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William H G Kingston

"Snow Shoes and Canoes"

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## Chapter One.

**Black Fort—The pack-horse train sets out—Sandy McTavish's sagacity—The night-watch—The two redskin horse-thieves—A snowstorm—An uncomfortable bed and a terrible night—My delight at finding my horse alive—We obtain shelter in a wood—Desperate encounter between a lynx and an eagle for the possession of a hare—The hare becomes my prize—The untimely appearance of a wolf.**

The short summer of the North-West Territory of British America, the region in which the events I am about to describe took place, was rapidly drawing to a close.

I had been sent from Black Fort, of which my elder brother Alick had charge, with Sandy McTavish, an old follower of our father's, and two other men, to bring up ammunition and other stores as a winter supply from Fort Ross, about 150 miles off—a distance, however, of which we did not think much.

The stores ought to have been brought up the greater part of the way by the Saskatchewan, but a canoe had been lost in ascending the rapids, and no other was at that time to be procured to replace her. It became necessary, therefore, at all costs to transport the required stores by land. We had eight pack-horses, besides the four animals my companions and I rode.

We were all well armed, for though the Crees and other Indian tribes in the northern part of the territory were generally friendly, we might possibly encounter a party of Blackfeet on the war-trail who, should they find us unprepared, would to a certainty attack us, and endeavour to steal our horses and goods. We were but few in number for such an undertaking, but no more men could be spared. Sandy, however, was a host in himself. He thoroughly knew all the Indian ways, and from his long experience was well able to counteract them.

Many an evening, while seated at our camp-fire or at the stove in the fort, during winter, has he beguiled the time with accounts of his hairbreadth escapes and desperate encounters with the redskins. He had no enmity towards them, notwithstanding the attempts they had made on his life.

"They were but following the instincts of their savage natures," he used to observe; "and they were not over well pleased with the white men for hunting in the country which they call theirs, though it must be allowed they dinna make gude use of it."

Sandy was as humane as he was brave, and I am very sure he never took the life of an Indian if he could avoid doing so with due regard to his own safety. He had come out from Scotland when a mere boy with our father, who was at that time a clerk in the Hudson's Bay Company, but who had ultimately risen to be a chief factor, and was the leader in many of the adventurous expeditions which were made in those days. He was noted for being a dead shot, and a first-rate hunter whether of buffalo, elk, or grizzly bear. Sandy had followed him in all his expeditions, and took the greatest delight in describing them to us.

Having remained at Fort Ross a couple of days, to rest our beasts and prepare the packages for transport, we set out, Sandy and I leading, and the two men, Pat Casey and Pierre Lacrosse, following in the rear with the baggage animals.

We travelled at the rate of about twenty-five miles each day. That distance being accomplished, we encamped at night under shelter of a grove of poplars or willows, we being glad of the protection they afforded; for although the weather was fine, the wind had begun to blow somewhat cold.

Our beasts having been unloaded were hobbled near at hand, the goods being piled up so as to form a breastwork in case of an attack. Fuel to last the night had then to be collected, when the fire was lighted, and the pot put on to boil.

Supper being ready, we sat round our fire to discuss it, with good appetites. We then, after a chat for half an hour or so, drawing our buffalo-ropes over us, with our saddles for pillows, lay down to rest, our feet turned towards the fire. One of us, however, always remained on guard, to watch the horses, and to give warning should any Blackfeet Indians or prowling wolves draw near our encampment.

We did not believe that we had much to fear from either one or the other. The Blackfeet seldom ventured so far north into the territory of their hereditary enemies the Crees; and should any wolves approach, the horses would be sure to make their way up to the camp for protection.

The two hours watch which each of us took in turn made us sleep the sounder for the remainder of the time. We were all too well inured to the sort of life to think it any hardship. Just before dawn the last man on watch roused up the rest of us. The ashes were raked together, fresh sticks put on, the water boiled for the tea, and a breakfast of slices of bacon or dried buffalo meat, with flour cakes, prepared us for the toils of the day.

The country over which we travelled was seldom traversed by white men. The grass-covered prairie extended often as far as the eye could reach, here and there hills rising in the distance, or long lines of trees marking the course of some stream falling into the main river.

We had to cross several of these streams, but at that time of the year were able to ford them without difficulty, the drought of summer having greatly diminished their depth.

Sandy and I were jogging along at the head of our party when, as we reached the summit of a slight hill from which we could obtain an extensive view over the surrounding country, he stopped and gazed, I thought somewhat anxiously, around the horizon.

"We must push on faster than we have been going, if we are to reach Black Fort before bad weather comes on," he observed.

"I see no change in the appearance of the sky," I answered. "There's not a cloud in any direction, and the wind is as moderate as it was when we started."

"The sky is blue and cloudless, I'll allow, but it's whiter away in the nor'ard than I like to see it. There will be wind from that quarter before long, and the wind won't come alone," said Sandy. "It may not reach us to-morrow or the next day, and we may be safe within the fort before it is down upon us."

Though I had a high opinion of Sandy's sagacity, I thought that in this instance he might be mistaken. It was very important for us to reach the fort before the snow should cover the ground to any depth. The stores we were bringing were much required, and the heavily-laden animals would have great difficulty in making their way through it. Of course I agreed, as Sandy advised it, that we should push on that day as long as the light would allow, and that we should make a forced march on the following day, so that we might reach the fort on the next before nightfall, which we calculated we should thus be able to do.

Waiting till the two men with the loaded beasts came up, we told them of our intentions, and ordered them to push on as fast as they could. We had not gone far, however, when Sandy's horse stumbled, a very unusual thing for the animal to do. It continued to walk lame, evidently in pain.

We dismounted and examined its feet, when we found that a sharp stone had wounded its hoof. We extricated it with considerable difficulty, and when we again moved on the animal walked with as much pain as before. Nothing could make it move on. We were therefore compelled to encamp at the first suitable spot we reached.

The weather remained fine, and we hoped in the morning that Sandy's horse would have recovered, and that we should be able to make a long day's journey. According to our intention, our camp was formed as usual under shelter of a wood, but there was scarcely any good grass in the immediate neighbourhood, and we were compelled to let the animals roam much further than we liked in search of it.

We agreed that, in order to keep a proper lookout, two of us should remain on the watch at a time, one in the camp, and the other in the direction the animals had taken.

Sandy had Pierre for his mate; I, Pat. Sandy and Pierre took the first watch. The latter went off with his rifle and a brace of pistols in his belt, to walk backwards and forwards near where the horses were feeding. Pat and I then lay down with our feet to the fire.

"We'll sleep as fast as we can, Mister David, to make up for the shortness of time we've got to do it in," observed Pat, as he rolled himself up in his buffalo-robe.

I endeavoured to follow his advice, but somehow or other the presentiment that danger threatened us kept me awake longer than was usual. It seemed that I had scarcely closed my eyes when Sandy aroused me, and springing to my feet I examined the priming of my rifle and pistols, and prepared to relieve Pierre, who was to wait near the horses till I arrived. I had to walk nearly a quarter of a mile before I found him in a grassy valley, between two slight hills running in the direction of the river. Had there been any trees thereabouts it would have been a better place than the one we had chosen for our encampment. Pierre reported all right, and went back to camp.

By walking to the top of one of the hills I could get a view all round, and watch the horses feeding below me. I counted them and found that all were there, and then went down again to find some shelter from the wind behind a small clump of low bushes. I could watch from this most of the horses, but some of them would wander up the valley out of my sight.

At last I saw by the movements of those near me that they were becoming somewhat uneasy, and presently two which had got to a distance came up as fast as their hobbles would allow them, the whole heading towards the camp. I rushed forward to cut the hobbles as fast as I could get up to the animals, when they all set off in the direction they had before been going.

I had just set the last free when, looking up, I saw two dark figures which I knew were those of Indians, who had been endeavouring to get up to the horses before I could set them at liberty. The moment they found that they were discovered they stopped short. I pointed my gun, they hesitated, and then once more began to move towards me, their scalping knives gleaming in the moonlight. Anxious not to shed blood, I again shouted to them to stop; but perhaps seeing, by my voice and slight figure, that I was but a youth, they fancied that they could intimidate me, and uttering terrific shrieks they continued to approach. My life depended, I knew, on the steadiness of my aim, and pulling the trigger I sent a bullet into the body of one of the strangers. He staggered and fell, when drawing a pistol I prepared to receive his companion, who, however, stopped, and lifting the wounded man to his feet, the two made off faster than I should have supposed possible.

I thought it prudent not to follow, as I felt sure that other Indians were in the neighbourhood. The sound of my shot would have aroused my friends, and from the appearance of the horses they would understand what had happened.

As the Indians made off in one direction, I ran as fast as my legs could carry me towards the camp. Before I reached it, I met Sandy and the other men coming out to my assistance. They expressed their satisfaction at finding me safe.

Pierre and Pat wanted to set off in pursuit of the enemy, but Sandy would not allow them.

“Na! na! laddies; we’ll gain nothing even if we were to shoot a score of redskins. We shall want our ammunition to defend ourselves when we are attacked. Let’s count the horses, and see if all have come in,” he said.

On doing so, we discovered that one was missing. The animal had evidently been carried off by some Blackfeet.

The loss was a serious one, as we should have either to add to the weight of the loads of the others, or place the packages on one of the saddle-horses, taking it by turns to walk.

One thing was certain, that even if not attacked, our journey, which we were anxious to finish as soon as possible, would be prolonged.

As may be supposed, we got no more sleep that night. We had to hobble the horses, and keep a bright lookout on every side, lest the treacherous Indians might steal upon us and catch us unprepared. They must have guessed from the number of horses that our party consisted of several men, well armed, and from the experience they had had of my rifle they knew that they could not come openly upon us without the certainty of some of their number being laid low.

As the sky remained clear, and the moon was bright, we could see objects at a considerable distance; our enemies could not therefore get near without being discovered. Our chief fear was that they might, if they were resolved on our destruction, make a wide circuit, and getting into the wood attack us in the rear. To prevent the risk of this, Pierre made his way among the trees and watched on that side; on hands and knees he crept cautiously from place to place, as the panther does watching for its prey. Wary as the Indians were, it was not likely that they would surprise him. There is an excitement in an adventure of the sort we were engaged in which affords actual pleasure, and for my part I enjoyed it greatly, caring neither for being deprived of sleep, nor for the danger to be apprehended.

We let our fire remain in, though we kept it low, with plenty of sticks at hand which we could throw on and make it blaze up, should we find it necessary. At last dawn appeared in the eastern sky, and we believed that, as the Indians had not attacked us at night, they would not molest us during our journey.

Having collected our horses and distributed the load of the animal which had been stolen among them, after a hasty breakfast we set off. We were much disappointed at finding that Sandy’s animal was as lame as on the previous day, and as it could not move out of a walk, he dismounted and proceeded on foot. Our progress was therefore slower even than usual.

The country as we advanced became much rougher than that which we had hitherto passed over. When the greater part of the day had been spent, we reached the foot of an excessively steep hill, on the top of which was a wide extending plain. We all here dismounted, and allowed our horses to scramble on as best they could. To climb up with more ease I disencumbered myself of my cloak, which together with my gun I fastened on to one of the pack-horses. We had provided ourselves with thick sticks, which helped us along.

Sandy’s poor horse had great difficulty in making its way, and dropped behind the rest. There was no fear of its straying; the animals being accustomed to keep together, it was sure to follow.

“I wish that we had been able to make our way as fast as we had intended,” said Sandy. “We shall have more difficulties on this journey than we looked for; however, there’s no use sighing about what cannot be helped. Just do you go on, David, to the top of the hill, and take a look round to see if you can catch sight of any Indians. You are more active than I am, and will be at the top before I can reach it; I’ll wait and bring up the rest of the horses. If the Indians were to come upon us at this moment they might take us at a disadvantage.”

From the way Sandy spoke I saw that he was not like himself. It struck me that he was ill; or, had he expected that we should have been attacked by the Indians during our ascent of the hill, he would have made preparations beforehand. I, however, did not hesitate to do as he wished, and springing forward soon climbed up among the rocks and shrubs to the top. Before me, stretching to the westward, was a perfectly level plain, on the edge of which I looked down on the other side over the lower country, across which we had passed.

I could see our horses toiling upwards among the rocks and shrubs to the top, followed by Sandy and the two other men, he having stopped to speak to them. The sky overhead and on three sides was clear, but on looking to the northward I observed a dense black mass which came sweeping along at a tremendous rate towards me. Though the air had just before been perfectly serene, on a sudden a keen cutting wind struck me with a force which almost took me off my feet.

The next instant I was in the midst of a fearful snowstorm. The sun in a moment became obscured, and the wind increasing rose to a perfect hurricane. I could dimly discern two of the horses which just then had reached the plateau. I ran towards one of them to secure it, hoping that it was my own, but I found that it was one of the loaded animals, and unfortunately not the one on which I had laid my coat and gun. In a few seconds of time, so fearful had become the darkness that I could not see three feet ahead of my nose. I shouted at the top of my voice to the rest of the men who were, I knew, not far from me to mount their horses and come on, allowing the others to shift for themselves.

We should all be frozen to death if we were to remain where we were. Our only hope of safety was to reach a thick grove of trees at the farther end, and I hoped that we might get to it before the snow became too deep to allow the animals to move rapidly over the ground.

In vain I looked for my own horse. I could faintly hear Sandy and the other men shouting in return to my cries, but whereabouts they were I could not tell. I fully believed that they would all follow the course I proposed, and as I could not discover my own animal I cut the tyings and threw off the load from the pack-horse I had caught, then mounting on the pack-saddle I rode off at full speed through the deep snow, in the hope of reaching the wood.

So rapidly did the snow come down that in a few moments it was several inches deep. Every instant it was increasing and rendering my progress more difficult. I urged on the poor animal, which seemed to know its danger and did its utmost, but thicker and thicker fell the snow, and in a short time, night coming on, it became so dark that I was literally unable to see my hand held close to my face; except judging by the wind, I could not tell in what direction we were going. I could only hope that the instinct of the animal might guide it towards the wood in which shelter could be obtained.

As to seeking my companions, that was out of the question. I shouted to them every now and then, but no voice answered my calls. I knew, however, that they all, being well acquainted with the country, would endeavour to reach the shelter for which I was aiming, and I hoped at length to meet them there.

The cold was intense; even had I possessed my overcoat it would have been bad enough to bear, but with only moderately thick clothing on, I felt the wind pierce to my very bones. I rode on, however, as long as I was able to sit my horse, but at length my limbs became so benumbed by the cold that I could ride no further. The poor beast also was almost exhausted with his exertions in plunging on through the deep snow.

Hoping to keep somewhat warm by walking I dismounted, and leading him by the bridle tried to get along. At every step I made I sank halfway up to my knees, and could scarcely lift my feet high enough to make another step forward; still, it would be death to stay where I was. I went on, hoping that I was approaching the wood. Now and then I stopped and shouted; still there was no reply.

I became at length convinced that I must have either passed the wood or been going in another direction. No sound reached my ears but that of the thick-falling snow, which seemed to come down in a mass upon the earth, so rapidly did it accumulate.

Sandy, I knew, would be very anxious about me, and would take every means to discover where I had gone; but even in daylight he could not have followed my track, as the snow must instantly have obliterated it.

I resolved as long as I had strength to push on, though I had missed the wood for which I was aiming. I might, I hoped, in time reach another which would afford me protection.

The storm instead of abating only seemed to increase in violence. As the night wore on I found my poor horse advancing at a slower and slower pace, showing how fatigued it had become, while I had scarcely strength left to move forward; still I was afraid to halt. At last it stopped altogether, and I myself felt utterly exhausted. Further it was impossible to go, but how to endure the cold and keep the blood circulating in my veins was the question. It seemed to me that I must inevitably perish; still I resolved to make an effort to preserve my life.

