and Ashatea had many questions to ask about Lily and Dora.

"I have been longing to come and visit them again," she said. "Now that the rice is ripe, I want to take them down to the lake where it grows, that we may gather our canoe full."

Kepenau said that his people would be very glad to receive the goods we had brought, and would be ready to purchase them with their beaver-skins and other peltries, of which they had a considerable store.

When we talked about hunting, he assured us that we need have no fear of obtaining plenty of sport, as, with our rifles, we should be certain to kill the game much more easily than his people could do with their bows and arrows. A hunting-party was accordingly arranged for the next day, on the shores of a lake some miles off. He had already transported a couple of canoes to it, so that, should any of the deer take to the water, we might be able to pursue them. Ashatea was much inclined to come with us, but her father told her that she would be acting more like an English girl if she would stay at home and attend to household affairs.

We started the next morning with Kepenau, Kakaik, and several other Indians, who carried long spears as well as bows and arrows. We were also accompanied by a pack of dogs, well-trained by the Indians for chasing the deer, though they were noisy, ill-looking curs.

We commenced our hunt at some distance from the shores of the lake, but for an hour or more we saw no signs of deer, and Reuben and I began to fancy that we should have to return home without venison.

We had separated from Kepenau, but now we heard his voice, and immediately afterwards the dogs gave tongue. We were looking about to ascertain in what direction to bend our steps, when a fine deer started out from among the trees on our right into the open glade. My gun being ready, I fired, and felt sure that I had wounded the deer; but the animal still continued its course. The next instant the dogs appeared from the same direction, in hot chase after the deer.

We followed, joined by Kepenau and the other men. Marks of blood on the grass showed us that the deer had been wounded. Still, it might run, should the dogs not overtake it, for several miles, and might escape us after all. It was too valuable a prize to be lost, so we continued the pursuit.

The country now became much more open, and we saw that the deer had made its way across the plain. On the further side there were some lofty pines, towards which the animal appeared to have directed its course.

We had been running on for several minutes, when, before I could distinguish anything, the exclamations of the Indians showed me that the deer was in sight; and presently I saw it standing at bay under the trees, with the dogs yelping round it and preventing it from proceeding further.

When I got within gun-shot, I stopped for a moment to reload my rifle; and crying out to my friends not to get in the way, I again fired, and the noble beast rolled over. Kakaik then dashed forward with his hunting-knife, and quickly put an end to the creature's sufferings, while the rest beat off the dogs.

The deer was soon cut up, and each man loading himself with as much as he could carry, the venison was conveyed to the spot selected for an encampment; where two of them remained to take care of it while we went in search of more game.

We had been for some time beating about, when once more we heard the dogs giving tongue; and after making our way through the forest, and reaching the borders of an open glade, we caught sight of a herd of eight or ten deer scampering along at full speed, with the pack of dogs at their heels. We all of us fired, but although two or three shots took effect none of the deer stopped. We saw them directing their course towards the lake; but they ran faster than we did, and did not allow us an opportunity of firing. We managed, however, to keep them in view, and saw that they did not turn either to the right hand or to the left, so that we felt sure of overtaking them when they reached the shore of the lake.

Kakaik, who was on my left hand, made signs to me to accompany him towards the spot where we had left one of the canoes. I also understood him to signify that the dogs would prevent the deer from turning back. On reaching the canoe he lifted me into it, and stepping after me, seized a paddle, and with a few strokes sent it skimming out into the lake. Rounding a point, we soon caught sight of the deer, which stood on the shore with the dogs barking behind them. The shouts of some of the people who now came up increased the terror of the poor animals. First one plunged into the water, then another, and another; till the whole herd, with the exception of two which had fallen, were striking out in different directions, making for the opposite bank.

Kakaik pointed out one fine deer, and paddled towards it. I might have shot the animal, but my Indian companion made signs to me to use a spear which lay at the bottom of the canoe; so, standing up, I grasped the weapon with

both my hands, and drove it with all my force into the creature's skull. In an instant its head went down, and its feet rising, it lay dead on the surface. Kakaik handed me a rope to cast round its antlers, and we forthwith towed it in triumph to the shore. This done, we made chase after a second deer, which was swimming across the lake towards a spot some little way off. Greatly to my satisfaction, I succeeded in striking this animal as I had done the first.

In the meantime the other canoe was paddling away in chase of two more deer, which had made towards the further end of the lake.

While we were occupied as I have described, I saw a third canoe, paddled by two strangers, darting out from behind a point in pursuit of another deer. Whether the people were friends or foes, I could not tell; but as soon as Kakaik saw them he declared that they were the latter, and that we must be prepared for an attack should they have many companions in the neighbourhood.

"Then let us at once tow our deer up the lake towards the camp, where we can obtain assistance," I said.

I now observed that those who had been unable to embark in the canoe were making their way in that direction. They had probably caught sight of the strange Indians. My fear was that Kepenau and Reuben might be attacked on their return. I made signs to my companion that we would land the deer and then go to the assistance of our friends. As Reuben and I had our rifles, and the strange Indians were probably without firearms, we might easily keep them in check or put them to flight; or should they venture to attack us, we might sink their canoes, even if we did not kill them with our rifle-bullets, before they got up to us.

As we reached the shore at the end of the lake, we found Mike and several of the Indians standing ready to receive us.

Mike was full of fight. "Arrah! be aisy, Masther Roger," he said. "Sure, if the inimy come, I will sind them to the right-about wid me firelock, and they'll not be afther taking our venison from us in a hurry."

He and the Indians taking charge of the deer, which they immediately set about cutting up, Kakaik and I paddled off again down the lake to the assistance of our friends. The strange Indians had succeeded in capturing one of the deer; but as we considered that it was their lawful prize, although we had driven it into the water, we did not interfere with them.

Seeing another deer still swimming, though at considerable distance, I fired at it, for the purpose of showing the strange Indians, in case they should not have heard our other shots, that we had firearms, and thus probably prevent them attacking us. Whether or not my shot had taken effect I could not tell, as the deer continued to swim on towards the bank.

We now directed our course for our friends, who had killed the two deer of which they had gone in chase. I told them of the strangers we had seen; and Kakaik, in his own language, gave a long account to Kepenau of the matter.

"We will let them alone, if they do not molest us," answered Kepenau, after expressing his approval of my conduct.

Having secured the bodies of the two deer to ropes,—Kepenau and Reuben towing one, and Kakaik and I the other,—we began to paddle back towards the end of the lake from which we had come.

As we passed the part of the shore near which I had shot the last deer, we observed several Indians, who had seized the animal as it landed, and were now employed in cutting it up. They had evidently only one canoe with them, and were therefore afraid of coming off to attack us, whatever may have been their disposition. We might, therefore, consider ourselves masters of the seas.

Kepenau was well pleased with the success of our expedition, and having made up his mind to live at peace with his neighbours, he was very glad to avoid a collision with the strangers, even though we might come off victorious. "We must, however, be on the watch for them as we return homewards," he observed. "They may possibly greatly outnumber our party; and though our firearms will keep them in check, they may try to overcome us by stratagem."

The deer we had first killed were soon cut up, and all the best parts made ready for transportation to the camp. Those we had now towed on shore were treated in the same manner; and each man being loaded with as much as he could possibly carry, we set off for the camp. Here we found a blazing fire ready for cooking the venison, of which our friends ate an enormous quantity—with the exception of Kepenau, who was as moderate as we were.

Knowing that we had foes in the neighbourhood sentinels were posted, two of whom kept watch all the night round the camp; but the strangers, seeing us prepared, did not make their appearance, and on the following morning we started, an hour before dawn, on our return. Kepenau kept in the rear, turning round very frequently to ascertain if we were followed. He also gave his people directions to keep a look-out on either hand. Once he caught sight of a warrior's plume in the distance, but although his eyes were of the sharpest he could not discover whether his foe approached nearer. Before evening we arrived safely at his lodges; the ample supply of food we brought affording great satisfaction. The chief, however, did not fail to send out scouts to bring word whether the enemy had ventured into the neighbourhood. As no traces of them could be seen, Kepenau came to the conclusion that the strangers had gone off again to the westward, content with the game they had obtained. Still, he thought it prudent, in case of treachery, to keep on the watch; and day and night two or three of the party were constantly scouring the country round, in search of tracks made by strange Indians.

The time had now arrived for us to return. Mike had made himself a universal favourite; the Indians, notwithstanding their general gravity, delighting in the merry tunes he played on his fiddle. He frequently set them jigging; and Reuben and I showed them how white people danced—though neither of us had any exact notions on the subject. Ashatea sometimes joined us, and moved about very gracefully, performing figures of her own invention, which I

have since discovered greatly resemble those of the minuet of Europe.

She often told me how much she longed to go back and stay with Lily. Native of the wilds as she was, she had gained a taste for civilised life, she told Reuben and me. We assured her that Lily and Dora would be delighted to see her, and that, if her father would allow her to accompany us, we should be glad to take her at once. This, however, Kepenau refused. He did not tell us why; only saying that he could not let her go unless he went with her, and for the present he must not leave his people, who had to hunt and fish, so as to lay in a store of provisions for the winter.

I should have said that at the back of the lodges were several pieces of cleared ground, on which Indian corn was growing and potatoes had been planted. This showed that Kepenau and his people were in advance of the hunting Indians, who trust only to the chase for subsistence, and are thereby frequently reduced to a state of starvation.

All the inhabitants of the camp turned out to wish us farewell, and offered up prayers for our safety as we stepped into our canoes. Kakaik and Reuben led the way in one canoe, and Mike and I followed in the other, flourishing our paddles over our heads as a farewell salute. We plied them diligently, and, gliding rapidly down the stream, were soon lost to sight. Having the current with us, we expected to reach home before nightfall, should no accident happen.

"I'm after hoping that none of those Indians we saw the other day are lurking about, or maybe they will take a fancy to our packs of dried venison and skins, and stop us," observed Mike.

"What put that idea into your head?" I asked.

"Sure, because they are cunning spalpeens; and as they know the way we must take, they are likely enough to be on the watch for us," he replied.

"We must be on the watch for them, then," I answered, laughing. "If any of them appear, and look as if they intended to interfere with us, we shall have to show them the muzzles of our rifles; although, as I never have shot a man, I trust that I shall not be obliged to do so."

We paddled on for some time after this, and now and then we caught up Reuben's canoe and had a talk with him. I told him what Mike had said.

"Oh! I don't think there is much chance of that," he answered, lightly. "A few rifle-bullets will soon drive the fellows into the woods, if they show their noses."

We were now entering a part of the stream which ran between broken cliffs; on one side rocks rose almost perpendicularly from the water, their summits shaped like the parapets of ruined castles, while on the other the trees came down to the river's brink. Kakaik reminded us that we were approaching a series of rapids; and he explained by signs that he would lead the way, and advised Mike and me to keep exactly in his course. He and Reuben paddled on, therefore, while we followed at a little distance. We saw them descend one of the first rapids. Immediately below this, in a turn of the river, was another, the fall in which being probably about four or five feet, was not sufficient to endanger the safety of the canoes if carefully handled.

We were approaching the highest of the rapids, which, as I have said, the other canoe had just descended, when we saw an Indian dart out from behind the trunk of a tree growing close to the water, and point his arrow at the first canoe, aiming at Reuben. The arrow flew from the bow, but whether my friend was hit or not I could not say, as the canoe, darting down the rapid, was lost to sight.

We were too near the rapid to paddle back, for in turning round we should have run the risk of upsetting the canoe, when it would have been carried down sideways, and probably dashed to pieces. Our only safe course, therefore, was to dash forward; and we hoped to pass the Indian before he could perceive us, or have time to fix another arrow in his bow. Had we been in still water I might have lifted my rifle and shot the Indian, but I dared not leave my paddle for a moment. Down the rapid we dashed, then, paddling with might and main to turn the canoe so as to be ready for the next descent. The Indian had disappeared, but we heard his voice, calling, as we supposed, to his companions,—and directly afterwards we caught sight of him running along the bank among the trees; but he could not have seen us.

A short way below this was another and still more dangerous rapid. Kakaik signified that he had often shot it, but he at the same time advised that we should land and make a portage. To do this was now, however, out of the question, as we should be seized by the Indians on shore did we land on the side on which they were; the only practicable one along which we could make our way.

"Paddle, Mike! paddle!" I said in a low voice, fearing that I might be heard should I shout. "Our only chance is to dash down the rapid. We cannot stop to look out for rocks ahead, and must run all risks."

Mike saw this as well as I did. "Sure, it's the only thing to be done, any way. May all the saints in the calendar help us!" he exclaimed.

I don't think, however, that Mike had much faith in the saints, although he uttered the expression.

We dashed on, the water hissing and bubbling and foaming round us, and had almost reached the bottom, when I felt the bow of the canoe strike something. The next instant I found myself struggling in the seething waters, and instinctively striking out for dear life. Looking down the stream, I caught a glance of the canoe being rapidly hurried downwards, with Mike clinging to it. The next moment, he and the canoe had disappeared.

I had been carried down some distance, when, on more perfectly recovering my senses, I discovered that I was

happily near the side opposite to that on which I had seen the Indians. I scrambled up on the bank, therefore, hoping to find some place of concealment before they could discover me. I had not gone far, however, before I recollected that my footprints would certainly betray me. I therefore retraced my steps and threw myself backwards into the water; and as I looked up towards the bank, I clearly perceived the marks I had left.

The river in this place was narrow, but though the current ran strong it was smooth, and I felt sure that I could swim across it and hide myself among some thick bushes which I saw growing over the water. It was my only hope of saving myself, and I determined to run the risk; but no time was to be lost, as the Indians might look up the stream and discover me. I struck out boldly, and found that I could stem the current, though it certainly required all the strength I possessed. I looked down the stream every now and then, to ascertain whether the Indians were returning, which I thought they might do when they saw only one person clinging to the canoe; otherwise I kept my eye as steadily as I could on the bushes for which I was making. Of course, I might have crossed the stream much more easily by allowing myself to be carried down with the current, but then I should have landed much below the place where I hoped to find concealment. I could distinguish for some time, even amid the roar of the waters, the voices of the Indians as they shouted to each other; but they gradually became fainter and fainter, and this gave me encouragement, as it informed me that they were getting further off.

Even then I thought of poor Mike. What might be his fate, should he be captured by the Indians? His fiddle, and probably everything else in the canoe, would be lost, and he would have no means of softening their savage hearts. With his fiddle in his hand, I felt that he might succeed in saving his life. It may seem strange that such thoughts entered my mind at that time; but the truth is, I was less anxious about myself than I was about him.

I had got more than half-way across when I began to find my strength failing me. It seemed that I should never reach the shore; still, I struck out, straining every nerve. I was afraid at length that I should be obliged to allow myself to be carried down by the current, and be glad to cling to the first rock or bough I could reach. My eyes were growing dim, and I could scarcely see the bushes on which they had so long been fixed. Still I struggled on, determined if possible to succeed. Suddenly I felt myself caught by an eddy, and the next instant I was carried close under the bank. I was about to grasp one of the branches, when I recollected that the sharp eyes of the Indians would discover where my hand had crushed the leaves, so I resisted the temptation, turning myself on my back for a minute to rest; then I dived down, and came up again in the very middle of the bush.

I now without fear drew myself out of the water, and climbing up, discovered a thick trunk hollowed out by age, the larger portion of which had been broken off either by a storm or lightning, the boughs having sprung out of the remainder—forming, indeed, a natural pollard. No concealment could have been more perfect; for even an Indian's eye would fail to penetrate through the bark. By slipping down I was concealed on all sides, while at the same time a slit in the trunk afforded me a "look-out" through the boughs in the direction of the river. Here, therefore, I considered that I was safe for the present. The difficulty would be to get away; although I might remain concealed as long as I should desire, hunger would at length compel me to leave my hiding-place in search of food. I remained crouched down, listening anxiously for any sounds which might indicate the whereabouts of the Indians. Mike, I felt sure, had he escaped drowning, would be captured by them; but I had hopes that Reuben and his companion, by being so much ahead, might escape altogether.

The ground was excessively rough; numerous high rocky ridges, and intervening spaces filled by trees and dense underwood, abounded.

The fact that the Indians had been so long shouting to each other convinced me that they had not up to that time captured the first canoe. As I heard no one approaching, I should not have been afraid of



"One of them stopped and pointed at the marks which my feet had made as I sprang up the bank."

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betray me.

leaving my hiding-place; but then I knew that my footsteps would

I must have remained an hour or more, when I heard voices in the distance. The sounds came nearer, and I knew that the Indians were returning. I scarcely dared to draw breath. They passed close to the tree in which I lay concealed; but I did not venture to look out, lest they should discover me. I was sure as they went along that they were trying to discover my trail. I knew, too, by the voices, that there was only a small party. What had become of the rest?

I calculated, by the direction their voices came from, that they were making their way up the stream. Some distance off, the low cliffs between which the river forced its way were surmounted by trees, which formed a natural bridge. I knew, therefore, that should they wish to get to the opposite side they might easily pass over.

Nearly another anxious hour went by, when I again heard their voices coming across the stream; and looking through the slit, I saw three painted savages standing together in the shallow water, narrowly examining the bank on both sides. Presently one of them stopped and pointed at the marks which my feet had made as I sprang up the bank. I saw them standing consulting eagerly together, but whether their sagacity would enable them to decide if I had gone forward across the country, or leaped back into the water, I could not tell. I anxiously watched, in order to ascertain to what decision they had come. At length one of them climbed up the bank and looked about; then the others followed, and walked for some distance, closely scrutinising the ground. At first I hoped that they were at fault. I had noticed that the bank was composed, a little way on, of hard stones, which could scarcely, I thought, receive any impression from my feet.

They went on for some distance; and then I saw from their gestures that they were fairly puzzled. At length they came back to the bank, and gazed down at the rapidly-flowing stream. They were evidently of opinion that I could not have swam across it. Greatly to my relief, I saw them continuing their course down the river, examining the bank as they went along, under the belief that I must have landed again further down, or else have been swept away by the current. This greatly relieved my mind. I sincerely hoped that they would give me up as lost, and abandon the idea that they should have the pleasure of exhibiting me to their squaws, and torturing me.

On and on they went, until they disappeared among the trees which grew on the bank. Whether or not they would again cross the stream I could not tell, or if indeed they had the means of doing so. They had come from the right bank, so I concluded that they must know of some way or other to get back to it. Still, I was anxious to be certain that they had done this before I left my shelter. I had made up my mind to swim back, and to descend the stream on the left bank, following it down till I reached home. There were by this time ripe fruits of all sorts to be found, I knew, so that I had no fear of starving.

I sat crouched down, feeling very much as I suppose a hare does, listening for the hunters—eager to be off, yet not daring to leave her cover. Hour after hour passed by, but I could hear no sounds except the notes of the birds in the trees, the woodpeckers searching for insects in the bark, and the cries of the squirrels as they skipped from branch to branch. I really wished that one of them would poke his nose into my nest, that I might have the chance of capturing him, for I was getting very hungry, and would have eaten him raw without compunction; but none came within my grasp.

At last I could bear it no longer. Food I must have, or strength sufficient would not be left me to swim across the river.

I fully believed that the Indians had gone to a distance, and that I might therefore make the attempt without being seen by them. However, I did not intend to swim directly across, as I had done before, but to allow myself to float down with the stream, paddling easily till I could gain the opposite bank. I should thus be assisted rather than impeded by the current.

I nerved myself up for the enterprise. I believed that it would be more easy to make my way out of the hole through the branches on the land-side, and then, going round them, take to the water where there was no back eddy. I had observed, a little lower down, that the current set directly across to the opposite bank, and it was this which had caused me so much trouble to reach the spot where I now was.

Popping up my head, I was about to climb out of the hole, when what was my horror to see four Indians sitting silently smoking their pipes, directly in front of me! To escape was impossible, for I knew that they had perceived me by the loud grunts they uttered, and by one of them immediately springing to his feet and rushing forward towards the tree.

Endeavouring to conceal my fears, I leaped down and advanced towards them, putting out my hand. Instead of taking it, the man who was advancing grasped me by the shoulder; while the others burst into a loud guttural laugh, as much as to say, "You thought yourself very clever, young master, but we have outwitted you."

How they came to know that I was in the tree, I could not divine; perhaps they only suspected that I was in the neighbourhood, from not finding my dead body lower down, and had taken their seats on that spot by chance.

One of the men now addressed me, but I could not understand a word he said. I answered him, however, in English, interspersed with such Indian expressions as I could recollect. He on this rose to his feet, patted me on the shoulder, and pointed to the tree; intimating, as I fancied, that I had been very clever to conceal myself as I had done, but that he and his companions were cleverer still to discover me.

As I was famishing, for my anxiety had not taken away my appetite, I thought it as well to let them understand that I wanted something to eat. Espying some berries growing on bushes near at hand, I pointed to them; and the man who held me letting me go, I sprang forward and ravenously devoured a number. They quenched my thirst, though they did not much tend to appease my hunger. One of the Indians, suspecting that this was the case, produced some dried buffalo meat from his pouch, and offered it to me.

I thanked him by signs, and showed how I appreciated his gift by immediately eating it up. He and his companions, on observing how hungry I was, again laughed. One of them now pointed to the sun, which was getting low, and made me understand that I must accompany them. As I knew that I had no chance of escaping, I nodded,—as much as to say that I was ready to go if they wished it,—and tried to look as cheerful as possible.

Their leader, the man who had first spoken to me, pointed to the west and stalked off; and two of the others seizing me by the arms, one on each side, we followed him.

Chapter Six.

My Indian captors commence their homeward journey—Arrival at the camp—Aguskogaut the chief—His kindness to me—My astonishment on seeing Mike a prisoner—His ludicrous fiddling—His comical account of his capture—Return of the warriors from the war-path—Mike and I join the buffalo-hunters—The herd—Exciting sport—The bison—Its importance to the Indians—My hope of escape—I am in great danger from the herd—Mike rescues me—Our return to camp.

My captors led me along at a rapid rate over the rough ground; nimbly climbing the rocks, and dragging me after them without much consideration as to whether I was hurt or not. Of course, I had made up my mind to attempt escaping on the first opportunity. Perhaps they suspected this, for they took good care not to afford me the chance.

On we went due west, as I knew by the position of the sun, scorning all impediments—up hills and across valleys, through streams and marshes. They were, I knew, in an enemy's country, and were in a hurry to get out of it. Their leader did not fail to keep a look-out on every side—sometimes hurrying on ahead to the top of a rock, from whence he could take a glance over the country around to ascertain whether any one was moving; still they did not appear to be very anxious, and they must have been aware of the exact spot in which Kepenau and his tribe were encamped, while they knew that they were not likely to encounter other foes.

We must have traversed a good many miles before the sun set; and a thick grove now appearing ahead, with a stream running by its side, they hurried towards it. Having entered the grove, they immediately began stripping off the bark from some of the older trees, and collecting firewood. With the bark they formed a lean-to; and igniting the wood, they soon had a fire blazing.

While the daylight lasted they allowed me to search for berries; one of the party helping me, but keeping a constant watch on my movements. The rest, in the meantime, toasted on sticks some dried buffalo meat, a small portion of which they gave to me. Having satisfied my hunger, and feeling very tired, I lay down before the fire, glad of the warmth; for my clothes, though partly dry, were still damp, and I every now and then gave a shiver, which made me fear that I was going to be seized with illness.

From the way in which my captors had hitherto behaved towards me I hoped that I should not be ill-treated, and believing that I should some day or other make my escape, I determined not to be unhappy. I was soon, therefore, fast asleep. Just before I closed my eyes I saw the Indians sitting round the fire smoking their pipes, and eagerly discussing some subject or other—probably, what they should do with me—but, in spite of my precarious position, I

never slept so soundly in my life as I did for some hours. When I at length awoke, I saw that a few embers alone of the fire remained. One of the Indians was walking up and down, acting as sentry; while the others lay, with their feet towards the fire, wrapped in their buffalo robes. I was nearly certain that they were the same men who had discovered my footprints, and they probably had then left their robes concealed somewhere while they searched for me in the river, and had afterwards resumed them.

How I wished that that sentinel would sit down and go to sleep! If he should do so, I had determined to get up and run away. They would be unable to follow my tracks in the dark, so that I should have a long start of them; and I thought that I might possibly reach the river before they could overtake me, and either swim down it, or get floated down on a log of timber or a raft of rushes.

I had still my axe in my belt, which the Indians had not taken from me, as also my hunting-knife. I was nearly throwing away the first when crossing the river, but, feeling its value, I resolved to keep it as long as I could, and was very glad I had done so. Once the thought came into my mind that, should the sentry at last go to sleep, I might kill all the Indians with my axe before they could awake. I remembered a story I had heard of a white woman who had been made prisoner thus killing all her captors while sleeping, and ultimately escaping; but I put the idea from me as a temptation of Satan, and felt more happy when I had done so. They had unjustly made me captive, it is true, but they were only following the instincts of their savage nature; and it would be a dreadful thing to think of afterwards, should I deprive them of life.

As the sentry kept his post, and presently brought some more wood, which he threw on the embers, I felt sure that he was not likely to neglect his duty; therefore, closing my eyes, I again went off to sleep. When I next awoke the Indians were yawning and stretching themselves. One got up, and then another, and I saw that day had broken.

I sprang to my feet, and the idea came into my head to pretend that I was not aware I was their captive; so, putting out my hand, I signified that I would wish them a good morning and take my way homewards. They shook their heads—laughing, however, as if they thought the idea a good joke; and two of them walking on either side of me, we set off in the same order as before.

We travelled on all day, till, leaving the hilly country and crossing several streams, we saw the wide prairie stretching out before us, beyond some thick clumps of trees. Towards one of these clumps the Indians advanced, when I heard the neigh of a horse. In a few minutes we saw a couple of Indians, who had charge of several steeds tethered among the trees. A few words were exchanged between my captors and them, after which they immediately set to work to build a lean-to and light a fire. From this I knew that they were going to pass the night in the wood. Again the hope rose in my breast that I might have a chance of escaping, but I tried to put on as unconcerned an air as possible.

The Indians we had found in the wood exhibited the carcass of a deer, which they had, I supposed, killed during the day. This was quickly cut up in large pieces, and placed before the fire to roast.

“I only hope, my friends, that you will gorge yourselves till you are unable to move,” I thought. “Then, if I can but get on the back of one of those horses, I will gallop off to the hills, and not let you see my face again if I can help it.”

I was not sorry, however, to eat some of the venison which the Indians gave me; and then I lay down and pretended to go to sleep. They sat up feeding for some time after this; then, greatly to my disappointment, one got on his feet and began to walk backwards and forwards, while the rest stretched themselves on the ground, as they had done the night before. I watched and watched, and at last believing that they were too cunning to allow me to escape, I closed my eyes and went to sleep. I awoke twice, and on each occasion observed that one of them was on the watch.

When daylight appeared they all rose, and after shaking themselves, the horses were caught and they got on horseback; their leader making a sign to me to mount one of the spare animals, of which there were several. This done, we immediately set off at full gallop across the plain, taking a south-westerly direction. We stopped twice during the day, to allow our animals to crop the grass; while we took some food, a stream near at hand supplying us with water.

Towards evening I espied several wigwams partly concealed by the wood before us. On approaching nearer, I saw that they were very different from those to which I had been accustomed further east, where the Indian dwellings are constructed of birch-bark. These were, however, much larger; the framework, consisting of long poles tied together at the top in a conical shape, was covered with the tanned skins of buffalo and deer, and was ornamented with figures of animals and men,—apparently hunting scenes.

There were five or six of these wigwams pitched close together. Several women were moving about, or sitting on the ground. In front of one stood a tall man wrapped in a buffalo robe, with a spear in his hand, whom I at once guessed to be the chief. He contemplated us, as we drew near, without moving, or seeming in any way interested. This manner was, I suspected, put on to show his own importance, when he discovered that a white person was among our party. Getting still nearer, another Indian, who had been, I concluded, sleeping, and just awakened by the tramp of our horses, crawled out of the tent to have a look at us. It was a perfect scene of Indian domestic life. Near the chief, his wife sat on the ground playing with her child, a fat little urchin; a second woman was busy chopping wood; a third was coming in, axe in hand, with a huge bundle of sticks on her back, and a child clinging round her neck while a dog was too busy gnawing a bone to turn round and bark at us.