My horse was standing stock-still, with its back to the wind. I bethought me that the only chance I had of retaining existence was to dig a hole in the snow, in which I might crouch down, and wait till the storm was over. I set desperately to work. While so employed, the drift eddying around my head nearly suffocated me; still I persevered.

Having dug down to the ground, I took off the pack-saddle from the horse's back, which I placed as a cushion below me, and then putting the saddle-cloth over my shoulders I crouched down in the hole I had made, which I could not help dreading was more likely to prove my grave than to afford any efficient shelter.

I knew for certain that, should I fall asleep, death would ensue, and that I must exert all my energies to keep awake. I had not been long seated, doubled up in my burrow like a mummy, before I felt the cold begin to steal over me. My feet were the first to suffer. I tried to keep them warm by moving them about, but it was of no use.

At last I took off my frozen shoes, and tucked my feet under me on the pack-saddle; then I rubbed them as hard as I could. I was tempted at last to take the horsecloth off my shoulders, and to wrap my feet up in it, but all was of no use. They appeared to me to be frozen, while my whole body seemed changing into ice. At last I had scarcely strength to move either my hands or feet. During this time the inclination to sleep almost overcame me. I struggled against it with all the resolution I possessed. I was perfectly well aware that, should I give way to it, death would be

the consequence.

I took every means I could think of to keep awake. I shouted; I even sang, or rather I tried to sing; but the most melancholy strains were the only results of my efforts, my voice sounding as hollow as that from a skull—if voices ever do come out of skulls, on which subject I venture to be sceptical.

I kept moving from side to side, and up and down, filled with the dread that, should I stop, I should fall asleep. The snow all the time was gathering round my head, forming an arch over me, and I had frequently to make a hole in front, so as to obtain sufficient air for breathing.

How I lived through that dreadful night I cannot tell. Morning came at last; the snow had ceased to fall as thickly as before, allowing the light to penetrate through the veil drawn over the earth. Faint as was the light, it gave me a glimpse of hope. I might still reach the wood, and by obtaining a fire thaw my benumbed limbs. My first efforts were directed towards breaking out of my icy prison; but the hole in front of me was so small that it was not till I had made several attempts that I could force my body through it.

I at length managed to get up on my feet, when I took a look round. There stood my poor horse, where I had left it, rigid as a statue, and, as I believed, frozen to death.

On every side I could see nothing but one vast expanse of snow. I could not, however, remain where I was. Either on horseback or on foot I must try to reach a place of shelter and to find my companions. I now remembered that I had taken my shoes off. How to get them on again was the difficulty, for when I felt them, I found that they were frozen as hard as iron. I made several attempts to thrust in my feet, for I knew that they would be dreadfully cut should I attempt to walk without shoes. The exertion contributed somewhat, perhaps, to restore the circulation in my veins, and at last, after many efforts, I got on my shoes.

Having accomplished this I broke entirely out of my burrow, and staggered towards my poor steed. To my great relief the animal moved its head and looked at me, giving evidence that it was still alive. I accordingly returned to the hole and dug out my saddle, when, after great exertion, I managed to reach the horse and put it on. Then, digging round the poor beast's front feet, and patting it on the neck, I induced it to move forward a few paces.

It seemed surprising that, after the fearful night it had endured, it should still be alive and could move its legs apparently without much difficulty.

I now tried to mount, but could not bend my frozen limbs sufficiently to get into the saddle. I therefore, taking the bridle in my hand, led forward my horse, stumbling at every step. I hoped, however, that the exercise would restore circulation, and that I should be able at last to get on horseback.

I looked round, but could nowhere see the wood of which I was in search; though the snow was not falling as thickly as it had done during the night, the weather still looked very threatening. Dark masses of snow-clouds obscured the sky like a canopy but a few feet, it seemed, above my head.

The wind was still piercingly cold, and at any moment the snow might again come down and overwhelm me. The rough training I had gone through, however, had taught me never to despair, but to struggle on to the last. I had no thoughts of doing otherwise, though every limb ached, and I had scarcely strength to draw one leg after the other.

At last, finding that I could walk no longer, I made another effort to mount, and succeeded, though not without great pain, in climbing into the saddle; when I was there, however, my poor horse showed his utter inability to carry me, and refused to lift a leg; indeed, his strength was insufficient for the task. In vain I patted his neck and tried to make him go forward. The only movement he made was to sink down on his knees. To prevent him from falling altogether, when I might not have been able to get him up again, I threw myself off his back.

At the same moment the storm burst forth with greater fury than before. I began to believe that I should perish; but still I had some strength left in me, and resolved to exert it to the utmost. As to facing the storm, that was impossible, so all I could do was to turn my back to it and move forward.

I might be going further and further from the wood, but I trusted that Providence, which had hitherto preserved me, would direct my steps towards some other shelter. Still I in vain looked out for any object rising above the apparently interminable plain of snow. The saddle-cloth drawn tightly over my shoulders somewhat protected my back, but the wind whistled past my ears, which had now lost all sensation.

On and on I went, I knew not for how long. I could scarcely think, indeed I could scarcely feel, except that I was suffering all over from pain. The storm sent me along, in what direction I could not tell, though I supposed that it was towards the south. The thick-falling snow hid all objects, if any there were, from sight. My companions might be in the neighbourhood, but I was not likely to see them, nor they me.

I tried occasionally to shout out, but I had not power to send my voice to any distance. Still I went on, like a hawker crying his wares in a town, but I had lost all hopes of hearing an answer to my calls. At last so great became my exhaustion that I thought of killing my horse, opening him, and getting into his body, fancying that I might thus save my life. I drew my hunting-knife, and was about to plunge it into the poor brute's chest, though even then I felt a great repugnance to kill the faithful creature; when it occurred to me, should I get inside, that, after the heat had left the body, it would freeze, and I might be unable to extricate myself. I should thus be immured in a tomb of my own making. The idea was too dreadful to contemplate for an instant.

I sheathed my knife, and again walked on. Shortly after this the storm sensibly abated. The snow ceased, the wind fell; and as the atmosphere became clear I found that I was on the edge of the plateau, and I saw before me in the far distance a thick wood extending away to the south. It bordered a stream flowing, I concluded, into the

Saskatchewan. I could find shelter within the wood should the storm again come on, and I might be able to kill some creature or other to satisfy the cravings of my appetite.

The hope that I might still preserve my life raised my spirits. My horse, too, appeared to be somewhat recovered; so I again climbed up on the saddle, and this time the animal consented to move forward, its instinct telling it that food was to be found in the direction we were going. Had I possessed my gun I should have been better satisfied, as I could thus, without difficulty, be able to obtain provisions and defend myself against any wild beasts or Indians I might encounter. My impatience made me fancy that my horse was moving at a very slow pace. He seemed to gather strength as he advanced, or rather his muscles became more pliable, and he moved with less pain. I was still, I calculated, at least two days' journey from the fort. It would be impossible for either my steed or me to perform the distance in our present condition.

About the animal I had no fear, as it would be able to pick up grass from under the snow, even should that not disappear; but my chance of obtaining food was far more problematical. At last the sun shone forth and warmed my well-nigh frozen body. Its bright rays cheered my spirits, and I could look more hopefully to the prospect of getting back to the fort. I had not given up all expectation of falling in with some of my companions. It occurred to me that they might at once have put before the wind, as sailors say, and steered for the wood towards which I was directing my course.

I looked out, almost expecting to see a wreath of white smoke curling up from amidst the trees. No signs of human beings, however, could I discover. As we advanced my horse increased its pace, and at last the wood was reached, but on the weather side the snow was piled up more thickly than even in the open ground. I had, therefore, to make a circuit, till I could get to the lee side.

In course of time, however, I reached it, and found a deep bay or hollow formed by the trees. Here the snow was comparatively shallow. As I threw myself from my horse and took off the bridle, the sagacious animal immediately began to grub away with its nose in the snow, and soon got down to the green grass which grew there abundantly.

I was very sure that my steed would not stray away, so that there was no necessity for hobbling it. Fastening the bridle over my shoulder, I hurried into the wood to collect sticks to light a fire, at which I might thaw my shoes and warm myself thoroughly. I was satisfied that, in spite of the cold I had endured, I was nowhere severely frostbitten. As I came along I had rubbed my ears with snow, which had restored circulation. Even my feet and fingers, though bitterly cold, had escaped.

Having collected a number of sticks, I scraped away the snow at a short distance from the trees, and piled them up. I then felt in my pocket for my flint and steel and tinder box. I at once found the latter, but to my dismay I could not discover the flint and steel.

I remembered giving it, the last time we encamped, to Pat Casey, but I could not recollect whether he had returned it. I was almost in despair. I feared that, should I attempt to pass another night without fire, I must perish, even were the cold less intense than it had been previously.

Pat Casey was bound to give them back to me. He must have done so.

I remembered that I had pockets in my waistcoat. I unbuttoned my coat, and there at the bottom in the left-hand pocket of my waistcoat I found my flint and steel. They were of more value to me just then than a purse of gold.

I quickly struck a light, and going down on my knees, by the aid of some dried moss and leaves, and by dint of careful blowing, I soon had a fire started, as we say in the Far West. Eagerly I bent over it. Its genial warmth imparted new life to my chilled limbs and body. Then, sitting down with my feet so close that I almost singed my stockings, I gradually thawed my shoes. How comfortable they felt when I again put them on!

I now began to feel the pangs of hunger, for I had taken nothing since the previous morning. Food I must have at all costs. I even glanced at my poor horse with wolfish eyes.

"I must eat it, if I can get nothing else," I said to myself; but then again I thought, "By what means shall I reach the fort? I cannot trudge on foot all the distance through the deep snow. I must let my horse live. It would sorely grieve me to have to kill him."

Thoroughly warmed, I got up with the intention of pushing into the wood and trying to knock over some bird or small beast. There were few young birds at that season not well able to fly out of my way, and the animals of the forest were likely to have been driven under shelter by the snowstorm.

I still had the stick which had served me to mount the hill and make my way over the snow. I had left my pistols in my holsters. I mention this to account for my not now having them. My only weapons, therefore, were my long hunting-knife and this stout stick.

I was, I knew, more likely to find some animals deep in the wood than on the borders, as they would have gone there for shelter. As I went along I anxiously examined every tree I passed in search of birds or the traces of squirrels or any other of the smaller inhabitants of the woods.

Now and then a squirrel would look out of its hole, and on seeing me would be off to the tree-top. Birds were rare, and being perfectly silent at this season, their notes did not betray their whereabouts. The evening was drawing on. I considered whether I could manage to set any traps. It would take time to construct them, and I was starving.

As I wandered along, I found myself again near the borders of the wood with a thick bush near me. At that moment I caught sight of an animal of nearly three feet in length, which I at once recognised as a "peeshoo," as the French

Canadians call it, though properly denominated the Canadian lynx. Its fur was of a dark grey, freckled with black. It had powerful limbs, and thick, heavily-made feet. It was still when I first caught sight of it, but presently it commenced a succession of bounds with its back slightly arched, all the feet coming to the ground at the same moment.

Instead of moving forward in a direct line, I observed that it was making a large circle, which it gradually decreased. I concealed myself behind the bush, hoping that it would come near enough to give me a chance of rushing out and striking it a blow on the back, when I could at once have killed it. With intense interest, therefore, I watched its proceedings. I now observed a small animal which I saw was a hare in the centre of the circle it was forming. The little creature, terror-stricken, seemed unable to run off, though, being a fleeter animal than the lynx, it might easily have escaped.

The lynx approached nearer and nearer the hare, keeping one of its sharp eyes fixed on it all the time, when, having got sufficiently near to reach its prey, it made two bounds, and the hare the next moment was dead.

I was on the point of rushing out to secure, as I hoped, both the lynx and the hare, when I saw a dark shadow cast on the ground, and, looking up, I caught sight of a golden eagle, which must have come from the far-off Rocky Mountains, in the act of pouncing down on the lynx; the latter, seeing its enemy, dropped the hare and prepared to defend itself and prevent its prey being carried off. In spite of the large size of the lynx, the eagle swooped downwards to the attack, striking with its powerful beak the quick-sighted animal on the back, into which it fixed its sharp talons.

The eagle had, however, not so firm a hold as to prevent the lynx from freeing itself; then with its formidable claws it sprang at the bird, tearing some of the feathers from its breast.

On this the eagle rose into the air, and circling several times round, a short distance above the earth, prepared undauntedly again to descend and renew the combat. The lynx, watching every movement, as it saw the bird coming made a tremendous leap, trying to seize it by the neck; but the eagle, striking its antagonist's body with its talons, threw it on its back, and again attempted to plunge its beak into the throat of the lynx.

So furiously did the two creatures struggle, and so thickly was the snow sent flying round them, while the air was so filled with the eagle's feathers, that I could scarcely distinguish what was taking place.

I should have rushed forward to destroy both the combatants, had I not feared that seeing me coming the eagle might fly off, and the lynx scamper away out of my reach, and I was too weak to follow it to any distance. I therefore let the fight proceed, hoping that I might benefit by the utter exhaustion of the two parties, as is often the case when nations go to war, and a third interferes to reap an advantage from the folly of the others. I had to restrain my impatience for some minutes while the furious struggle continued.

The bird now made an attempt to rise, but it seemed to me that the lynx held it fast. I could restrain myself no longer, and, grasping my stick, I rushed forward. Both creatures saw me coming. The lynx got on its feet, but before it could make a single bound a well-directed blow on its back laid it dead on the snow. The eagle, to my surprise, did not fly off, and I now saw that one of its wings was broken. It still presented too formidable a front to be approached unless with due caution, for its beak might inflict a serious wound.

Holding my stick ready, I swung it with all my force against its head, and the bird rolled over stunned. As it might quickly come to, I immediately drew my knife and severed the head from the body.

I was too hungry, however, to stop and examine either the eagle or the lynx, except to ascertain that the latter was perfectly dead. A few cuts of my knife soon settled that point, and then eagerly taking up the hare, I hurried with it back to the fire. I did not stop to skin it very artistically, but running a spit through the body, I at once placed it to roast—camp fashion—on two forked sticks. I watched it eagerly for a few minutes, when, unable longer to resist the cravings of hunger, I cut off one of the legs, which I devoured nearly raw.

The keenness of my appetite being satisfied, I felt that I could wait till the rest was more properly cooked. I now bethought me that it would be wise, while the hare was roasting, to bring in the lynx, at all events; for though not dainty food, I had seen Indians eat the flesh of the animal, and it was very possible that wolves might be attracted to the spot and deprive me of it.

I might have to wait a long time before my larder was supplied in so curious a manner as it had been on this occasion. I therefore hastened back to where I had left the lynx. As I got up to it, I saw in the distance an animal which I felt nearly sure was a wolf. I must get back to the fire with my game, or the wolf might deprive me of it.

Shouldering the lynx, the weight of which was as much as I could carry, I struggled along with it towards my camp. Every moment I expected to hear the wolf behind me, but as I at once struck into the wood I kept out of the creature's sight. I was thankful when I saw the bright blaze of my fire between the trunks of the trees. Hurrying forward, to my infinite satisfaction I found the hare safe on the spit and almost done.

I threw down my burden close to the fire, having made up my mind to fight for my prize should the wolf attempt to take it from me. I might have to do battle also, I knew, not only for myself, but for my horse, which, should the wolf discover, it would very probably attack.

The hare, which was now sufficiently cooked to be eaten, wonderfully restored my strength and spirits. A portion remained for my breakfast next morning, and I must then commence on the flesh of the lynx.