On drawing near, our leader got off his horse, and ordered us also to dismount. We then approached the chief, to whom he described, as I concluded, the mode in which I had been taken prisoner. The clever way in which I had hidden myself, and the efforts I had made to escape, elicited no small amount of admiration from the chief. I could, of course, only guess at what he said, but I caught a word here and there; and he looked down on me and smiled with such benignity as his stern features were capable of assuming. At all events, I thought that these people, whatever they might do, would not torture me or put me to death.

My captors having unsaddled their horses, turned them adrift to pick up food on the surrounding prairie, where the grass grew with unusual luxuriance. The men then went to their lodges, leaving me with the chief. He seemed to have taken a fancy to me from the first, and now invited me into his lodge, where his wife brought me a mess of broth, which, hungry as I was, I found very palatable.

The floor of the greater part of the lodge was covered with buffalo-skins, and a sort of divan, composed of stuffed cushions, was arranged round the walls; while in the centre burned a large fire, from which ascended volumes of smoke through the aperture at the top, though no small quantity pervaded the wigwam. Though disagreeable, it had the effect of driving away mosquitoes and other flying things.

I had not expected to be so well treated; still, I could not tell how long the chief might remain in his present good-humour.

The chief's name was, I found, Aguskogaut. The tribe into whose hands I had fallen were Sioux, who live entirely on the prairies, and subsist by hunting the buffalo. They had come further east than they generally venture, in order that their warriors might make predatory excursions against the more pacific and civilised Indians living near the white men. They seemed to have no fear of being attacked by the latter, as, being well supplied with horses, they could beat a rapid retreat to the westward; and I discovered that they had scouts out in all directions to give notice of the approach of a foe.

Not knowing how long I might be kept a prisoner, I set to work at once to try and learn the language of my captors. The women, especially, were very ready to teach me; and my willingness to learn gaining me their friendship, they supplied me plentifully with food. I was puzzled, however, to know on what account they had carried me off, as I certainly could in no way benefit them. I concluded that one object might be to hold me as a hostage, in case any of their party should be taken prisoners.

The chief took me out riding with him, in search of deer or other game. He was armed with his bow and a long spear; and knowing that a bow would be of little use in my hands, he gave me a spear, with which to defend myself or attack any animals we might come across. He kept a sharp look-out on me, however, in case I might try to escape; but I well knew that, under present circumstances, it would be useless to make the attempt.

We were successful the first day in running down a young deer, with which we returned to the camp. As we approached, what was my surprise to hear the sound of a fiddle! Surely those tones could be produced by no one but Mike Laffan! Could he have escaped? There, sure enough, as we rode up to the lodges, was Mike himself, standing in the midst of a group of Indians; while he was fiddling away with might and main, they were dancing to the best of their ability, and keeping very good time too.

On seeing me he shouted out, "Good luck to ye, Masther Roger! Sure my heart was nigh breaking, when I thought ye had been drowned or shot to death by these rid gintlemen; but it would not do to show me grafe, lest it would make them think manely of me, so thinks I to meself, I'll fiddle away as long as me elbow can move."

All the time he was speaking, he continued to play as furiously as at first; most of those surrounding him jumping and whirling round and round, or keeping time with their hands. The Indians, we knew, must have been aware that we were friends, and therefore it would be of no use to pretend that we were strangers to each other.

Mike was at length obliged to stop playing; upon which the chief ordered that he should be brought before him, and inquired how he had been captured. What account those who had taken him gave, I could not make out; but Mike told me how, after the canoe had been upset, he had floated some way down the stream clinging tightly to it. Most of the articles were soon thrown out. The guns, of course, had at once gone to the bottom, but the bales floated down. At last he saw his beloved fiddle washed out.

"Faix! it would have broken me heart to lose it," he observed; "so I made a grab and caught it and the bow, and held them tight, although the wetting, to be sure, was doing them no good. Down I went, faster and faster. I could hear the roar of the lower cataract. Thinks I to meself, If I go over that I shall be done for, and just then I found the canoe carried by the current towards the shore. I struck out with me feet to help it; and glad I was when, as I let them drop, I felt them touch the ground. I sprang up the bank, but, to me sorrow, the canoe floated off, and it was more than I could do to get a hold of it again. I climbed to the top of a cliff, hoping to catch sight of you, or of Reuben and the Indian; but no one could I see. And grieving from the bottom of me heart at the thought that you were lost, I scrambled down again, and made me way through the wood, guided by the sound of the waterfall.

"I went on and on till I had passed it, looking out for our friends; but not a glimpse of them could I see. At last, as I was getting pretty tired, I thought to meself that I would climb up into a tree to get some rest, and hide away in case the inimy should be looking for me. Scarcely had I stowed meself away among the branches when I heard voices. I dared not look out, but I guessed they were those of the Indians, who had by some means or other missed me tracks, and having gone down the bank before me, were now returning. They passed by without seeing me, which shows that they are not always so sharp-sighted as is supposed. I stayed up in the tree all night; but next morning, being very hungry, I came down to make me breakfast off the berries I had seen growing about. There was no lack of them, and I was lucky enough to knock down two young squirrels with a stick I had picked up.

"I was not happy in me mind all the time at going away without looking for you, so, thinks I to myself, I'll try and find him. I started up the stream again to the place where the canoe was upset. Not a trace of you could I discover; so with a sad heart I began to make me way back again. It struck me that, somehow or other, I must have wandered away from the river; and after trudging along all day I could nowhere find it. I felt still more unhappy than I had done before, and so, thinking to solace myself, I sat down on a rock, and putting me fiddle to me chin, began playing away. I tried one tune and then another, and a mighty dale of good it seemed to do me. I was playing the 'Groves of Blarney,' when half a dozen rid-skinned savages jumped out of the bushes and looked me full in the face.

“‘Whoo!’ says I. ‘Whaugh!’ says they, in chorus. ‘Whoo!’ says I again. On which they came nearer, flourishing their ugly-looking scalping-knives.

“‘Is that what you’re going to be afther?’ said I, feeling uncomfortable on the top of me head. ‘Keep off, me beauties, till I give you another tune.’ And putting up me fiddle to me chin—for I had let it drop, and small blame to me!—I began scraping away as if I would be afther shaking me arm off.

“‘Whaugh!’ says they again, beginning to skip and leap about.

“On this I played faster and faster; and the faster I played, the higher they bounded. ‘It’s all right,’ thinks I to meself; ‘they will not be doing me any harm if I can keep them at that game.’ So I thought I had best give them a tune with me voice into the bargain; and I sang, and scraped, and shook me head, till they all burst out into fits of laughter.

“On this I got up and made them a low bow; though I clapped my hat on again pretty quick, in case of accidents. And says I—‘If you will all sit down, and behave yourselves like dacent men, I’ll tell you a tale which will astonish you.’

“Whether or not they understood me, I could not for the life of me tell; but, sure enough, down they all squatted. And I began to recount to them how Daniel O’Rourke one night, returning from waking Widow Casey at Ballybothrem, and having taken a drop more than usual of the ‘crayther,’ saw the fairies come dancing round him; and I went on to describe what Daniel said, and what the fairies did. ‘And now,’ says I, ‘just sit quiet where you are till I come back and finish me story.’ And on this, giving another whoop, and a hop, skip, and a jump, I was making me way back to the river, when up sprang the Ridskins and came bounding afther me. ‘Sure, thin,’ says I, stopping short, and beginning to scrape away as before on me fiddle, ‘you don’t understand me.’ And, by me faith, indade they did not; for without more ado they got round me, and suspecting that I had been bamboozling them, began to prick me with their spears behind, as a gentle hint that I was to march forward.

“Seeing that there was no use trying to make me escape—for, of course, six men can run faster than one—I took their hints, which were not to be mistaken, and stepped out in the direction they pointed, now and then playing a tune to keep up me spirits and put them in good-humour.

“The long and the short of it is, that they made me prisoner, and brought me along with them; until we found some horses, on which—stopping a night or two on the way—we galloped along till we reached this place.

“And here I am, Masther Roger! well pleased to find that you’re alive, and to bear you company.”

And so Mike concluded his story.

The Indians allowed Mike and me to talk together without interfering with us. I told him that I would try to escape as soon as I could.

“Sure, and that is what I’ll be afther,” he answered. “But it’s more easily said than done, I am afraid. However, where there is a will there is a way; and cunning as the Ridskins think themselves, maybe we’ll be even with them.”

While we were talking we had observed some commotion among the inhabitants of the lodges; and presently we caught sight of a band of horsemen scouring across the prairie towards us, and flourishing their spears as they came along. At first I thought they might be enemies; but as no preparations were made for the defence of the camp, I knew that they must be friends. In a few minutes they galloped up; and the leading warriors, decked in war-paint and feathers, dismounted, each of them carrying one or more scalps hanging to the end of his spear. Our chief, Aguskogaut, who had put on his finest robes, advanced to meet them while they stepped forward; and their leader began a long harangue, which sounded very fine, although I could not make out what it was all about.

Mike and I stood on one side, thinking it as well to keep out of the way. The new-comers, however, after a time began to point towards where we were standing; and I guessed they were talking about us, and inquiring how we happened to be there.

Aguskogaut then, as we supposed, gave them an account of what had occurred; to which (as I judged from their gestures) they replied, that we ought to have been killed, and our scalps taken to adorn their lodges. On this Aguskogaut—who was, happily, our friend—made another speech; and lifting up his hand to heaven, appeared to be invoking the Great Spirit, and letting his countrymen understand that we were under his protection, and that no harm must happen to us. So successful was his eloquence, that the warriors appeared to be satisfied. At all events, we were allowed to move about within sight of the camp, no one molesting us.

The next day there was a great feast in honour of the victory which had been gained.

Mike and I were generally kept apart; but we occasionally found opportunities for meeting, when we did not fail to discuss plans for escaping. We were, however, too narrowly watched to allow at present of any of them being feasible: wherever we went, an Indian, apparently appointed for the purpose, had his eye on us. Had we managed to mount any of the horses tethered near the lodges or feeding around, we should have been immediately tracked and followed. Still, it kept up our spirits to talk of what we would do. We were not otherwise ill-treated, and were amply supplied with dried buffalo meat. Sometimes the hunters brought in a deer or a bear; but as there was always on such occasions a grand feast, the fresh meat did not last long.

At last, one morning the Indians turned out at daybreak, and immediately began taking down the tents and packing up their goods. The coverings for the tents were divided and done up in bales, and then secured to the backs of horses. The poor women were loaded with as much as they could carry, in addition to the younger children. The chief’s squaws were allowed to mount; but their animals were also loaded like the rest of the horses. The men carried only their arms, and spare buffalo robes strapped on to their saddles. Mike and I were compelled to assist in doing up

the bales, the squaws showing us how to perform the operation; sometimes scolding us, at other times laughing at what they considered our clumsiness.

When all was done, we were left standing; so we concluded that it was the intention of the Indians to compel us to march on foot.

“Begorrah,” exclaimed Mike, “I don’t like this fun at all, at all! See, there are two mustangs without anything on their backs! Small blame to us if we just get astride them.” And suiting the action to the word, he leaped on to one of the ponies, while I mounted the other. Whether they belonged to any of the Indians, we could not tell, but there were several spare animals besides.

Urging on our steeds, we joined the throng of warriors, who were already forming at a little distance from our late camp. The chief laughed when he saw us, and exchanged remarks with some of his companions. We concluded that these were in our favour, for we were allowed to retain our steeds.

The signal was now given to advance, and the tribe moved forward in a south-westerly direction. Though we were glad to be on horseback, yet our spirits sank when we found that we were getting further and further from home, and saw our chances of escape diminishing.

“No matter,” cried Mike; “the longer we stay with these Indians, the more we shall know of their ways, and be the better able to desave them. We must appear to be perfectly contented and happy, and try to spake their language—though it gives me a pain in me jaws whenever I utter one of their long words.”

“You are right, Mike; I will try to practise your philosophy,” I answered.

We marched on all day, stopping only for a short time to take our scanty meals. We could proceed but slowly, on account of the women and loaded animals; but the warriors scoured over the plain on both sides of our line of march, either looking out for an enemy or in search of game. Mike and I, however, were kept with the main body. At night we encamped either near a wood or by the side of a stream, where there were always trees to afford us fuel for our fires. Thus we went on for several days.

The Indians were, we guessed, making for a region frequented by buffalo, which had not this year come so far east as usual. At last we reached the spot at which they considered it desirable to remain; there being a full stream from which water could be obtained, and plenty of wood to afford fuel for our fires. In every other direction, as far as we could see, the country was nearly level, with little or no timber of any size growing on it. The women immediately set about their usual avocations. But as our meals were very scanty, it was evident that there was a scarcity of meat in the camp.

Early next morning a band of twenty men mounted their best horses to set out, as we concluded, in search of buffalo. Without asking leave, Mike and I got on our steeds and joined them. They did not object to this; probably supposing that we should not attempt to make our escape so far from home. We each of us obtained a bow and a quiver full of arrows, besides a long spear. None of the tribe possessed firearms.

We rode on for some distance, the main body keeping together, while scouts were sent forward to look out for buffalo. At last we reached a broad stream, and were proceeding along the bank, when my companions became greatly interested; and looking out to the left, I saw the whole plain covered with a dense mass of dark objects, which I at once guessed to be buffalo. It was evident that they were making for the river. The Indians, urging on their horses, dashed forward to try to intercept the herd before they could cross it. It seemed to me, however, that we should be too late to do that.

I could see the scouts galloping along the flank of the herd nearest us, trying to find an opening among them into which they might penetrate; while every now and then they let fly one of their arrows into the neck of an animal. As to turning the herd, or preventing it from crossing the stream, they might as well have attempted to stop the falls of Niagara in their downward course. With a tramp which shook the earth, and terrific bellowings sounding far across the plain, onward rushed the seemingly maddened creatures, tossing their heads, throwing high their tails, and turning up the earth in their course.

The river was reached before we could get up to them; and their leaders plunging in, they began to swim across, the animals in the rear driving those in front into the water. The former would have treated the latter in the same way had they reached the edge of a precipice, when all would have gone over together. As it was, they proved themselves good swimmers, quickly gaining the opposite bank, and rushing forward as at first.

Before we got within shot of them, the greater number had crossed; but the hunters, urging on their well-trained steeds, rode boldly up, shooting their arrows within a few feet of the creatures. Three or four only fell; others seemed to take no notice of their wounds; and several, springing out of the herd, with heads lowered to the ground, plunged forward furiously at their assailants. The nimble horses wheeled as they approached, and escaped the attack made on them; their riders never failing to discharge one or two arrows in return at the infuriated buffalo. Had we possessed firearms, many more would have been killed.

The Indians had no intention of giving up the pursuit. Where the herd had crossed the river, the water was too deep to allow us to wade over. At a signal from their leader, however, the hunters turned their horses, and galloped back in the direction from whence we had come; soon we reached a ford, where we all crossed, though the water almost covered the backs of our short-legged ponies. The herd could still be seen in the far distance, so we immediately galloped on to overtake it.

Though called buffalo, the animal I am speaking of is really the bison. It has a protuberant hunch on its shoulders, and the body is covered, especially towards the head, by long, fine, woolly hair, which makes the animal appear

much more bulky than it really is. That over the head, neck, and fore part of the body is long and shaggy, and forms a beard beneath the lower jaw, descending to the knees in a tuft; while on the top it rises in a dense mass nearly to the tops of the horns, and is strongly curled and matted on the front. The tail is short, and has a tuft at the end—the general colour of the hair being a uniform dun. The legs are especially slender, and appear to be out of all proportion to the body; indeed, it seems wonderful that they are able to bear it, and that the animals can at the same time exhibit the activity they seemed possessed of.

In summer the buffalo finds an abundance of food by cropping the sweet grass which springs up after the fires so frequent in one part or other of the prairies. In winter, in the northern regions, it would starve, were it not possessed of a blunt nose, covered by tough skin, with which it manages to dig into the snow and shovel it away, so as to get at the herbage below. In winter, too, the hair grows to a much greater length than in summer, when the hinder part is covered only by a very short fine hair, smooth as velvet. Many thousands of these magnificent animals congregate in herds, which roam from north to south over the western prairies. At a certain time of the year the bulls fight desperately with each other, on which occasions their roaring is truly terrific.

The hunters select, when they can, female buffalo, as their flesh is far superior in quality and tenderness to that of the males. The females are, however, far more active than the males, and can run three times as fast, so that swift horses are required to keep up with them. The Indians complain of the destruction of the buffalo—forgetting that their own folly in killing the females is one of the chief causes of the diminution of their numbers.

Huge and unwieldy as is the buffalo, it dashes over the ground at a surprising rate, bounding with large and clumsy-looking strides across the roughest country, plunging down the broken sides of ravines, and trying the mettle of horses and the courage of riders in pursuit of it.

To the Indians of the prairies the buffalo is of the greatest possible value, for they depend on these animals for their food, tents, clothing, and numerous other articles. They dress the skins with the hair on, and these serve as cloaks or coverings at night. The horns are converted into powder-flasks; the hides, when tanned, serve to cover their tents; and the wool makes a coarse cloth. When the flesh is eaten fresh, it is considered superior in tenderness and flavour to that of the domestic ox; the hump especially being celebrated for its delicacy. It is also cut into strips and dried in the sun; or it is pounded up with the fat and converted into pemmican. The hides are used also for leggings, saddles, or, when cut into strips, form halters. With the sinews, strings are made for their bows. From the bones they manufacture a variety of tools—of the smaller ones making needles, and using the finer sinews as threads. From the ribs, strengthened by some of the stronger sinews, are manufactured the bows which they use so dexterously. The bladder of the animal is used as a bottle; and often, when the Indian is crossing the prairie where no water is to be found, he is saved from perishing of thirst by killing a buffalo and extracting the water which is found in its inside.

To resume: In spite of the rate at which the buffalo were going, we soon overtook them on our swift mustangs; and now began the most exciting part of our day's sport. The leading portion of the herd kept close together; but in the rear the animals were separated—some lagging behind, others scattering on either side. The Indians, with their bows drawn or their spears couched in their hands, dashed in among them, shooting right and left, or plunging their weapons into the shoulders of the brutes—so dexterously aiming the blows, that many of their victims fell pierced to the heart.

Mike and I, though good horsemen, were but little accustomed to the Indian weapons; and although we did our best, many of the buffalo at which we rode either escaped being wounded, or galloped off with our arrows sticking in their bodies. We each of us, however, managed to kill an animal, and were galloping on, closely following one of the principal hunters, when a huge bull, after which the Indian was riding, turned suddenly round, and with its head to the ground rushed madly at him. His horse for a moment stood stock-still, watching the buffalo, while the Indian shot his arrow. It struck the animal on the neck, but failed to kill it. I expected that the next moment I should see both horse and rider rolling on the ground; but the well-trained steed sprang nimbly on one side, and the now infuriated buffalo dashed towards Mike and me. I shot my last arrow, but it glanced off the skull of the creature, which now came towards me, looking the picture of savageness.

I endeavoured to make my steed spring on one side, but barely in time to escape the tremendous battering-ram—for to nothing else can I liken the buffalo's head. The creature went rushing on till it was met by two Indians, one of whom shot his arrow, while the other struck his spear so exactly in the buffalo's breast that the huge creature immediately fell over dead.

Such was the beginning of our day's hunt. I was completely carried away by the excitement of the chase, and was as eager to kill buffalo as any Indian amongst them. As I had exhausted all my arrows, I had now only my spear to trust to. Had I been dependent on my own skill, I should have been quickly overthrown, and probably gored to death; but my well-trained mustang knew far more about the matter than I did, so I let him get out of the way of any of the animals which attacked me as he thought best.

I had singled out a young bull which turned off from the herd, and I followed it up, expecting to be able to get ahead of it, so that I might point my spear full at its breast in the way I had seen several of the Indians do, knowing that my mustang would spring on one side should it be necessary. Suddenly the bull stopped; then turning round and seeing me before it, came rushing towards me. I endeavoured to run my spear into its breast, and then make my steed spring out of the way. I thrust my spear with all my force; but before I could let go my grasp it was whisked out of my hand, after which my horse sprang clear of the animal with a bound which very nearly threw me from the saddle, and had galloped some distance away before I could stop it.

What a glorious opportunity this would be for escaping! I thought to myself. Had Mike been near me, I should have proposed doing so. I was looking round, to try and ascertain where he was, when down came my steed—having stepped into the hole of a prairie dog, numbers of which honeycombed the ground around—and I was thrown right over his head. As I lay half-stunned, I saw to my horror the whole herd of buffalo tearing along towards me, ploughing

up the turf with their hoofs, and bellowing loudly. I fully expected to be trampled to death before many minutes had passed, or to be tossed high in the air over their shaggy backs. My horse, looking up, saw his danger, and seemed to understand the state of affairs as well as I did. He made desperate struggles to rise; and I endeavoured to get on my feet and seize the reins, hoping to mount before the herd was upon me. I might thus gallop off, and keep ahead of them till I could find an opportunity of turning on one side.

I rose, but fell again before I could reach the reins which hung over my steed's neck. Already I could almost see the eyes of the infuriated beasts; but I was not going to give up my life if I could help it. I therefore made another desperate effort, and reaching the rein, patted the animal's nose, turning his eyes away from the approaching foe; then in an instant—I scarcely know how I did it—I was on his back.

I was fully aware that the same accident which had brought me to the ground might again occur; but of that I must run the risk. Before, however, my horse could spring forward, the herd was close upon us. Digging my heels into his flanks, I urged him on, shrieking at the top of my voice. The sound of the tramping hoofs behind him, the bellowing of the bulls, and the expectation every instant of being probed by their horns, made him strain every muscle to keep ahead of them. His speed was far greater than theirs, and he soon distanced them; but still, the danger of again falling was imminent, for as we flew along I could see in every direction the burrows of those abominable little prairie dogs, though the inhabitants had taken good care to ensconce themselves far down out of the way of the hoofs of the buffalo. Looking over my shoulder, I saw that by turning to the right I might soon get clear of the herd, which did not extend far on that side. I accordingly pulled the right rein, so as to ride almost across the course the herd was taking; and observed, as I did so, a number of the Indians galloping along by the side of the buffalo, and shooting their arrows.

I was congratulating myself on the prospect of escaping, when down came my steed once more; and as I was as unprepared for the accident as before, I was thrown over his head, and more severely injured than at first. Still, though partly stunned, I could see what was taking place. I fancied that I was, at all events, sufficiently to the right of the herd to escape being trampled to death, when just then a huge bull, who must have had his eye upon me, wheeled from his companions, and, putting his head to the ground, made, as I thought, towards me. To escape by mounting my horse was now out of the question, for I had been thrown too far to seize the reins, and the poor animal still lay struggling to get his feet out of the hole. Any other than a prairie horse would have broken his legs, or sprained himself irretrievably. Just when I expected to be trampled to death or gored by the bull's horns, I saw that the savage creature was making towards my horse instead of me; but as it reached the mustang, the latter drew his feet out of the hole, and throwing up his heels at the bull's nose, scampered off, followed by his enemy, while the rest of the herd swept by like a torrent, not ten yards from where I lay. Some stragglers, however, caught sight of me; and another big bull was rushing on to give me a taste of his horns and hoofs, when a loud "Whallop-ahoo-aboo! Erin go bragh!" sounded in my ears.

"Don't be afraid, Masther Roger, me darlint!" shouted Mike, for it was he who had uttered the cry; and dashing forward with spear in rest, he struck the bull behind the shoulder with such force that his weapon must have pierced the animal's heart. It swerved on one side, thereby enabling Mike to avoid trampling on me, and the next moment fell over perfectly dead.

A number of Indians passing at the moment, applauded Mike's achievement. I managed at the same time to get on my feet, and pointed to my horse.

"Ay, to be sure; I'll be afther him," cried Mike, "as soon as I can git me shtick out of this baste's carcass."

He tugged and tugged till he liberated his spear, then galloped off in the direction my horse had taken, leaving me by the dead bull.

I had no longer any fear of being knocked over by the buffalo, as all, except a few laggards, had passed by, and were further away to the left. I could just see Mike attacking with his spear the animal which had pursued my horse; but a faintness again came over me, and I was obliged to sit down on the ground. I had no fear of being deserted, as I was sure that the Indians would come to look after the animals they had killed; and in a few minutes Mike returned, leading my horse, who appeared none the worse for his falls or his encounter with the buffalo.

We had by this time reached a part of the country where woods and hills could be seen rising here and there above the plain. The rearmost of the buffalo had become separated, and many of the Indians, having exhausted their arrows, were now attacking them with their spears; two hunters generally singling out one animal, and riding alongside it till they had wounded it to death. As far as I could see, on either side, the country exhibited an animated scene,—the buffalo scampering along in every direction, with Indians riding after them, their robes wildly flying in the air, while they flourished their spears above their heads. On the ground over which we had come could be distinguished numerous dark spots,—the bodies of the buffalo we had slain. Indeed, our comparatively small party had, I afterwards found, killed upwards of two hundred animals; which will give some idea of the numbers annually slaughtered by the Indians.

At length they gave over the chase, and commenced the operation of skinning their victims, leaving most of the carcasses a prey to the wolves. The tongues and humps, however, were generally secured, as well as the flesh of the cows, which is, as I have said, far superior in tenderness to that of the bulls.

The horses loaded with skins and meat, we returned at night to the camp; and as our captors had now an abundance of provisions, they were in an unusually good-humour.

"Sure, thin, but this wouldn't be a bad opportunity for us to git away from these rid gintlemen," observed Mike, as we watched them feasting on the produce of the day's hunt—stuffing such huge quantities of flesh into their insides, that it seemed impossible, were they long to continue the operation, that they would be able to move.

Chapter Seven.

Mike's precaution—We again go buffalo-hunting—The prairie on fire—A ride for life—Our escape from the fire and the Indians—Hobbling horses—The fire is stopped by the river—A brief sleep—Our fishing tackle—Mike catches a cat-fish—Our lean-to—Mike loses his book—The visit of Bruin—A hearty meal—Death of Mike's horse—I am taken sick—Mike's careful watch—My horse is drowned—Our visit to the rice-Lake—We find Lily and Dora there, with Ashatea, in a canoe, gathering rice—Lily's account of Manilick, the young chief, Ashatea's lover—Kepenu's address—Again taken ill—How I recover.

Mike and I were on the watch for an opportunity of mounting our horses and galloping off unperceived by the Indians; but, though they feasted for several successive days, that opportunity never came. Unfortunately, so far as our enterprise was concerned, they had no whisky in the camp, and were therefore able to watch our movements.

In a few days the hunters again set out, to obtain a further supply of buffalo robes; not that these were required for their own use, but they intended to exchange them with the traders for whisky and other articles—especially firearms and ammunition. The chief and two or three of the leading men had already procured weapons, although as yet they were by no means expert in their use.

"They'll soon give us a chance, if they get howld of the whisky," observed Mike; "so we must have patience till that happy time comes."

As we had proved ourselves such expert hunters on the previous occasion, the Indians decided to take us with them, and allowed us to select two capital horses, as also some tough spears and a supply of arrows. We likewise stowed away, at Mike's suggestion, as much dried buffalo meat as our pouches would hold. "There is no harm in having it," he observed; "and it may just come in convanient if we get the chance of giving our rid-skinned frinds the slip."

I was glad to find that the Indians were directing their course to the north-west of the camp, towards a plain on which, the scouts had brought word, buffalo had been seen feeding the previous evening, and it was supposed that they were not yet likely to have got far off. When we reached the ground, however, it was found that they had gone away further to the northward, so chase was immediately made after them. The herd must have gone on at a somewhat rapid rate, for we forded several streams, and entered on a part of the prairie across which, after riding a few miles, we could see nothing but the waving grass on every side.