I had been so far preserved, and I was under no apprehension as to what might happen. I reflected, however, that it would be necessary to prepare some defence both for myself and my horse during the night against the attack of

wolves, and I considered how that might best be done.

As I had still a few minutes of daylight, I employed them in cutting some stout sticks, which I fixed in the snow at a short distance from the fire; others I fastened with withes to the top as rafters, on which I laid some branches, covering the whole with snow.

I also formed the walls of my hut with snow. There was fortunately a moon in the sky, which enabled me to continue my labours long after sunset.

Having completed my hut, I collected a further supply of sticks, and made up my fire to last, as I hoped, for two or three hours. I then went out, intending to bring my horse close to the hut. I found him still at his supper, and he seemed very unwilling to leave the spot where he had cleared away the snow. On my speaking to him, with a little coaxing he, however, followed me, and I led him to the side of the hut, where I secured him to a stake which I managed to drive into the ground, for though covered with snow, it was soft below it.

I then cleared away the snow sufficiently to enable him to get at the grass. This seemed to content him, and I hoped that he would remain quiet and get rested for the journey which I expected to commence the next morning. On examining my pile of sticks, I thought it would be prudent to get a further supply, so that I might keep the fire blazing till daylight, and be able to cook some of the lynx for breakfast, as also a sufficient quantity to take with me.

For this object I was going along the edge of the wood, when suddenly a large animal rushed out from a thick copse a short distance before me, planting itself in a threatening attitude as if determined to dispute my progress. It was scarcely twenty feet off, and I knew that in a moment its fangs might be fixed in my throat.

My situation appeared desperate, for I felt sure that should I show the least symptom of fear the creature would attack me. I prayed for the courage and firmness I so much needed. Should I retreat, the monster would to a certainty follow. Holding the bundle of sticks I had already collected in front of me as a shield, I flourished my stick, shouting as loud as my weak voice would permit.

The wolf appeared somewhat startled and retreated a few steps, still keeping its piercing eyes fixed firmly on me. The creature's retreat, though it was but for a short distance, encouraged me. I advanced. On seeing this it set up a most fearful howl, which I concluded it did for the purpose of collecting some of its fellows to assist it in its meditated attack on me.

I redoubled my cries, shouting out, "Sandy! Pat! Pierre! Come along!" with the idea that the wolf would suppose I had companions at hand, who would come at my call. As I advanced it kept retreating, but still continued its appalling howls.

It occurred to me that it was the wolf I had before seen, and that it must have its lair in the neighbourhood. This was not a pleasant thought, but still I hoped that if I could frighten it off I should not be further molested.

The wolf continued howling and I shouting for nearly a quarter of an hour. At length finding that no other wolves came to join it, and that I was determined not to flinch, it turned round, and in a few seconds was lost to view in the surrounding gloom.

I learnt an important lesson from the adventure. It showed me that by an exhibition of courage and determination even enemies of far superior force may be deterred from making an attack, and be put ignominiously to flight. Having satisfied myself that the wolf had really gone off, I returned to my hut, looking back, however, every instant to ascertain whether or not it was following me. I found my horse still cropping the grass. He welcomed me with a neigh as I approached, to show his gratitude. It was a sign also that he was regaining his strength.

I felt very thankful that I had not killed him, as I had contemplated doing.

Having deposited my bundle of wood on the pile previously formed, I crept into my hut. I then placed some sticks across the entrance as a protection against any sudden attack, and lay down on the pack-saddle, covering my feet with the horse-rug. Though the cold was sufficiently severe under other circumstances to have kept me awake, before many minutes were over I was fast asleep.

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## Chapter Two.

**First night in my solitary camp—Pat Casey rescued—Lynx broth—The wolf's second appearance—Pat's "dhrameing"—The wolf again appears—Pat recovers and shoots the "baste"—Pat's novel method of making a fire burn—Loss of our powder—We construct hunting-spears, and commence our journey—Our horses mysteriously disappear—Marching without food—The infuriated elk—Having taken refuge in a tree, my spear proves useful—Deer's flesh a good preventive against starvation—Smoked venison—Miskwandib is starving, and so are his squaw and children—Our narrow escape from being poisoned by roots.**

I had remembered before closing my eyes the importance of awaking in a couple of hours. It was the last thought that had occupied my mind. I recollect starting up and seeing the fire blazing brightly, which showed me that I could not have slept half the time I had intended. The next time, however, I awoke but a few embers were still burning.

I sprang to my feet, and rushing out threw on some sticks. I was compelled to blow pretty hard to make them blaze up. I was afraid that before they would do so the wolf might pay me a visit. Perhaps he might appear with several companions.

I was greatly relieved when the flames once more blazed up, and on looking round beyond them I could see no



animal in the neighbourhood. I therefore again retired within my hut, hoping that I might now rest securely till daylight.

The appalling howls of the wolf still rung in my ears; and though I slept on, it was under the impression that the monster was about to attack me. I believe that the howlings were only in my own fancy, for when I once more awoke and looked out it was broad daylight.

My horse was standing quietly cropping the remainder of the grass, though there was little enough he could manage to reach. Having moved the stake to a little distance, and cleared away the snow, so that he might get at the grass without difficulty, I made up the fire, and put some of the lynx flesh to roast before it.

It would not, I expected, prove very palatable, but it would enable me to support existence. While the flesh was cooking I sat down inside my hut and devoured the remainder of the hare. It was but a small animal, and what I had left from the previous evening was not sufficient to satisfy my hunger, which was somewhat ravenous after the many hours I had gone without food.

I found in the morning, when attempting to move about, that my limbs were very stiff, while my strength had greatly diminished, and I began to doubt whether I should be able to accomplish the journey I proposed without taking longer time to recruit. I was, however very unwilling to delay longer than I could help, Alick would be anxiously looking for me. I hoped that Sandy and the other men had escaped, for I knew that they also, if they had strength sufficient, would not return home without endeavouring to discover what had become of me.

I, however, still suffered a good deal of pain, and when I walked about my legs felt stiff, and scarcely able to support my body; still, I hoped that after I had breakfasted I should be sufficiently recovered to commence my journey. The lynx flesh being cooked, I ate a portion, but it was tough and unsavoury, and I was not sorry to finish my meal.

I then got up, with the intention, before starting, of watering my horse at the stream, which I knew would not yet be frozen over, in spite of the cold. Putting on the saddle and bridle, I led him along the edge of the wood in search of some narrow part through which we could make our way, for the wood, as far as I could see, bordered the stream for its whole length. I went on for some distance in the direction from which I had come, when I caught sight afar off of a dark object rising out of the plain of snow.

On examining it carefully between my hands, placed on either side of my head, I saw that it was a horse standing stock-still, and it appeared to me that there was another small body at its feet. It naturally occurred to me that the horse must be that of one of my companions, and immediately throwing myself into the saddle I rode towards it. In a short time I was convinced that I had not been mistaken—that the object I saw was a horse, and that at its feet lay the body of a man.

Every moment was precious, for if he was still alive he must be in an almost dying state, and would require instant attention. As I got near I saw that the horse was held by the bridle, which the man on the ground was still grasping in his hand. This gave me some hope that the person was still alive.

I urged on my poor steed, who could scarcely move through the thick snow. At length, on reaching the man and horse, a glance showed me that the man was Pat Casey!

Throwing myself out of my saddle, and kneeling down by his side, I had the satisfaction of discovering that he still breathed, though he was apparently perfectly unconscious. His horse was almost as far gone, and I saw was unable to carry him.

My first thought was to get poor Pat to the fire and give him some food. Exerting all my strength, I accordingly lifted him on to my saddle, and, holding him there as well as I could, I set off to return to my camp. His horse followed mine, so that there was no necessity to lead it.

Though the distance was not great, it took me a long time to perform it, and I was greatly afraid that he would expire before I could give him some food, and restore the circulation in his veins. Hurrying on as fast as I could make my horse move, we at last reached the hut, before which the fire was still burning. I brought my horse close to the entrance, when, lowering Pat down off the saddle, I dragged him inside, for I had not sufficient strength to carry him; indeed, I had found it a hard matter to get him into the saddle.

The first thing I did was to examine his brandy flask, but found it empty. I would have given much for a small portion just then. I next took some of the roasted lynx meat, which I applied to his mouth, and squeezed all the juice out of it down his throat.

The slight quantity of nourishment he thus swallowed, with the warmth of the hut, had a beneficial effect, and he, opening his eyes, seemed to recognise me, though he could not speak. This encouraged me to persevere in my efforts to restore him. I got off his shoes and stockings and rubbed his feet; then warming the stockings at the fire, I again put them on. I applied friction also to the palms of his hands and to his chest.

While I was thus employed, I saw his horse, which had followed us, approach the hut. It struck me that there was something very like a pot hanging from the saddle. I rushed out and caught the animal, when, to my delight, I discovered our saucepan, with a tin mug, which Pat at our last encampment had probably forgotten to fasten to the baggage-mule, and had consequently secured to his own saddle.

Making up the fire, I instantly put on some of the lynx meat to concoct some broth, which would, I knew, prove more efficacious than anything else I could give to my suffering companion, while I myself should be very glad of it.

Fortunately his gun was fastened to his saddle, and he had on his thick coat. A brace of pistols were also in his

holsters. Whatever might befall him, I should thus have the means of defending myself and of procuring game, for he had on his ammunition-belt, which was well supplied with powder and shot. The coat, with the aid of the horse-cloths, would contribute greatly to our warmth at night, though I could dispense with it during the daytime.

While the broth was boiling, I continued to feed him with as much juice as I could press from the meat, for he was not in a fit state to eat solid food. While I was attending to Pat, I allowed the horses to remain loose, as I was sure that they would not wander far. I had given up all idea of travelling that day, for Pat was utterly unable to move, and I felt myself scarcely in a fit state to ride any distance.

As soon as the soup was ready I took some in the cup, and having cooled it in the snow, poured it slowly down Pat's throat. His eyes seemed to be regaining their usual brightness, but yet he did not speak. Waiting a little I gave him some more, when I heard him say in a low voice, "Arrah! now, but that's foine! Blessings on you, Masther David."

"I am glad to hear you speak, Pat," I said; "you'll get all to rights in time."

I next took some of the soup myself, but I cannot say that I admired its flavour, though it warmed up my inside, and contributed much to restore my strength. I kept the pot on boiling, that I might give Pat more soup.

Thus the day wore on, Pat gradually recovering, though as yet he was unable to give any account of himself. The expenditure of the lynx flesh was considerable in making the soup, but I hoped to be able with Pat's gun to shoot some birds, or some other animal, and did not begrudge it.

Leaving Pat asleep, I took his gun and went out to see how the horses were getting on, and to gather more sticks for our fire. I brought in several bundles, and was returning for some more when, almost at the spot where I had encountered the wolf on the previous evening, it again made its appearance, snarling savagely at me. I should have shouted to frighten it away, but I did not wish to awake Pat, as he could not have come to my help; so holding the gun ready to fire, I advanced slowly, with the same success as before. When I stood still, so did the wolf. When I moved forward, it retreated. I was unwilling to fire lest I should miss it, and I thought it best to refrain from doing so till it should come nearer to me. At last, to my great satisfaction, it turned round and bolted off. So rapidly did it retreat that I had no time to take a steady aim at its shoulder, though I lifted my gun for the purpose of doing so.

"I will not let you go another time, my fine fellow," I said to myself. "If you show your ugly face here again, look out for the consequences."

The wolf could not have been very hungry, or it would, I suspected, have attacked the horses; though I have since heard that a single wolf will seldom attempt to kill a horse, a pair of heels proving more formidable weapons than its fangs.

Having collected enough wood, I returned to the hut. Pat was in the same semi-conscious state as before, still he appeared to me to be getting better, and I hoped that by the next day he would be sufficiently recovered to set off with me towards the fort. I watched him anxiously for some time, wishing, should he awake, to give him some more broth. Finding that he slept on, I was compelled by sheer drowsiness and fatigue to lie down, when I myself was soon fast asleep. When I awoke, I found him sitting up and scratching his head.

"Arrah! now, what's it all about?" he muttered. "Shure I've been dhrameing. I thought I was out riding along in the snow."

"I hope you feel better, Pat," I said.

"For the matter of that, I'm mighty ager after some mate, for I do not know when I last put some between my grinders," he answered.

"If you wait a bit, you shall soon have some broth," I said, seeing that he was still weak and scarcely himself. "Lie down, and I'll get it ready for you."

I quickly warmed some broth, as I had promised, and brought it to him. He eagerly swallowed it, and asked for more. This I had not to give him, but I promised if he would go to sleep again that I would get some ready for the morning. I accordingly cut off some more meat, and putting it into the pot, filled it up with snow. I then put the pot on the fire, and sat inside the hut watching it while it was boiling.

The occupation kept me awake. As I was looking out into the darkness beyond the fire, I fancied that I saw a shadowy form gliding by. It was, I suspected, that of the wolf, which had been attracted by the scent of the boiling meat.

The creature was afraid of approaching the fire, or I should soon have had the contents of my pot carried off. I got Pat's gun, and having withdrawn the charge and carefully reloaded it, I placed it by my side, to be ready for use.

Now and then the wolf got near enough to show me its glaring eyeballs, and several times I was greatly tempted to fire, to try to kill it, but I did not wish to throw a shot away; and, should I miss, the bullet might find its way towards one of our horses, which were feeding at some distance beyond.

At last, on my throwing some more sticks on the fire, which made it blaze up brightly, the wolf scampered off. My cooking kept me awake the remainder of the night, and I had some strong broth ready for Pat in the morning. It had a flavour of its own which would have been much better for some salt and pepper, not to speak of a few vegetables; but as they were not to be procured, we had to take it as it was. Pat, as before, pronounced it "mighty foine." Though it evidently did him good, he showed no inclination to get up and exert himself. To my regret, indeed, I found that he was still very weak, and had not entirely recovered his senses.

I had, therefore, to make up my mind to stay in the hut another day. To leave him in that state was impossible, and I

was scarcely in a fit condition to set out alone, though I should have done so had I not found him.

The weather was tolerably warm, and the snow was diminishing in depth, though where it went to it was difficult to say.

Pat, evidently getting better as the day drew on, I took his gun and went out in the hopes of finding some game to replenish our larder. The constant attack I made on the lynx to supply our broth-pot had greatly diminished the flesh on the body. The first night I had kept it inside the hut; but it becoming not over pleasant, I afterwards fastened it to a cross-piece between two high poles, out of the reach of wolves.

I was not afraid of meeting my old enemy in the daytime, as by slipping a bullet into my gun I could quickly have disposed of him. I went sometimes into the wood, and at others kept along just outside it; but no animals of any description could I meet with, though I fancied I saw some deer in the distance. They did not, however, come near enough to enable me to be quite certain. It was possible that I might fall in with a buffalo—some solitary bull, perhaps—driven from the herd, but no traces of one could I see on the snow. At last, as I was becoming fatigued and the evening was drawing on, I unwillingly returned to the hut.

Pat was sitting up, almost himself again. I fully expected that the next day we should be able to start. Having had some supper, I advised him to lie down; but he insisted on sitting up and watching while I took some sleep, which I confess I greatly required.

On awaking, I saw that he was at the entrance of our hut, kneeling down with his gun at his shoulder.

“Hist!” he said. “There’s a baste looking in upon us, and I’m just going to make him wish that he hadn’t come this way.”

Before I could advise him not to fire he pulled the trigger, and rushing out I saw my old enemy, the wolf, struggling in the agonies of death on the ground.

“It will give us some mate, at all events, if not the pleasantest food in the world,” exclaimed Pat; “but don’t get near his jaws till you are sure he’s dead intirely.”

Pat had taken good aim, and the animal’s struggles were soon over. I went round, and dragged the carcass close to the fire, so that it was not likely to be carried off by any of its comrades during the night. It was a huge, savage-looking beast, and I thought that I must be very hard pressed before I could eat its flesh.

No other adventure occurred during the night. Pat, whom I advised to lie down again, slept on soundly till the morning, when he appeared to have almost recovered. On looking out, I found that our fire had been extinguished. The weather was very much warmer, and a slight shower of rain had fallen, which had tended gradually to decrease the depth of the snow.

We could not expect a more comfortable time for travelling, and I proposed that we should at once set out. Pat got up and tried to walk about.

“Shure! it’s mighty quare I feel,” he said, “but if I can but climb on to the back of my baste, well be able to get along somehow.”

On observing Pat’s weakness I felt rather doubtful about this, and saw that it was necessary at all events that he should have a good meal first, and that we should have enough to eat on our journey. The first thing to be done was to get the fire lighted. I set to work with some dried leaves and bark which I had kept inside; but the sticks, being wet and somewhat green, would not burn up.

“Here, Pat! give me a little powder from your powder-horn,” I cried out.

It is customary, I should say, to use it in such cases. Pat crawled forward, while I stepped aside to look out for some drier sticks. What was my dismay to see him, instead of handing me the powder, or taking a little out in his hand, uncorking his horn and pouring out the contents on the burning leaves! Before I could cry out it exploded, blowing all before it, and sending Pat himself sprawling, six feet from where he had stood, and myself nearly as far. I lay stunned and senseless for some minutes. When I came to my senses, I was seized with the dread that Pat was killed. The fire, I saw, was completely extinguished, and at a distance lay Pat. I got up, and to my surprise ascertained that I had suffered no material injury, beyond having my clothes somewhat singed.

On reaching Pat, I found that the horn, which he had held in his hand when the powder exploded, was blown to atoms; but, on examining him, I could not discover that he had received any wound, nor were his face and hands even blackened. While I was looking at him, he opened his eyes.

“Arrah! now, what’s become of the powder?” he exclaimed, lifting up his hand, which had held the horn, and gazing at it; “shure! it’s blown to smithereens.”

“Indeed it is, and it’s a mercy that you were not killed,” I said. “What could make you do such a thing?”

“Shure! just from not thinking of what I was about,” he answered, endeavouring to get on his legs.

I helping him, he was able to walk back into the hut. He soon completely recovered, and I sat by his side feeling anything but comfortable or happy.

As it had turned out, the most serious result of his thoughtlessness was the loss of our powder, for not a grain more did we possess. Though we had a gun and shot, they were useless.

"It's of no use mourning over our loss," I said at length. "I'll try again to light the fire, and after breakfast we will consider what is best to be done. There is a greater necessity than ever for pushing on."

Pat agreed with me in this, and after several efforts I got the fire to blaze up, boiled some water, and cooked the remainder of our lynx flesh. Unpalatable as was our food we made a hearty meal, washing it down with warm water. We would have given much for a pinch of salt, and an ounce of tea, not to speak of sugar and milk.

"As we cannot use the gun we must be after making a weapon instead," observed Pat. "The best thing we can do is to fasten our hunting-knives to the end of long poles. They will serve as spears, and enable us with some chance of success to defend ourselves against either Indians or bears or wolves. We can at any time, if we want to use our knives, take them off the poles again."

As Pat's idea was a good one, we immediately carried it out. While we were shaping the poles, I saw him eyeing the wolf.

"We may get some more tasty mate than that baste will give us, but it's just possible that we may not, and shure it will be wise in us to take as much as we can carry," he said.

I agreed with him, and before we bound our knives on to the poles we skinned and cut up the wolf, hanging the hide on to the cross-piece to which the skin of the lynx was suspended. Pat then chose what he considered the best portions of the animal, leaving the remainder of the carcass on the ground.

It was time to take another meal before we were ready to start, so we cooked a piece of the wolf's flesh. It was tough and unsavoury, but our teeth being in good condition we managed to masticate a larger portion than I should have conceived possible. I then got the two horses, and, having saddled them, assisted Pat to get on to the back of his.

"Forward!" I cried, and we moved on; but I saw that Pat sat his saddle as a sick man does, bending down, and occasionally swaying from side to side. I was afraid that he would fall off.

"Never fear, Masther David," he said, "I'll catch hold of the mane before it comes to that, and shure I can stick on as well as Dan O'Rourke when he had got a skinful of the crayther."

We both of us knew more or less the direction we were to take, but having got out of the route between the forts, the country immediately around was strange to us. We went on and on, keeping on the lower ground, and hoping in time to strike the right trail. Our horses making no objection, we concluded that we could not be far wrong.

We had lost so much time before starting, however, that evening overtook us before we expected, and we were compelled to camp at the first suitable spot we reached. It was under shelter of a wood with a stream running near it, at which we at once watered our horses. We then, as customary, took off their saddles and bridles and turned them loose to feed.

The weather being somewhat threatening, I thought it prudent to build a hut, both for Pat's sake and my own; and while he, having collected some sticks, prepared a fire, I set to work to cut the necessary stakes. It was very similar to the one I had before constructed, and as there was plenty of snow on the ground, I formed the walls of it.

The hut would be thus much warmer than if formed merely of branches, which, though affording sufficient protection in summer weather, are not calculated to keep out the cold. The only difference between our present and former hut was that the one we had last built was somewhat larger, so as to afford accommodation to both of us.

We had nothing but the wolf's flesh for supper, and though we tried it roasted and boiled, in neither state could I manage to eat more than a very small quantity. Pat munched away far more to his satisfaction, if not greedily. It was, perhaps, in consequence of this that he awoke in the night complaining of great pain. The only remedy I could think of was hot water. It somewhat alleviated his sufferings, but in the morning he was too ill to proceed.

He urged me to go on to the fort, but this I refused to do. I might be three or four days reaching it, or longer, should any untoward circumstance occur, and he might be dead before I returned. This event made me feel very much out of spirits. I was anxious if possible to procure better food than the wolf's flesh afforded, so taking my spear I went out to try to kill some animal or other. In vain I searched in every direction. I was tantalised by the sight of birds. I caught glimpses of a racoon and a couple of squirrels, but I could not get at them. Had I possessed a charge of powder I might have killed something.

At last hunger compelled me to return, and I set to work to cook more of the wolf's flesh. Detestable as I had thought it, I was thankful that we possessed even that on which to sustain life. I was too tired to go out again; indeed Pat was so ill that I did not like to leave him.

Having led the two horses to the stream to drink, I returned with our pot full of water to the hut; then making up the fire, I lay down to sleep. On awaking at night I heard the sound of falling snow. Our fire was out, and as it would be a hard matter to relight it, and to keep it in when alight, I did not make the attempt.

Next morning, when I looked out, the whole country was a foot or more deep in snow. I turned my eyes in the direction I expected to see the horses. They were nowhere visible. Still, I hoped that they had only gone round to the other side of the wood, and would soon return. Pat was rather better. When I told him that the horses were missing, he looked much aghast, and acknowledged that having awakened in the night, he had seen several figures like shadowy forms passing in the distance before the hut; but fancying he was dreaming, he had again dropped off to sleep.

"I hope you were dreaming," I observed, "but I shall be more satisfied when I see the horses again."

Immediately after breakfast, taking my trusty spear, I sallied out in search of our steeds, with very little doubt that I should soon find them. Great was my disappointment, therefore, on reaching the place to which I supposed they had gone, not to see them. I went completely round the wood and looked up the stream, but not a trace of them could I discover.

Our condition had been bad before; it was now much worse. I was convinced that Pat had really seen some Indians, who had carried them off. We had cause to be thankful that they had not attacked us; perhaps they were deterred from the belief that we possessed firearms. They knew also that they would not be pursued, as the snow would have completely obliterated their trail?

Here we then were, several days' journey distant from the fort, without firearms, and my companion too ill to walk. I looked at our store of wolf flesh, and calculated how many days that would last us. It would soon come to an end, and then what could we do? Our friends might, indeed, come in search of us, but the snow almost hid our low hut; and, unless we had a fire burning, they might pass by without discovering us.

I pass over the next three days. Pat got better, but our store of meat came to an end. We had a few bones, which we pounded, and with some roots which I dug up in the wood I made a kind of broth. It was more palatable and nutritious than I could have supposed.

I proposed going back to our former camp, to fetch the skins of the wolf and lynx, as they would cut into strips, and boiled, give us sufficient food to sustain life. Pat advised me not to make the attempt. In the first place he thought that the skins would probably have been carried off by the Indians, who were sure to have visited our camp; and they might be in the neighbourhood, and seeing me alone, might take my scalp as a trophy of their prowess. Notwithstanding the limited amount of unsavoury food we had eaten, I retained my strength, and Pat regained his.

At last every particle we possessed was consumed. Notwithstanding the danger of marching without food, it was better than remaining where we were; and early one morning, with our spears in our hands, Pat carrying the saucepan and mug, we started forth. We had no great fear of Indians, for should those who stole our horses have wished to kill us, they would have done so at once. They could now track us easily in the snow; but this they were not likely to do.

We had got to some little distance along the bank of the stream when Pat, who was rather in advance, stopped, and made a sign to me not to move, while he pointed ahead. There I saw several magnificent deer, which had come down to the water to drink. It would have been a sight to cheer our hearts had we possessed powder; but in spite of our want of it, I at once resolved at all hazards to try to kill one of the animals.

There were several young ones with them. We were near a bush, behind which we slipped; then in low voices we arranged our plan of operation. It was important to keep to leeward of the deer, or they might have scented us.

We at once crept forward, crouching down and keeping ourselves concealed by the brushwood. As we got nearer, we perceived that the animals were moose or elk, the largest of the deer tribe, with magnificent thick antlers. We well knew the danger of attacking such animals, which defend themselves both with these antlers and with their fore feet; with the latter they can strike the most terrific blows, sufficient to kill any assailant.

Still, hunger made us daring. Besides the wood through which we were making our way, poplars and several other trees grew in the open ground.

We would, if we could have approached them, have attacked one of the smaller animals, but they were feeding farther away from our cover, and their mothers would quickly have led them out of our reach. Close to the wood, however, stood a magnificent stag, feeding leisurely, as if unconscious of the approach of a foe.

Our plan was to rush out and attack him; and we hoped mortally to wound him before he had time to take to flight. The attempt was a desperate one, but it was worth making.

We crept on noiselessly in Indian fashion, stopping every now and then to be sure that the elk did not see us till we had got within eight or ten yards of him.

"Now!" I whispered to Pat, and we both sprang up and dashed forward with our spears aimed at the elk's breast.

So completely surprised was he that he did not even attempt to fly, but stood staring at us with his large lustrous eyes, till Pat's spear entered his chest, and I, who was more on the outside, had wounded him in the shoulder.

Pat, instead of pressing home his spear, withdrew it with the intention of making another lunge, when the animal started back, and reared on its hind legs, as if about to strike Pat, who, seeing his danger, leaped back under cover, calling to me to follow him. I had no time to do this; but hoping that the wound which Pat had inflicted would prove mortal, ran off to a distance.

The elk missed Pat but saw me, and immediately came bounding towards me. I had barely time to slip behind a thick poplar, when the elk's horns came crashing against it. The animal, apparently, in its fury had not seen the tree.

Finding itself stopped, it retreated, when it again caught sight of me, and made another rush; but, as before, I avoided it by slipping round the tree.

Now it rushed with its antlers against the trunk; now it reared, pawing with its feet, one blow from either of which would have laid me low. My life depended on my quickness of sight and agility. Each time long strips of bark were torn off the tree, showing how it would have treated my body.

Again it retired, to charge in the same way as before. I hoped that it would soon get tired of these performances, but

it seemed resolved on my destruction. To mount the tree was impossible, and I dared not turn round to ascertain what trees were behind me with branches sufficiently low to enable me to climb out of the way of the enraged animal.

Pat did not come to my assistance. I hoped indeed that he would not, for the elk would probably have seen him, and would have pierced him with its antlers before he would have had a chance of retreating. I was, however, getting very weary of the fearful game I was playing.

I wanted to ascertain what had become of Pat, but I dared not withdraw my eye for a moment from the movements of the elk. All my energies, all my senses were required to escape the dreadful charges it was making. Now it would rush to one side of the tree, now to the other, while I had to slip round and round to escape its blows. Not having my usual strength to begin with, I was becoming very tired.

There seemed to be no likelihood that my antagonist would give in. At last, I determined at all hazards to carry out the plan I had formed, and to escape to some tree up which I could climb. I knew that should my foot slip, and I fall to the ground, the elk would in a moment be upon me.

I shouted to Pat, telling him what I intended to do, and hoping that he might appear and attract, if even but for a few moments, the attention of the elk.

Some time elapsed before I could get to the side from which I intended to take my flight. I waited for the moment that the deer should make his charge against the tree, when, as it would be some seconds before he discovered that he had not caught me, I might have the start of him.

With a crash his antlers struck the trunk, and as I heard the sound I darted off. I did not dare to look round to see whether he was following. Almost breathless I reached a tree, but it was not one I could climb. As I ran round it, a glance I cast over my shoulder showed me the savage brute tearing across the open ground in the direction I had taken.

On I went; another and another tree was passed. He was nearly up to me, when I saw one a short distance ahead with a branch projecting at a height which I could reach. The elk was close upon my heels when, grasping hold of the bough by an effort of which I scarcely supposed myself capable, I drew myself up beyond the reach of his antlers, which the next instant came crashing against the trunk just below my feet.

I had no wish, however, to let my antagonist go, and having saved my spear I resolved to make effectual use of it; so, getting into a position between the branches where I could sit securely, I got my weapon ready for use.

The elk having lost me retreated for a few paces, when again catching sight of me he dashed forward, rearing up on his hind feet.

With all the strength I possessed, I darted down my sharp-pointed spear towards the top of its head. I knew that the skull was thick, but that if my knife would penetrate it, I should certainly kill the elk. The blow was more effectual than I had dared to hope for. The moment the moose was struck, down it sank to the ground, without giving a single struggle. I could then for the first time look out to ascertain what had become of Pat, shouting as I did so, and presently I saw him rushing out of the larger wood towards me.

As he caught sight of the dead elk, he threw up his hat, exclaiming, "Hurrah! good luck to you, Masther David! Erin go bragh! We'll not be afther starving at any rate."

On seeing him coming I descended from my perch. We greeted each other with a hearty shake of the hands, as if we had been long absent. We lost no time in skinning our game, cutting out the tongue, and as large a portion of the haunch as we could carry.

Having prepared our loads, I was about to set off, when Pat exclaimed, "Stay, Masther David; before we are back, the wolves or vultures will have got hould of our mate. It's more than they deserve, the varmints."

Saying this, he carefully cut away the inside of the animal, and drew forth a large bladder, which he emptied of its contents, and then blew into it till it was inflated to the full. He then secured it by a thin line drawn from the intestines, which he fastened to a branch overhead, so that it hung vibrating in the breeze over the carcass, glittering brightly as it slowly moved to and fro.

"That will keep the bastes away till we come back," he observed.

I rather doubted, however, the success of the experiment. We at once returned to our camp, where we left our pot and Pat's useless gun, and the few other articles we had brought with us. We soon got a fire lighted, and our venison cooked, and a very hearty meal we made.

Having secured the meat inside the hut, before which we left the fire blazing, we returned for a further supply, as we intended to dry enough to last us for the time we should take to reach the fort.

As we approached the spot we saw numerous birds seated on the branches of the surrounding trees, and at a short distance a dozen at least of the smaller prairie-wolves. Both one and the other were evidently scared by the glittering balloon.