The chief had of late been friendly, and kept Mike and me near him. He was evidently pleased with the good-humour we exhibited, and probably thought that we were contented with our lot.

At last we came in sight of the rear-guard of the herd, when the Indians at once gave chase.

We had been riding on for some time, the buffalo evidently moving at a greater speed than they do under ordinary circumstances, when the chief, who was on the right of the party, stopped, and looking round him, shouted to those who were within hearing. I could not understand what he said, and asked Mike if he could.

"Sure, it's something not altogether plisant," he answered. "Look there, Masther Roger. What does that mane?"

He pointed, as he spoke, to a long line of what looked like grey mist, forming wreaths, and rising above the horizon to the westward.

I saw several of the Indians standing up in their stirrups and gazing in the same direction. They knew perfectly well what it was, but they were trying to ascertain a point of vital importance to us all. The prairie was on fire! Of that there was no doubt; but, in order to give themselves the best chance of saving their lives, it was necessary to settle, before galloping forward, what course to take.

While the Indians were discussing this point, Mike, who had been looking about him, exclaimed to me,—“There is one way we want to go, and that is to the north-east. Never mind if we do get singed a little, for sure, as we came along, I remember that we passed several swamps. If we can get into one of them we shall be safe, as the fire won't be afther crossing the wather.”

"But the Indians will probably take the same direction," I observed.

"Sure, if they intinded doing that same, they would have been off at once," he answered. "They have some raison for what they think of doing, and we have another for what we will do; so come along, Masther Roger. There's only one thing I mourn for, and that is me fiddle; but no matther; maybe I will be afther getting that another time. Whallop-ahoo-aboo! Erin go bragh!" Then digging his heels into his horse's flanks, he set off in the direction he proposed; and I, seeing that the Indians were too much occupied to notice us, galloped after him.

As I turned my head I saw them scampering along towards the north-west. The fire having approached with far greater rapidity than I could have supposed possible, I began to fear that they were right and we were wrong, when I saw the flames catching the dry grass and flaring up furiously, with dense masses of black smoke above them, and already scarcely a mile behind us; indeed, they looked very much nearer. Onward came the conflagration, faster than any horse could gallop. Happily we had the start of it, but we must, we knew, keep our steeds at the utmost stretch of their powers to maintain a safe distance.

As our course diverged more and more from that of the Indians, they soon discovered our object, and shouted to us to accompany them.

"Bawl away, me boys!" answered Mike. "It is not convanient just now to attind to you."

When our intention became clearly evident, the chief despatched two of his people in pursuit of us; but we kept well ahead of our pursuers, and they, fearing that the fire would overtake them, turned and took the same direction as the main body. Soon after this we lost sight of our late companions.

"I would be well content never to set eyes on you again, my jewels," said Mike, shaking his spear as a sign of farewell.

Although my companion kept up his spirits, I could not avoid fearing that, after all, the fire would overtake us. Happily our horses were fleet and in good wind, as we had not exhausted them during the early part of the day; and all we could do at present was to gallop on. The wind, of which there had hitherto been very little, now got up, and blew almost in our faces, driving the fire in the direction the Indians had taken, and at the same time keeping it back from that in which we were going. Still on came the fire, the whole country in our rear apparently one mass of flame. Even now, did we stop, we should be overtaken. Happily for us, there were no buffalo in the direction from which the fire was coming, or we should have run the danger of being overwhelmed by them. Smaller animals, however, came rushing by us or close at our heels, but too much frightened even to notice us; and we were in too great a hurry to interfere with them.

I am almost afraid to say how many miles we covered in a couple of hours, but certainly not till that time had elapsed did we get to a safe distance from the fire; and even then, on looking back, we could see it raging along the whole verge of the horizon to the westward and southward. It was clear to me that Mike was mistaken about the swamps, and had not the wind, providentially for us, changed, we should probably have fallen victims.

We now slackened our speed a little, hoping to meet with some broad river which might prove a barrier to the flames, should another change of wind drive them towards us, as there was nothing, so far as we could see, to stop the fire from quickly overtaking us. Our horses, too, were already suffering from want of water, and so were we. We therefore eagerly looked out for a pool or stream at which we might slake our thirst. At length, greatly to our joy, as evening was approaching, we caught sight in the far distance of a silvery line of water glittering in the rays of the western sun. It was a river running from the north-west to the south-east, and as we approached we saw that it was of considerable width. Should it not prove fordable, we resolved to swim across.

With infinite satisfaction we reached the bank of the river, and descending quickly, allowed our horses to drink; while, stooping down by their sides, we lapped up the water eagerly with our hands. It seemed as if we could never drink enough. When we had somewhat slaked our thirst, we looked about for a place at which to cross. From the appearance of the current a little lower down, we hoped that we should there find the river fordable; we accordingly agreed to lead our horses to it.

On climbing up the bank we observed that the fire was still raging in the direction from whence we had come; and it was evidently very much nearer. We had wished to allow our animals to rest and recover their strength before attempting to cross; but on again looking back we saw that there was no time to be lost. We accordingly at once mounted, and urged our steeds into the water, keeping their heads up the stream.

As we advanced it grew deeper and deeper, and we expected every moment to have our horses taken off their legs; still it would not do to turn back. Our greatest chance of safety lay in pushing forward. The cool water restored strength to our beasts, and, sagaciously leaning over against the current, they soon got across the deep part. We had now no further difficulty, and in a few minutes landed safely on the opposite side. Fortunately there was plenty of fresh herbage, and we allowed the animals to crop it, while we sat down and discussed some of the pemmican with which, by Mike's forethought, we had provided ourselves. Without it we should have starved; for we could find nothing eatable anywhere around. As night was approaching, and our horses were too much knocked up to go further, we resolved to remain on the bank of the river till the morning. We accordingly hobbled the animals, and then looked about for some place which might afford us shelter.

Our search was rewarded by the discovery of a hollow made by the stream in the bank during the spring floods. Here we hoped that we might rest secure from danger. Indians were not likely to be passing at that time of the evening, and no wolves would find their way, we believed, into our cave. Our horses were, of course, more exposed to risk than ourselves; but we were obliged to let them take their chance, for unless they were allowed to feed during the night they would be unable to carry us the next day.

After leaving our horses to pick up their supper, we were about to return to our cave, when, on looking to the eastward, we observed that the fire was making most rapid progress in our direction. We felt thankful indeed that we were on the right side of the river.

On came the conflagration, the heat sensibly increasing every minute, while dark wreaths of smoke filled the air, below which the burning grass and shrubs hissed and crackled. The darkness of night added to the fearful character of the scene. As far as the eye could reach there appeared a long unbroken line of fire: now, as it caught some thick bush or clump of trees, forked flames rose high in the air; in other places it came along maintaining the same height, but ever advancing, till it reached the bank of the river, when every shrub and tree was enveloped in a sheet of fire; and notwithstanding the width of the river, we expected every instant to see some of the sparks carried across, and the whole country on our side given over to destruction. We might save our own lives, but our horses would inevitably be lost.

We sat anxiously watching the conflagration as it raged along the entire bank: now the sparks, wafted by the wind, flew high into the air; now burning branches fell hissing into the water.

"It's all very fine," observed Mike, after watching it for some time; "but I would rather be after going quietly to slape."

I felt quite as tired as did Mike, but I sat up till my eyes began to close and my head to droop, and I could not for the life of me tell what I was looking at. I had just sense enough left to lie down alongside Mike, when I was almost

directly asleep. I do not think I ever slept more soundly in my life than I did on that occasion. So thoroughly wearied out was I, that I forgot all about the fire raging within a few hundred yards of us; or prowling wolves, or Indians, or rattlesnakes, which might have made their holes in the bank.

When I awoke I found Mike sitting up, dawn having just broken. The fire had burned itself out, a few burning embers alone appearing on the opposite side, with here and there a blackened stem of some tree which had resisted the flames. One side of the river presented a scene of utter desolation, while the other was still green, and glittering with the dew of early morn.

We knelt down and returned thanks to God for our preservation, and offered up a petition that he would still take care of us. We then ate a little more pemmican, and took a draught of water from the river; though, to do so, we had to drive back the burned twigs and black scum which came floating down the stream. We then caught our horses, which, in consequence of being hobbled, had not strayed far; and after leading them down to drink we mounted and rode on to the north-east. Reaching some elevated ground whence we could obtain an extensive view, we looked round to ascertain if any Indians were in sight. Not a human being could we discover; and we therefore, with increased hopes that we might escape, continued our journey.

I asked Mike how many days he thought it would take us to reach home, that I might see if his computation agreed with mine. I calculated, recollecting the distance we had come with our captors, that it would occupy us a week at least, or perhaps ten days. He was of the same opinion.

"But will our pemmican last us as long?" I asked.

"Sure, that depends upon how much we take of it each day," he answered. "The berries are now ripe, and by good luck I have found a couple of fish-hooks in me pocket. Maybe, also, I can manage to manufacture some traps in which to catch birds or small animals; and though we have no arrows, if we are hard pressed we may make some; and we have got our spears. If we could only meet with a young bear, we should have flesh enough to last us for many a day. Sure, we'll not be fearing harm till it comes upon us."

I agreed with Mike that we were not so badly off after all, and we rode forward in good spirits. There was still, of course, the danger of being overtaken by the Indians; but on that score Mike thought that we need not trouble ourselves. They would probably suppose that we had been destroyed by the fire; or they themselves might have met with the fate from which we had so narrowly escaped.

The sun shone brightly from the unclouded sky; the atmosphere was clear, and we could see objects at a great distance. We looked out, as we rode along, for any of the natives who might be passing either on the war-path or engaged in hunting, as we resolved to endeavour to avoid them rather than risk an encounter. They might prove to be friends; but if enemies, we knew that we should have a poor chance of coming off victorious. Whenever the country was open, we galloped across it as fast as we could venture to push our horses without over-fatiguing them; but when we came to woody districts we kept as much as possible under shelter of the trees, so as to avoid being seen. We did not forget that, should enemies cross our trail, they would probably follow us. We therefore very frequently looked about us, to ascertain if we were pursued. We agreed that, in that case, we would run for it, trusting to the mettle of our horses for escape.

It may seem strange, but I enjoyed the excitement, and should not have been alarmed had we caught sight of a dozen Redskins, provided they were on foot, and we had a fair start. Mike did not quite enter into my feelings, however.

"Sure it would be better, Masther Roger, if we could get along asily, and just stop and enjoy our dinner and supper without the feeling that at any moment our scalps might be taken off our heads," he observed.

"We have kept them on through much greater dangers than we are now likely to meet with," I answered; "and while we have fleet horses under us, we may laugh at the Indians. They won't know that we are without firearms, and they are terribly afraid of bullets."

For all this, I should have been glad had we possessed a good rifle and a brace of pistols apiece. Though our spears might serve us in a close encounter with a bear, or even with wolves, we were but ill able to protect ourselves against the arrows of a party of Redskins.

Whenever we reached a height we surveyed the country both before and behind us, to make sure, in the first place, that no Indians were following; and, in the second, that none were encamped ahead, or, as I have before said, moving about. During the day we met with several small streams at which we could water our horses and slake our own thirst; and the first night we encamped under shelter of a wood, where there was plenty of grass for our steeds. We contented ourselves with forming a lean-to, but did not light a fire lest it should betray our whereabouts. Having eaten a little more pemmican, we formed our beds of spruce-fir tops, and lay down to rest.

"Do you slape as sound as you like, Masther Roger; I'll jist keep one eye open, in case any unwelcome visitor should take the throuble to poke his nose into our palace," observed Mike. "When you think you have had rest enough, you can jist wake up and let me take a snooze till morning."

I thanked my honest friend for his kind intentions, and in less than half a minute my eyes were closely shut. When I awoke it was already dawn, but Mike, instead of keeping watch, was as sound asleep as I had been.

"Hallo, Mike!" I exclaimed; "I thought that you intended to rest with one eye open all night."

"Sure, Masther Roger, haven't I done so, barring the last few minutes," he answered. "I did my best, thinking that every moment you would be getting up; and small blame to me if at last I dramed that you did get up, and told me

that you would take a turn at watching."

"Never mind, since no harm has happened," I said. "Now let us mount our horses and ride forward till we can get some cold water for breakfast."

Our animals, who now knew us, came at our call; and throwing ourselves on their backs, we galloped forward as we had done the day before. Not a human being did we meet with during the whole day, and in the evening we encamped by the side of a broad stream overshadowed by trees. From the appearance of several deep holes close under the bank, we hoped that fish might be found in them. As soon, therefore, as we had secured our horses, we set to work to manufacture lines for the two hooks which Mike had found in his pocket.

Some people might have been puzzled how to get the lines, but we were not to be defeated in our object. We procured them by cutting off a small portion of the two hobbles, which consisted of long strips of deer-hide, and plucking some hairs out of our horses' tails. The deer-hide we cut into thinner strips, which served for the upper part of the lines, while the lower were formed of the hair platted together. We thus in a short time had two good lines, to which we carefully secured the hooks. Having caught some grasshoppers, we determined to try them for bait; while our spears served us for fishing-rods. Hunger made us keen sportsmen, and never had I felt so anxious for success.

My line had not been long in the water when I felt a bite. I almost trembled with eagerness as I gave a gentle jerk, sufficient to hook the unwary fish. It tugged pretty hard, and I was sure that I had it fast; but still I was afraid that it might break my line. Carefully I drew it along till I got it sufficiently near the surface to ascertain its size. To my satisfaction, I saw that it was not more than two or three pounds' weight. After playing it for some time I drew it towards the bank, when Mike, who had hitherto not got a bite, left his rod and rushed into the water to secure our prize, exclaiming—

"Faix, thin, we'll have this darlint for our supper to-night; and, bedad! there is another at my line. Hurrah! good luck to us!"

Throwing the fish to me, which proved to be a gold-eye, he sprang off, just in time to catch his rod, the end of which was nearly off the bank.

"Och, murther," he cried out, "but it's a big one!" and he rushed along the shore, jumping over all impediments; shrieking out in his eagerness in a manner which would have made a sedate Indian fancy that he had gone out of his mind.

I could not help laughing as I watched him.

"Come along, Masther Roger, and lend me a hand, or the baste will be afther getting away."

Securing our first prize, I followed Mike as he rushed along down the bank, afraid of breaking his line, which was by this time stretched to the utmost. Now he gently pulled it in, now he allowed it to go off again, as he felt the strain increase. By thus dexterously managing the fish for some minutes, he at length brought it close to the shore, and I caught sight of an ugly-looking dark monster.

"Sure, it's a cat-fish, and mighty good ateing too, though it's no beauty," exclaimed Mike. "Get howld of him, Masther Roger; get howld of him, or he will be off."

Following Mike's example, I dashed into the water and grasped the huge creature, although, covered as it was with slime, it was no easy matter to do so. Giving it a sudden jerk, I threw it on shore, rushing after it to prevent its floundering back again into its native element. It proved to be a prize worth having, being at least seven or eight pounds in weight. It was a wonder how, with such slight tackle, Mike had contrived to hold it.

We agreed that, as we had now an ample supply of fish for one day at least, we would not run the risk of losing our hooks; and accordingly, carrying our two prizes, we made our way back to the part of the bank we had selected for our camp. It was under a widespreading tree, which extended over the water, and would materially serve to hide a fire, which we agreed to light on a piece of flat ground, almost level with the water. We soon collected a sufficient supply of sticks, and had our fire blazing and our fish cooking. The cat-fish, in spite of its ugly name and uglier looks, proved excellent, though somewhat rich—tasting very like an eel.

Having eaten a hearty meal, and cooked the remainder of our fish for the next day, we put out our fire, and then arranged our dwelling for the night. It consisted simply of branches stuck in the ground, and extending about six feet from the trunk of the tree. We closed the entrance, so that no wolves or bears could pay us a visit without some warning; and kept our spears by our sides, to poke at their noses should they make their appearance.

The night passed quietly away, and the next morning at daylight, having caught our horses, we swam them across the stream. The sun soon dried our clothes, and as we had no fear of starving for that day, we rode merrily onward.

Next day we were as successful in fishing at a stream we reached a short time before sundown; but we were not so prudent, for after each of us had caught a couple of fish we continued our sport, when Mike's hook was carried off. He looked as if he was going to burst into tears, while he surveyed the end of his line with an utterly comical expression of countenance.

"No, bedad! it's not there," he exclaimed; "the baste of a fish has got it—ill luck to him! But we shall have the consolation of ateing his brothers; and maybe some day we will come back and hook him."

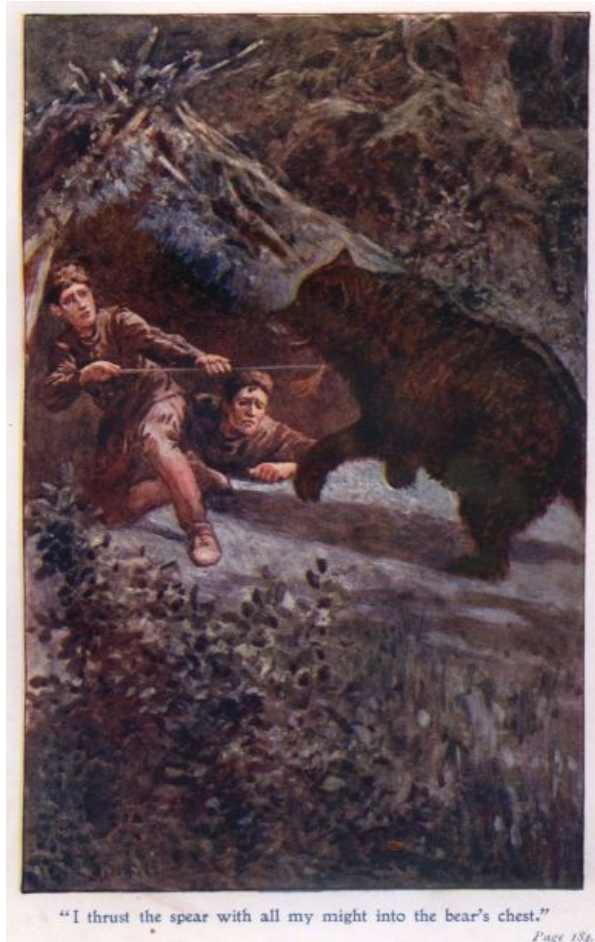
We had now but one hook left, and this it was necessary to secure with the greatest care. What a value we set upon that little crooked bit of steel! Our lives might depend on it, for though Mike had set several traps of various

descriptions, no animals would consent to be caught by them.

Two days more we travelled on, catching sight of what we believed to be Indian encampments in the distance, but, according to our resolution, carefully avoiding them. Our fish had come to an end, our last handful of pemmican was exhausted, and for a whole day we had no food except a few berries. Towards evening we reached a wood. As there was a stream not far from it, while Mike was engaged in forming our camp I endeavoured to hook a fish.

My efforts were vain; for some time none would bite. At last I felt a tug, and I was sure that I had hooked a fish. Eagerly I drew it towards the bank. It seemed to come willingly enough at first, but there was another tug, and my line almost flew out of the water. I cast a blank look at the end. The hook was gone!

Feeling very disconsolate, I returned to the camp. Mike endeavoured to comfort me for our loss, but he could not supply us with food. We therefore lay down to rest, keeping our spears as usual by our sides, and Mike offering to watch while I slept.



Whether or not he had done so I could not tell, but suddenly I was awakened by feeling the branches at my side roughly shaken; and looking up, what was my dismay to see, by the moonlight streaming through the wood, a big brown bear poking his nose through the bushes, and not live feet from us! Giving Mike a nudge with my elbow, I grasped my spear, and rising on my knee, without a moment's consideration as to what might be the result, I thrust the spear with all my might into the bear's chest. With a fierce growl and open jaws it rushed at me,—as it did so, driving the spear still further into its body; whilst I, expecting the movement, sprang to the inner end of our arbour.

Mike in a moment was on his knees,—he had not time to rise to his feet,—and seizing his weapon, drove it into the bear's neck. Still the creature, though thus desperately wounded, broke through the branches we had put up; but the thick leaves prevented it from seeing us as clearly as it would otherwise have done. The life-blood was flowing from its wounds. Mike managed, as I had done, to get out of Bruin's way; and before the creature could turn to pursue either of us, over it fell, on the very ground on which we had been sleeping. It struggled for a few seconds, gnashing its teeth, and I had to retreat through the branches to avoid it. Mike, who had managed to escape at the other end, now joined me, and getting hold of the handle of his spear, endeavoured to pull it out of the bear's body. After a few tugs he succeeded in regaining possession of his weapon; and the first thing he did with it was to plunge it again into the animal's breast.

"I did it just to make sure," he remarked. "These bastes have as many lives as a cat; and maybe he would have come to again, and taken to ateing us instead of our ateing him, as I hope we will be after doing before long."

Whether or not the last thrust was necessary I do not know, but the bear ceased struggling; and Mike, springing on the body, exclaimed—

"He's dead enough now, anyhow! And we'll take the liberty of cutting him up, and getting our teeth into his flesh; for, sure, he has spoilt our rest for the night."

The centre of the hut was by this time a pool of blood; we therefore dragged out the bear, and while Mike began scientifically to flay the carcass, I collected sticks for a fire. We soon had a good one blazing up, and some of the

slices of the bear toasting before it. We were too hungry to wait until the morning.

“Sure, the bear was sent to us to be eaten,” observed Mike; “and suppose we get nothing else till we reach home, it will serve to keep us alive till then.”

Having satisfied the cravings of hunger, we cooked some more slices of the best portions of the meat, to serve for our breakfast before starting; and the remainder we cut into thin strips to smoke over the fire, and afterwards to dry in the sun. As both we and our steeds were tired, we agreed not to start till a later hour than usual. There was a risk in remaining, but still it was better to run it, rather than knock up our horses or ourselves.

Mike faithfully kept watch, and the sun was already high in the sky when I awoke. We hung up the strips of bear's flesh, to give them a drying before we packed them to carry with us. We also did up a portion of the fresh meat, which would, we calculated, last us for some time. Then, having taken a late breakfast, we mounted our horses and continued our journey.

It would take too much time, were I to describe the events of the next few days. After continuing on for the time we supposed it would occupy us in reaching home, we were still unable to recognise any of the features of the country. Mike, however, remarked that as forests and hills and rivers were all much alike, it was no wonder that we could not make out where we were. I proposed directing our course eastward, as we should thus certainly come to some of the settlements. Mike thought that we had not got sufficiently far to the north, and advised that we should continue on in that direction. I gave in to him.

Our horses had hitherto held out well, but suddenly Mike's began to stagger, and, almost before he could throw himself from its back, down the poor animal fell. What had been the cause of the horse's death we had not knowledge sufficient to ascertain; only one thing was certain,—that it was dead, and that we must take it by turns to ride, and thus get on at a much slower pace. There was no use stopping to mourn our loss, so, having taken off the saddle and bridle, we did them up in a package, and placed them on the back of my steed. We did this lest the dead horse should be recognised as having belonged to the Indians, and some of their friends might discover it and pursue us.

We had, shortly afterwards, a river to cross. True, we might have made a raft, but as we were both good swimmers we determined to trust to our own arms and legs for getting to the other side. After some persuasion we induced the horse to go in; and then, Mike taking the rein, we each of us put a hand on the saddle and swam over, I on one side and Mike on the other. Though swept down for some distance, we got safe on shore at last, but we had to trudge on in our wet clothes. Not only were we wet, but so was our imperfectly dried meat; the consequence was, that when we came to cook it in the evening it was scarcely eatable. Our clothes, too, were damp when we lay down at night.

I awoke shivering the next morning, though the fire was still blazing near me; and when I tried to get up I was unable to stand. Mike was in a state of great distress. The remainder of our provisions had become worse; but even had the food been of the most delicate description, I could not have touched it.

Mike, faithful fellow that he was, immediately set to work to build a hut, so that I might be sheltered from the heat of the sun as well as from the wind. As soon as it was completed he carried me into it, and closing the entrance, said he would set out in search of food. In a short time he returned with some delicious strawberries, which greatly refreshed me.

For several days he tended me with the greatest care, and was fortunate in trapping several young birds, which, though not very fat, served to restore my strength. I asked him how he had managed to eat the dried bear's meat, being very sure that he had not touched any of the birds he had caught.

“Bedad, Masther Roger, it's not the mate at all I've been ateing,” he answered. “I found no lack of big fellows with four legs hopping about in the marsh down there, and, for want of better food, I took the liberty of cooking them. They are not so bad, afther all; only the idea of the thing was not plisant at first.”

Mike had been living on frogs, I found out, during all my illness; and as for a whole day he was unable to catch any birds, I begged that he would let me taste the frogs. I confess that I had no reason to complain of the food, for he gave me the hinder legs alone, which I should have supposed to have been those of small birds, had he not told me what they were.

I was at last strong enough to move about, and I proposed that we should at once continue our journey. Mike agreed, therefore, that we should start the next morning.

When daylight arrived, he left the hut to look for the horse while I prepared breakfast. He was a long time absent, and I began to grow anxious, wondering what could have become of him. I waited and waited till I could bear the suspense no longer, so, going to a height at a little distance from the wood in which we had formed our encampment, I gazed around on every side. Should any accident have befallen him, how fearful would be my fate! I was also deeply grieved at the thought of losing him; but I confess that selfish feelings for the time predominated. There was a river, I should have said, in the distance, and on looking in that direction I at length saw a figure moving towards me. It might be Mike, or it might be an Indian, and perhaps an enemy. Still, I did not think of concealing myself.

Great was my joy when, as the person drew nearer, I recognised Mike. I rushed down to meet him; but I saw that there was something wrong, by the expression of his countenance.

“What is the matter, Mike?” I asked. “I was terribly afraid that you were lost.”

“Sure, a great deal is the matther,” he answered. “That baste of a horse has been afther drowning himself; and you will have to walk the rest of the journey on foot, except when I carry you on me shoulders—and that I will do, as long

as I have the strength, with the greatest pleasure in the world.”

I assured Mike that I was so glad to see him, that I cared little in comparison for the loss of the horse, for I felt perfectly able to walk any distance.

“Well, that is one comfort; and seeing that we have nothing to carry except our spears, which will help us along, matters might have been worse,” he answered.

Both of us were determined to make the best of what had happened; so, having eaten our breakfast, and packed up the remainder of our provisions, we recommenced our march forward. Mike insisted on our encamping early in the day, so that he might search for food; and before dark he had procured a supply of the same description as that on which we had been living for several days.

The next morning we went on as before, and I felt my strength considerably restored. Soon after noon, having reached the summit of a height, we saw before us a wide river, connected with a series of small lakes, their borders apparently deeply fringed with tall grass. This, Mike said, he believed must be rice, and it would afford us a change of diet if we could procure some; we accordingly made our way down towards the nearest. We thought, also, that we might catch some unwary ducks, if they were not accustomed to the sight of human beings.

On getting close to the borders, we fancied we heard some sounds from a brood of ducklings. We therefore crept cautiously along the shore, when, to our infinite satisfaction, we caught sight of a couple of ducks, and not one, but two broods. We had got almost near enough to catch hold of the hindmost, when the cries of the mother-ducks warned their young ones to make the best of their way from us. Eager to seize our prey, we dashed into the water after them; when, to escape us, they endeavoured to make their way through the high grass.

We had each of us caught a couple, when what was our astonishment, on pressing aside the grass, to see directly before us a canoe with three girls in it! Two of them were busily employed in beating out the rice into their canoe, while the one who sat in the bow, on hearing the noise we made, turned her head with an inquiring but somewhat alarmed glance towards us. Yes! I could not be mistaken; it was Lily! Just before her sat Dora, while Ashatea occupied the stern.

“Lily, Lily!” I exclaimed. “Don’t you know me?”

“Yes, yes! I do. O Dora, Dora! there is Roger and Mike Laffan. They were not drowned, or killed by the Indians! I always said so,” she cried.

In a moment their paddles were out, and, guided by Ashatea, they were making their way towards us.

“Come into the canoe!” they exclaimed in chorus. “There is room for you; and we will take you to our friends. They will be so glad to know that you are alive, though you both look sadly tired and thin.”