Our shouts prevented the wolves from approaching, and allowed us plenty of time to obtain a further supply of venison. More we could not have carried with us even when dried, so we left the remainder of the carcass to the birds and beasts of prey, who would certainly, after sunset, pounce upon it.

Our first care on arriving at our camp was to cut the venison which we did not require for immediate use into thin strips. These we proposed drying in the sun and smoke, and then packing in as small a space as possible to carry on our backs.

Thankful for our preservation, we lay down that night to sleep, hoping that nothing would prevent us from continuing our journey on the following morning. Eager as we were to proceed, we agreed that it would be wiser to spend another day in preparing our meat and recruiting our strength, for though both of us were much recovered, we were not fit for a long tramp, with the fatigue at the end of the day's journey of building a hut and collecting wood for our fire.

We were very busy all day smoking the venison and drying it in the sun, the heat of which was still sufficient for our object. We could hear the wolves during the night wrangling over the carcass of the deer, but they did not pay us a visit. As they would have had sufficient food, we did not fear that they would attack us; should they do so, we were prepared to receive them with our sharp spears.

The morning of our departure arrived. Breakfasting on the remainder of our fresh venison, we did up our provisions in two packs, including our other articles; and with our spear-handles as staffs, we set forward on our journey in good spirits.

We had met with many dangers, and surmounted them all; and we hoped that, should we have more to encounter, we might be preserved by the same merciful Providence which had hitherto watched over us. My chief anxiety now was about what had happened to Sandy and Pierre; still, thoroughly well acquainted with the country as they were, and accustomed to emergencies of all sorts, I hoped that long before this they would have made their way home. Pat could give no account of them. He had been separated from them as I was in the snowstorm, and had ridden on, not knowing where he was going. Had I not found him, he would undoubtedly have perished.

We trudged on manfully all day, stopping only for a short time about noon to eat a portion of the cold venison which we had cooked, so that there was no necessity for lighting a fire till we reached our camping-ground at night.

Had we possessed more clothing we should have been saved the trouble of building a hut; but as we had only our horse-cloths to put over our shoulders, we were afraid of suffering from the cold should we sleep in the open air.

We marched straight forward without even looking for game, as we had food enough, and were unwilling to lose any time. Our belief was that we were directing our course exactly for the fort, but, after marching on for four days, I began to have some uncomfortable misgivings on the subject. We might have kept too much to the south and passed it, for the snow covered up the slight trail which existed, and we had only the general appearance of the country to go by.

I had never led a party, having trusted to Sandy or others, and therefore had not sufficiently noted the landmarks. I now bitterly regretted my carelessness, and resolved in future to note for myself, on every journey, the most remarkable points, so that I might, when alone, be able to find my way.

"Shure! the fort's a mighty dale funder off than I thought for," observed Pat, as we were forming our camp on the evening of the fifth day.

I then told him my own apprehensions. He looked somewhat uncomfortable.

"But we have still got some venison in our packs, and must try back, I suppose," he said. "I can think of no other course to take."

After we had fixed up our hut, we had a serious talk as to what was best to be done. I proposed going northward, and endeavouring to reach a branch of the Upper Saskatchewan, on the bank of which our fort was situated, as by following the stream up or down we must eventually come upon it.

This was, indeed, our only safe plan, and we determined next morning to pursue it. Darkness had come on. We were engaged in cooking our supper—roasting a portion and boiling some of the dried venison to serve as a beverage. We had had no time to dig for roots during our journey, but as soon as we halted, while I was preparing the fire, Pat went into the wood to search for some. He brought in a large handkerchief full, but, as we were very hungry, we agreed that we would wait until the next morning to cook them for breakfast, as they would require a good deal of boiling. We therefore piled them up on one side, that we might peel and prepare them after supper.

I was stirring the pot, when, looking beyond the flames, I caught sight of the figure of a man slowly approaching. The light falling on him showed me that he was an Indian. He held a bow in his hand, and a quiver of arrows was at his back.

"Hillo! some one is coming," I exclaimed to Pat, who was lying down, and did not therefore see the Indian, and was probably not seen himself.

Pat started up, and mechanically placed his hand on his gun, which was lying near him, forgetting that it was unloaded.

The Indian must have observed the action, but without taking notice of it, he quickly came up and stood opposite to us on the other side of the fire.

"Whaugh!" exclaimed the stranger, in a tone of surprise, looking at Pat and me. "I did not expect to find white men here, at this time of the year."

"Who are you?" I asked.

"I am Miskwandib, and wish to be your friend," answered the Indian. "At present I am hungry, and should be glad of food. Had I been an enemy I could have killed you both with my arrows at a distance, and taken what I require."

"Much obliged to you, friend Miskwandib, for your kindness," said Pat. "Sit down, and make yourself at home, and you shall have some of our supper." Pat spoke partly in English and partly in the Cree language.

The Indian understood him, and coming round to our side of the fire sat down next to Pat. We immediately handed him some of the venison, which he ate ravenously, while I put on a fresh piece to roast. It greatly diminished our stock of provisions, but we could not withhold it from the starving Indian.

"Have you any friends in the neighbourhood, Mither Miskwandib?" asked Pat.

"I have my squaw and children encamped at the farther end of the wood," he answered. "They, too, are starving and want food. They nearly perished in the snowstorm which occurred some time back, and since then I have been unable to kill any game for their support. You with your firearms will be able to obtain what you may require."

We, of course, did not wish to say that we had no powder, or that I had not even a gun. Pat and I, after a short consultation, agreed that humanity demanded we should share our provisions with the starving Indians.

While we were talking, the Indian's eye fell upon the roots by Pat's side.

"What are these for?" he asked.

"Shure! to cook and ate," answered Pat.

"If you eat these roots, before many hours are over you will be dead men," exclaimed the Indian, taking them up one after another, and throwing them to a distance, reserving only four or five of a different species from the rest. "These are wholesome, if you boil them sufficiently; they are such as my family and I have lived on for many days past."

Being assured that the Indian spoke the truth, we thanked him for the timely warning he had given us. We now did up the larger portion of what remained of our meat, reserving only enough for the following day, and giving it to him, asked if he knew Fort Black, and would agree to guide us to it. He seemed somewhat surprised at our liberality, and replied that if we would wait a day or two, till his family were fit to travel, he would show us the direct way to it. We understood from him that it was some distance off.

I replied that, as our friends were expecting us, we wished to set off at once, and that if he would point out the direction of the fort we could find our way alone.

"As such is your resolution, may the Good Spirit guide you! I cannot leave my family, and they will be unable to travel for two days at least." Saying this, he got up and drew a line on the ground pointing to the north-east. "That is the direction you must follow," he said. "In three days you will reach the fort."

We knew by this that we had gone too far to the westward, and not sufficiently to the north. We hoped that now we should be able to make our way. We were thankful to think that we had only two nights more to stop out, and unless the weather changed very much for the worse we were not likely to suffer.

The Indian having done up the meat we had given him, without expressing any gratitude took his departure, and was soon lost to sight in the gloom.

"Miskwandib! that's the name of the 'red head' or 'copper-snake'," I observed. "What do you think of our friend, Pat?"

"I don't altogether trust him," he answered. "He may be an honest man and have told us the truth; but he may be a rogue and mean us harm, notwithstanding all he said."

"He might have shot us with his arrows had he been so inclined," I answered, "and at all events he did us a great service in warning us of the poisonous character of the roots you dug up. I feel pretty sure, too, that he pointed out the right direction to the fort."

Still Pat was not convinced of the honesty of Miskwandib. He was never very friendly to the Indians, and certainly begrudged parting with so much of our venison, though ready to do as I wished.

We sat up for some time, half expecting another visit from the Indian; but we did not see him, and at length lay down to sleep, Pat promising to keep one eye open, in case he should steal into our camp and help himself to the remainder of our venison.

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### Chapter Three.

**Our last fragments of meat are consumed—Fortunate discovery of a flask of powder—Pat's lasso—The maddened buffalo bull—Pat's lasso is turned to useful account—Buffalo tongues roasted—Pat's "Irish"—Our Buffalo meat becoming exhausted, we are sadly in want of food—Pat's strange behaviour—His mysterious disappearance with the gun—I go in search of him—Failing to find him, I am overjoyed at meeting Bouncer—The "bull boat," or parchment canoe—Shooting rapids—Black Fort once more—Sandy and Pierre's adventures—Our young-lady visitors, Rose and Letty—The meat pit.**

"Copper-Snake" did not return during the night, nor did we the next morning see anything of him; we therefore packed up, and began our tramp in the direction he had pointed out.



The sky had hitherto been clear, but the clouds now began to spread over it, though there was scarcely a breath of air. In a short time the sun was so obscured that it no longer enabled us to steer our course. We had marked a hill, however, in the distance, and marched on guided by it.

The hill was of less height and not so far off as we supposed, and when we had crossed it, we could fix on no object to serve as a mark. Notwithstanding this, we kept straight on till we came to a stream. We then had to make our way for some distance down it till we could find a ford. Though the water was very cold, by taking off our shoes and trousers we waded across without wetting our clothes.

We were unable to decide in what direction the stream ran, and crossing it somewhat confused us. It might, Pat argued, be running north, or north-west, and still fall into the Saskatchewan, or be running east.

Neither the appearance of the sky nor the wind served in any way to guide us. At last we were obliged to camp, as neither of us had strength to go farther. By the next evening we had exhausted, with the exception of a few mouthfuls, the whole of our stock of dried venison, but as we hoped during the next day to reach the fort, we agreed that we could manage to keep body and soul together with the little which remained; still, I did not feel very comfortable. The idea would intrude, that "Copper-Snake" might have misled us, or that we had wandered out of our course. If so, we should be very hard pressed for food, or death by starvation might after all be our fate. I remembered too the anxiety my brother Alick would be enduring about me.

There were in the neighbourhood others who, should they hear that we were missing, would be greatly concerned about us. Some way off, farther to the westward, at the foot of the hills, was a missionary station, of which a Mr Crisp had charge. His two children, Martin and Rose, were great friends of ours.

In the winter, when we could travel over the country on sleighs, we frequently paid them a visit at the missionary station, which, in the summer, when the river was full, we could reach in a canoe, by making three or four portages past the rapids.

Martin was rather younger than I was, and Rose was somewhat older. She was a sensible, clever girl, and we were all much attached to her and her brother.

Mr Meredith, who had charge of Fort Ross, had a daughter, Letty. I admired her very much. She was a fair, blue-eyed little girl, just a couple of years younger than me, and I would have gone through fire and water to serve her.

I was much disappointed at not finding her at Fort Ross, for she had been spending the summer with Mr and Mrs Crisp, for the purpose of receiving instruction with Rose from Mrs Crisp, who was a highly educated lady.

Mr Meredith looked a little more careworn than usual. Reports had been brought him that a large party of Sioux had made an incursion into our territory, and it was not known in what direction they had gone. He had advised us to keep constant watch, and to push forward as fast as our horses could move.

Should Sandy and Pierre not have returned to Fort Black, I felt confident that Alick would send to Fort Ross to ascertain when we had set out, and to obtain assistance in searching for us.

Remembering, however, that it was wrong to indulge in anticipations of evil when we had already been so mercifully taken care of, I succeeded in putting away my anxious thoughts.

The next day was like the past. The sky was clouded; there was not a breath of air, and we had no certain means of knowing in what direction we were proceeding. We ate the last fragments of meat we possessed, before starting, to give us strength for the journey.

On we went, but still I was unable to recognise any of the features of the country. Noon approached, and we were getting desperately hungry. After the danger we had run of being poisoned by the roots Pat had dug up, we were afraid of trying others, for neither of us was certain which were wholesome and which poisonous, they both looked so much alike.

We were passing the border of a small wood, when Pat gave a shout.

"It's my belafe there's the remains of a camp-fire," he exclaimed, pointing to a spot a little distance off.

We hurried towards it. There was a black spot round which the snow had been scraped away, and near it was a pile of sticks, but none of the embers remained, the ashes having apparently been blown away by the wind. There were marks of several feet around, in all directions, which made us suppose that the party had been a numerous one.

I was looking about when my eye fell on a small object, almost covered by the snow.

I ran towards it. It was a powder-flask!

Eagerly I pulled out the cork. It was almost full.

"Here's a prize, Pat!" I exclaimed, holding it up.

"Thank Heaven for it," cried Pat. "We shall now be able to shoot any bird or baste we catch sight of, but it is a bad lookout for whoever left it behind."

"I think it tells a tale," I answered. "The party, whoever they were, must have hurried away—perhaps from the appearance of a body of Indians, or they might have gone off in chase of some deer or buffaloes."

"If that was so, no one would have left his powder-horn behind," observed Pat. "It's my belief they took to flight to escape from Indians. It must have been in the daytime, for there are no pieces of bark about, or any signs of a night encampment; but how the Indians came to miss the powder-flask is more than I can say. Let me look at it." He examined the flask carefully, as I had been doing.

"It's my belief," he said, "that it does not belong to any of the people of the fort. My idea is that a party of white men have come over the Rocky Mountains by Jasper House, and have stopped here on their way eastward, intending to reach Fort à la Corne, or Fort Pelly, farther south, though I doubt, unless they can procure sleighs, if they will get there this winter."

"Be that as it may, the powder-flask is a God-send to us," I said; "and I hope that the owner will not be the worse without it. At all events, let us load your rifle to be ready for any animal which may come across our path."

We searched about for any other treasure which might have been left behind, but could discover nothing in the immediate neighbourhood of the fire.

It would be useless to stop where we were, so taking it for granted that the fugitives had gone eastward, we continued on at right-angles to their trail.

We had not gone far when, crossing a piece of meadow, where from its exposure the snow had almost disappeared, Pat cried out, "There is something else worth having;" and, darting forward, he lifted up a long lasso composed of buffalo hide. One end had been cut, the other was fixed into the ground by an iron stake with a ring.

"The owner of this must have mounted his horse in a desperate hurry, and cut him free," he observed. "If the Indians had taken him, they would have carried off the lasso and stake. We shall hear more about this some day; but I only hope the whites got safe off."

Coiling up the lasso with the stake, Pat hung it over his shoulders.

"If any buffalo are in the neighbourhood, they are likely to visit this meadow," he observed; "and if we see any, won't we—" And he made signs of biting away with his teeth so furiously that I could not help laughing at his grimaces.

"Come! that's right, Master David. It's a great thing to keep up one's spirits, especially on an empty stomach."

We were proceeding along the edge of a wood which bordered the meadow, when we caught sight of several dark spots. By keeping close under the trees we got still nearer to them, when to our infinite satisfaction we discovered that they were buffaloes.

So busily were they feeding that they did not see us, but they were still too far out from the cover to allow us to get a shot at one of them; starving as we were, it was a matter of the greatest importance not to allow them to escape.

In summer, with proper precautions, when the grass was long, we might have managed to creep over the ground without being discovered by the animals, but with the white mantle which now lay on the ground we should be certain to be seen.

We remained hid behind some bushes, Pat's mouth watering with the thoughts of the buffalo meat he hoped to obtain, and my hand trembling with anxiety. Though we could not approach the animals, they might draw nearer to us. We were still waiting in the expectation of their doing this, when another buffalo appeared on the scene, and bellowing loudly approached the herd. They retreated towards the wood, but still at a distance from where we were, when a bull advanced from among them to meet the newcomer. The latter bellowed still more loudly, and was answered by his antagonist.

In another minute the horns of the two animals were crashing furiously together.

"Now is our time," I cried, and rushing forward with Pat's gun in my hand, I approached the combatants. Pat followed, keeping somewhat to the right of me.

I had got to within about thirty yards of the two animals, who were moving about now on one side and now on the other with the greatest rapidity, so that it would not be very easy, I knew, to hit a vital part.

Dropping on my knee, that I might take a steadier aim, I raised my rifle and fired at one of the buffaloes, which at that moment presented its side to me. It was in the act of making a rush at its opponent, but fell before their horns met, when the other immediately rushed at it, leaping over the prostrate body of its foe.

I was about to reload my rifle, when the victorious buffalo caught sight of Pat and me, and throwing up the snow with its hoofs, and bellowing with rage, it dashed towards us.

"Run for a tree! run for a tree!" cried Pat, "or the baste will be upon us;" and suiting the action to the word, he made towards one at no great distance off. I, following his example, ran in the direction of one which appeared somewhat nearer to me. As I began to move, I felt something slip from my fingers. It was my powder-flask! Fortunately I had not yet withdrawn the cork. I had to run as fast as I had been compelled to do when escaping from the elk, with the bellowing buffalo close to my heels.

I had barely time to swing myself into the tree, when the enraged animal was up to me.

The buffalo dashed forward for some paces, when, not seeing me in front, it turned up its eyes and espied me a few feet only above its head; on this it made a furious charge at the tree, which shook so that I feared it would be uprooted or broken off by the force of its blows.

I shouted to Pat to make a diversion in my favour.

"I'll do it if I have the chance," he answered; "but why don't you shoot the baste?"

I told him that I had lost my powder-horn, and that my rifle was unloaded.

All this time the buffalo was going round and round the tree, charging at it, now on one side, now on the other. This it continued doing for what appeared to me a very long time.

Sometimes it retired to a short distance, but it was to return again with its rage seemingly increased.

The tree, which was but a large sapling, trembled to the very roots, and I had to hold on tightly to escape being shaken off.

I entreated Pat to shout, and try to attract the attention of the savage brute.

At last I saw him descending from his tree, and approaching cautiously, in an attitude which showed that he was ready at any moment to beat a rapid retreat. As he got nearer, he began to shout at the top of his voice, clapping his hands. Then he took out a red handkerchief and waved it. The buffalo did not at first observe him, but as soon as it caught sight of the red handkerchief, with a loud bellow it went charging my companion at headlong speed, with its horns close to the ground.

Pat lost not a moment in scampering off, but he had only just time to reach the tree, and to climb up onto the bough from which he had descended, when the buffalo's horns struck the trunk just below his feet.

"It will be all right now, Masther David," shouted Pat; "don't be afther throubling yourself more about the matter."

As he said this I saw that he was uncoiling his lasso, and forming a noose at the end. He then took his seat on the bough in an attitude which would enable him to throw it with certainty.

The buffalo, however, was not to be so easily caught. Again and again it retreated, charging up to the tree, and rushing round it, without affording Pat an opportunity of letting the noose drop over its head.

At last the animal came close under where Pat was sitting. He dropped the noose, and giving the lasso a jerk, brought it over the animal's horns and completely round its neck.

No sooner did the buffalo find itself adorned with this somewhat tight cravat—an article of dress to which it was not accustomed—than it began to pull away with all its might; but of course the harder it hauled the tighter became the noose, till, almost strangled, it rushed towards the tree with the idea, apparently, that it would thus be able to liberate itself.

"Now's your time, Masther David," cried Pat; "you can pick up your powder-horn and soon settle with the baste."

Slipping from the tree, I hurried towards where I had dropped the powder-horn, guided by the traces of my feet; and recovering it, immediately reloaded my rifle. Pat shouted to me to make haste, as he was afraid that the buffalo would break loose. I, of course, was not likely to delay longer than I could help. Stopping within a dozen paces of the buffalo, which eyed me as I approached, I lifted my rifle to my shoulder, and fired.

The buffalo, a moment before bellowing with rage and exhibiting its mighty strength, at that instant sank down to the ground; and before Pat, who had slipped from the tree, had time to plunge his hunting-knife into its throat, the monster was dead.

The remainder of the buffaloes had taken to flight, leaving us masters of the field and in possession of two fine animals. We had, therefore, only to cut off the humps and extract the tongues, which are considered the most delicate morsels, intending, however, to secure a larger portion as soon as we had satisfied our hunger. Choosing a spot close to the trees where we were completely sheltered from the wind, we speedily lighted a fire, and had one of the tongues roasting before it. The effect of a hearty meal was very satisfactory. Both of us found our strength restored and our spirits rise, as we now felt sure that we should have food enough to last us till we could reach the fort, even should it be farther off than we had supposed.

Having cut off and packed up as much buffalo meat as we could carry, we proceeded on our journey, intending not to stop till nightfall. Though we had a good load on our backs we trudged along merrily. The air was pure, and though the cold was considerable we did not feel it while in exercise. At night, though we had not much to cover us, we were able to keep ourselves warm before a blazing fire. Had we enjoyed sufficient time, we might have skinned the buffaloes and made two robes which would have formed sufficient bed-covering, even during the hardest frost; but of course we could not delay for this purpose—besides which, we should have been unwilling to add them to our loads.

From every height we reached we looked out eagerly, hoping to see the fort or a portion of the river which flowed by it. Twice we caught sight of Indian wigwams in the far distance, but we avoided them, not knowing whether the inhabitants might prove friends or foes. In either case they would be sure to deprive us of our buffalo meat and perhaps of our lives.

Could we have been certain that they would prove friendly, it might have been worthwhile to sacrifice our provisions for the sake of being guided to the fort, with the road to which they would be well acquainted. We took care not to encamp till we had got to a good distance from the wigwams we had last seen, as the smoke of our fire might betray us.

"Shure! before the sun sets this day we shall reach the fort," observed Pat, as we were preparing to start after our

breakfast; but the sun did not appear in the sky, or rather the clouds obscured it, and we had no certain means of directing our course.

As I said before, an Indian or an experienced white hunter would have been quite independent of the sun, being able to tell to a certainty the points of the compass by the appearance of the bark on the trees, or moss on rocks, or many other signs of which both Pat and I were ignorant.

I had only lately returned from school in Canada, and Pat, though a capital follower, was not born to be a leader. He did not possess the gift of observation, and like many another Irishman was always making the most curious mistakes. I should never have been surprised when he was loading his gun had he put in the shot first and the powder afterwards; and a story was told of him that, having forgotten to put any powder in the pan of his lock, each time that his gun missed fire he added a fresh charge; and when at length he did prime his piece, and firing, it went off knocking him down, he jumped up exclaiming, "Hurrah! shure, that's only one charge! There's five more to come presently."

Still Pat was a faithful fellow, and did his best; which must be allowed was much in his favour, so that he was a favourite with every one—French voyageurs, English trappers, and half-breeds.

"I do hope we shall reach the fort before to-night," I answered to his last remark.

"Shure! if we do not, we've got mate enough to last us for a week. If our shoes don't give out, we will have no raison to complain at all at all," he exclaimed.

I little thought at the time he spoke that a whole week would pass by, and that even then we should be as far as ever, for what we could tell, from the fort. Had the sky been clear we could have proceeded in a straight line, but obscured as it remained, we, I felt sure, made many a circuit, though we did not exactly hit on our former camp-fires.

The snow at this period of the year, just before the early winter set in, rapidly disappeared, so that the marks of our footsteps were obliterated. Sometimes, as we trudged on, I felt as if I was in a troubled dream, aiming at a point and never able to reach it.

The end of the week came; our buffalo meat was nearly exhausted, and we saw neither deer nor any other animals. Though for the past two days we had husbanded our store, it came to an end at last, and we were as badly off as we had been before. Our shoes were worn out, our clothes torn, though we still, with a sufficiency of food, should have had strength to go on. Even Pat lost his spirits, and he neither sang nor talked as before. I felt ashamed of myself at having been unable to find my way, when I thought that I should have no difficulty in doing so.

Night was approaching, and we must encamp without a particle of food to restore our strength. Frost had set in that day, and the cold before morning might become very severe. Tired though we were, to prevent ourselves from perishing we must light a good fire.

At last we reached a wood, and immediately setting to work, collected all the sticks we could find. We had no time to build a hut, and all we could do was to put up a few slabs of birch-bark close to the fire, creep in under them, and go supperless to bed.

I could not sleep for thinking of our dreary prospects. Pat's manner too during the day had been very unusual, and caused me much anxiety: the hardships we were enduring were evidently beginning to tell on him. Strange to say, though I was so much younger, I bore them better than he did. Pat, I must confess, at times had been too fond of "the crayther," which had, I concluded, somewhat weakened his constitution. He frequently did not appear to know what we were doing or where we were going, and spoke as if we were out only on a day's shooting excursion. I had generally kept the gun in my own possession, as I was a better shot than he was, and had more chance of killing any game we might come across. Frequently he had declared that he saw buffalo and deer in the distance, and wanted the gun to go in chase of them; but as I was very sure that none were in sight, I had kept it till the idea wore off. Twice I rose to make up the fire, the flames of which I kept watching till they sank low. It was very important to keep it blazing, lest any wolves, or a still more terrible grizzly bear, should find us out.

Finding myself at last dropping to sleep, I called Pat, and told him to keep an eye on the fire.

"Of course," he answered; "don't be troubling yourself, Masther David." And I saw him sitting up and rubbing his eyes. Trusting that he would do as he promised, I lay back and quickly dropped off to sleep.

It was bright daylight when I awoke. On looking round I found that Pat was not where I had last seen him. Supposing that he had awoke early, and, unwilling to arouse me, had gone to collect some sticks to make up the fire, I did not feel anxious. When, however, I got up and looked round on every side, I could nowhere see him. Still fancying that he could not have gone to any great distance, and would soon return, I occupied myself in scraping the embers of the fire together.

At last, after waiting for some time, I became still more anxious. He had, I found, taken the gun with him, but, strange to say, had left the ammunition behind. This circumstance made me fear that he had lost his senses, and had gone off, not knowing what he was about.

He might, however, have gone out, I thought, in search of game.

"Well, if he has gone, I trust that he will bring back something for breakfast," I said to myself, "if he manages to hit with his first shot."

Taking my spear in my hand, I at last set out, intending to track him. The snow, as I have before said, had nearly all

disappeared; but still here and there I could trace his footsteps without much difficulty. I went on for some distance till I arrived at a wood. I entered it, and was soon utterly unable to discover in what direction he had gone. Again I felt my inferiority to an Indian under similar circumstances.

I had left our pot and tin cup at the camp, and I feared that should I push on in the attempt to discover him, I might lose myself altogether, and not be able to make my way back. I accordingly returned to the camp, having still some hopes that Pat, making a circuit, might rejoin me.

I waited, but waited in vain. At last I became ravenously hungry. I had the skin in which our meat had been packed, and singeing off the hair, I cut a portion of it into thin strips. After the skin had boiled for some time, I attempted to eat it, by cutting it up into very small pieces. I managed to chew them, and to drink the water in which they had been boiled. The food, such as it was, somewhat allayed the gnawings of hunger. I still kept a portion for Pat, should he appear without any game; but the day wore on, and he did not come.

Though I frequently before during our disastrous expedition had been very miserable, I now felt more wretched than ever, beginning seriously to fear that I should perish with hunger. While I thought of myself, I at the same time thought of poor Pat, greatly dreading that some accident must have befallen him—either that he had met a grizzly bear, and had been squeezed to death, or been carried off and killed by Indians.

If such had been his fate, the same might be mine. Still, I determined to struggle on, so long as I had life to do so. The day was already so far advanced that I thought it wiser to remain where I was, and not to start off till next morning, when I intended to push northward, in hopes of at last getting to the fort.

I passed the night in attending to my fire, and taking short snatches of sleep. In the morning I boiled some more skin, and having eaten it, slung the pot over my back and commenced my solitary march. I walked on till nearly noon, when, utterly exhausted from want of sleep and food, I sank down under shelter of a copse which I had just reached. How long I had remained in a state of unconsciousness I could not tell, when I felt something licking my hand. I opened my eyes with the idea that a wolf or a grizzly bear was about to seize me.

What was my astonishment to behold our dog Bouncer, a general favourite at the fort, but especially attached to me.

“Bouncer, old fellow, where have you come from?” I exclaimed.

As soon as he heard me speak, he began leaping round me, and barking for joy at finding me alive.

“Where are the rest, Bouncer? Are they near at hand?” I asked; but the only reply Bouncer could make was to wag his tail and bark and attempt to lick me all over.

The sight of the faithful dog greatly restored my spirits and even my strength, for I was able to get up and walk more steadily than I had been doing during the whole morning. I looked about in every direction, expecting to see some of my friends who had come in search of me; but no one appeared, nor did Bouncer show any intention of leaving my side. That he would know the way to the fort I felt very sure, and I now hoped that I should have no difficulty in reaching it. He looked in pretty good condition, so I judged that he could not have been very long on the search. I walked on as I had been going when I sank down, and as he did not attempt to lead me in any other direction, I concluded that I was taking the right course. Before long we came to a wood. As I suspected that I should be led a considerable distance out of the direct line of march should I attempt to go round the wood, I made my way through it, and found that it bordered a broad stream, too deep apparently in that place to ford. I therefore continued down the stream. Before I had gone far, what was my surprise to see lying on the bank a small canoe, known among us as a bull boat or parchment canoe. It was formed of buffalo hide with the hair scraped off, stretched over a framework. It contained a single paddle, but there was nothing else whatever in it. The canoe appeared to be in very good condition, and to require nothing whatever done to it to make it fit for a voyage down the stream.

From its construction, I came to the conclusion that it was not a canoe belonging to our fort, though at first I supposed that it must have been left by some of the party who had come out in search of me. Of one thing I felt sure, that the stream would conduct me into the river Saskatchewan, and that I should now be able, without further fatigue, to arrive at the fort.

Hunger made me anxious to get off as soon as possible. As I launched the canoe, Bouncer stood watching my proceedings with evident satisfaction, and convinced me that he knew I was right.

Being well acquainted with the management of a canoe, I had no fears about making the voyage in safety. I stepped in, and Bouncer followed, sitting in front of me; then taking the paddle, I shoved off, and commenced my voyage down the stream.

The current ran gently, and I paddled on, expecting to have an easy voyage. As I was not acquainted with the appearance of the banks, I did not know how far off the fort was; but I knew that I must have some distance to go. I could not possibly tell when I might reach my destination.

Had poor Pat been with me, I should have been very happy, but his disappearance caused me much anxiety. I knew, of course, however, that as soon as I got to the fort a party would be sent out to look for him. I paddled eagerly on, expecting every moment to come to some part of the river with which I was acquainted.

The stream became more rapid, and the banks were higher than at the spot at which I embarked. Occasionally there were low cliffs, and here and there rocks projected some way from the shore, compelling me to keep in the centre of the stream. Now and then wild-fowl rose up, and in their flight passed but a short distance from the sight of my longing eyes. Had I possessed a rifle, I would have stopped and shot one of them to satisfy my hunger. Now I proceeded a mile or two with scarcely any perceptible current; now I reached a part of the river with trees of

considerable height growing on both banks, the wind, which was pretty strong, blowing amid their branches, and causing a loud murmuring sound. It contributed somewhat to drown another sound which now reached my ears. The sound I heard was that of rushing water, and I guessed that some rapids were near, but their exact distance off I could not tell.

Eager to get to the end of my voyage, I paddled on. I fancied that I should without difficulty, should I find myself near the rapids, paddle to one bank or the other and land, so that I might examine them before attempting their descent. If I found them too dangerous, I could carry my canoe overland and launch it again below them.

Suddenly, however, a loud roar burst on my ears, and I found the canoe drawn rapidly forward. Bouncer looked up and barked, gazing towards the shore. I attempted to turn the canoe and paddle in that direction, but the current was too strong to enable me to succeed. I at once saw that my only chance of safety was boldly to descend the rapids.