“No wonder, Mistress Lily,” observed Mike; and he gave an account of my illness.

They were all eager to hear how we had escaped; and as the canoe skimmed lightly over the smooth surface of the lake, urged by their paddles, I told them all that had happened to us, from the time we left the camp of our Indian friends. I then asked if Reuben and his companion had ever been heard of.

“Yes; it was they who told us that you had either been drowned or made prisoners by the Indians,” said Lily. “They escaped by running through the rapids at a place where no canoe had ever before ventured. And Reuben has undertaken to come up here and escort us back to the settlement. We have been paying our long-promised visit to Ashatea; and I can assure you she received us in the most hospitable manner. You will like to see the beautiful dome-shaped wigwam her people built for us, with a divan all round, and the floor covered thickly with matting. We felt quite like Indian princesses, when she escorted us into it. It is divided by a curtain into two portions. The inner serves as our bedroom, and the outer as our drawing-room. As there is space for a fireplace in the centre, we agreed that we should not object to spend the winter in it; while at the present season it is delightfully cool and pleasant.”

“Ah, but it is not equal to one of your comfortable houses,” observed Ashatea, who understood all that Lily said, and had, I found, improved greatly in her knowledge of English, having spent a considerable time at the settlement with Lily and Dora.

We had some distance to go, I found, before we could reach the spot where Kepenau and his people were now encamped. The chief had, Lily told me, spent several months there; and had, besides, made a tour with our missionary friend, Martin Godfrey, for the purpose of being instructed in gospel truth, which he was most anxious to impart to his countrymen. The chief had, some time before, learned to read, and had devoted all his attention to the study of the Scriptures, so that he was well able to carry the gospel to others.

My uncles and aunt had been greatly grieved at my supposed loss, and it had made them less contented with the settlement than they had before been; Uncle Mark especially missed the assistance of Mike, though honest Quambo had done his best to supply his place.

Various schemes were afloat for occupying fresh territory, far to the westward. Some speculators had visited our settlement, and my uncles had listened to their descriptions of the advantages to be gained with far more interest than they might otherwise have done.

“I had hoped that we should remain where we are,” said Lily. “I am attached to the place, and should be content to spend the remainder of my days here.”

“You have not got over many of them as yet, Lily,” I said, looking up in her face.

"They may be many, in comparison with those which are to come," she answered gravely, and I thought mournfully.

"I hope to see you grow into a dear old woman, like Aunt Hannah. I like to think of the future, and I want my future to be happy. However, it will be a long, long time before you grow old, Lily."

"I already feel old," she said; "or I did, at least, when they told me that you were lost, Roger, though I did not believe it; but perhaps I shall now feel young again. I have been very sorry, too, about poor Ashatea," she continued in a whisper; "she has her troubles, though she does not show what she feels by her countenance as much as we white people do. A young Indian, who is said to be superior to most of his people, has long wished to marry her; but as she is a Christian and he is still a heathen, though I believe she likes him very much, neither she nor her father will consent. This has produced a feud between them; and the conduct of Manilick—for that is his name, which, I believe, means a 'pine-tree'—has caused them a great deal of anxiety. Kepenau fears that Manilick will try to carry off his daughter by force, and he is therefore obliged to keep scouts constantly watching the movements of the young chief. Indeed, when you appeared through the rice grass I fancied that you were Manilick, and that you might have come to carry us all off together; not that I believe he would venture to injure any white people, since he professes to be our friend."

I was much interested in what Lily told me, for I fancied that Reuben had lost his heart to the Indian girl. Still, superior as she was in many respects to those of her race, she would scarcely have made a fitting wife for a well-educated young man; though the rough traders and hunters of the Far West frequently marry Indian wives, who make them as happy as they wish to be, but are seldom able to bring up their children properly, the chief objection to such alliances.

While Lily was talking to me, Mike was recounting to Dora and Ashatea, in his rich Irish brogue, our various adventures with the Indians. Thus the time was passed while the girls paddled across the lake and up the river till we reached Kepenau's lodges.

As we neared the shore, we observed a large concourse of people assembled near the wigwams. Many by their costume appeared to be strangers, while others were Kepenau's own people. I saw that Ashatea was regarding them with great interest. In front, on a rock, sat Kepenau; and I judged by his attitude and the tone of his voice that he was addressing them on a matter of importance, while they listened with rapt attention. His right hand pointed to the sky, while his left was directed towards the earth; and by the words which reached me I knew that he was preaching the gospel—setting before the people the way of eternal life.

We all stopped at some distance to listen, and so intent were he and his auditors that none perceived us. Ashatea, who stood next to Lily, was regarding the scene with even greater interest than we were. I saw her eye directed towards a young Indian, who by the ornaments on his dress I guessed was a chief. I pointed him out to Lily.

"Yes," she said, "that is Manilick. I am very glad to see him here, as I hope he is receiving the truths which Kepenau is endeavouring to impart."

Ashatea was, I had no doubt, hoping the same.

Kepenau had nearly brought his address to a conclusion when we arrived. Now, rising from his seat, he took Manilick's hand, and spoke to him affectionately, as it seemed to me. The young chief hung down his head, and answered only in monosyllables.

Kepenau, after speaking in the same way to others, offered up a prayer, in which several of his own people joined. Not till then did he discover us. With a look of surprise he at once advanced to greet Mike and me, his countenance as well as his words exhibiting his satisfaction. He afterwards turned again to the young chief, and addressed him. He had, until now, I found, suspected that Manilick had instigated the attack on us, if he had not taken part in it, and he wished openly to exonerate him. Kepenau questioned me as to the dress and appearance of the Indians who had made us prisoners. From my description he was satisfied that they were really Sioux, and that Manilick had nothing to do with them.

We were anxious to return as soon as possible to the settlement, to relieve the minds of our relatives but that evening, in consequence of the fatigue and hardships I had endured, I was again taken ill. Kepenau had a wigwam carefully built for me, in which Lily and Dora assisted Mike in watching over me. Good food, however, was all I needed; and as our Indian friends had abundance of fish and game, I was soon well again.

Just as I had recovered, we one evening saw a large canoe approaching the camp. Who should step out of it but Uncle Mark, accompanied by Reuben, Quambo, and several men! They had brought a quantity of goods to supply their Indian friends.

As may be supposed, Uncle Mark was delighted to find that I was alive; and Quambo, in the exuberance of his joy, embraced Mike.

"But where de fiddle?" he exclaimed, after their salutations had ceased. "Just play one tune. It do my heart good, and we set all de camp jiggling."

"Och, botheration! but the Ridskins have got it—bad luck to the spalpeens! and sorra a one of thim can play a tune, or I would not mind it so much," answered Mike.

"But you must try to get him back," observed Quambo; "if dey not play on him, dey not want him."

"I'm mighty afraid it's burned, though," said Mike, with a sorrowful countenance.

When Uncle Mark heard of Mike's loss, he told Kepenau and Manilick. The latter had that day paid a visit to the chief. They were both of opinion that should the fiddle be in existence, it might, by proper diplomatic proceedings, be recovered; and, greatly to Mike's joy, Manilick undertook to ascertain what had become of it, and, if possible, to restore it to its owner.

Chapter Eight.

Uncle Mark's canoe—Our start for home—The rattlesnakes—Mike longs for his fiddle—Our night encampment—Jacques Lerocque's fishing joke—Mike's terror at the supposed Indian ambuscade—The phantom bear—Our arrival at home—Kakaik and the fiddle—Mike's delight—Kepenau's second visit—Reuben's chagrin—Mr Simon Spark's advent—His glowing description of the far north-west—The forest on fire—Our hut destroyed—Our escape.

The canoe in which Uncle Mark had come up had been built by some Indians on the lake, who intended to dispose of it to the fur-traders; but, in consequence of some dispute, they had refused to let them have it, and had thereafter sold it to my uncles at a reduced price.

It was of far superior construction to those we had hitherto seen used, though of the same materials.

Formed of large sheets of birch-bark, kept in shape by delicate ribs of lance-wood or willow, it was nearly forty feet in length, and sharp at both ends; and the seams where the bark was sewn together were covered by a thick resinous gum, which became hard in the water. Like the small canoes, it required careful handling; for, having no keel, it was easily turned over. It was impelled by six or eight paddles,—three or four on one side, and the same number on the other; one man steering with a paddle, as well as paddling.

Uncle Mark had come down one river, then across the lake, and up another river, instead of the shorter route along the course of several narrower streams with rapids, which necessitated the same number of portages. By this means he was able to bring a cargo of cottons, cutlery, and other heavy articles. He purposed returning by the same route, though it might have been possible to carry the canoe across the portages, as the bales of peltries occupied less space than the cargo he had brought. There was sufficient room, too, for the four additional people the canoe had now to carry.

The day before we were to start, Ashatea appeared to be very unhappy. It was, I concluded, at the thought of parting from Lily; but Lily afterwards told me that it was more on account of Manilick, who still refused to embrace Christianity.

"We must pray for him," said Lily. "Kepenau has taken every opportunity of speaking to him, and putting the truth plainly before him; but though he would very gladly make Ashatea his wife, he still remains firm in his heathen belief."

We could no longer delay our return home, as the autumn was advancing, and before long we might expect storms and frosts, which would make our proposed voyage in the canoe both trying and dangerous.

The whole tribe came down to the bank of the river at early dawn to see us off, as Uncle Mark wished to cross the lake before sunset. We should have to encamp for the night, and continue our voyage up the river next morning.

We made good progress down the stream, having the current with us, and entered the lake just as the sun rose above what appeared like a sea horizon, though we knew that the shore was not far off on the opposite side. The calm lake shone like a burnished mirror. The shore we were leaving was tinted with various colours, the higher ground here crowned by groups of spruce-firs, and in other places rocky and barren, but still picturesque in the extreme.

I took a paddle and sat by Lily. Reuben and Mike also made themselves of use; while Uncle Mark sat with Dora at the bottom of the canoe. It was the first voyage I had ever taken on the lake, and Lily and I agreed that it would be very pleasant to have a canoe or small vessel of our own, and to cruise round the shores, exploring every inlet and creek.

As the sun rose the heat became intense; not a breath of air stirred the surface of the lake, and Lily, who had taken off her hat, was very glad to put it on again. After paddling for some distance we landed to breakfast, or rather to dine; for we did not intend to stop again till we went on shore to encamp for the night.

Wild rocks fringed the shore, and we had to exercise great caution in approaching it, for the slightest touch would have knocked a hole in the bow of our canoe, and we should very soon have had the water rushing in. We had, therefore, to look out for some opening into which we could slowly paddle till we found a landing-place. After making two or three ineffectual attempts, we succeeded in finding a bank with an almost perpendicular side, on to which we could at once step from the canoe.

Immediately after landing, all hands set to work to collect wood for a fire. An abundance lay on the ground, driven there by the wind. Lily and Dora undertook to cook the breakfast, the materials for which consisted of eggs, fish, maize cakes, and dandelion coffee—the roots having been prepared by Aunt Hannah. We soon had a fire blazing up, when, as Uncle Mark declared, Lily and Dora performed their duties in a most efficient manner.

Just as we had finished, one of the men, who were seated at some little distance from us, started up, exclaiming, "Take care! take care! there are rattlesnakes near us."

Scarcely had he spoken when I saw one of the venomous creatures, the sound of whose tail the man had heard,

rearing its head not five feet off from Lily. In another moment it might spring on her. Fortunately a long thin stick lay close to me, which I seized, and with all my might struck the snake a blow on the head which brought it to the ground, while I cried out to Lily to run to a distance. Almost in an instant the snake recovered itself, and sounding its rattle as it moved forward, made an attempt to spring at me. Again I struck it; and Mike coming to my assistance, it was quickly despatched.

Where one rattlesnake is found, there are generally many more. Scarcely two minutes had passed ere another made its appearance, crawling out of a hole under a tree. While Mike and Reuben went to attack it, Uncle Mark advised that we should all get on board without delay. Our breakfast and cooking things were quickly packed up; and the second rattlesnake being destroyed, Mike and Reuben followed us into the canoe. Scarcely had we shoved off when three or four more rattlesnakes were seen, and we felt thankful that none of us had been bitten by them. We had literally encamped in the midst of a colony of the venomous reptiles.

We had to exercise the same caution in going out of the harbour as on entering it; after which we continued our course to the eastward at a moderate distance from the shore.

"The day was, Masther Roger, when you and I would have been very happy to have fallen in with as many of those same snakes as we could have caught," observed Mike to me. "They're mighty good ateing, barring the head and tail. At laste, the Ridskins hold to that notion."

I was, I confess, very thankful that we had not been compelled to eat the creatures; though I did not know what hunger might have induced me to do.

As we paddled on, Uncle Mark asked Lily and Dora to sing. They were not girls to offer excuses, and declare that they were out of voice.

"What shall it be?" said Lily.

"Anything you like," replied Dora; and immediately they commenced a melody which, although I had heard it before, sounded very sweet on the calm water.

Reuben and I joined in chorus; and the men, as well they might, applauded heartily. Then one of them commenced a canoe-song, in which they all joined. As soon as they ceased, Lily and Dora gave us a third; and so we went on, singing and paddling over the calm water.

"Och! but it's a sad pity that them Ridskins have got me beautiful fiddle!" exclaimed Mike. "Would I not have been giving you all a tune! Sure, if I do not recover it I will be breaking me heart intirely."

He said this in so melancholy and yet comical a tone, that Reuben and I burst out laughing. We reminded him that our Indian friend had promised to try and recover his beloved instrument, and by degrees he regained his spirits.

The weather continued fine, and the water smooth as before. As I gazed over the vast expanse spread out on our left, I could scarcely fancy myself navigating an inland lake, small though it was compared to many in that region. I thought, too, of how it would appear should a storm arise, and the now tranquil surface be turned into foaming billows by the furious wind. Our canoe, with sides not much thicker than a few sheets of brown paper, would have been a frail bark for navigating the lake under such circumstances.

Evening was approaching, and though we had paddled on all day we could not as yet see the mouth of the river, near which we intended to camp. We redoubled our efforts, therefore, to gain it during daylight.

The sun had almost reached the watery horizon to the west, when we espied a clump of tall trees which marked the spot towards which we were directing our course. Having rounded a point, we ran into a bay with a grass-covered shore; and here we were able to land without difficulty.

We unloaded the canoe, and carried our packages up to a grassy spot underneath the trees. The men immediately set to work to collect bark with which to form a wigwam for Lily and Dora; we contenting ourselves with a lean-to, which would afford us protection from the night wind. The usual fire was lighted, and as we were all very hungry, no time was lost in cooking supper. As soon as it was over Lily and Dora retired to their abode, as they had been up and ready to start some time before dawn.

We sat round the fire spinning yarns, as the sailors say, and singing songs. We were speaking of the necessity of trying to get some more fresh fish, as our stock was nearly exhausted, and Mike had told the party how successful we had been till our hooks were bitten off.

"But there is a place not far from here where we can catch fish without hooks," was the answer.

"Sure, and I should like to see it!" exclaimed Mike. "But how is it to be done?"

"Why, with nets, to be sure," said the canoeman. "And if you like to come with me, I will show you how I do it."

Mike at once agreed to the proposal.

Hearing that some nets which would suit the purpose had been left *en cache* with other articles close at hand, Reuben and I and another man agreed to accompany them.

Jacques Lerocque, Mike's friend, was an amusing fellow, and fond of practical joking. It struck me at the time that he was up to some trick; but he put on so grave a face, and spoke so earnestly, that my suspicions were banished.

On reaching the cache, which was close to the camp, I found that the nets were something in the form of hand-nets, only larger. We were also provided with a lantern containing a thick tallow candle.

“You see how to use these nets!” said Jacques. “We put them into the water, and then hold the candle at the further end. When the fish see the light, they swim towards it and are caught.”

The plan seemed very feasible, and Mike declared that he thought it was a mighty convenient way of obtaining a supper.

We were to fish in twos; one man to hold the net, and the other the light. Reuben agreed to accompany Mike, and I was to take the other man; while Jacques said he would superintend operations, promising us an abundance of sport if we would follow his directions.

Going on for half a mile over hard ground, we reached a marsh which was connected with the lake.

“It is very full of fish, which come in to feed on the insects clinging to the reeds,” observed Jacques, “But you must not mind wetting your feet.”

However, having so recently recovered from a severe illness, I thought it wiser, when it came to the point, not to do this; so Jacques took my intended companion with him.

“Here, Master Reuben, you take one bit of candle and I the other,” said Jacques, cutting the piece in the lantern in two.

Reuben and Mike at once plunged into the marsh, and made their way through the rushes. I heard their voices, although from where I stood I could not see them. Presently Mike exclaimed—

“Here comes a big one! Howld the light furdur back, Masther Reuben, and, bedad, we’ll have him. Sure, though, he’s gone off; come a little furdur. There he is now; this time he’ll be afther getting caught, sure enough.”

Then the sound of splashing and the crackling of the reeds reached my ears, when presently Mike cried out,—“Och! murther, but what are these bastes about? They’ll be biting off our noses, and bunging up our eyes! But we must have the fish, though. Och! murther, murther!”

Reuben’s voice joined in chorus, though with varied exclamations.

I ran to a point near the spot which my friends had reached, and there I saw Mike bending down, holding the net in one hand, while he endeavoured to beat off with his hat a swarm of mosquitoes which were buzzing thickly round him. Reuben stood near holding out the candle, and a second net in his other hand, which prevented him from defending his face from the venomous bites of his persevering assailants. Still, though his countenance exhibited the sufferings he was enduring, he manfully kept his post.

Just then the most fearful shrieks and cries rent the air, sounding like the war-whoop of a band of savage Indians.

“Och, but the Ridskins are upon us!” cried out Mike. “We must run for it, Masther Reuben dear. Niver mind the nets, or the fish, or the mosquito bastes. It’s too much for any mortal man to stand, with the savages into the bargain. Come along as fast as your legs can carry you; but we will find Masther Roger first. We must not lave him behind to be scalped; and as to Jacques and Tom Hodges, if they have not taken care of themselves, it’s more than we can do for them.”

Mike was rapidly uttering these expressions while, floundering along, he made his way up to where I was standing. Whether or not Reuben was aware of the true state of the case I could not tell, but he was certainly following much more leisurely than might have been expected. I had that moment caught sight of the grinning countenances of Jacques and Tom over the rushes, and guessed that the former was playing off one of his tricks.

When Mike saw me, he exclaimed, “Run, Masther Roger, run! sure, don’t you hear the shrieks of the Indians? They will have the scalps off our heads, if we don’t show them our heels, before many minutes are over.”

I burst out laughing, and pointed to our two companions, who, however, at that moment bobbed down and hid themselves among the rushes.

Mike now began to suspect that a trick had been played him; but nothing ever made him angry, so, laughing as I was doing, he exclaimed—

“Come out of that, ye spalpeens! It will be many a day before you get me to go fishing with you again.”

Jacques, having had his joke, recovered the nets, and being well experienced in the style of sport, in a short time caught half a dozen fine fish, with which we returned to the camp. I was glad to roll myself up in my blanket, and go to sleep under the shelter of our lean-to; but the rest of the party sat up cooking and eating one of our prizes.

I was awoke before long by the sound of loud growlings, which made Uncle Mark and several of the party start to their feet, with guns ready to receive the bear from whom they expected an attack. Recollecting Jacques’ propensity to practical joking, I lay quiet; and I heard my uncle come back soon afterwards, growling almost as much as the supposed bear, and observing that the brute had got off, though it must have been close to the camp. I said nothing, though I suspected who had performed the part of the bear. The next morning I looked about, but could discover no traces of such an animal. Jacques, if he had represented it, kept his own counsel; and after we had started I heard him complaining that his night’s rest should have been so disagreeably disturbed.

Lily and Dora had been awakened, but they, trusting to the vigilance of their protectors, had wisely gone to sleep again, being very sure that, did any savage animal approach the camp, we should soon give a good account of it.

We had a long paddle up the river, and had again to encamp, but no event worthy of mention occurred; and the next day, late in the evening, we reached the settlement. Lily and Dora and Reuben went to their respective homes; and after we had paid a visit to Uncle Stephen and Aunt Hannah, to convince them that we were still alive notwithstanding our perilous adventures, we returned to the hut, where we were welcomed by our three canine friends, which had been left to guard it under charge of one of Uncle Stephen's men.

The autumn soon passed by, and once more the winter was upon us. We had plenty of work in felling trees, and either burning them or dragging them over the snow to places where we intended to cut them up. Occasionally we paid a visit to the settlement; indeed, I was always glad of an excuse for passing a few hours with Lily when I could spare the time. I looked in, also, on my friends the Claxtons. Both they and my uncles, as Lily had told me, were, I observed, becoming more and more discontented with the settlement, as were likewise a number of other people, and the attractions of the new regions of the far west were the constant subject of conversation. We at the hut troubled ourselves much less about such matters than did our friends. We had plenty of hard work, and were pretty well tired when the day's labours were over. Mike declared that the only drawback to his happiness was the loss of his fiddle, which he never expected to see again.

"Dat am de cause ob my grief," observed Quambo, putting his hand to his heart. "If you did get it, would not we hab a dance! We would kick up de heels all night long, to make up for lost time."

It was some days after this that we one evening saw an Indian coming through the opening which had now been made down to the river, walking on snow-shoes, and with a package of some size on his back.

"Here comes Kakaik! I wonder what him bring!" exclaimed Quambo, running forward to meet our visitor.

Kakaik having made signs that he had got something valuable, Mike advanced with open mouth and outstretched hands. An idea had occurred to him.

"What is it, me friend?" he asked eagerly.

The Indian began a long speech.

"Och, man alive! just tell us what it's all about," cried Mike, who could no longer restrain his curiosity.

By this time Uncle Mark had come out of the hut. The Indian, however, would go on with his address, of which we did not understand a word. Mike kept all the time pointing to the package, and entreating him to undo it.

At length the Indian stopped and commenced untying the thongs which secured the mysterious parcel, and exposed to the delighted eyes of Mike—his fiddle and bow.

"Sure, I thought so!" exclaimed the Irishman, eagerly grasping his treasure. "Erin go bragh!—long life to yese, me jewel!" and clapping the instrument to his chin, he made an attempt to play on it; but it required, as may be supposed, no small amount of tuning. Mike at once set to work, however, turning the keys and drawing the bow over the strings, all the time uttering expressions of gratitude to the Indian, and to all concerned in the recovery of the fiddle. The moment he had tuned it to his satisfaction, he began playing one of the merriest of jigs, in unison with his own joyous spirits.

Quambo on hearing the sounds started up, snapping his fingers, kicking up his legs, and whirling round and round in time to the tune. The Indian, grave as was his exterior, forthwith joined him, out-vying him in his leaps, and adding the wildest shrieks and shouts. I could not long resist their example, and in a few minutes even Uncle Mark was dancing away as vigorously as any of us; Mike all the time kicking his heels, and bobbing his head with a rapidity which seemed to threaten the dislocation of his neck. It was the wildest scene imaginable, and any one observing us would have supposed that we had all gone mad.

At last we had to stop from sheer want of breath, and on entering the hut Kakaik informed us that it was through the exertions of Manilick that the fiddle had been recovered. He had paid half-a-dozen yards of cotton, the same number of strings of beads, a looking-glass, and a frying-pan, for the treasure. It had been regarded with reverential awe by the possessors. He sent it, however, as a gift to the rightful owner, and declined to receive anything in return.

"Faix, thin, I will be grateful to him till the end of me days," answered Mike; "and I hope that you will receive, for your throuble in coming, Masther Kakaik, my 'baccy-box, and half-a-dozen red cotton handkerchiefs for your wife and childer, all of them bran-new, except one which I wore as a night-cap when I last had a cowl, and another which has been in use for a matther of a week or so."

Kakaik accepted the proffered gifts with due gratitude, and further informed us that the Indians from whom Mike and I escaped had succeeded in regaining their encampment, though the fire had been close to their heels; and until Manilick's ambassador visited them they had supposed that we were destroyed. By the manner in which we had got away from them, we were very much raised in their opinion; though they threatened, should they ever catch hold of us, to have our scalps off our heads.

"Much obliged to the gintlemen," remarked Mike; "but we will not let them do that same if we can help it, and we'll show them that the Palefaces have as much brains in their skulls as the Ridskins, cunning as they think themselves."

Kakaik consented to stop with us for the night, and we had several more tunes from Mike's fiddle, and another dance, almost as boisterous as the first. Kakaik, after remaining a day with us, took his departure, loaded with as many

articles as he could well carry; some forced on him by Mike and Quambo, others being given by my uncle and myself as presents to our friends. I should have said that Kakaik also told us that Manilick was frequently at Kepenau's camp, and appeared to be favourably received by Ashatea.

Mike's fiddle was a constant source of amusement to us during the remainder of the winter.

Spring returned, whereupon Kepenau paid us another visit. He said that he and his people had determined to move further westward, into an unoccupied territory, and he feared that some time would pass before he could again see our faces, but that he hoped occasionally to come with the peltries he and his people might obtain.

I accompanied him to the settlement. Lily was much grieved to find that she and Ashatea were not likely to meet again for a long time.

"I thought that she would have become like one of us," she said, "and live in a comfortable house, and adopt our habits."

"A flower of the forest cannot bloom on the mountain top; nor can one born in the wilderness live happily in a city," answered Kepenau. "Though she may not adopt the habits of the Palefaces, she loves them, and the true faith they have taught her, and will ever pray to the same God they worship to protect them from danger."

Reuben scarcely attempted to conceal his disappointment, and even offered to accompany Kepenau back to his lodges; but the chief shook his head.

"If it is not well for my daughter to dwell among your people, still worse would it be for you to live with us, natives of the land," he answered. "Stay with your parents, and support and protect them, and you will be blessed, and made far happier than were you to follow the desires of your heart."

After spending some days with us, Kepenau took his departure.

We were, as usual, very busy getting in the crops on our newly cleared ground, and carrying on other agricultural pursuits. The summer was intensely hot,—far hotter than I ever recollected it. The crops had come up early, but the locusts appeared and destroyed every growing thing which had risen above the surface. This greatly disappointed those who had looked forward to an early harvest.

About this time a stranger arrived at the settlement. He quickly made himself known as Mr Simon Sparks; and said, moreover, that he was the chief land agent of a new territory far to the west, which wonderfully surpassed our settlement in richness of soil, and fertility, and abundance of game. His accounts were eagerly listened to, and my uncles were completely carried away, as were a large portion of the community. Still, some of the older people were of the opinion that well should be let alone; and that if we took as much pains in cultivating the ground as we should have to do were we to make a long journey, we should prove, notwithstanding the difficulties which might beset us, as successful in the end.

Mr Sparks, however, was not a man to be defeated in his object; he continued arguing the point till he had won over a good many adherents. Still, he had not gained a sufficient number to suit his purpose.

"Well, friends," he said, mounting his horse one evening, as a large number of the inhabitants were assembled in the chief open place in the village, which was designated the Square, "do I look like a man who would mislead you, or fail to carry out my promises? I have slain many a bear, hunted the buffalo across the prairies, and, single-handed, fought and defeated scores of Redskins. With such fellows as you at my back, even if ten thousand were to attempt to stop us we would force our way onward, and send them to the right-about. What are you afraid of? If rivers are to be crossed, we can form rafts and swim our cattle over. There is grass on the plains, and game in the forests to supply all our wants; and a glorious country at the end of the journey, where happy homes can be established, and wealth obtained for ourselves and our children. I ask you again—Do you take me for a man who would bamboozle you; or do I look like one who will prove true as steel, and fulfil all his engagements, as an honest man should do? Those who believe that I speak the truth, hold up their hands; and those who don't, keep them down, and we part friends notwithstanding."

Few of us could help confessing that, as Mr Simon Sparks, with his tall sinewy figure, firm-set lips, and keen eyes, sat there on his strongly-built mustang, his rifle held across his saddle, he did look like a man very capable of doing what he said he had done, and what he said he would do. Nearly all hands were raised up.