I grasped my paddle tightly. In another moment the bow of my canoe was on the very edge of the cataract, and the next instant gliding downwards like an arrow, the water boiling and hissing on either side.

I looked anxiously ahead, to ascertain if there were any rocks in the way. Should my frail canoe strike on one, she must in a moment be knocked to pieces; and in so rapid a current I might find it very difficult to reach the shore, though I knew that Bouncer would give me all the assistance in his power.

I held my paddle in the water, my only aim being to keep the canoe with her head straight down the rapid. She floated buoyantly, though it seemed a wonder that she should not be overwhelmed by the tumultuous waters raging around her.

Much depended on my retaining my presence of mind, and avoiding any rocks which might appear. On and on I went; now a dark rock rose on one side, now on the other, the spray as the water struck them from above being scattered far round, and often completely deluging me.

Now the canoe seemed to be hurrying on to a rock, when by exerting all my strength I directed her course so as to avoid it, and the next moment was shooting by, almost touching as I passed. Thus the canoe rushed forward in its rapid descent. I had no time to think or to consider what I should do, if it were to strike. I could not tell how long a time was spent in shooting the rapid; I only know that at length I found myself at its foot, floating on the comparatively tranquil water.

Striking now on one side, now on the other, I made the canoe dart forward and continued my course, thankful that I had escaped the danger, and earnestly hoping that I should not have to encounter another of a similar character; still I knew that very possibly there might be more rapids before the stream emptied itself into the broad Saskatchewan.

Should I find myself much above the fort, I might have others to shoot in that river; but I was well acquainted with them, and had no fear about being able to guide my canoe in safety amid the rocks which rose up here and there across the stream.

I was becoming almost faint with hunger when, to my great satisfaction, I recognised several spots along the banks I was passing, and I knew that I was not more than a couple of miles above the mouth of the stream. As the current was pretty strong, the distance was soon accomplished, and I found myself in the Saskatchewan, which even thus far, in the very heart of America, and only ten days' journey or so from the base of the Rocky Mountains, is a river of considerable width. Had I not known that there was a hearty welcome and abundance of food at the end of my journey, I could not have borne the hunger I was enduring, but hope cheered me on.

At length my eyes were gladdened by the sight of the flag waving above the fort, and I could see the palisades which extended to the edge of the bank above the river.

I renewed my efforts, and Bouncer set up a bark of delight to announce my coming, feeling, I have no doubt, very proud in the belief that he had brought me back. So he had; and he would, I am sure, had I not found the canoe, have led me overland, but his instinct had told him that the most speedy way of reaching the fort would be by water.

Not till I was close to the bank was I discovered, when my brother Alick, followed closely by several other persons, hurried out of the gate to welcome me.

"Why, David, you appear as one from the dead," he exclaimed, wringing my hand. "We had almost given you up as lost. We have sent out party after party to look for you, and Bouncer alone has the honour of bringing you back. Martin and Rose and Letty have been as unhappy as I have felt. They are all eager to know what has happened to you."

"I cannot tell you until I have had something to eat," I answered.

Just then looking up I saw the friends he mentioned, who I had no idea were at the fort. They all warmly shook hands, but forbore to put any further questions, for they saw how weak I was; indeed, had not Alick and Martin assisted me, short as was the distance, I could not have reached the fort.

We were soon inside, and Rose and Letty hurried to the kitchen, to get some buffalo steaks and white-fish, which were fortunately cooking for supper.

A good meal greatly restored me. My first inquiries were for Sandy and Pierre, whom I had not seen. I was greatly relieved to hear that they had found their way to the fort two days after the snowstorm, with all the baggage animals and my horse, and had since gone out on the expeditions to search for Pat and me.

Sandy would not believe that I was lost, but had again set out only two days before. From the direction he had taken,

I was in great hopes that he would fall in with poor Pat and bring him back safe. How Bouncer had come to find me, or to whom the canoe belonged, no one could tell. When the previous expeditions had set out, Bouncer had been chained up, as he had a peculiar antipathy for Indians; and it was feared that, should any be met, he would fly at them, and do mischief, or get killed himself. He had observed the several parties setting out, and had sagaciously surmised that they were going in search of me, without being able to understand why he should not have been allowed to accompany them.

Soon after Sandy had last started from the fort he had managed to make his escape, and had either followed Sandy's trail or had taken an independent course by himself. Which he had done it would be impossible to ascertain, nor did it matter. I, at all events, felt deeply indebted to him, and we became more attached friends than ever. On the canoe being examined, Alick and the other people in the fort were decidedly of the opinion that it was built by Indians, and must have come down from the upper part of the stream, which rose a considerable way to the southward; they also believed from its appearance that it had not long been hauled up on the bank. It had very evidently belonged to a Plain Cree, as those people are hunters of buffalo, and when living in the neighbourhood of streams or lakes, construct these parchment canoes for the purpose of fishing. This they are compelled to do, as there are but few birch trees of any size in the part of the country they inhabit. Except in shape, it was very similar to the coracles still in use, as I have read, on the Wye and other rivers in England.

The canoe was carried into the fort; Alick intending, should the owner appear at any time, to return it, and to pay him for its use.

I now inquired how Martin and his sister Letty came to be at the fort. They had, I found, arrived a few days after we left it for Fort Ross.

"My father and mother," said Martin, when Rose and Letty were out of the room, "wished us to come, as I am sorry to say that the Indians in our neighbourhood have lately been showing a bad disposition; and though the converts who live round us are faithful, and would defend us with their lives, they are but few in number compared with the heathen Indians. The latter have, during the summer, suffered greatly from smallpox, and their cunning medicine-men have persuaded them it is owing to the circumstance that some of their people have deserted their ancient customs, and that the complaint has been introduced by the pale-faces. They are not very clear about the matter, but regard my father with an evil eye, instead of treating him as before with respect, even when they declined listening to him. He is not alarmed about himself, but he thought it prudent to send Rose and Letty to a safer place, and directed me to take charge of them. Though very unwilling to leave him and my mother, I was, of course, obliged to obey his commands. We came down the river in a small canoe. It was so severely battered on the voyage that, though we escaped actual shipwreck, your brother Alick considered it would be highly imprudent to continue the voyage in it to Fort Ross. We therefore dispatched a messenger to Mr Meredith, requesting him to send us up an escort; but we greatly fear, as we have received no answer, that the man must have perished in the snowstorm which overtook you."

Alick had the same fears about the messenger Jacques Allon, the only man who could be spared from the fort.

Jacques wished himself to go, declaring that he could make his way without difficulty, even though a whole tribe of hostile Indians were on the watch for him. Whether he had been cut off by Indians or had perished in the snow remained doubtful.

Though very sorry to lose poor Jacques, we were thankful that our friends were safe with us, and we promised to take very good care of them till Mr Meredith should hear of their being at Fort Black, and should come, as he probably would, to fetch them away. Alick and I would, at all events, in the meantime enjoy their society.

Martin was a great friend of ours, and the young ladies added a brightness to the routine of our ordinary life at the fort; not that we were ever idle or found the time hang heavily on our hands. Each season had its various occupations. We were either out hunting buffalo, or deer, or smaller animals, or were fishing in some of the neighbouring lakes for white-fish, or were preparing them or pemmican for our winter stores or for travelling; or packing the skins we had obtained, or trading with the Indians.

The buffaloes which we killed when ice could be obtained, either at the end of the winter or after the frost had set in, were preserved in a very easy though somewhat rough manner. We had a deep circular pit, like a well, dug in the fort. The sides were lined with ice, and a layer of ice was placed at the bottom. The carcass was then cut up, and a layer of meat pressed tightly down on the ice; another layer of ice was then thrown in and another layer of buffalo meat; and thus layer after layer of ice and meat was placed in the pit till it was full. It was then covered over with ice and boards and earth, so that we had always an ample supply of fresh buffalo meat at our command, even during the hottest time of the year.

Fish we preserved in the same manner. Of course, during the winter there was no necessity for putting them into the pit. We had only to let them freeze, and they remained hard frozen till the return of spring.

We had lately obtained a good supply of both meat and fish, so that we were well able to entertain our guests.

On speaking to Alick privately, I found that he was not very well satisfied with the temper of some of the Indians in the neighbourhood who had hitherto professed to be our friends; while reports had reached him that the Blackfeet and other tribes of Sioux were threatening to drive the pale-faces out of the country. He, of course, laughed at the idea of their making the attempt.

"Though they might attack small parties of travellers," he said, "or such forts as ours in advanced positions. However, if they do come, we shall be able to defend ourselves, and teach them that they would have been wiser to keep to their hunting-grounds. On the chance of their coming I have made every preparation for defence, and they will not capture Fort Black with as much ease as they may suppose."

## Chapter Four.

**Hurrah! Pat is found—Sandy McTavish's yarn—His discovery of Robin Grey—Tobogganing—The dog-train—Our sorrow at the departure of Rose and Letty—We start on snow-shoes—Wolves out foraging—A race for life—The fort in sight—Safe at last—Robin's story—His capture by the Indians—Wamegon—His poor feet—His imprisonment in the log—"Netnokwa," his Indian mother—The Indian dance—Wamegon persecutes him—Robin's novel method of killing a deer—Wamegon perseveres in his cruelty.**

I had been two whole days at the fort, and no news had been received of Sandy and his party, who had gone in search of poor Pat and me.

I was rapidly recovering my strength, and Rose and Letty by their kind attentions greatly contributed to raise my spirits. They had not been told of the danger Mr Crisp apprehended, and Rose only supposed that she was going to Fort Ross for the sake of being a companion to Letty. They were therefore perfectly happy, and laughed and joked as their natural tempers inclined them to do.

We were, of course, rather anxious about Sandy and poor Pat. The latter I scarcely expected to see again, for ill as he was when he went away from me, I feared that if not at once found he would have been starved to death.

I have not yet described our fort. It consisted of strong palisades, surrounding nearly half an acre of ground, with wooden towers at the four corners, projecting so as to enfilade each of the sides. The whole was surrounded by a trench, which would make it difficult for an enemy to approach the walls, if they were well defended with musketry. The interior was occupied by dwelling-houses and stores, and huts and wigwams for the accommodation of the hunters and canoe-men who might be detained during the winter.

Though small, our fort was thus of considerable strength, and we had no fear, should it be attacked, of being able to defeat any number of Indians who might come against it.

Evening was approaching when the lookout, who was always stationed at the top of the highest tower which faced the open country, gave notice that he saw several persons on horseback approaching.

We hurried up the tower with our spy-glasses, and before long, greatly to our satisfaction, we distinguished Sandy at the head of the party.

"Hurrah!" I exclaimed, "and there's Pat. I'm sure it must be him, and Pierre is riding alongside him, and supporting him on his horse."

"I see a boy too," exclaimed Martin. "He looks to me very like an Indian, and yet I fancy he's got a white face. Who can he be?"

As the party drew nearer, we were satisfied that we were right in our conjectures. We all hurried out to meet them.

Sandy, as soon as he saw me, jumped off his horse, and nearly shook my hand off in his delight at finding I was safe.

"I thought it was all right," he exclaimed, "as I'll tell you by-and-by. We found your last resting-place, and traced you to the canoe; and as I discovered that Bouncer had made his way to you, I felt sure that you had gone down the stream, though I was not so sure how you would have shot the rapids."

"How do you know that I came down in a canoe?" I asked.

"I have not been so long in the country, and accustomed to Indian ways, not to have seen that you had launched a canoe from the bank; besides which I had another proof, if any had been wanting, but I'll tell you all about it presently," he answered.

"And how did you find Pat?" asked Alick.

"And who is that boy in the Indian dress?" inquired Martin.

"If you put one question at a time, young gentlemen, I'll tell you how it all happened," said Sandy. "But if you have no objection, we'll go into the fort and have some supper first; for as we have pushed on to get here before nightfall, we have had no opportunity of satisfying our hunger since noon."

The horses of the party being taken by the other men, we entered the fort together, Martin regarding the young stranger with a look of curiosity. He appeared to be somewhat abashed at finding himself among so many white people, though it was very evident from his features and complexion that he was himself a white. Martin, who was always kind-hearted, seeing the unwillingness of the boy to advance, went towards him, and taking his hand said, "Come along; we want to hear all about you."

The boy opened his large blue eyes, but made no answer, though he understood Martin's signs, and accompanied him willingly. Martin then led him up to Rose and Letty.

"Perhaps he can understand you, but he makes no reply to anything I say to him," said Martin.

Rose spoke to him first, and then Letty exclaimed, "Surely you can speak English?"

The boy shook his head, though he tried to say something, but was unable to pronounce the words.



"You understand what we say, though," remarked Letty; "I am sure you do by your looks!"

The boy nodded, and a smile for a moment irradiated his features, though they quickly again assumed their former startled look.

"He has spoken English, and I am very sure will be able to speak it again," said Martin. "He has evidently been living a long time among Indians, and it's my belief he has made his escape from them.—Is that the case, boy?"

The young stranger considered for a moment, endeavouring to understand what Martin had said, and then he again nodded.

"I knew it was so," exclaimed Martin. "We shall soon find out all about him, and in a few days he will be able to speak English as well as any of us.—Come along, boy; you are hungry, I'm sure, after your long ride, and we are all going in to supper."

Martin taking possession of the young stranger, I did not interfere, but followed Pat, who had been led into the house. Though the poor fellow had apparently lost his senses, he certainly had not lost his appetite, and as soon as the food was placed before him he began to devour it eagerly.

"Let him take his meat," observed Sandy. "It'll do the chiel gude. He hasna had muckle to put intil his inside, though we spared him all we could from our store."

We asked Sandy no further questions till supper was over, when he gave us an account of his adventures.

Pushing directly southward, he had come across the trail Pat and I had made in our wanderings several days before; when, following this up, he had reached our last camp a short time after I had quitted it. At first, misled by the trail I had formed when going in search of Pat, he had continued to follow that; but convinced at last that I had returned, he was on the point of coming back, when one of the men saw an object, which he was sure was a human being, lying on the ground under a tree. They soon discovered it to be Pat, who had fallen to the ground exhausted, and would very soon have died. By pouring some spirits-and-water down his throat he revived, and still further recovered when he had taken some food. Though able to speak, he could give no account of himself or me.

Sandy, who had come across the trail I had formed when returning to the camp, now pursued it, and discovered that I had passed through the wood, towards the river. He had gone about half way, when he caught sight of a person endeavouring to conceal himself among the bushes. He at first supposed that an Indian was lying in ambush for some sinister object, and keeping his gun ready to fire he made his way towards the spot. His surprise was great when he discovered the young white stranger whom he had brought with him.

The lad was much alarmed at first, but his confidence returned when he found that he had fallen into the hands of people of his own colour. He could speak but a few words of the dialect of the Plain Crees, though sufficient briefly to explain that he was making his escape from a tribe who had kept him in slavery, and that his intention was to descend the river, which he fancied fell into the ocean; and he said that he there hoped to meet with friends who would be glad to have him back.

Sandy, on hearing this, accompanied him to the bank of the river, where, not finding his canoe, he expressed the most bitter disappointment.

Sandy at length comforted him with the assurance that he would take him by a safer route to some white people, who would endeavour to discover the friends of whom he was in search.

"More than this I was unable to learn," observed Sandy; "but it's vera clear that the boy was kidnapped by the redskins sometime or other, though not long enough ago to make him forget his relatives and friends. At the same time, not having spoken a word of English for three or four years, or perhaps more, he finds it almost impossible to express what he wishes to say."

We all agreed that it would be better to let the young stranger become accustomed to us before we questioned him about his history. If then he had ever, as Sandy suspected, spoken English, he would probably recollect it. At present we had great difficulty in communicating with him, as he was chiefly accustomed to speak the language of the Sioux, with which we were unacquainted.