"Thank you, friends," he said; "I will stay another day with you, and we will talk the matter over again. If a fair number are determined to move, we will go together; if not, I shall soon find others who know their interests better than you seem to do."

Saying this, he dismounted, and went to spend the evening with Mr Claxton, who was one of his chief adherents.

I returned home to report to Uncle Mark what Mr Sparks had said; but he was doubtful about moving till he had secured a purchaser for the land we had cleared with so much labour.

We were about to turn in for the night, when Quambo, who had been to look after the cattle and pigs, reported that he observed a peculiar glare through the opening towards the west, though no camp-fire was likely to be burning in that direction. We all hurried out to look at what the black had described, and saw the brilliancy of the glare rapidly increasing.

"It is such a fire as it will take many bucketfuls of water to put out!" exclaimed Uncle Mark. "As I live, boys, the forest is in flames! And they are likely to extend pretty rapidly, too, with the wood dry as it now is."

"What had we better do?" I asked.

"Collect our cattle, pigs, and poultry, take our guns and ammunition, and a supply of food, and get out of the wood as fast as possible," he answered, quite calmly. "In a few minutes, if I mistake not, we shall have the forest blazing away all round us; and nothing that I know of can save the hut from destruction. It will be fortunate if the village itself escapes, for the forest comes close up to it on two sides; and there will be no time to clear away the trees, and put an open belt between the houses and the fire."

Influenced by Uncle Mark's spirit, we immediately set to work to drive in the cattle, set the pigs free, and collect the poultry. We loaded the waggon with as many articles as it could carry; and harnessing the oxen, commenced our retreat.

We were not a moment too soon, for already the forest to the westward was in a blaze, extending from the river far away to the north. A narrow belt of trees alone remained between us and the conflagration, the dense smoke, curling in thick wreaths, being sent by the wind towards us, and making respiration difficult. While Uncle Mark took charge of the waggon, the rest of us drove on the other animals, directing our course to the settlement by the only open road. We knew, indeed, that in a short time we might have the fire on both sides of us.

The flames rose up high above the tops of the trees in the rear. The crackling of the burning branches, and the loud reports as the thick trunks were split in two by the heat, sounded alarmingly near—the whole landscape before us being lighted up by the glare shed from the burning forest. We might, we believed, escape with our lives, were we to leave the waggon and the cattle, but that was very far from Uncle Mark's thoughts. By voice and whip we urged on the oxen, and shouting, shrieking, and using our thick sticks, we endeavoured to drive forward our refractory charges.

The inhabitants of the village must have seen the conflagration long before this, and would, we hoped, be preparing for their escape.

I remembered the fire on the prairie. Then only the grass was burning, but now we should soon have the tall trees in flames on both sides of us. In a few minutes the flaming masses might be tumbling down on our heads, and overwhelming us. The thought of this prevented us from relaxing our efforts. We ran here and there flourishing our sticks, shouting and bawling till we were hoarse; still, we kept ahead of the fire, although it was advancing rapidly in our track. The hut, outbuildings, and enclosures must already, we knew, be reduced to a mass of cinders; but there was no use thinking about that. We should be fortunate, did we preserve the more valuable part of our property.

At length the road became wider, and we got among clearings, which would somewhat stop the progress of the flames, did they not impede them altogether. We dared not halt, however, but pushed on, directing our course to the south side of the village, where the country was completely open, and no trees left standing. The river, too, ran in that direction, and some flat marshes on the banks would afford security to all fugitives.

I was thinking all the time of Lily, and my uncle and aunt; and had not my duty compelled me to remain with the cattle, I would certainly have hurried on to warn them, in case they should not have discovered their danger. However, I felt sure that Uncle Mark would not have forgotten them, and that he was satisfied they would take the necessary steps to escape. Uncle Stephen had also a waggon in which to convey his household goods out of the way of danger.

As we got near the village, we were satisfied that the inhabitants were aroused; for already several waggons were moving forward in the direction we were going, while we heard the shouts of the men driving others in the rear. Fortunate, indeed, were those who had waggons, as the rest of the people would have to carry on their shoulders everything they wished to save.

The wind, which had increased, hurried forward the fire with terrific rapidity, and drove the smoke in dense masses round us, so that, bright as were the flames, we could often see but a short distance ahead. The shouts and cries of the terrified settlers increased in loudness. All hope that the village would be preserved must by this time have been abandoned. The fire was coming up from the west and north-west, leaping at a bound, as it seemed, over the clearings; the burning branches, driven by the wind, quickly igniting all combustible matters amid which they fell.

We at last reached the ground I have spoken of; but not without the loss of some of our hogs, which had got away from us, in spite of our efforts to drive them forward. Having early taken the alarm, we were the first to arrive, but others from the village quickly followed; when we immediately set to work to cut down every bush and blade of grass which might catch fire.

In a short time I heard Uncle Stephen's voice, and thankful indeed was I to see Lily and Aunt Hannah safe. They had found time to load their waggon with the most valuable part of their property and a store of provisions. The Claxtons directly afterwards arrived, and reported that there were still several persons remaining in the village, who believed that the conflagration would not reach it, and that they would be perfectly safe. We were, however, too busily engaged in clearing the ground to think of anything else.

It was fortunate that these precautions had been taken. In a short time, as we looked towards the village, we saw the flames rising up in all directions. The fire came working its way along; in some places in thin lines, in others like a wave rolling over the sandy beach, and consuming everything in its course.

Before the night was half over a semicircle of flame was blazing up round the spot we occupied; the river, which was here very broad, preventing the progress of the fire in that direction. Still, a burning brand, driven across a narrow part by the wind, might set some dry grass or bushes on fire; and it was impossible to say how far it might then extend. Frequently the stifling smoke almost prevented our breathing, and we had to throw ourselves on the ground to escape it.

All night long did the fire rage round us. The heat was intense, and the smoke and fine black dust blown over us was most oppressive. Happily, we had water near to quench our thirst, blackened though it was with ashes; and we had reason to be thankful that we had reached a place of safety—the only one near the settlement where we could have escaped destruction.

The women and children were placed in the waggons, where they endeavoured to obtain some rest. The ground was too wet for the men to lie down; and we therefore either leaned against the wheels of the waggons or walked about. Indeed, we had ample occupation in beating out the fire, which ran along the most dry portions of the ground we occupied, wherever there was herbage of any description.

Morning came: but the fire raged on; and there was but little chance of our being able to move for some days to come. We had, however, no lack of meat; for, besides the pigs and poultry, several deer and numerous small animals rushed for safety towards our camp—only to meet the fate they were attempting to avoid. Two or three bears, also endeavouring to escape from the flames, were shot. No wolves or foxes came near us: they had probably, exercising their cunning, made their escape from the burning forest against the wind.

Daylight showed us such a scene of desolation as I hope never again to look on. Not a vestige of the village remained; while blackened trunks—some with a few of their stouter limbs still branching from them, others reduced to mere black poles, and many burned down to stumps—appeared in every direction. The crops had disappeared; and not even a fence was standing.

Thus the settlers, with sorrowful countenances, beheld the labour of years destroyed.

Chapter Nine.

The settlers determine to accept Mr Sparks' offers—Lily's sorrow at leaving the old settlement—Mode of advance—Sabbath observance on the march—We are left behind, in consequence of our waggon breaking down—Our great want of water—A dangerous descent—The horrid spectacle of the wolves—Our oxen flagging, I proceed forward alone in the direction of a fire in the distance—My joy upon discovering our friends—Reuben offers to accompany me back—We get lost—Faithful Mike finds us—Strange horsemen—Mike, Reuben, and I taken prisoners by the Sioux.

The fire gave more support to the schemes of Mr Sparks than did all his arguments and glowing descriptions. Mr Claxton, my uncles, and most of the settlers who possessed the means of transport, resolved to accept his offers, and at once prepared for the journey. Those who had no waggons made up their minds to remain where they were, and to cultivate the ground, which the ashes would render more fertile than before. The grass, after the first rain, would spring up and afford a rich pasture for their cattle; and the charred trunks would enable them to rebuild their log-huts and put up fences. I had reason afterwards to believe that they chose the wisest course; though at the time I was well pleased at the thought of the long journey we were to take, and the adventures we might expect to meet with.

I was surprised to find that Lily did not enter into my feelings. "I would far rather have stayed where we were," she said. "The trees would soon have become green again, and we could have cultivated the ground as before, and the river and hills would have remained the same; though, as Uncle Stephen and aunt, and you, Roger, wish it, I am ready to go."

My uncles had saved a bag of dollars, and the Claxtons and others were provided with cash. Therefore, as soon as the country was sufficiently cool to enable the waggons to move, two were sent off to the eastward to bring back such stores as were required; while the main body began to move southward, along the bank of the river, to a spot where we intended to cross.

Our course for some distance was to be to the southward; after which we were to turn to the south-west till we reached the prairie. I cannot describe each day's journey. In front marched a body of a dozen men, with their axes, to clear the road. The waggons, drawn by long teams of oxen, followed; and the loose cattle, driven by the younger men and boys, brought up the rear.

While no fears existed of an attack from the Indians, the axemen generally marched a day in advance of us, to cut a road through the woods. Another party, acting as hunters, ranged on one side or the other of the line of march in search of deer, bears, or any other animals, and birds; and they contrived, when possible, to reach the camping-ground an hour or two before the waggons, so that they might get the fires lighted, and have the game they had killed cooking on the spits, in readiness for the women and children. Reuben and I undertook to hunt, since we were as good shots as any of the emigrants. We always went together, and seldom failed to bring in game of some sort.

As evening approached we made our way towards the spot fixed on for the encampment. Before nightfall the main body usually arrived, and the waggons were arranged in a circle, so as to form a sort of fortification in case of attack from the Indians: though we had no great reason to apprehend such an event at that period of our journey. No time was lost in commencing supper; and as soon as it was over the women and children went to rest inside the waggons, while the men not on guard lay down either under them or in the neighbourhood of the fires. A spot was always chosen—either by the side of a stream or near some pool—where the cattle could find water and good grass. They were then turned out to graze, under charge of a few armed men. Of course, we all kept our rifles by our sides, so that we might be ready to defend ourselves at a moment's notice.

We met with very few Indians, and those we fell in with seemed disposed to be friendly. They saw that we were merely passing through their hunting-grounds, and had apparently no objection to our killing the comparatively small amount of game we met with. Had we shown any intention of settling, the case might have been different.

We thus pushed on for many days together, halting only on the Sabbath, to obtain the rest which both we and our cattle required. This was a day we all enjoyed. One of the elders conducted a service, and the wilderness we were traversing resounded for the time with praise and prayer.

Thus we travelled on day after day; but we made but slow progress through the densely-wooded country, having sometimes to cut our way amid the trees, though we were generally able to find a passage without felling them. Occasionally, however, we were compelled to do even that, and to drag the huge trunks out of the road, before the waggons could proceed. We had also frequently to cross rivers. When no ford could be found, we built large rafts, on which the waggons were ferried over, while the oxen gained the opposite bank by swimming. They were accustomed to the undertaking; and, strange as it may seem, we never lost any by this means.

At length we gained an open but more desert region. The ground was stony and uneven, and we had rocky hills to ascend and dark gorges to pass through. Water was scarce, and we had often to carry sufficient to supply our wants for a couple of days; while our cattle suffered greatly from thirst. We could no longer hunt in small parties, for fear of encountering hostile Indians; but we were able to kill game without going to any great distance from the camp, as we found several species of deer inhabiting those wilds.

My uncle's waggon was one day bringing up the rear of the train; and our water being nearly exhausted, we were pushing forward as fast as the oxen could move, in the hope of reaching a stream before dark, when one of the wheels came off, and the waggon, in falling over, suffered considerable damage. Under other circumstances, the train would have stopped till our waggon was put to rights; but as most of the oxen were suffering from thirst, and many of the party had no water remaining, it was important for them to push forward without delay. We were therefore compelled to remain by ourselves; but no Indians had as yet been seen in this part of the country, and we hoped that we should escape without being attacked.

My uncles were not men to be frightened by difficulties. They and Mike, with Quambo and I, immediately set to work to do what was necessary. We unloaded the waggon, and commenced repairing the damage it had received. This, however, took us some time, and it was quite dark before we got the wheel on again and the waggon reloaded. Having been more provident than the rest of the party, we were able to wet our beasts' muzzles, and still have sufficient water to last ourselves for a few hours.

As we wished to overtake our companions as soon as possible, we immediately pushed forward, and soon got into a somewhat more level country than we had lately been passing through; but the ground was very hard, and in the darkness we could not perceive the tracks made by those in advance. Had an Indian guide been with us, he would undoubtedly have discovered them; but we had to trust to our own sagacity, and we had not gone far when we found that we had got out of the right road. We did our utmost to regain it, but in vain. Still, believing that we were going in the proper direction, we proceeded onwards. The stars came out brightly from the sky, and we shaped our course as directly as we could by them.

While Uncle Stephen drove, Uncle Mark and I, with Mike and Quambo, marched on either side, our faithful dogs following at our heels. We kept a look-out in every direction, lest we should chance to be observed by a band of Indians, who, seeing a small party, might pounce down upon us; still, we were all accustomed to look on the bright side of things, and though we were aware of the possible danger, we were not unnecessarily alarmed. Our chief anxiety arose from a fear of not finding water for our thirsty beasts. They might hold out during the cool hours of night; but should they not be supplied with the necessary fluid, they must in a short time succumb, and dreadful indeed would be the consequences to ourselves.

When I occasionally went up to the waggon, I found Aunt Hannah and Lily awake. They kept up their spirits very well, and naturally inquired whether we had as yet discovered the track of those who had gone before.

"Not yet," I answered in as cheerful a voice as I could command; "but we soon shall, I dare say; and, at all events, we are going in the right direction. The stars are shining brightly, and by them Uncle Stephen can guide the waggon as well as if we had the train of our friends in view. But we shall soon be up with them, I hope, and find them all comfortably encamped."

"I trust that we may," said Aunt Hannah, "if not, we shall find water, I suppose, in a few hours, and we shall certainly overtake them to-morrow."

This showed what was passing in her mind. She had begun to suspect—what really was the case—that we had widely deviated from our course. One thing was very certain,—that it would be destruction to stop; so, although our oxen were beginning to show signs of fatigue, and we felt our own legs aching, we continued to move forward.

At length, about a couple of hours before dawn, we arrived at the edge of a ravine, the sides of which, though not precipitous, appeared to be *very* steep, and down which it would have been madness to attempt taking the waggon in the dark. We must either stop, or try to find a passage across to the north or south. We had observed that the valleys already passed by us were shallower to the southward; we therefore turned our waggon in that direction, hoping shortly to discover a practicable path, though we suspected that it would lead us even further from the track of our friends.

We went on and on, fancying that we could discern the bottom of the valley more clearly than at first, and hoping soon to discover a sufficiently gentle slope which we might be able to descend. But we were deceived, and though Uncle Mark and I made our way down in several places, we saw that the waggon would certainly be upset should we attempt to get it down. We were almost in despair of success, for the ravine appeared to run on to the southward with equally rugged sides as at first. The panting oxen, too, could scarcely drag on the waggon, and we began to fear that they would fall unless water should be found. We urged them on, however, for stopping to rest would not avail them, and might prove our destruction.

Morning at length broke, when we saw a hill before us which seemed to be the termination of the ravine; and as the light increased, to our joy we caught sight of a silvery line of water making its way along the course of the valley. Our eagerness to reach the bottom was now greater than ever; and we could with difficulty restrain the oxen from rushing down the bank. We had to keep at their heads, indeed, to prevent them attempting so mad a performance.

On we went, till we saw before us what we had so long been looking for,—a gentle slope which it would be easy to descend, while on the opposite side the ground was equally favourable for again ascending to the same elevation as before. Putting the drag on the wheel, we commenced the undertaking; and though I more than once feared that the waggon would be upset, we reached the bottom in safety. Then, immediately unyoking the tired oxen, we hurried to the fountain-head to obtain water, while they rushed to a pool close below it, where they could more easily drink. Near at hand was an abundance of fresh grass, with which they quickly recruited their strength.

Aunt Hannah and Lily offered to watch while we lay down and took the sleep we so much required.

“I will keep a look-out all round, and if I see any suspicious Indians approaching I’ll scream loud enough to wake you all,” said Lily, half in joke, as if she were not at all anxious on the subject.

“One thing is very certain,—if they do come, we cannot run away from them,” observed Uncle Mark. “We must hope that they will prove friendly, for if not we shall have to beat them or be cut to pieces. However, we will trust to your watchfulness, and pick up a little strength to continue our journey.”

We accordingly lay down under the waggon, and in less than a minute were fast asleep.

We rested till about ten o’clock, when Aunt Hannah, as Uncle Stephen had desired, awoke us. Not a human being had approached the valley, though she said that she had seen some creatures moving along on the top of the heights; but what they were she could not make out, though they did not look, she thought, like deer.

Having taken a hurried meal, we again yoked the oxen; and going behind with crowbars to assist, we commenced the ascent of the hill. It was harder work than we expected, but, by making a zigzag course, in about half an hour we got to the top. Looking ahead, the country appeared to be pretty level, with rocky hills rising out of it in various directions, but we expected to have no difficulty in making our onward way. We had filled all our skin-bottles with water, and even should we meet with no more till the following day the cattle would not materially suffer.

My uncles were of opinion that we had crossed near the source of the stream at which the rest of the party must have stopped, and that by verging to the right we should fall upon their tracks, although we did not expect to meet with them till the close of the day, owing to the direction we were taking. They might possibly have sent back to help us; but as they had not many men to spare, it was more likely that they would push forward, expecting us ultimately to overtake them. We kept a look-out for water as we went along, that we might allow our animals to drink, and thus be able to continue our journey the next day although none should be found at the camping-ground. Still, though we went on and on, no signs could we discover of our friends. Already the sun was sinking towards the west.

I had gone on ahead, and made my way up a hill over which we should have to pass, that I might obtain before sunset a wide view around, when I saw some way before me a number of creatures moving about. They seemed to be very busy, but what they were doing I could not make out. Some objects lay near them on the ground. I hastened on, and when I got nearer I perceived that the objects were broken pieces of waggons,—several wheels, and portions of the woodwork,—while the animals, I had no doubt, were wolves, from the horrid sounds which reached me; a mixture of snarling, yelping, barking, and growling, for I cannot otherwise describe the noise made by the creatures.

Not wishing to approach closer by myself, I returned to tell my uncles what I had seen. Uncle Mark and Quambo accompanied me back, and as we got nearer the wolves looked up and snarled at us, and continued their occupation; but what was our horror, on advancing a little further, to discover that they were feeding on the dead bodies of a number of persons stretched on the ground! A dreadful fear seized us. Could they be those of our late companions? I shuddered, and burst into tears.

Yes! there could be no doubt about it, I thought. There lay those we had lately parted from in health and strength, cruelly murdered, and now the prey of the savage wolves. Our friends the Claxtons!—Dora! honest Reuben! and their parents!

Then the fearful thought that such might ere long be our fate came over me.

“Can none have escaped?” I exclaimed.

Uncle Mark advanced a few paces nearer the wolves, with his gun, ready to fire should they attack him. He was looking at a man whom the wolves had not yet torn to pieces. Apparently he was only just dead, and had probably defended himself to the last, keeping his assailants at bay.

“That man did not belong to our party,” I heard Uncle Mark cry out. “These people must have formed part of another emigrant-train.”

Quambo and I ran up to him. We then shouted together, and some of the wolves nearest to us, startled by our approach, left their prey, when we were convinced, by the dresses of the corpses, that Uncle Mark’s surmise was correct. This discovery somewhat relieved our minds. Our friends might have escaped; but at the same time it was too evident that hostile Indians were scouring that part of the country, and that we ourselves might ere long be attacked, and share the fate of the unhappy persons we saw before us.

We now slowly retreated, shouting as we did so to keep the wolves at bay, and turning every few paces to face them; for had they seen us fly, they might have been induced to follow. They were now, however, happily for us, too much

engaged in their dreadful feast to take further notice of us.

Having told Uncle Stephen what we had seen, we turned the heads of the oxen away from the spot, directing our course to the right, where the ground appeared to be more even than any we had yet gone over. We agreed not to let Aunt Hannah and Lily know of the dreadful scene we had witnessed; but it was important to get as far as possible from the spot, and we determined, if the oxen could drag the waggon, to continue on all night.

“Do you think it likely that the wolves, when they have finished their horrible feast, will track us out?” I said to Uncle Mark.

“I hope not,” he answered. “Were they starving, they might do so; but only the younger animals, which would have been prevented by their elders from joining in the feast, may possibly follow us. If they do, we can keep them at a distance, for they are more easily frightened than the older brutes.”

The stars, as on the previous night, were very bright, and we were able, by them, to keep a direct course. Our chief desire now was to rejoin our friends, and next to that to find water. We, of course, as we moved along, kept a strict watch, as before; but the scene I had witnessed made me feel much more anxious than usual, and every moment I expected to see a band of Indians start up from behind the rocks which here and there rose above the plain, or to hear a flight of arrows whistling through the air past our ears—perhaps to feel one sticking in my body.

Uncle Stephen had advised Aunt Hannah and Lily to lie down in a space left vacant for them in the middle of the waggon, where they would be protected by the luggage piled up on both sides.

We had now gone on many hours without water, and our cattle began to show signs of being very thirsty. All we could do was to wet their muzzles with a little of the water we had brought with us; but our lives might depend upon our pushing on.

As we generally marched apart—two of us on either side of the waggon—we had no opportunities for conversation, and were left, consequently, to our own melancholy thoughts. Had I been by myself, or with male companions only, I should not have cared so much; but my mind was troubled by the idea of what might be dear Lily’s fate, and that of Aunt Hannah, should we be attacked, or should our cattle break down and we be unable to proceed.

The oxen went slower and slower, notwithstanding every effort of Uncle Stephen to make them move at their usual pace. At last they came to a stand-still. Mike and Quambo, who at the time were ahead, endeavoured in vain to induce them to move on. Uncle Mark and I ran forward to assist them. As I was about to do so I caught sight of a ruddy spot in the distance, away somewhat to the left. That must be a fire, I thought, and I pointed it out to Uncle Mark.

“It may be the camp-fire of our friends,” he observed; “but we must not be too sure, for it may be that of a band of Indians.”

He asked Uncle Stephen what he thought.

“The Indians generally take care to have their fires in places where they cannot be seen from a distance, so that is much more likely to be what you at first supposed,” he answered. “At all events, we will try and find out.”

“If the oxen cannot be got to move, I will go on and ascertain,” I said. “I can direct my course by the fire, and will approach cautiously. Should I discover that Indians are encamped there, I will hurry back and let you know. We must then try and make our way in some other direction.”

“I am afraid, Roger, that in such a case our hope of escape will be very small,” said my uncle in a grave tone. “Unless we can find water in some hollow in which it will be possible to conceal ourselves, at the return of day, the Indians are sure to see us. Should they cross our track, they are equally certain to come upon us before long. We must, however, hope for the best. Go forward as you propose, and may Heaven protect you, my boy.”

Without stopping to bid Lily and my aunt good-bye I hurried on, keeping my gaze on the fire, which, growing brighter as I advanced, enabled me without difficulty to direct my course for it. The ground was tolerably even, but sloped slightly downwards in the direction I was taking. The fire, indeed, when I first saw it, appeared to be in a hollow, or at all events at a lower elevation than that where we were standing. I looked back once or twice, and quickly lost sight of the waggon. So far I was satisfied that, should the people who had made the fire be Indians, they would not discover the waggon until daylight, by which time I hoped we should be able to conceal ourselves among the hills in the neighbourhood.

I hurried on as fast as I could venture to move, ignorant of what was before me. It would be useless, I knew, to attempt concealing my trail, but as I did not intend to go nearer the camp-fire than was necessary to make out who were there, I hoped some time would elapse after I had retreated before the Indians could discover that any one had been near them. Now and then, when crossing a hill, I lost sight of the fire, and had to direct my course by the stars overhead. Again I saw it before me, blazing brightly. I hoped that Uncle Stephen was right in his conjectures. The fire, however, was further off than I had supposed, and the greater part of an hour was consumed before I got close enough to see the figures moving about it.

I now crept on as noiselessly as I could, for I knew that the least sound would be conveyed to the quick ears of the Redskins. Fortunately there were a number of bushes in the neighbourhood, behind which I could conceal myself.

As I was going on I heard voices, and stopped breathlessly to listen. They did not sound like those of Indians, and presently I saw a couple of figures pass in front of the fire. I almost shouted for joy as I distinguished by their outlines against the bright blaze that their dress was that of white men. I felt sure that the people I saw before me were our

friends; still, caution was necessary, for it was possible that they were prisoners of the Indians, saved from the caravan lately destroyed, only to meet with a more cruel death by torture. There might be a large party of Indians encamped.

Presently two other fires came into view, which had been hitherto concealed by the thick bushes surrounding the hollow in which the camp was formed. I crept on and on, crouching down like a panther about to spring on its prey. The voices became more and more distinct, and at last I found myself on the top of the bank, with only a few bushes intervening between me and those encamped below.

On pushing aside the branches my eyes were greeted by the pleasant sight of waggons, cattle, and a number of people; some cooking before the fires, others preparing their resting-places for the night. Not far off, at the lower part of the hollow, for it could scarcely be called a valley, was a pool reflecting the stars overhead.

Feeling sure that I saw my friends before me, I now rushed down the slope towards them. The first person I met was Reuben Claxton.

"Why, Roger! where have you come from?" he exclaimed. "We were very anxious about you, and my father had determined, should you not appear soon, to return with a party to your relief."

I quickly told him what had occurred, several others gathering round to hear my account. They were greatly alarmed at the description I gave of the remains of the emigrant-train we had discovered. I pointed out that their own camp was formed with less care than usual; of which fact they were convinced, but excused themselves on the plea that they had arrived very tired just at dark, having had a rough country to traverse, and that their cattle had suffered from want of water since the last place they had stopped at. The way I had approached showed them how easily they might have been surprised by a party of hostile Indians.

I told them that I must be off again at once, as I was anxious to get back to our waggon, in order that we might join them without delay. Reuben offered to accompany me, and I was very glad to have him. We therefore set off immediately.

It was necessary to be careful, however, to keep a direct course; and this could only be done by watching a star which I had marked, overhanging the spot where I had left the waggon. By any deviation to the right hand or to the left we might easily pass it.

Reuben told me that many of the emigrants had become very anxious, and the account I had brought would make them still more so. Could they venture back alone, he thought they would be willing to return to the settlement.

"For my own part, I like the wild sort of life we are leading; but I should be happier if I knew that Lily and my aunt were in safety, whereas they are exposed to as much danger as we are," I observed.

More than once I thought that we had gone wrong, as it was impossible to distinguish objects clearly in the gloom of night. I fancied that we must have performed the distance; still I could nowhere see the waggon. The dreadful thought occurred to me that some prowling Indians might have pounced upon it, and carried it off.

"I hope not," said Reuben, when I told him my fears. "We may not have gone far enough yet; or we are perhaps too much on one side or the other."

We went on a little further, trying to pierce the gloom. Then we stopped to listen, but could hear no sounds.

"We must have gone wrong," I said; "for I am certain that we should otherwise have got up to the waggon by this time."

Still Reuben thought that I might be mistaken.

"Let us shout, and perhaps they will hear us;" and before I could stop him, he cried out at the top of his voice—"Hallo! Mr Tregellis, whereabouts are you?"

Thinking it too probable that Indians were not far off, I dreaded lest the shout might be heard by them, and I advised Reuben not to cry out again.

I was still fearing that we had missed the waggon, when a voice reached our ears. It was that of Mike.

"Is that you, Masther Roger? If you are yourself, come on here; but if not, I'll trouble you to stop where you are, or I'll be afther shooting you through the head."

"All right, Mike!" I exclaimed, as we made our way in the direction from whence the voice came.

He had grown anxious at my long delay, and had got leave from my uncles to try and find out what had become of me.

We soon got back to the waggon; and by giving the patient oxen the remainder of our water, they having in the meantime cropped some grass, we were able to move forward. The road, in the dark, was difficult; but we managed to reach the camp without any accident, and were heartily welcomed by our friends.

Those who wished to return had, we found, summoned a meeting, and it was settled that the matter should be decided by the majority of votes. My uncles turned the scale in favour of going on. They pointed out that it would be as dangerous to retreat as to advance.

Mr Sparks urged that it would be madness to give up the enterprise. Water, he assured us, would be found at the end of every day's march, or even oftener; and though Indians might be met, with our rifles we could without difficulty keep them at bay, as none of them were likely to possess firearms—their only weapons being bows and arrows and spears. His remarks prevailed; and it was agreed that after a day's rest, which the cattle greatly required, we should recommence our march.

Once more we were making our toilsome way across the desert. For two days we had moved on without interruption, keeping scouts out as usual on either side to give notice should any Indians approach. Reuben and I, and other young men, performed that necessary duty for several hours each day.

Early in the morning of the second day we caught sight in the distance of a couple of horsemen with long spears in their hands. They galloped towards us, apparently to ascertain who we were; then, wheeling round, they quickly disappeared, and though we were on the watch we saw no more of them. When we halted at noon, we of course reported the circumstance. As it showed that Redskins were in the neighbourhood, several more men were told off to act as scouts, with orders to retreat towards the train the moment they might see any Indians, whether few or many.

Reuben, Mike, and I were advancing as I have described, somewhat ahead of the train, when towards evening we entered a valley, the hills sloping away on either side of it. At the further end we expected to find a stream, at the side of which we could encamp. I was leading, Mike was next to me, and Reuben was nearest the train. The ground I was traversing was somewhat rough, and I was leaping from one rock to another, when I fell and sprained my ankle. Just as I got up—being then on higher ground than my companions, and having a more extensive view—I saw a large band of horsemen approaching at full gallop. I knew at once that they were Redskins.

"Indians! Indians!" I shrieked out to Mike. "Tell Reuben to run and let our friends know that the enemy are upon us."

Mike shouted at the top of his voice, as I had desired him. I saw Reuben set off, and Mike following him. Presently Mike stopped and looked back to see what had become of me. I endeavoured to run, but found it impossible to move. Before I had made a second step, I sank to the ground.

"Sure, you are not coming, Masther Roger," cried Mike, on seeing me fall.

The pain I endured prevented me speaking.

Mike rushed back towards me, crying out all the time, "Come along! come along!" But move I could not.

He was still at some distance from me, when, looking round, I saw that the Indians were rapidly approaching. I made signs to him to save himself, but he either did not, or would not, understand them.

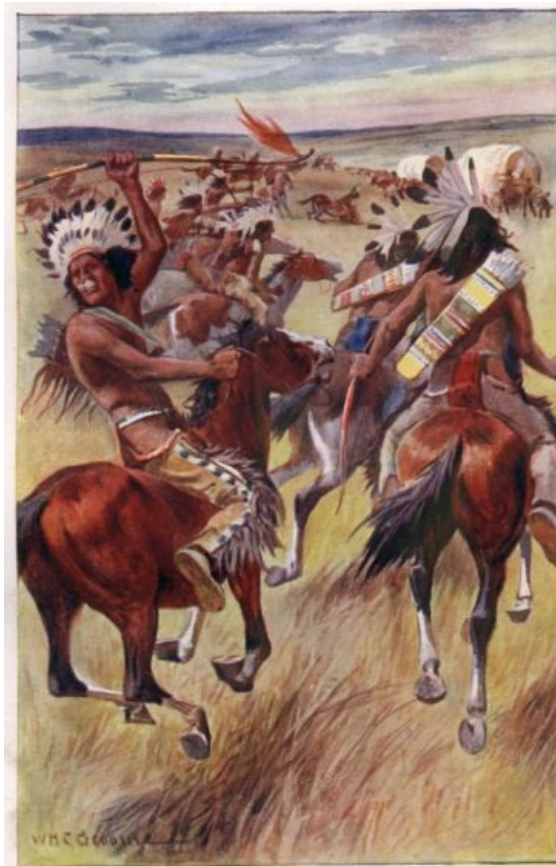
"Go back! go back!" I at length cried out.

"Arrah! and sure, not till I've got you on me back," he answered, still making his way towards me.

I felt very certain that, with me to carry, he could not possibly reach the train before the Indians would be up with us, and he could scarcely have failed to know this.

"Cling to me back, Masther Roger, and I'll show the Ridskins how a bog-trotter can get over the ground;" and stooping down, he seized my arms and threw me on his back. "Now, here we go!" he cried out, and began leaping over the ground with as much agility as if he had had no burden to carry.

But his efforts, as I feared they would be, were in vain. A wild whoop sounded in my ears, and looking back I saw upwards of a dozen Indians in their war-paint—their feather-plumes and cloaks flying in the air, as they galloped forward on their mustangs over the rocky ground, sending the stones and dust flying away from their heels. I expected every instant to feel one of those ugly-looking spears plunged into my back. One of the painted warriors was just about to finish my career, when I heard a loud voice shouting in an authoritative tone; and instead of transfixing me, he let the point of his spear fall, then, seizing me by the collar, dragged me up on his steed, and laid



"Puffs of smoke and the report of rifles showed that my friends were determined to defend themselves." Page 26.

me across his saddle in front of him. Another treated Mike in the same manner, in spite of his struggles to free himself. I made no resistance, knowing it was useless to do so.

The two Indians who had captured us wheeled their horses round and galloped away, and we met crowds of other warriors galloping at full speed in the track of the first. I got one glance round, which enabled me to see that the enemy were close up to the waggons, while the puffs of smoke and the report of rifles showed that my friends were determined to defend themselves. Several of the Indian saddles were emptied in a minute, but still a whole host of the savages appeared charging down on the train. Whether or not Reuben had succeeded in getting under shelter of the waggons, I could not tell. I saw no more, for my captor galloped off with me round the hill, and they were concealed from view, though I could still hear the sound of the shots and the shrieks and shouts of the combatants. I had no hope of escaping with life, and believed that I was reserved to suffer the fearful tortures to which the Redskins so frequently subject their prisoners.

After going some distance the Indian stopped, and lifting me up from the painful position in which I lay, placed me behind him; fastening me by a leather strap round his body, and so securing my arms that I could not move. He had previously deprived me of my rifle, which I had hitherto held firmly in my grasp, hoping against hope that I might have an opportunity of using it. I saw Mike not far off, he having been treated much in the same manner, though not without the assistance of another Indian, who had accompanied the one on whose horse he was placed.

Having secured us, the Indians again galloped forward. After going some distance, I saw that we were approaching a more wooded region than the one we had left, with a stream or river running through it; and I thought that I could distinguish cliffs, below which the river, in part of its course, made its way.

I could manage to turn my head, and as I did so I fancied that I discerned another horseman coming up behind us, with a prisoner, whom I naturally feared was Reuben. Further off were numerous Indians, but whether they formed the whole of the body which had attacked the train or not I could not make out. If they were, I had great hopes that the Redskins had been defeated, although they would probably wreak their vengeance on us, their unfortunate captives. Still, in either case I felt sure that we should be put to death—though I rejoiced in the belief that Lily and my other relatives and friends had escaped; for as none of the Indians I had seen had firearms, I had good reason for hoping that our party had gained the victory. Should Mr Sparks prove equal to his professions, by leading them well and taking the necessary precautions against surprise, they might still fight their way through the hostile territory.

My mind being relieved of anxiety about my friends, I was able to think more about myself and Reuben and Mike. Had we any chance of escaping? I was determined, at all events, to make the attempt; and I was very sure that they would do likewise. I resolved, could I get near enough to Mike, to tell him of my intention, and to advise him to keep up his spirits; and before long I had an opportunity.

"Bedad! it's what I have been afther thinking about," he answered. "I'll let young Reuben know me thoughts, too. We've outwitted the Ridskins once before, and, sure, we'll thry to play them another trick."

He spoke in a tone of voice which showed that no coward fears had overcome him.

We galloped on until we reached the wood, where our captors dismounted, aided by the third Indian I have mentioned. I had scarcely thought about my foot during my ride, but when I was cast loose and attempted to move by myself, I found that I could not stand, and presently sank to the ground. Mike, on finding himself at liberty, hurried

to my assistance, and, taking off my shoe, examined my ankle.

"It's a bad sprain," he observed; "but maybe these rid gintlemen will just let me get some cowl'd wather. I'll bathe it and bind it up, and in the course of a few days, or in less time than that, it will be all to rights again."

I could only smile, not believing that I should be allowed many days to get well.

He then carried me under the shade of a tree, against the trunk of which I reclined. The pain rapidly went off, and I was better able to consider our position, and the possibility of escape.

Chapter Ten.

My sprained ankle—Mike's devotion—Reuben brought to the camp—The Indians bind us to trees—The debate on our fate—I am released by Sandy McColl—Old Samson again—The secret cavern—Samson is very kind and attentive to me—His close attention to my account of the burning of the settlement, and the rescue of Lily and me when children—I recover, and Samson and I leave the cavern to reconnoitre—The Indian massacre—Sandy, Reuben, and Mike are hotly pursued—Our fortress besieged—We hold out, and beat off our besiegers—Our start—The elk.

The Indians, instead of binding Mike, as I expected they would do, allowed him to come and sit by me under the tree; narrowly watching him, however, though they did not interfere with us.

"Faix, thin, Masther Roger, I don't think these Ridskin gintlemen can be intending to do us much harm, or they would not be afther letting us sit so quietly by ourselves," he observed.

"I am not so confident of that, Mike," I answered. "We must wait till the rest come up, to judge how they will treat us; at all events, I would advise you, when you get the chance, to mount one of their best horses and gallop off. I am afraid that I shall be unable to make the attempt, or I would try it."

"Why, thin, Masther Roger, would you be afther belaving that I would go and desart you? Even if they were to bring me a horse, and tell me to mount and be off, it would break me heart intirely to think that I had left you to their tinder mercies. Whativer they do to you, they may do to me; and I'll stop and share ivereverything with you."

"I deeply feel your generosity, Mike," I said; "but you might have saved yourself and got back to the waggons, had you not attempted to carry me off, and I therefore wish you to try and escape if you have the opportunity."

Mike laughed and shook his head; and when I still urged him to escape if he could, he put on that look of stolidity which an Irishman so well knows how to assume, and refused to reply to any of my remarks.

While we had been talking, the Indian I had seen following us approached, having slowly walked his horse, which had apparently been lamed. I now caught sight of the person behind him, and with much concern recognised my friend Reuben. One of our captors assisted him to dismount; and Reuben, with his hands bound, was dragged forward to a short distance from us, where he was compelled to sit down on the ground, the Indians intimating by signs that he must not move. He looked very melancholy, evidently imagining that he was soon to be put to death. I tried to cheer him up by telling him that we had not been ill-treated.

"That may be," he answered; "but I know their treacherous nature. Depend upon it, when they all eat together, and talk over the number of their warriors who have been slain, they will wreak their vengeance upon us. Are you prepared to die, Roger? We must make up our minds for that, and we may consider ourselves fortunate if we are not scalped and flayed first. I have often read, with very little concern, of the dreadful tortures the Redskins inflict on their prisoners, little dreaming that I should ever have to suffer the same."

"It is not wise to anticipate evil," I said. "Let us hope for the best; and perhaps means may be offered us, that we do not now think of, to make our escape."

"I don't see where they can come from," he replied. "These fellows keep too sharp a look-out on us to give us a chance. Look there! here come the whole tribe of savages, and they will soon settle our fate."

He pointed as he spoke to a large number of horsemen galloping across the country from different directions, towards us. They halted outside the wood, and several of them appeared to be wounded; but they did not allow themselves to exhibit any sign of suffering. Having taken the saddles and bridles from their horses, the greater number led them down towards the water to drink; while six, who, from their more ornamental dresses, appeared to be chiefs, advanced towards us. Their principal man, or head chief, spoke to us; but as we could not understand what he said, we knew that it would be useless to reply. He then pointed to Mike and me, and addressed a few words to his companions. They nodded, and we were led to separate trees, to which we were bound, with our hands secured behind us in a very unpleasant fashion.

Matters now began to look more serious than at first. Darkness was coming on, and our captors lighted a large fire near to the spot where we were bound, and those among them who acted the part of cooks began dressing the evening meal. They then sat down to discuss it—an operation which was soon concluded. We in the meantime were left bound to the trees, watching what was going on. After supper, a similar fire having been lighted near where we were bound, the principal Indians took their seats round it and began to smoke their long pipes, while, as I suspected, they deliberated on our fate. They were some little distance off, but the flames from the fire cast a red glow on their figures, and enabled me to observe the expression of the countenances of those turned towards me, from which, with painful anxiety, I endeavoured to learn how they were disposed towards us. Though I could hear their voices, I could

not understand a word that was said.

After talking for some time, one of them, whose back, however, was towards me, got up and addressed his companions. He spoke at some length, and I would have given much to know what he was saying. His spear he held with one hand; with the other he pointed, now to the sky, now to some unseen distant object, now he waved it in the air. The other Indians gazed up at his countenance, as if greatly moved by his address; but whether he was pleading for us or advocating our death, I could by no means discover. In vain I listened to catch any words I might understand.

At last he brought his address to a conclusion, and sat down; when another slowly rose and commenced a harangue which was equally unintelligible to me. Still, I felt very sure that the discussion was one on which our lives depended; and, judging from the countenances of the Indians, I was nearly certain that they intended to kill us.

The next speaker was even more long-winded than the first. I thought that he would never bring his address to a conclusion.

A fourth man got up. His face was also turned away from me. His action was more vehement than that of his predecessors, and the tones of his voice afforded me but very little hope of mercy from his hands.

While he was speaking, another Indian, whom I had not hitherto seen, stalked into the circle, and regarding the speaker with a fixed and, as I thought, somewhat contemptuous look, sat himself down among the others. His appearance evidently created a considerable amount of astonishment, little as the natives are accustomed to show their feelings. So soon as the last had ceased speaking, he rose and addressed the assembly. As he did so, it struck me that he bore a strong resemblance to Manilick, though he was much more gaudily dressed than I had ever seen that young chief.

All eyes were turned towards him as he spoke, and scarcely had he commenced when I heard a voice whisper in my ear, "Trust to me!" At the same moment I felt that the thongs which bound me were being cut, and the next instant I was at liberty; but, recollecting my sprained ankle, I feared that it would not avail me. To my surprise, however, when I tried to move I found that I could do so without much pain.

I slipped round the tree, when I felt my hand grasped by that of my deliverer, who, discovering that I could move but slowly, stooped down and lifted me on his back. The darkness prevented me from seeing who he was, but I felt convinced, from his dress and the tone of his voice, that he was a white man. He moved along cautiously under the trees towards the bank of the river.

"Can you swim?" he asked in a low voice, "Yes—like a fish," I answered.

"Then we will take to the river at once. There are horses waiting on the opposite side, lower down. We can float with the current till we reach them," he continued.

We were not more than three or four minutes in reaching the bank, and we at once glided in so as to create no splash.

"Strike out towards the middle of the river," he whispered; "but do so as gently as possible."

I followed his directions, and found that I could swim without any pain to my ankle.

"Now throw yourself on your back, and we will float down with the current," he said.

We could all this time hear the voice of the Indian addressing the assembly of warriors. So intent were they in listening to what he was saying, that they had evidently not discovered my escape.

"Can nothing be done to save my companions?" I asked, thinking of the dreadful fate which might await Reuben and Mike.

"Others will look after them," he answered. "Don't speak, lest the water should convey your voice to the shore."

After we had gone some distance he told me to turn round again and swim, so that we might make more progress.

"Now make for the shore," he said.

In a short time we gained a spot where the trees grew close down to the bank. Climbing up there, he led me through the wood. On the further side I found a man holding three horses.

"Glad to get you out of the clutches of the Indians, my son Reuben," he said.

"I am not Reuben," I answered; "but I heartily wish that he had escaped. I am Roger Penrose."

"Why, Sandy McColl, I told you to try and set Reuben at liberty; though I am glad to see you, Roger," said the speaker, whom I now recognised as the old trapper, Samson Micklan.

"I should have been discovered if I had attempted to reach the two others, for they were much nearer the fire; and, in truth, I could not distinguish one from the other," said Sandy.

"Well, we must see what can be done to rescue Reuben and the Irishman," said old Samson. "Our friend Manilick promised to plead for you and Mike, and, should he fail, to come and let me know; and he will, I trust, exert his influence in favour of Reuben, when he finds that you have got off. At all events, the Indians will not put their

prisoners to death till they get back to their lodges, and we must try and set them at liberty before then. Though they have vowed to have my hair, I fear them not, for I have outwitted them a hundred times—and intend to outwit them as many more, if I have the chance. But we must not delay here, for when they find that you have got away they will suspect that you took to the river, and will scour the banks in search of you.”

Anxious as I was to save my friends, I had no wish again to fall into the hands of the Indians, I therefore very readily mounted one of the horses.

“If you, Samson, will go on to the cave with this young man, I will return and try to help the others,” said Sandy. “Maybe, while the Indians are looking for me, they may leave them unguarded, and I may have a chance of carrying out my object.”

“That’s what we’ll do, then,” answered old Samson. “I needn’t tell you to be cautious, because I know that you will be so.”

As he spoke, Samson threw himself on one of the horses, and took the rein of the third. “We shall better deceive the Redskins if we take this one with us,” he observed. “They may possibly discover that it has no rider; but it will puzzle them, at all events, if they come upon our trail, and they will be less likely to suspect that you are watching them.”

“Don’t fear for me,” answered Sandy. “I’ll keep my wits about me; and if the other two can make good use of their legs, we will overtake you before long, should I manage to set them free. If I am caught, why, I shall only suffer the fate I have often thought would be my lot.”

Saying this, Sandy again plunged into the wood out of which we had come; while Samson and I galloped away across the country. It was too dark to discern objects at any distance, but my companion seemed to be thoroughly acquainted with the ground. At last I saw before me a hill, rising out of the plain. As I got nearer, I observed that the sides and summit in many places were covered with trees; in others, it was barren and rocky. We directed our course towards a gap in the hillside, up which we wound our way.

“Can you walk?” asked old Samson.

“I will try,” I answered, imitating his example and dismounting—when I soon found that I could get on better than I should have supposed possible.

He led two of the horses, while I followed with the third; but, passing amid the trees, the animals had to lower their heads to enable them to creep under the boughs.

On getting out of the wood, I found that we were proceeding up a steep zigzag path, along which two people could not make their way abreast. At last we reached a narrow terrace, with a few trees growing on it. We made our way between them till Samson entered a cavern, the mouth of which would admit only a horse, or, at the utmost, a couple of persons at a time. I followed; and having gone through this narrow archway, Samson told me to stop. He then, using his flint and steel, lighted a torch, and by the flame I discovered that we were in a large vaulted chamber. On one side there were some rude stalls, and litter for horses; on the other, a couple of rough bunks, and a table and some stools, showed that it was used as a human habitation.

“This is my home and fortress,” said Samson. “I come to it occasionally when tired of hunting; and I always keep here a store of provisions. At the further end is a spring of water, so that I might hold it for any length of time against a host of foes. I have never as yet been attacked, for the Indians know that they could not attempt to drive me out with impunity, and think it wiser to leave me and my companion unmolested.”

I asked him how he came to know that we had been captured by the Indians.

“Because I witnessed with my own eyes what happened,” he answered. “I was on the hillside overlooking the train, but had no time to warn you of the approach of the enemy, nor could I at first help you; but I saw you three carried off, and then made my way here to get the assistance of Sandy, who had remained at home, as well as the three horses.”

I asked him if he thought that our friends had escaped.

“I know that the Indians were beaten off,” he answered; “but whether any of the emigrants were killed or wounded, I cannot say. They continued their course, and must have encamped shortly afterwards by the side of the river. They will there have formed a strong camp, which the Indians will not venture to attack. Their road will lead them not far from this, when you can rejoin them, and I will pay them a visit.”

“But I could not show my face among them without Reuben and Mike. I should feel as if I had deserted my friends, without attempting to rescue them,” I said.

“A very right spirit, my lad,” answered old Samson; “but you could have done nothing, and would only have lost your life if you had made the attempt. Sandy has a long head on his shoulders, and a brave heart; and if any man can circumvent the Redskins, he can. He has a good drop of their blood in his veins, with the brains of a white man, and knows all their ways.”

These assurances somewhat relieved my mind. The exertions I had made, however, had brought on the pain in my foot; and after having eaten some food which Samson gave me, I was thankful, by his advice, to lie down in Sandy’s bunk. I slept, but not soundly, for I fancied that I heard the voices of the Indians consulting as to our fate; and then, in my dreams, I saw them approaching with their scalping-knives to take the hair off my head. Such being the character of my dreams, I was glad to awake and find myself in comparative safety.

Old Samson was listening at the entrance of the cave. He had, I found, the means of barricading it with stout timbers, so that no foes could force their way in without paying dearly for the attempt. I rose from the bunk, intending to join him, but he told me to lie quiet. I obeyed, and was soon asleep; and when I again awoke daylight was streaming through the entrance. I looked round, but Samson was not to be seen.

On attempting to get up, I found that my ankle was much swollen, and that I could not walk. With a groan I sank back again on the bunk, and waited anxiously for Samson, wondering what had become of him. The horses were still there, munching their fodder, so he was not likely to have gone far. At last I saw him at the entrance.

"Well, lad, you may get up now, and have some breakfast," he said.

I told him that I could not walk, as I was suffering severely from my ankle.

"That's a bad job," he observed; "I intended to have moved away from this. There are more Redskins in the neighbourhood than I like, as no game can be got while they are here."

I asked if Sandy had appeared, and brought any tidings of Reuben and Mike.

"No," he answered; "for the reason I have given, they could not make their way across the country in daylight. But that is no reason why Sandy should not have succeeded. He may have set them at liberty, and concealed them and himself in some other place. There are several caves like this in different directions, which seem to be made by nature as refuges from the Indians. The only difficulty is to get to them without being tracked, as it is always a hard job to escape the keen eyes of the Redskins, although the horsemen of the plains are not so clever in tracking a foe as those who go on the war-path on foot. That makes me hope that we shall hear of our friends, though it may be some time hence."

These remarks of old Samson again somewhat relieved my mind. I then asked him when he thought that the emigrant-train would pass by; and whether he could manage to let me join it on horseback, for I thought that I could ride although I could not walk.

"I much doubt whether it will pass this way at all," he answered. "It will either turn back, or, if the leader is a man of judgment, he will conduct it by a different route, further to the south. Your uncles, Mr Claxton, and their companions are brave men, but they will not wish to encounter the savage hordes who have assembled to stop their progress on the road they intended taking."

I was very glad to hear this opinion from one who was so well able to judge rightly, and I felt more reconciled than I otherwise should have been at remaining inactive; for, as to moving, unless I was placed on horseback, I knew that was impossible. As far as I could tell, it might be many days before I could recover, as a sprain, I was aware, is frequently as difficult to cure as a broken bone; still, I did not like to keep old Samson in the cave, should he wish to go out for the purpose of ascertaining what had become of Sandy. I told him that I should not be at all afraid of staying by myself, if he could manage to close the entrance behind him.

"I have no desire to show myself on the plain, or I should have a dozen Redskins galloping after me; and though I should not fear to meet twice as many, provided I could take shelter behind some big trees, I would rather not meet them where I should be exposed to their arrows," he answered. "We must make up our minds to be prisoners for some days to come; and keep a constant watch, too, lest they should get upon our trail, and find their way up here."

"But how can you manage to keep watch alone? You will require some sleep," I observed.

"Two or three hours are quite sufficient for me; and they are not likely to attack us for the first hour or two before and after midnight," he answered. "If they come at all during the night, it will be soon after dark, or just before dawn. I know their ways, and have thus been frequently enabled to get some necessary rest, even when I knew that they were on my trail."

"But you would surely be better for more than two or three hours of sleep; and if you will drag my bunk to the door, I will keep watch while you rest."

To this he would not agree. "You require all the sleep that you can get," he said. "No enemy, either, is able to break in on us unawares. I have made arrangements in case of an attack, as you would have seen, had you examined the entrance. There is a thick door which can be slid across it; and in the door several loopholes, so that Sandy and I could hold it against any number of Indians who might manage to make their way up the hill."

From what old Samson had said, I fully expected that the cave would be attacked; for I did not suppose that the Indians, scouring the country, would fail to observe our tracks.

The entrance was always kept closed, and we should have been in darkness had it not been for a rude lamp, fed by bear or deer fat, which stood on the table. The old hunter and his companion had stored up a large supply of dried grass for the horses, so that it was not necessary to turn them out to feed. He allowed me to sleep as much as I could, and when I was awake he generally seemed disposed to enter into conversation. He told me many of his adventures and escapes from Indians, and appeared to like to have me talk to him, and to hear all about my uncles, Aunt Hannah, and Lily.

One day I began repeating to him the history Uncle Mark had given me of his and Uncle Stephen's arrival in America. As I went on, I saw that he was listening with more and more interest; and when I described how, on reaching the village where my parents had lived, they found it burnt to the ground, and discovered Lily and me, and our murdered mothers, he exclaimed—

"Did your uncles learn the name of the little girl's mother?"

"No," I answered; "she died before she had time to utter it, and could only commit her infant to their charge."

"Strange!" exclaimed the old man. "I had a daughter, my only child, living in that village; and she, with her husband and babe, were, I had every reason to suppose, slaughtered by the savages who attacked the place. Yet it is possible that their infant may be the very one your uncles saved; but, alas! I can never be sure of that."

"But I think that you may have very satisfactory proofs whether or not Lily is your daughter's child," I answered, "for Aunt Hannah has carefully preserved her clothing, and some ornaments which her mother wore, and which you may be able to recognise."

"That I certainly should," said old Samson, "for I had but a few days before parted from my daughter to proceed eastward. On hearing of the massacre, I returned; but finding the whole village a mass of blackened ashes, and being unable to gain any tidings of the beings I loved best on earth, I had no doubt left on my mind that they had all perished. Having thus no one to care for, I took to the life I have since led—which I had before only occasionally followed, after the death of my wife and the marriage of my daughter, for the sake of the sport it afforded me."

From this time forward old Samson constantly spoke about Lily; and, persuaded by his own hopes that she was his grand-daughter, he seemed to be fully convinced that such was the case. His anxiety to see her, and to examine the clothes and ornaments which Aunt Hannah had preserved, increased every day; but how were we to find Lily and Aunt Hannah? Had our friends turned back; or had they pushed forward, fighting their way successfully towards the fertile region to which they were bound? Neither he nor I could bring ourselves to contemplate what might otherwise have happened—had they been overwhelmed by the hordes of savages, and met the fearful fate which had overtaken the smaller band whose remains we had discovered?

The old trapper went out every day to ascertain if the Indians had moved away from the plain below us—should he find the country open, he intended, he said, to go in search of Sandy, and those he might have rescued—but he as often returned with the information that the Indians still occupied the country. I, of course, greatly hampered him, for he would not leave me in the cavern for long together. Had he been by himself, he could easily have started at night and made his escape.

Gradually my ankle regained strength, and Samson now made me get up and walk about to try it. Unwilling longer to detain him, I at last declared that it was quite well, making light of the pain I still felt when I walked, and begged to accompany him the next time he went out. He consented. "But you must not go without a weapon; and you can use it well, I know," he observed, as he drew a rifle from under his bunk. He produced also a powder-horn, which I slung over my shoulder, and a bag of bullets. The great drawback to our place of concealment was, that although well hidden from the sight of those in the plain, we had to go some distance before we could obtain a view of the surrounding country.

Leaving the horses in the stable, and the entrance open, we set out. Then going some distance down the hill, we made our way through the thick wood which covered its sides, and were just emerging into the open space, when, through the bushes, I caught sight of several horsemen galloping across the country. I made a sign to my companion to keep concealed, and crept forward on my hands and knees. As I looked out, I discovered the object of the Indians. A solitary waggon had just come into view, and they were about to attack it.

I drew cautiously back, for though the Indian warriors were probably intent on the business in hand, their keen eyes might have detected me. I asked Samson if we could assist the unfortunate people in the waggon.

"I fear not," he answered. "We might kill a few of the Redskins; but unless the travellers possess a number of rifles, and make a bold stand, we cannot help them. We will, however, be ready to take a part if we have opportunity."

As the horsemen approached, three rifles alone opened fire upon them from behind the waggon. One of their number fell, but several dashed forward; while others, circling round, prepared to attack the devoted emigrants from the opposite side. The affair, which was a short one, was dreadful to witness. We should, I saw well enough, lose our lives did we show ourselves. Indeed, before we could have got up to the waggon, all its defenders were killed by the savages surrounding it; and we knew too well that those inside must, according to their cruel custom, have been put to death, whether women or children. The Indians of the plains have no compassion either for age or sex. The dreadful thought occurred to me that those we had seen slaughtered might be our own friends. It was evident, however, from his calmness, that the idea of such a thing had not crossed old Samson's mind.

After plundering the waggon of everything they considered of value, the savages set it on fire. While it was burning, and they were still gathered round it, a dreadful explosion took place, scattering destruction among them. Panic-stricken, and not knowing what might next happen, the survivors mounted their horses and galloped off. A keg of powder, which they must have overlooked, had probably exploded.

"They deserve their punishment," said the old man, "and they will not come back again in a hurry; so we may now descend into the plain, and see if we can learn who the unfortunate people were."

This was what I was wishing to do. We accordingly left the wood and made our way down the hill, towards the remains of the waggon. We had not got far, however, when we caught sight of three horsemen galloping across the plain towards us. My companion scrutinised them narrowly.

"If they are friends, they have reason for their hurry; and if enemies, the sooner we get under cover the better," he observed. "We must not now attempt to reach the waggon. Ah! I understand all about it. See! out there come a dozen or more horsemen. They must be Indians in pursuit of the first—who, if I mistake not, are our friends. Come on, Roger! they will reach the hill as soon as we do."

As he said this we retreated to the foot of the hill, and began to climb it as rapidly as we could.

"But, if these are our friends, will they find their way to the cave?" I asked.

"Yes, yes! Sandy knows it as well as I do," he answered, without stopping.

We were just approaching the entrance of the cave, when the war-whoops of the Indians, and their loud cries, as they shouted to each other, reached our ears.

"They are making their way up the hill," said Samson. "Get inside, lad, and prepare to close the entrance when I tell you."

The loud rustling sound of persons making their way through the brushwood was heard, and presently Sandy, accompanied by Reuben and Mike, sprang out from among the trees, and rushed towards the mouth of the cavern.

"No time to be lost," sang out Sandy. "The Redskins are at our heels!"

In a moment they were all three within the cave. Old Samson was still outside, and I saw him lift his rifle and fire. At the same moment two arrows flew past his head—one sticking in the woodwork, the other entering the cavern—and just then I caught sight of the fierce countenances of half-a-dozen red warriors who were making their way between the trees. Their leader, springing forward tomahawk in hand, nearly reached Samson; when, with the agility of a far younger man, he sprang through the opening, and I immediately closed the door—the sharp blade of the weapon burying itself deep in the wood.

"Now, we'll give it them!" exclaimed Samson, as he and Sandy opened three of the concealed loopholes, through which we thrust the barrels of our rifles and fired on our assailants. Their leader fell dead, shot through the heart by Samson. Two others were severely wounded, but numbers were following them, and rushing forward with their hatchets, dealt desperate blows on the door.

"You may cut away pretty hard, my laddies, before you break that in," observed Sandy, as he reloaded his rifle. Samson and I were doing the same, and again we fired; but most of the Indians, knowing the time we should take to do that, sprang aside, and only one of them was hit.

"You will find two more rifles in yonder chest," said Samson to Reuben and Mike. "Quick! load them, and we'll astonish the Redskins."

While he was speaking, the blows on the door were redoubled, and in spite of its strength it appeared every instant as if it would give way. Samson was, in the meantime, ramming down his charge, and again his rifle sent forth its deadly contents. Instead of firing together, we now followed each other, allowing a few seconds to elapse between each shot, thus making our assailants afraid of approaching the door. We guessed that they were collected on either side, where our rifles could not reach them.

In a couple of minutes or so Reuben and Mike had found the rifles, and loaded them.

"Now!" said Samson, "you two and Roger fire together; and then Sandy and I will take your places, and try what we can do."

We waited till the savages, losing patience, again attacked the door with their axes, in a way which threatened each instant to bring it down, when we all three ran out the muzzles of our rifles and fired. Another savage was, at all events, hit; but they had been on the watch, and had actively sprung, some on one side and some on the other, so that we could not be certain what execution had been done. The moment, however, that our rifles were withdrawn, as many as could attack the door leaped forward, and began hacking away with greater fury than before. Scarcely had the first strokes been given when Samson and Sandy fired into their midst, killing two of the most determined—the bullets passing through the bodies of the first and wounding others behind them. Five rifles, however, were more than they were prepared to encounter. They must have guessed that we had increased our number, for, with cries of rage and disappointment, they deserted the door and got under shelter.

"Hurrah! we have beaten them," I cried out, and was turning to Reuben to shake hands, and to ask how he and Mike had escaped, when Samson observed—

"We must not be too sure that they will not make another attempt, for they are up to all sorts of tricks, and will not give in so easily."

"What are they likely to do?" I asked.

"Try to burn us out," answered Samson. "But we must be prepared, and show them that five well-handled rifles can cope with all the arrows and hatchets among them. We do not lack ammunition, and might stand the siege for a month or more."

Samson's surmises were correct. Though we could not see the Indians, we heard their voices, and the sound of chopping, and presently a bundle of fagots was thrown down in front of the door.

"Stand ready," said Samson, "and fire, if we can catch sight of one of them through the loopholes."

Another and another fagot followed, but as yet so carefully had they been thrown that we could not get a shot. It appeared to me that they were dropped from above. The pile was increasing, and soon rising higher than the loopholes, prevented us from seeing any one. Presently we heard the sound of crackling, and the flames rapidly caught the pile.

"Close the loopholes," said Samson. "We'll keep out the smoke as long as we can. The door is tough, too, and will stand the flames better than our enemies suppose."

We all stood with our rifles in our hands, ready for any emergency.

"Should the door burn through and the cavern fill with flames, we must rush out, lads, rather than be stifled; and we may be pretty sure of knocking over four or five Redskins, if they stop to give us the chance," said Samson, who had not for a moment lost his calm manner. "It may be the smoke won't be more than we can bear. See! I am prepared for everything." He pointed to a mass of woodwork, which leant against the wall of the cavern. It was longer than the width of the door, and of a height which would enable us to fire over it. "This will serve as a barricade," he said. "When the Indians fancy that they are going to get in without difficulty, they will find themselves stopped in a way they little expect."

The crackling sound of the flames increased, and thin wreaths of smoke found their way in through the crevices between the woodwork and the rock; still the stout door resisted the fire, which we began to hope might burn itself out without igniting our defences. We could hear the voices of the Indians outside. They were, we guessed, piling up more fagots, as the others had burned down.

Sandy put his hand to the door. "It's getting very hot," he said.

"Well, then," exclaimed old Samson, "we must get our barricade ready, should the door give way, and then crouch down behind it. The nearer we are to the ground, the less we shall suffer from the smoke."

We accordingly dragged the heavy piece of woodwork from the place where it had been standing, to the position it was to occupy, where we laid it flat on the ground. It was at the proper moment to be lifted up, and supported by stout pieces of timber, serving as props, on the inner side. It would thus shelter us, and prevent our enemies from entering.

The door took even longer than we had expected to burn through; but at last, here and there, the forked flames were seen making their way through it, and after this its complete destruction was rapid. Down the upper part came with a crash, followed by the shouts of the Indians, and a shower of arrows—which, however, flew over our heads. No further attempts were made to increase the pile of fagots; our foes supposing that their work was accomplished, and that, even were we not suffocated by the smoke, we should speedily become their victims. We knew that the Indians were not likely to rush through the flames; we therefore waited concealed on either side, behind the rock, till they had somewhat subsided.

Old Samson listened eagerly for any sounds which might indicate that the attack was about to be recommenced.

"Now, lads! up with the barricade!" he shouted out; and with one united effort we lifted it from the ground, directly across the doorway. Scarcely was it securely fixed before the Indians, who had not perceived what we were about, leaped over the burning embers and came rushing on. Our five rifles rang out together, and as many Redskins bit the dust. The rest found themselves stopped by the barricade; and with the crowbars which we had used to get it in position we struck furiously at their heads, beating them back into the hot embers, where several of them, stunned by our blows, were quickly suffocated, or burned to death. The remainder, believing success hopeless, fled from the spot, and made their way down the hill to where they had left their horses. On this we dashed out and followed them, picking off several more. We should have pursued them further, had not their numbers made it prudent for us to remain under shelter of the wood.

On reaching their steeds they mounted and galloped off. In their haste to attack us, they had not taken the trouble to destroy the horses which Sandy, Reuben, and Mike had ridden, and which were grazing at a little distance. Having caught them without much difficulty, we returned with them to the cave.

"This will no longer be a secure hiding-place for us," observed Samson, "for the Indians are sure ere long to come back and attempt to revenge themselves. They will watch day after day for weeks together, till they see some of us go out in search of game; and they will then manage to get between us and the cave, so as to cut us off. I can pretty well guess the sort of tricks they will try to play us; and it is not always easy to circumvent them."

Samson's advice was not to be despised. The Indians, however, were not likely to come back that day, so that we might take some hours' rest before preparing for our departure—our wish being to try and ascertain the course followed by the emigrant-train, which we would then endeavour to overtake. This, as we had horses, we might hope to do in the course of a week or ten days, even supposing that it had pushed forward without any stoppages.

With such ammunition and provisions as we could carry, we started on our journey just after the sun had gone down, as Samson thought it prudent to get some distance ahead during the hours of darkness, so that, should our enemies be on the look-out for us, we might escape unobserved.

Well-armed and well mounted as we were, we did not fear any ordinary band, possessed only of bows and arrows, we were likely to encounter while on the road. Our chief danger would lie in being attacked while encamped at night. To guard as much as possible against surprise, we chose a spot difficult of access, or one by the side of a broad stream, with a few trees which might afford us shelter, without concealing the approach of our foes; or else we threw up a breastwork of logs and branches, behind which we could be protected from the arrows of our assailants. The old trapper and Sandy were adepts at making arrangements of this kind, and were never at a loss. Of course, one of the party, or sometimes two, kept guard; our horses being hobbled near, as we always chose localities where there was an abundance of grass. We could thus, in case of alarm, immediately bring them in under such protection as we had formed for ourselves. They, of course, ran a greater risk of being shot than we did, but that could not be helped.

I had naturally been curious to know how Reuben and Mike had escaped from the Indians. Reuben told me that he

had given himself up for lost when he heard the chiefs discussing, as he supposed, what they should do with us. Each in succession made a long speech, becoming more vehement as they proceeded. He fully expected to be flayed alive, or roasted over a slow fire, or shot to death with arrows aimed so as to avoid vital parts. He had not recognised Manilick, and was therefore not aware that we had a friend in the council. The warriors at last ceased speaking, when he saw one approaching with uplifted tomahawk, which he fully expected would be buried in his brain. What was his surprise to find, instead, the thongs which bound him severed, and to feel himself at liberty! He stood for a moment or two irresolute, not knowing what to do.

“Run! my friend, run!” said the Indian; “make for the river, and you will escape.”

He was not slow to obey the command, but before doing so he looked wistfully at Mike, whose bonds were also cut, as his had been, and by the same friendly Indian. Mike immediately started off with him, but they had not got far when they met Sandy, who had been on the watch for them; and all three slipping noiselessly into the stream, swam across it. On landing, Sandy led them on foot at a rapid pace to a rocky hill some five or six miles away from the river. Having proceeded along it, the nature of the ground being such that even an Indian could not discover their trail, Sandy led them to a cave very similar to the one we had occupied. Here, he assured them, they would run little risk of being discovered. Sandy supplied them with game, and finally succeeded in getting possession of three horses, which he managed to carry off from the Indians. He did not call it “stealing” them, observing that they had all doubtless been taken from white men. On these they had finally made their escape and joined us, though, as we had seen, hotly pursued.

I asked Reuben if he liked the sort of life we were leading.

“I shall be very thankful to find myself safe in some settlement where the war-whoops of the Indians are not likely to be heard,” he answered. “I used to like to hear about such adventures as we are going through, but I confess that I consider them very unpleasant realities.”

I was very much inclined to agree with Reuben. One thing, however, was certain—for the present we must make up our minds to go through whatever came in our way.

Day after day we travelled on, encamping as I have previously described at night, or sometimes pushing forward during the hours of darkness and halting in the day-time. By doing this we saved ourselves the labour of forming defences, as we could in a moment mount and be in readiness to encounter a foe. We had, however, greatly exhausted our stock of provisions, and it became necessary to look after game with which to replenish our store. This we had hitherto avoided doing, as when hunting we should of necessity be separated, and if discovered by enemies we might be cut off in detail. We agreed, at last, that hunt we must; for we had all been on a very slender allowance of food, and were beginning to feel the pangs of hunger. Our horses, too, from being constantly on the move, now showed signs of fatigue. We accordingly halted earlier than usual one day, on the side of a tree-covered knoll, from which we could obtain a good look-out over the surrounding country. Here we resolved to remain for a couple of days, for, having seen no signs of Indians, we hoped to be unmolested. After putting up the framework of a lean-to, to afford us shelter at night, we ate the remainder of our provisions; and while Sandy took the horses down to a stream which flowed below us, we lay down to rest, keeping our rifles by our sides.

I had been dreaming of venison, and buffalo humps, and other prairie luxuries, when I heard Reuben whisper—

“See! Roger, see! There’s a magnificent deer within easy shot.”

I instinctively rose to my knees, with my rifle in my hand, and levelled it at the animal. It was a fine elk, as I knew by the thick branchy horns. At the same moment old Samson sat up. Reuben, knowing that he was not so good a shot as I was, did not attempt to fire. I felt somewhat nervous lest I might miss, though old Samson was not likely to let the deer escape even if I did so. I pulled the trigger, however, and the deer, giving one bound from the earth, fell over, shot through the heart. The sound awoke Mike, and we all rushed down to take possession of our prize. We very quickly cut it up, and shouldering the better portions, carried them to our encampment. Here we soon had a fire blazing, and some rich steaks before it.

Though we had now obtained sufficient food to last us for some days, yet we remained for the time we had determined on, in order to dry the venison, so that we might cure it, and prevent its becoming unfit for use. We were fortunate in killing another deer almost in sight of our camp; so, with renewed strength after our long rest, we again set out, hoping before long to gain tidings of our friends, whom Samson still persisted in believing were ahead of us. I had my doubts on the subject, but felt that I ought to yield to his better judgment.

Chapter Eleven.

Samson’s advice about buffalo-hunting—I see buffalo in the distance—Overtaken by a terrific storm—Benighted on the plain—Hunger-stricken, I allow my horse to take his own way—I swoon away—The Spaniards find me—Pablo, the cook—The prairie on fire—Indians approaching, I dash through the flames—My poor horse is frightfully scorched—The wolves in pursuit—I take refuge in a tree—My horse is devoured by the wolves—The wolves depart in chase of buffalo—I descend, and eat the loathsome wolf-flesh in my hunger—Lighting a fire, I camp for the night—Shooting a beaver.

In vain we searched for the trail of our friends. We ought to have caught them up by this time, even Samson acknowledged, unless they had pushed on more rapidly than ox-trains generally travel.

Our provisions again ran short, and it was necessary to replenish our larder. Though we saw deer in the distance, they scented us, and we could not get up to them; but we were in the region where buffalo might be found, and we

hoped to fall in with a herd. I had gained experience, when with the Indians, in hunting these creatures, and both Samson and Sandy were well acquainted with their habits, but Reuben had never even seen them. Hunger, however, compelled us to follow a course on which we should not otherwise have ventured.

Old Samson advised our inexperienced companion how to act.

“One thing remember, my boy—do not shoot any of us,” he observed; “and take care that the buffalo do not run their horns into you or your horse. The chances are that it is better acquainted with the habits of the buffalo than you are, so let it have its own way. It will generally manage to carry you out of danger, if you give it the rein. Don’t fire till you can aim at the animal’s shoulder or chest; and the moment you fire, load again. Pour in the powder, and drop the ball after it; you ought to be able to do so at full gallop. If you fancy you can manage this, you may try your hand, should you get near any buffalo; otherwise, just keep out of their way. If you manage to sight any, bring me word. A single fat cow is all we want, but they are harder to get up to than the bulls.”

I saw that Reuben was not very confident of his skill. He therefore undertook to act as a scout, keeping an eye on Samson’s movements. Sandy and I agreed to ride to some distance: he was to go to the north, I to the south; and we were afterwards to meet under a hill we saw in the distance. In case of the appearance of Indians, we were immediately to try and reunite.

These arrangements being made, I galloped off in the direction proposed. I had ridden for some time, when, on mounting a slight elevation, I saw afar off a number of black dots sprinkling the plain, and knew that they must be buffalo, though I was unable to determine in what direction they were heading. I therefore galloped on in order to ascertain this point, as it was necessary to do so before returning to inform Samson of my discovery. On descending to the lower ground they were lost to view; but I hoped, by moving forward, again to catch sight of them. On I galloped, without observing the sudden change which had taken place in the weather, so eager was I to get up with the buffalo.

Not till I had gone much further than I had supposed necessary, did I begin to suspect that, instead of feeding, as I had at first fancied, they were going at full rate, and that I must push my horse at his utmost speed to come up with them; still I did not like the idea of allowing them to escape me, without ascertaining whereabouts they were to be found. I forgot at the moment that all I had to do was to come upon their trail, and that we could then easily follow them up, however far they might go. On I went, however, looking out for some higher ground, from which I might again catch sight of them and mark their course. Eager in the pursuit of the animals, I did not notice how time went by, or how far I was going, and thought not of the danger to which I should be exposed if I encountered hostile Indians, nor of the difficulty I might experience in regaining my companions.

I believed that I was pushing due south, but it did not occur to me that I was running any risk of losing myself. Once again I caught sight of the buffalo; but though I had gained on them, they were still a long way off. I knew, therefore, that they must be moving rapidly; but yet I wished to get nearer to them, and if possible to kill one of the rear of the herd, and return with the meat, in case my friends should have been less successful. Being also desperately hungry, I contemplated eating a slice, even though I might not have time to cook it first. I had, of course, flint and steel, and should not have been long in lighting a fire.

I was first made aware of the storm which had for some time been brewing, by a bright flash of lightning which almost blinded me, followed quickly by a rattling peal of thunder; making my horse give a start, which, had I not had a firm hold of the saddle with my knees, would have unseated me. Another and still brighter flash was quickly followed by a yet louder peal. My horse stood still, trembling violently, and afraid to move. In a wonderfully short time the whole sky was overcast with a dense mass of black clouds; and then, after a succession of almost blinding flashes of lightning and terrific peals of thunder, down came the rain in torrents, completely concealing from view all objects at a distance.

Had I remained perfectly still, I might have ascertained the direction in which I was going, but when I attempted to make my horse move on he wheeled round and round, and the rain quickly obliterated the track I had previously made. I was thus utterly unable to determine what course to pursue. There was no wind, even, to guide me, and the rain came down perpendicularly, so that I was in a few minutes wet to the skin. I thought that perhaps my horse’s instinct would lead him back to his equine associates; or, if he was an old buffalo-hunter, that he might follow the trail of the herd we had been pursuing.

I was anxious to obtain both food and shelter. If I could overtake the buffalo, I might satisfy the cravings of hunger; but how to find shelter, was a more difficult point to settle. I therefore gave my steed the rein, and for some time he went in what I supposed was a straight course. Again, however, the lightning burst forth, with even more fearful flashes than before, while the thunder rattled like peals of artillery fired close to my ears. My steed again stood stock-still; and when I attempted to urge him on, he, as before, wheeled round and round. Every moment I expected to be struck by the lightning, which, coming down from the clouds in forked flashes, ran hissing over the ground like fiery serpents.

I was aware, from the time I had been out, that evening must be approaching, but, more suddenly than I had calculated on, darkness came down upon me, and I found myself benighted on the open plain, without the slightest means of guiding my course. Still, I might perish if I remained where I was, so I thought that the best thing I could do was to move on, if I could get my horse to carry me. The thunderstorm, however, continued to rage with unabated fury, and while it lasted I could not induce my steed to move. I got off and tried to lead him, but he plunged so much that I was afraid he would break away, so I therefore mounted again. He went on at first slowly, but suddenly, for what reason I could not tell, he broke into a gallop, and with all my efforts I was unable to check him. The darkness, too, prevented me from seeing the features of the country, and I was thus utterly unable to ascertain in what direction I was going.

All night long he continued; sometimes stopping to regain breath, and then going on again, in spite of the thunder and lightning. The rain had ceased, and the water gradually drained out of my clothes, but I felt very damp and uncomfortable.

At last dawn broke, and the storm gradually died away, but not a gleam of ruddy light indicated in what direction the sun was to be found. Although not thirsty, I was suffering greatly from the pangs of hunger, and felt myself growing weaker and weaker. The appearance of the country was strange, and I could not discern any object which could enable me to determine what course my horse had taken.

Although I could not obtain food for myself, I got off, and loosening the bridle, allowed my steed to crop the grass, in order that he might recruit his strength; for my life would depend, I knew, on his being able to carry me back to my companions, or to go in chase of game. After he had fed for a couple of hours I again mounted and let him go on, when he at once took the course he had before been pursuing.

I looked about on every side, in the hope of seeing some bird or animal that I might shoot. The smallest would have been welcome, but neither large nor small appeared. I was now becoming very faint; while my head felt giddy and my eyes dim. I endeavoured to rouse myself, but in vain. Trying to stand up in my stirrups to look round, I fancied I saw before me a wood. Could I but reach it, I might shoot a bird or squirrel, or some other of its inhabitants.

Another evening was approaching, as I calculated, when I neared the wood. I have a faint recollection of reaching it; then, utterly exhausted, I felt myself slip from the saddle. I disengaged my foot, and was aware that I had reached the ground, on which I stretched myself, trying to hold the rein in my hand. The next instant I must have swooned. There I lay, utterly unable to help myself—my faithful horse standing over me.

How long I had thus lain, I cannot say. Certain it is that, providentially, no wild beasts came near me, or I should have become an easy prey. When I returned to semi-consciousness, I found several people standing round me, one of whom had poured some brandy down my throat, while others were rubbing my feet and hands. I again closed my eyes, unable to make out who the strangers were. They gave me, I believe, more brandy, diluted with water, and then some broth, the effect of which was that I speedily regained a little strength.

In half an hour I was able to sit up. I then discovered that the Samaritans who had relieved me were Spaniards, who, having encamped under shelter of the wood, had, while in search of game for breakfast, discovered me at early dawn. When I was sufficiently recovered, they moved me to their camp where they intended remaining for a day to dry their clothes and packages, which had been saturated by the rain. They formed a large party, bound across the continent with goods for traffic; for only a strong body of well-armed men could venture to travel, with the certainty of meeting bands of hostile Indians, who would be restrained from attacking so formidable a force through dread of their rifles.

The day's rest, and the careful treatment I received from the Spaniards, quickly restored my strength. They had all been in the States, and consequently many of them could speak English; but I had no wish to live long amongst them, for, though kind to me, many of them were fierce, desperate characters, long accustomed to savage warfare with the Indians, and held life at a remarkably cheap rate. The one who was especially attentive to me was old Pablo, —who acted as cook,—and he was constantly bringing me the most delicate messes he could concoct.

By the time they were ready to start I was well able to sit my horse. The question now was, In what direction should I proceed? They assured me that, were I to attempt to make my way back to my friends, I should certainly be cut off by the Indians, who were tracking their footsteps, looking out for stragglers, and ready to pounce down upon them should they be found unprepared. They advised me to accompany them, and afterwards to try and make my way northward with any party of white trappers or hunters who might be going in that direction.

Pablo strongly urged me to take this course. He had his reasons, he said, for wishing to go to the northward, and would accompany me. Though his appearance was not attractive,—for he looked more like an old Jew pedlar than a son of the prairies, as he called himself,—I had confidence in him. I should have said that my new friends were accompanied by a small party of Indians, who acted as guides. To these people Pablo had an especial aversion, the cause of which he did not divulge to me; but I believe that his reason for wishing to quit the party was to get away from the Indians.

The Spaniards remained a day longer than they intended; but we started at dawn, and made considerable progress during the cooler hours of the morning. The sun then came out with withering heat, and the air appeared to me to be unusually oppressive; while, notwithstanding the rain, the grass rapidly became as dry as before. A brown hue pervaded the landscape.

We halted at night by the side of a stream, which, though very small, afforded water for our horses. By this time I felt quite myself again, and capable for any exertion.

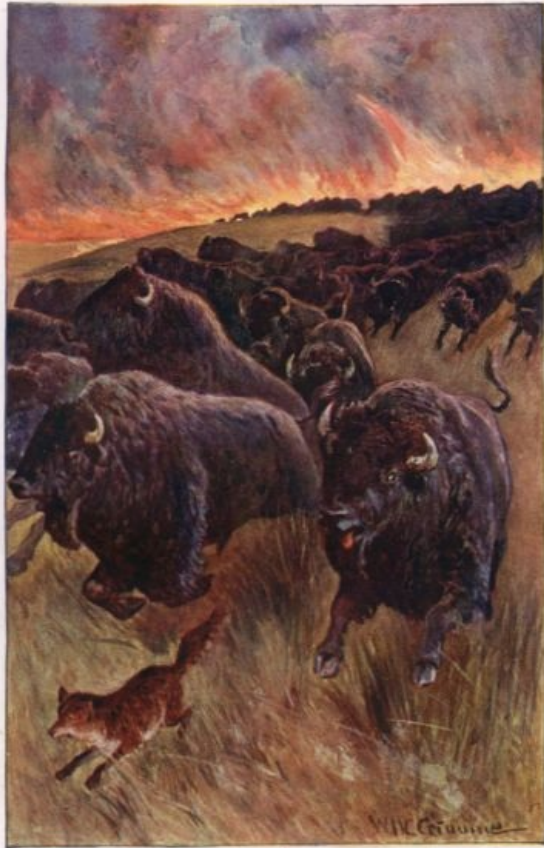
The next day, about noon, I observed the Indian chief, who acted as our principal guide, standing up in his stirrups and looking anxiously towards the south-west. He exchanged some words with our white leader; but still they advanced.

I now noticed a long thin line of what appeared like mist rising above the horizon, but rapidly increasing in height and extending on either hand. The rest of the party also began to look anxious. I remembered the appearance of the prairie fire from which I had before so narrowly escaped, and I now became convinced that we were about to encounter a similar danger.

The clouds of smoke rose higher and higher, and extended further both east and west. Here and there, however, there were gaps, and our leaders seemed to consider it possible that we might make our way through them. At all events, we continued to advance.

The Spaniards began to talk vehemently to each other, evidently not liking the appearance of things. The gaps, towards the broadest of which we had been directing our course, now began to close up, and presently a number of deer came scampering by, only turning slightly aside to avoid us. Whole herds followed—their instinct telling them it was time to make their escape from that region. Our leaders thought likewise; so, turning our horses, we galloped back in the direction from whence we had come.

The whole party had been riding in somewhat less compact order than usual, and they now became widely scattered. I was on the extreme right, and ahead of most of them. Pablo was near me. I urged on my steed to its utmost speed, for I knew how rapidly the fire would spread over the tall, dry grass through which we had passed. Before us was



"I caught sight of a herd of buffalo dashing on to escape the flames."
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what, in the mostly solid, and here the grass grew even more luxuriantly than in other places. By keeping to the right, I avoided it.

In our rear I heard a thundering sound, intermixed with loud bellowing, and glancing round for a moment I caught sight of a herd of buffalo, which, mad with fright, were dashing on to escape the flames, the crackling and hissing sound of which, I fancied, could now be heard. Another glance showed me the horse of the chief plunging in the marsh, and the frantic herd bearing down directly upon him and several of the Spaniards, who, it seemed to me, must inevitably be overwhelmed; but I had to take care of myself, though I would gladly have gone to their assistance had I been able to do so. Recollecting how Mike and I had before escaped, I kept verging more and more to the right, where the country was higher, and the grass would, I knew, though equally dry, be much shorter. The fire too, in that direction, seemed to be advancing much more slowly than it was behind us. I therefore shouted to Pablo to follow me, but was uncertain whether he heard my voice.

I at length lost sight of my companions, but as I without difficulty kept well ahead of the flames, I was satisfied that I had followed the wisest course.

On looking round I saw a number of animals following me: straggling buffalo, deer of several descriptions, wolves, and many smaller quadrupeds. It would not do, however, to stop for a moment; so I pushed on as fast as my horse could go, and after galloping several miles I was satisfied that I had gained considerably on the fire.

Looking to the right, it appeared to me that I might double on it, as it seemed not to be extending in that direction. I was therefore about to change my course with that object, when I saw scampering along the plain a band of Indians, who, I guessed, from the tall plumes on their heads, their long spears, and general appearance, were on the war-path, and would not hesitate to take the scalp of a white man for the sake of adding to their trophies. Were I to continue as I had been going, I should ride almost into their midst. Of one thing, however, I felt sure—they would not willingly advance nearer the approaching fire.

They soon espied me, and several detached themselves from the main body and galloped forward. Should they come near me, my fate, I felt sure, would be sealed. I had not a moment to deliberate. I would rather rush through the flames than trust myself to their tender mercies; so, turning my horse's head, I galloped back towards the advancing fire. Directly in front of me was a spot where the flames reached to a much less height than in other places, and the belt of fire seemed also much narrower. Unstrapping the blanket I carried on my saddle, with desperate energy I tore off a broad strip and fastened it over my horse's eyes. The larger portion I threw over my own head, fastening the ends round my body.

Before I had finished this operation I heard the wild whoops of the Indians directly behind me. Tightening the rein, I

dug my heels into my horse's flanks and urged him forward, steering him between the numberless animals escaping from the fire. My poor horse knew not where he was going. I waited till the smoke began to curl round my head, then drawing the blanket over my face and chest, in total darkness I dashed forward into the midst of the flames. The heat was intense, and I felt that my boots were scorching, but the blanket kept the smoke from my mouth and nostrils, and I was able, though with difficulty, to breathe. I could feel the flames round me, and hear their crackling sound, so my only hope of safety depended on my horse keeping his legs. Should he fall, I must be destroyed.

He kept up wonderfully, and at length I knew that the worst was past. I threw the blanket from my head, for I had begun to fear that I should be suffocated. I was able to draw a free breath, though the air was full of smoke. I had passed safely through the fire, but my clothes were scorched, and my poor steed was fearfully burnt. The ground, too, over which I was passing was still strewed with smouldering embers, which my horse's hoofs threw up behind him at every step.

The fire went rolling on. As I looked down my poor steed's neck and shoulders, I saw that the hair had been completely singed off. A plunge in cold water, therefore, could alone restore him. A dreadful thirst, besides, had seized me. I knew by the course the fire had taken, that away to the eastward I should find a broad stream or marsh. I therefore rode towards it, and the instinct of my steed showed him that I was proceeding to where he could obtain relief from his sufferings.

After galloping along for some distance, having to hold him up with all the strength I could muster, I saw before me the bright water shining between the scorched trees. As I neared it, nothing could restrain the suffering animal. Springing down the bank, he plunged in, carrying me with him. I had not time to stop him; but after a minute I got him into shallow water, and was able to leap off his back on to the shore.

Scarcely had I dismounted, when a chorus of howls saluted my ears; and looking up, I saw a score or more of wolves, which had observed me as they were following in the rear of the fire, according to their custom, to feed on the carcasses of the animals which had fallen victims to the flames. Some had sprung into the water, and were swimming towards me; others came along the bank. I fired at the nearest and knocked him over—the others I attacked with my gun barrel, keeping the cowardly creatures at bay; but their sentinels, who remained on the upper part of the bank, were all the time uttering the fearful howls they make to summon their companions to attack a living animal, or to feed on the carcass they have discovered. I knew that in a few minutes I should be surrounded by a whole army of the savage creatures, and though I might keep a few at bay, I should be unable to resist the numbers which would ere long surround me.

My horse seemed aware of his danger. Driving back the wolves, I reloaded my rifle, and then shouting and firing at the most daring, while the howling pack retreated I mounted and dashed forward. The wolves sprang up round my horse's legs, trying to seize his neck, but I beat them off; and, maddened with terror, he galloped on, sending those his heels reached right and left. Scorched and suffering from the flames though he was, he strained every muscle to keep ahead of the yelping pack, and soon completely distanced them; still, their horrid yelps told me that they were continuing the pursuit. As I looked over my shoulder I could see a long line of fresh animals joining from all sides.

On and on we went, till we left behind the region blackened by the fire, and I saw before me a wood which the flames had not reached. I made for it, hoping that the wolves would not follow; or, if they did, then I might climb a tree, and defend my horse with my rifle as I sat amid the branches.

I reached the wood, and discovered on the very borders just such a tree as I desired. The poor animal was trembling all over, and looked in a wretched plight. My first aim was to make a fire, through which I knew that the wolves would not venture to pass. While engaged in collecting fuel, their yelps again sounded in my ears, and before I could produce a flame I saw them coming on. My only chance now was to mount the tree. Springing on to my horse, I climbed from his back into the fork of the tree, where I was out of the reach of my foes. This was the last service my faithful horse rendered me.

On looking towards the wolves, I perceived, to my dismay, that there were several large white ones among them, the most savage of their tribe. I now knew that I must abandon all hope of saving my horse. I fired at the nearest white wolf and knocked the creature over, but this did not avail my poor steed, for in an instant he was surrounded and pulled to the ground, where the dreadful brutes quickly destroyed him. I loaded and fired, in revenge, as fast as I could; and though at each shot I killed a wolf, it appeared in no way to diminish their numbers, while the living lost no time in devouring their dead companions. Directly I killed a white wolf, the yelling brutes set upon him and tore him to pieces.

Strange as it may seem, I felt an extraordinary pleasure in thus destroying the most savage animals of those wilds; but fortunately I remembered in time that if I continued my sport I might exhaust my ammunition. I therefore only fired when I was certain of bringing down one of the larger animals.

Darkness was coming on, but still the wolves showed no inclination to take their departure. As far as I could tell, they might starve me to death. Not a particle of my horse was by this time left, for they had torn even the saddle and bridle to threads, and, excepting the wood and ironwork, had devoured the whole.

Matters were becoming serious, for I was already desperately hungry. Could I have discovered even a small bird or any creature in the tree, I might have satisfied the gnawings of my stomach, and held out longer.

At length, when I was beginning to despair of relief, my ear caught the same yelping, yelling sound which had warned me of the approach of the wolves when I was in the river. On looking out, I saw a couple of buffalo bulls galloping across the prairie, with a pack of wolves on their trail. The animals still surrounding the tree also heard the sounds. They looked up wistfully at me, making a few desperate efforts to reach the branch on which I was seated; but finding that all their attempts were vain, first one started off in the direction the other pack had taken, then another

and another went away. In a few minutes only three hungry animals remained, gnawing at the bones of the white wolves and some of their own nearer relatives whom I had shot. These I did not fear to encounter. Killing one from where I sat, and then reloading, I jumped down from my perch. The brutes snarled, and one of them made a spring at me; but I shot him, and knocked the other over with the butt of my rifle, thereby saving a charge of powder and lead.

Hunger induced me to cut a slice out of one of the wolves, although it was with no pleasant feelings that I did so. For some minutes I gnawed away at the unsavoury morsel, till nausea compelled me to stop. I then set to work to collect sticks and branches, the waning daylight scarcely affording me sufficient time to pick up as many as I required. With those I could obtain I lighted a fire, spreading it in a circle; then, satisfied that it would burn brightly for a couple of hours, and that no wolves would venture to break through it, I lay down to obtain the rest I so much needed.

When I awoke, a circle of hot embers alone remained. As I had a small supply of wood yet unconsumed, I began to throw on stick after stick, to keep up the fire as long as possible, when I again heard that horrid yelping close to me, and through the darkness I could see the glaring eyeballs of numberless wolves gathering round. They dared not, however, pass the fiery boundary, and I knew that I was safe as long as I could keep up even a slight blaze; still, my stock of wood was growing less and less, and should a black gap appear in the circle, some of the most savage might break through.

Having exhausted the last twig, I saw that I must do something to rid myself of my foes. Seizing a burning branch, the end of which remained unconsumed, I waved it round and round in the faces of the wolves, shouting at the same time at the top of my voice. It had the effect I wished; for, a panic seizing them, away they all scampered, leaving me once more alone. I lost no time in springing over the fire and collecting a sufficient quantity of wood to enable me to keep it blazing till the morning.

The wolves did not return; and at dawn, having cut some more slices from one of the wolves which I had drawn inside the circle, I set off, with my face to the northward, hoping almost against hope that I might fall in with some of my late companions, or that I might find the means of supporting existence till I could strike the trail of old Samson and my other friends,—or the emigrant-train, should they have got so far south. Happily I saw no more of the wolves, and by keeping along the bank of the river, which here ran north and south, I avoided the district ravaged by the fire. Through not falling in with any of the Spaniards, I began to fear that they must have perished.

The first day I fortunately shot a beaver; and having cooked it, I made a hearty meal—stowing away the rest in my wallet. That night I slept up among the branches of a tree, which were so placed that I had no fear of falling down; and next morning, greatly refreshed, I pushed forward on my solitary journey.

Chapter Twelve.

I find poor Pablo, and assist him—Roasted squirrel—Pablo's reason for desiring to join the English—We stalk a buffalo—Pablo's terror at the approach of Indians—My surprise at being welcomed by Manilick—Mike's joy at seeing me alive—We again start in the direction of the waggon-train—Old Samson, Reuben, and Sandy nearly roasted alive by the Apaches—Quambo's care of "de fiddle"—Lily's relationship to Old Samson—Kepenu and Manilick—Conclusion.

I had been trudging on for some hours, directing my course by the sun, which shone brightly from an unclouded sky, when, feeling weary, I sat down to rest under the shade of a tree not far from the river's brink. Scarcely had I stretched out my legs, when I heard a voice, in a tone of suffering, calling to me; and going in the direction from whence it proceeded, what was my surprise to see, among the branches of a tree, my late companion Pablo!

"Misericordia, Señor Roger!" he cried out. "I am starving, and too weak to get down of myself."

I climbed up and gave him some of the beaver-flesh, which soon revived him. He told me how he had been frightened up the tree by the wolves, and that, having lost his gun and his flint, he had no means of defending himself, or of lighting a fire, and should certainly have perished had I not come to his aid. Having assisted him down, I led him towards the river, where he quenched his thirst.

We made but little progress that day, for Pablo was ill able to walk; so, having reached a spot where we could obtain sufficient bark and wood to build a hut and keep up a blazing fire all night, we encamped. Leaving Pablo to finish the hut, I set off in search of game. I brought down two black squirrels; and I afterwards came upon several bushes of berries, which would add a variety to our meal.

On my return to the camp, I found that Pablo had finished all the arrangements, and we soon had one of the squirrels roasting before the fire.

Pablo opened his heart to me. I had been the means, he said, of saving his life, and he should ever be grateful. The reason, he told me, of his being so anxious to join the English, was, that he had met with a missionary—who proved to be no other than our friend Martin Godfrey—and that his object, therefore, was to live with those who held the same opinions, for he was sure that they were the right ones. He cared nothing for all the fatigue and danger he might have to go through, provided that he gained his wishes at last.

We travelled on for several days, sometimes having to encamp in the open prairie, where we were more especially exposed to the risk of being attacked by wolves, or run over by a stampede of buffalo—though we did not trouble our heads much on that score. Our chief risk lay in encountering any bands of hostile Indians who might be traversing the open prairie, as it would be scarcely possible to conceal ourselves from them. I could only hope that, in the event of our being seen, they would not attack two wayworn travellers who could not injure them. Pablo, however, observed that there were some tribes who would murder us for the sake of our scalps, so as to be able to boast that they had

killed two enemies in battle. He had no affection for the Indians, and was inclined to doubt whether they possessed any good qualities.

How we should have got across the wide extent of prairie we traversed I know not, had we not been able to stalk a buffalo, by getting well to leeward of it, whereupon I brought it down with my rifle. Its stomach was full of water, with which we quenched our thirst; and the flesh afforded us food for many days—partly eaten fresh, and partly dried in the sun, and turned into a coarse description of pemmican. We were hoping soon to strike another river, where we could obtain water. This kept up our spirits; and we certainly needed something to do that, for we were growing weary of our long tramp across the open country. As may be supposed, too, we kept our eyes about us as we walked along; for should we espy any suspicious horsemen, our best chance of escaping, we agreed, would be to fall flat on the ground, where we might be hidden by the grass.

The sun was already verging towards the west, when Pablo, who happened at the moment to be looking eastward, exclaimed, "Here come Indians! here come Indians! Down—down!"

We both dropped to the ground, hoping that we had not been seen, and that they would pass by on one side or the other. I could catch sight, as I lay, of their feather, metal, and shell ornaments glittering in the sun, and of their spear-heads with long tufts waving in the wind. They were pushing rapidly across the prairie; but at the distance they still were from us I could not distinguish the tribe or nation to which they belonged. They might be Apaches or Comanches, deadly foes; or a tribe keeping up a friendly intercourse with the white men.

At first I was doubtful in what direction they were going, but I was soon convinced that they were riding directly towards the spot where we lay, and that our chance of escape from their eagle-eyes was small indeed. I observed their leader at length stand up in his stirrups and gaze around. From this I felt nearly sure that we had been seen, and that he was looking for us.

"We are sure to be discovered," I whispered to Pablo. "Our wisest mode of proceeding will be to stand up and face them boldly. It will be better to die on our feet, than to be speared like skulking foxes."

"Do as you think best," answered Pablo.

I immediately rose, and, with outstretched hand, advanced towards the Indians. Their leader galloped forward, then, greatly to my surprise, threw himself from his horse as he got up to me, and putting out his own hand, took mine.

"I have been searching for you! Don't you know me?" he exclaimed.

As he spoke I recognised Manilick, the young chief, Ashatea's lover.

"I happily met the friend of my tribe, Samson Micklan, who, with his companions, are anxious about you," he continued. "Confident of your courage and hardihood, they would not believe that you were lost; and they urged me to make a circuit to the south, in the possibility of coming on your trail. Glad I am to have fallen in with you, for I had almost given you up as lost. Right heartily will our aged friend rejoice that you have been found."

I thanked Manilick warmly for the interest he had taken in me, and inquired whether the waggons had turned back or continued their course westward, and whether they had been overtaken. He replied that Samson had discovered their trail, but, in his search for me, he had lost so much time, that he had not yet been able to come up with them.

As the party had several spare horses, Pablo and I were at once provided with steeds. We then pushed on at a quick rate, Manilick observing that he wished to reach the camp of a friend the following day.

I inquired who the friend was.

"Kepenau," he answered. "He has, with his whole tribe, moved westward, under my protection. He has buried the hatchet with all mankind, and has induced me to follow his example, provided we are not attacked; for should we be, even he allows that it is both lawful and right to defend ourselves. The good preacher, Martin Godfrey, has accompanied him, for the purpose of instructing his people and mine; and he afterwards intends to visit the Palefaces settled in other parts of the country."

"And has his daughter accompanied him?" I asked, looking at the young chief.

"Yes," he answered, with a smile; "and she is shortly to become my wife, as she is satisfied that I am now a believer in the same faith she has long held. I bless the day, too, when she won me over, though I had not before supposed it possible that I could abandon the religion of my forefathers."

I told Manilick how glad I was to hear this, and wished him every happiness.

We encamped that night in a wood near a stream, which we reached just before dark. The same precautions were taken against surprise which our small band had considered necessary; for, Manilick told me, should the Apaches discover his trail, they would be certain to attack him.

"However," he observed, "we have hitherto been preserved by the Great Spirit, and we have no fear of the result of a fight."

"Then you cannot be said altogether to have buried the hatchet," I observed.

"We have resolved to attack no one, and the sin will lie with those who attack us," he answered; "while it is possible, we will avoid a quarrel, and proceed peaceably on our way."

As Manilick's party was numerous and well-armed, they were calculated to inspire respect; and if any foes did approach the camp, they probably thought it prudent to retire to a distance.

The next morning we continued our march, and towards evening came in sight of a thick wood. I saw that Manilick's eagerness increased as we rode on. We were still at some little distance from the wood, when I observed a man with a gun in his hand issuing from under the shelter of the trees. He looked towards us, apparently suspicious as to who we were. I had no doubt, from his appearance, that he was a Paleface; and as we got still nearer to him, to my infinite satisfaction I recognised Mike Laffan. He knew me almost at the same moment, and throwing up his cap, and giving vent to an Irish shout of joy, he ran forward.

"Sure! is it you, Masther Roger dear, alive and well?" he exclaimed. "It brings back joy to me heart, for it was mighty troubled at the thoughts that you were lost intirely."

I jumped from my horse to receive the greetings of the honest fellow. He had, I found, overcome with the poignancy of his feelings at the thought of my death, been knocked up, and had remained with Kepenau, whose camp he told me was concealed within the wood. He led the way round to a narrow opening, where Manilick dismounted. Proceeding through it, we soon reached an open spot on which Kepenau had pitched his tents. He himself was the first person who advanced to greet us. Behind him stood Ashatea, a lovely specimen of an Indian girl, her countenance beaming with that intelligence which education could alone have given her. Though she met Manilick with a bashful reserve, I had little doubt that she had at length bestowed on him the heart he sought. Still I recollected honest Reuben's admiration. Yet I was very glad that it was so; for, charming as he might deem her, she was still a child of the desert,—and one of our fair countrywomen would, I was very sure, make him a far more useful and companionable wife than Ashatea would prove.

Kepenau told me that he intended to pitch his tents in the neighbourhood of the proposed settlement—remarking that he should now have no fear of his people being seduced by the terrible "fire water"—and that he hoped to change his skin-tents into substantial dwellings like those of the Palefaces, and to cultivate the ground instead of depending on the chase for subsistence. In the meantime, however, he and his people must hunt the buffalo and deer to obtain support for themselves and their families; and he was only awaiting the arrival of Manilick and his tribe to set out with that object, as provisions were already running short in the camp. Though I had borne the journey, I felt too much exhausted and weak to accompany him; and as both Mike and Pablo were much in the same condition, they insisted on taking care of me and themselves without troubling the Indians, who had plenty to do in guarding the camp and looking after the horses.

Mike and Pablo soon became great friends; and though I had no real authority over either of them, they took a pleasure in serving me.

"Sit still and be aisy for once in your life, Masther Roger," said Mike, as he brought a bundle of sticks and piled them up on the fire he had lit. "Sure, Pablo and I can do all the work, without you troubling yourself. There's Misthress Ashatea and the young chief billing and cooing at her tent-door like two turtle-doves; and if they were to see you moving about, maybe they'd think it necessary, out of courtesy, to come and help you—and it would be a pity to disturb them."

Mike's arguments prevailed, and for once in my life, as he advised, I did sit quiet,—and very glad I was to do so,—while I watched the Indians through the trees making preparations for their departure.

The young chief, after a short rest, started off with some of his best hunters in search of a herd of buffalo which had been seen in the neighbourhood; and before the end of the next day they returned with an ample supply of meat. After remaining a couple of days to dry what was not required for immediate consumption, the camp was broken up, and we proceeded in the direction it was said the waggon-train had taken. We were, however, not able to travel very much faster than the steady-going oxen, and we therefore had little hope of overtaking it before it had reached its destination.

As trails were discovered which were pronounced to be those of Apaches, I felt some anxiety lest old Samson and his companions might have been attacked and overpowered.

"He is too well acquainted with their ways to be caught," observed Kepenau.

I remembered, however, the eagerness the old man had shown to overtake the train, in order that he might ascertain whether Lily was, as he had hoped, his grand-daughter; and he might thus push forward, when his usual prudence would have induced him to remain concealed, or to have retreated from his foes.

We advanced like an army in an enemy's country—with scouts ranging on either side, so that there was no probability of our being taken by surprise; while our main body was too numerous to have invited an attack.

We had made good progress for several days, when the sound of rifle-shots reached our ears through the still air of a warm summer noon. Directly afterwards the scouts came in with the intelligence that a large number of Indians were collected in the neighbourhood of what looked like a log-hut, on the bank of a stream in the plain below us. We were, at the time, approaching the edge of a plateau over which we had been travelling. In the far distance rose some blue hills, spurs of a still more lofty range of mountains. It was at the foot of these hills that the new settlement was, I understood, to be formed.

While our main body advanced slowly for the sake of the women and children, Manilick, with a chosen band of warriors, rode rapidly forward. He at once expressed his opinion that a small party of white men had taken refuge in the hut, to defend themselves against the Apaches, and that it was our duty to hasten to their relief. We waited among the trees on the upper portion of the slope, to give time to our main body to appear just before we should reach the enemy—who, finding themselves menaced by superior numbers, would in all probability take to flight. At

the proper moment Manilick shouted "Forward!" and we rapidly descended the hill.

We did not arrive a moment too soon, for the fire of the little garrison had begun to slacken, and the besiegers were preparing to scale the walls. On seeing us approach, and observing the large number of armed men who at that moment reached the edge of the height, they took to flight, and endeavoured to make their escape to the southward. We gained a bloodless victory, for Manilick would not allow them to be pursued.

No sooner had the enemy retreated than the door of the hut was thrown open, and old Samson, followed by Reuben and Sandy, rushed out, while the hut burst into flames—the savages having just before set fire to it in several places.

"You have come just in time to save us from roasting!" exclaimed the old trapper, recognising Manilick, but not seeing me. "We caught sight of the Apaches bearing down upon us, and had just time to take shelter in the hut and barricade the doors and windows, before they readied it. They carried off our good steeds, but we have secured our packs and arms."

At length catching sight of me as I rode out from among the men, he expressed his satisfaction with a vehemence I had never before seen him exhibit—almost bursting into tears as he shook my hand.

"I should have grieved if you had been lost, Roger, and I had had to announce the sad tidings to my young grand-daughter; for that your Lily is my grand-daughter, I feel as sure as I do of my own existence. I have dreamed about her every night since you told me her history, and something tells me I must be her grandfather. Nothing must now stop us. Our friend Manilick will supply us with horses, and we shall reach the settlement before nightfall. They are all safe there long ago, for I came upon their trail; and they were strong enough to beat off any of the Redskins who may have attempted to interfere with them."

Notwithstanding Samson's eagerness, we had to wait till the main body came up, when, horses having been supplied to my three friends, they, with Mike and I, and six of Manilick's tribe, set forward at a rapid rate in the direction of the new settlement.

The sun had not yet set when we saw before us, on the banks of a clear stream backed by a wood, some white tents, and the canvas covers of a number of waggons. My heart began to beat with the anticipation of once more meeting Lily, my uncles and aunt, and other friends. As we approached the bank we were observed by the inhabitants, who at once assembled, rushing from all quarters with arms in their hands. On our drawing still nearer, however, they recognised us, and coming down to the water, pushed off on a large raft, which they propelled with long poles to the side on which we stood.

The first to spring on shore was Uncle Mark. He received Reuben, Mike, and me as people risen from the dead. Quambo followed closely, and, taking me in his arms, gave me a hug, in his joy, which almost squeezed the breath out of my body. Mike came in for the same sort of greeting.

"Och, sure! do you take me for a baby?" exclaimed Mike—"though you would have squeezed the life out of me if I had been one. But I am mighty pleased to see you; and, bedad, we'll be footing it away to the sound of me fiddle, I am hoping, before many hours are over. You have got it all safe?"

"Yes. I keep de fiddle all right, and let no one play on it—not even myself," observed Quambo.

"True for you, Quambo," said Mike, laughing; "for the best of raisons—there's no one else but meself could make the music come out of it."

Our Indian escort having set off to return to the camp, according to orders, we crossed the river to the opposite bank, where our relatives had collected to receive us.

Lily looked somewhat pale. Though she had not abandoned all hope, she had been fearfully anxious about me; and she made me promise not to go wandering again over the wilds, if I could help it. Mr and Mrs Claxton and Dora had been equally anxious about Reuben, and were proportionably thankful to get him back safe.

Old Samson stood gazing at Lily while I was talking to her. He then hastened up to Aunt Hannah.

"You have been a mother to that sweet child, and I will bless you for it as long as there is breath in my old body," he said. "But I want to take her from you. She is mine by right, for I am, I believe, her only living relative. You have got the proofs; and if you do not wish to try the feelings of an old man, which he thought were long ago dead and gone, show me the things you have taken care of since she was committed to your charge."

Aunt Hannah looked very much surprised at first; but the truth quickly dawned on her.

"You shall see them, Mr Micklan, for they are safe in my box in the waggon; and if you recognise them, as you expect to do, Lily shall call you 'Grandfather;' but as to giving her up—No, no! you will not expect that of us. For sixteen years she has been our child, and we have loved her, and love her still, as if she were our own. You would not be so hard-hearted, even if you have the right, as to deprive us of her!"

"Well, well—I cannot gainsay you; but only let me know that I have got some one to love, and I will give up my wandering life and come and settle down among you."

Lily and I accompanied Uncle Stephen and Aunt Hannah, with the old hunter, to the waggon, where the baby-dress and the ornaments she had worn were soon produced.

Samson gazed at them, without speaking, for some seconds. Then he exclaimed, "Yes, yes! there is no doubt about it.—Come, Lily, do not be afraid of your old grandfather. I will not run away with you; but just let me love you, and

watch over you, and take care of you, and I shall be content, and end my days more happily than I had ever hoped to do.”

Lily came forward and put her hand into that of the old man, who, stooping down, kissed her fair brow, and pressed her to his heart.

After this a change seemed to come over Samson Micklan. He was no longer the rough old trapper he had hitherto appeared—though he worked as hard as any one in the camp, and took especial delight in assisting to build the house Lily was to occupy.

Every one, as may be supposed, was busy from sunrise to sunset, and a village soon sprang up in that hitherto desert spot. Our Indian friends rendered us important assistance, by supplying us with the meat they obtained in their hunting expeditions, as also by acting as our guardians; for they were constantly on the watch, and no foes would venture to attack us while supported by such formidable allies. The settlement flourished and rapidly increased, for we were soon joined by other parties from the eastward; and even my uncles acknowledged that they had no desire to make another move—greatly to Aunt Hannah’s satisfaction.

Lily, in course of time, became my wife; and Mr Micklan, loved and respected by the whole of the community, lived to hear the prattle of his great-grandchildren.

Our friends Reuben and Dora both married happily, and we, who were once hardy backwoodsmen, became quiet and contented citizens. I own that though the life we had led possessed its attractions, our present condition was on many accounts preferable.

Mike and Quambo purchased a lot between them at a short distance from the settlement, and became prosperous farmers; but they remained bachelors to the end of their days—Mike declaring that the sound of his fiddle was more satisfactory to his ears than the scolding of a wife or the squalling of children. Albeit, he never failed to bring it on his frequent visits, to the infinite delight of my youngsters, who invariably began to dance and snap their fingers when they caught sight of him and his sturdy nag approaching our door.

Kepenau and Manilick, having become civilised themselves, laboured incessantly in the civilisation of their people—aided by our revered friend, Martin Godfrey, who eventually settled down among them.

We were not altogether without some trials and troubles, but we had also much to make us happy; and I can honestly say that we had good reason to be thankful—though we could never be sufficiently so—to that Merciful Being who had preserved us amid the many dangers we had passed through during the period I have described.

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