Rose and Letty volunteered to take him in hand. "We shall soon find out all about him, if he has got a tongue in his head," said Rose, laughing; "he will trust us more readily than he will you boys, and I am very sure that we shall soon become friends."

No event of importance occurred for some time at the fort. Our hunters went out, and were successful in killing several buffalo, which gave us an ample supply of meat for the winter.

The frost had now set in, not to break up for several months, and snow covered the face of nature. When not engaged in our duties, we boys and girls amused ourselves by tobogganing, the sloping bank of the river affording us a capital place for sliding down. We each of us had manufactured a toboggan, which is a small sleigh composed of a long thin slip of willow wood turned up in front. Several of ours were large enough to carry two, and we each of us were eager to obtain the company of one of the young ladies, I especially that of Letty.

I sat at the extreme after-end of the toboggan to steer it with my feet, while Letty sat just in front of me. The snow, which lay thickly on the sloping bank, was soon hardened. Placing the toboggan on the top, we took our seats, when a very slight shove was sufficient to send it off, and down we slid at a rapid rate, increasing our speed every instant, till we had gained sufficient impetus to glide right across the frozen surface of the river to the opposite bank, which

also sloped at a convenient angle.

Steps were cut upon one side of the slides, by which we ascended to the summit. Thus we were able to pass backwards and forwards, the rapidity of the motion and the risk of upsetting giving excitement to the amusement.

Alick generally took charge of Rose, who was not at all unwilling to have him as her charioteer. The other boys had smaller toboggans, each having one to himself.

Up and down the icy hills we went, and across the bright glassy river, laughing and shouting for hours together; indeed, I confess that we were never tired of the sport.

Sometimes I must own that we were upset, and rolled down to the bottom; though we were never much the worse for the catastrophe, for of course we were all well wrapped up in warm clothing.

The young stranger entered into this amusement with as much zest as any of us. He quickly recovered his spirits, and, under the tuition of Letty and Rose, soon found English words in which to express himself. His English name, he told us, was Robin, though he had been called Kishkanko by the Indians.

"It is a very ugly name, and we don't intend to call you by it," said Letty.

"Pray don't; I would rather be called Robin, as I used to be when I was a little boy by my father, and mother, and sister."

"Then you had a father, and mother, and sister," said Rose.

"Oh yes! and I love them so much, and they love me; and I wanted to go back to them, and thought I should have died when the cruel Indians would not let me," answered Robin.

"We want very much to hear how it was that the Indians took you away from your family," said Rose; "you must tell Letty and me all about it."

Robin passed his hand across his brow, as if trying to collect his thoughts. It was very evident that the circumstances were of a painful description. He was about to begin, when it was announced that several dog-sleighs were approaching the fort from the eastward. There was no doubt that they were coming from Fort Ross.

We all hurried out to meet them, and in a short time we saw that Mr Meredith himself was leading the party, which consisted of two clerks and several hunters. He was on his road, he said, to Mr Crisp's missionary station, to bring away his daughter Letty, and Rose, if her parents would allow her to accompany him; and he was very happy to find that they were already with us. He had heard rumours of the disaffected state of the Indians in the neighbourhood of the station, and was unwilling to allow his daughter to remain longer there. He intended, indeed, to try to persuade Mr and Mrs Crisp to quit the place, at all events till the return of spring, when, even if they went there again, they might at any time make their escape down the river, should they be threatened with danger.

Martin, however, assured Mr Meredith that his parents would not on any account be induced to quit their station; and that, though they were not blind to the danger, they were resolved to await whatever events might occur.

On hearing this, Mr Meredith, who was anxious as soon as possible to return to Fort Ross, determined not to go farther, but said that he would spend two days with us to recruit his men and dogs, and then go back to his own fort.

We were very sorry to part with Rose and Letty, though it was, of course, but right that they should be under the care of Mr Meredith. I was afraid that I should also lose Martin; but he had been so happy with us that he begged hard to be allowed to remain on, and Mr Meredith consented to let him spend the rest of the winter with us. Alick could give him some work to do, while at Fort Ross there were already as many clerks as could find employment.

We were afraid also, that Robin would be taken away; but Alick, having discovered that his great wish was to be sent to the eastward, where he affirmed that he had friends living, it was determined to allow him to remain at Fort Black, as any travellers who might be coming from across the Rocky Mountains were more likely to visit us than they were Fort Ross, which was out of the road. It was settled that, should no one appear, Robin should be sent by water when the navigation was again opened in spring.

Robin himself would gladly have accompanied Rose and Letty; but when he understood the object of our keeping him, he seemed perfectly reconciled to the arrangement.

All matters having been settled, our friends prepared to set out. There were three sleighs drawn by dogs. Mr Meredith took charge of his daughter Letty, and Rose was driven by Mr Macmillan, the eldest of the two clerks, of whom I suspect Alick felt rather jealous.

The third sleigh carried a small bell-tent, intended for the use of the young ladies, as they would have to encamp several nights on the journey. The rest of the men were to travel on snow-shoes by the side of the sleighs, with which they could very easily keep up. They were all well armed, for though Indians were not likely to be moving about at that season of the year, it was still possible that, should they have heard of Mr Meredith's journey, they might make an attempt to cut him off; at all events, it was wise to be on the safe side.

We were very sorry indeed to part with them, but we kept up our spirits; and as they issued early one morning from the gate of the fort, we all sallied forth, cheering them on their way. We little thought at the time what events were to occur before we should again meet.

Martin and I accompanied them for some distance on our snow-shoes.

"Now, lads, you have gone far enough," said Mr Meredith. "It is not wise to make too long a journey at the commencement of winter, before your ankles are well accustomed to the straps of your snow-shoes. You will be getting the racquettes, and may knock up before you reach the fort."

We were compelled to obey him, and wish him and our fair young friends good-bye. We stood watching them till the sleighs appeared like so many black ants in the far distance, while we could not even distinguish the men who ran by their sides.

"Come," said Martin, "we must put our best feet foremost, and get back as soon as we can. There's no chance of losing the trail so long as we have daylight."

It is extraordinary at what speed a person wearing snow-shoes can run over the hard snow. A snow-shoe consists of an elongated oblong framework of wood, with cross-pieces; the interior filled up with a strong network, on which the foot rests, with a hole for the play of the heel. This is secured to the feet and ankles by leathern thongs. It necessitates keeping the feet somewhat wide apart, to prevent the shoes being entangled with each other.

A person not accustomed to their use is very apt to topple down and find some difficulty in getting up again. Martin and I, however, had had plenty of practice during the two previous winters, though we had not gone very far on our return before we felt our ankles pain us considerably. We stopped to rest, but could not venture to remain long, as the cold was already intense; and expecting to be constantly in exercise, we had not put on our warmest clothing. A short rest, however, greatly restored us, and we had made good half the distance back to the fort when Martin, who happened to look round to the southward, exclaimed that he saw some dark objects in the snow.

"Whether they are wolves or Indians crouching down to try and get on us unawares is more than I can tell," he observed; "but whichever they are, we had better push forward, and endeavour to keep ahead of them."

I of course agreed with him, and as we went along we looked to the primings of our rifles, so that we might be prepared to defend ourselves.

"For my part, I would rather they should follow us than attack our friends," I observed. "Perhaps they are some of the tribe Mr Meredith heard of, and did not come up in time to see him pass; if so, we shall render him good service by leading them up to the fort."

"You take it for granted that they are Indians," said Martin; "I am not quite so certain of the fact. I rather believe that they are a small pack of wolves; and if they were not so far off, we should hear them howling to their friends in the neighbourhood to join in the chase. However, we need not be afraid of them; for if they get within shot we can kill a couple, and the rest are sure to stop and devour their companions, and allow us to increase our distance." He made these remarks as we were running on over the snow at a rate which would cost even Indians or wolves a considerable amount of exertion to overtake us.

Before, however, we had made good another mile, the objects we had seen were sufficiently near to assure us that they were wolves out on a foraging expedition. That they would, on seeing us run, pursue us there could be no doubt, and we occasionally looked back to determine when was the best time to stop, in order to take a steady aim at the leaders.

"Now we must give it them," at length cried Martin, who had just looked round.

We suddenly halted, and swinging our right feet round, confronted the pack; then, both of us taking deliberate aim, we fired.



The two leading wolves fell.

The two leading wolves fell, and, as we expected, the rest of the hungry pack immediately set on them, and tore their carcasses to pieces. Having reloaded, we again continued our course.

We had got some distance when the pain in my ankles again came on. I asked Martin how he felt. He confessed that he was suffering in the same manner. "It won't do to stop, however," he observed; "for these brutes, when they have eaten up their friends, will again give chase, and we shall not be safe till we are inside the walls of the fort."

We were still several miles from it, and I feared that I should be utterly unable before long to get over the ground. Martin encouraged me, and I persevered, though feeling inclined to drop at every step. We had almost lost sight of the wolves, and I proposed resting for a few minutes.

"We shall be able to make better play afterwards," I said.

"I think it would be wiser to go on," he answered; "but if you wish it, we'll sit down and loosen the thongs of our snow-shoes."

We sat down, and I was induced to take mine off altogether and to rub my ankles, hoping thereby to relieve the pain. We had not been seated many minutes when the yelping of the wolves again reached our ears. Martin, fastening the thongs, rose to his feet. "They are coming on; I was afraid so," he exclaimed. "Quick! David, quick! or they'll overtake us."

He assisted me in getting on my shoes—an operation which took some time. I again stood on my feet, but the pain appeared only slightly lessened.

"No time to lose," cried Martin, looking back. "Now, away we go," and we ran on as before.

Fast as we went, the brutes came on faster at our heels, and their horrible howls sounded louder in our ears. I felt as I have sometimes done in a fearful dream. I was scarcely able to move over the snow, the pain I was suffering making me fancy that I could not lift my feet; still we were really going at a good pace.

Once more the wolves got within reach of our rifles. We acted precisely as we had done before, and each of us killed a wolf.

Again we ran on, reloading our guns ready for another shot. We resolved, great as was the pain we were suffering, not again, on any account, to stop. The snarling, yelping sounds emitted by the brutes showed us that, as before, they were tearing to pieces the wolves we had shot.

We knew that we could not hope for safety till we were inside the fort, for, from the experience we had had on other occasions, we were certain that the animals would follow us up to the very walls. Twice in the previous winter they had pursued our hunters till up to the fort itself. Again we had to stop and fire. On this occasion we only killed one wolf, which, of course, would take the brutes less time than two to devour.

To our great relief we at length came in sight of the fort, by which time the wolves were again on our trail. We ran on faster than ever, though we were both so fatigued that we were afraid, should we again have to fire, that we might miss altogether. We shouted as we approached to call the attention of our friends.

Fortunately the lookout on one of the towers saw us, and several of the men came hurrying out with firearms in their hands.

Seeing the wolves they advanced shouting. The animals were, however, so directly behind us that not till we were up to them could they venture to fire. They then let fly a volley which killed several, and the rest, frightened by the shouts more than by the reports of the guns and the death of their companions, turned tail and scampered off. Once in safety, both of us sank down on the snow, and had to be carried into the fort. Even after our snow-shoes were taken off we suffered intense pain, and it was not for some days that either of us was able to walk.

The experience we had had made us both resolved to practise with snow-shoes before we again attempted to make so long an excursion as we had just performed. The winter wore on. That season occupies, as most of my readers must be aware, a large portion of the year in that region. For months together—that is to say, from the middle of October till late in May—during the whole period, the ground is covered with snow; the rivers are frozen over; the trees are leafless; every drop of water exposed to the air congeals. The atmosphere is very clear, the air pure and exhilarating, the sun shines brightly from the unclouded sky, and when no wind is blowing existence out of doors is far from unpleasant.

Parties from the fort were constantly out hunting, and buffalo frequently came up close to the very walls. We have often shot them from the towers.

Robin was rapidly picking up his recollection of English, and could now speak quite fluently. He was also, from being well fed and clothed, gradually improving in appearance and strength. His manners and his tone of voice were also good.

I had little doubt from the first that he was of gentle birth. He was not very communicative about his early life, some of his recollections, indeed, being painful. I picked up his history, however, by bits and scraps.

He was born in the old country, and had come over when very young with his father and mother, Captain and Mrs Grey. He spoke of a sister Ella, somewhat older than himself; and a little brother Oliver, to whom he appeared to be greatly attached. His parents had removed from either Boston or New York to one of the western cities, where they lived, I suspect, with somewhat straitened means.

Mrs Grey must have been an energetic woman, and had endeavoured, from what I could learn, to support her family by teaching music and other accomplishments. Captain Grey, who had been an officer in the army, did not appear to have conformed willingly to his changed circumstances, or to have sought for any employment. His great delight was shooting and fishing, and he frequently took out Robin on his excursions, for the sake, notwithstanding his youth, of his companionship.

Mrs Grey appears to have expostulated with her husband, wishing to keep Robin at home for the purpose of educating him. Captain Grey on one occasion, however, insisted on carrying off his boy, promising to bring him back safe. He had bought a small fowling-piece for him, and wished to teach him how to use it. It was natural that Robin should have no objection to go, though he was sorry to leave his mother, and brother, and sister.

“Now, my boy, that we are away, we’ll make a long trip, and I hope to come back with skins enough to pay all our expenses and have a good many dollars over,” said the captain, as they started from home.

They pushed away westward, crossing several rivers, till they reached the very outskirts of the settled districts. The captain then bought horses for Robin and himself, and for their two guides, as also a couple of baggage animals to carry the skins he expected to obtain. They reached the region frequented by buffalo, and succeeded in killing several, as also some deer and other animals.

Robin said he liked the life well enough, though they had to go through a good deal of hard work. He became a good horseman, and expert in the use of his fowling-piece, so that his father expressed himself highly proud of him. Robin could not now remember the names of the places they visited; indeed, as he had no map of the country, his geographical knowledge was, as may be supposed, very imperfect. His idea was that all the rivers he saw ran into the ocean.

After hunting for some time, the captain sent his horses with the produce of the chase back to a certain place to wait for him, while he took it into his head to descend a river in a canoe, manned by three half-breeds, for the sake of shooting wild-fowl.

They had gone some distance down, and were steering north or south, Robin could not recollect which, when they went on shore in the afternoon to form a camp, where Captain Grey intended to spend the night. Having landed all their stores and put up a wigwam, the captain, observing that there was time to shoot some birds, left Robin, who was not very well, at the camp with one of the men, while he proceeded some way farther down the river.

Robin, having a great wish to obtain some raspberries or bilberries, which were ripe at the time, or some other fruit, while his companion was engaged in cooking the supper, wandered away from the camp in search of them. It will be better to give Robin’s narrative in his own words.

“I had filled my hat with fruit of various sorts, thinking how pleased my father would be to have some for supper. The priming had fallen out of the pan of my gun, which I had taken with me to shoot any birds I might see, as also to protect myself from bears or wolves, and I was in the act of refilling it when I heard a rustling behind me, and presently three Indians sprang out of the bushes, and snatching away my weapon before I had finished the operation, two of them seized me by the hands.

“I felt dreadfully alarmed, for they were to my eyes ferocious-looking fellows, dressed in skins and feathers, with their faces painted all over in different colours. I was about to cry out for help, hoping that my father might have returned to the camp and would hear me, when the third Indian, who had possession of my gun, raising his tomahawk, threatened to cut me down if I made any noise. Without more ado they dragged me along, but finding that I no longer resisted, did not offer me any further violence.

“These Indians were, I afterwards found, unacquainted with the use of firearms. They allowed me to retain my powder-flask and shot-belt, looking upon my weapon, however, with evident respect. They therefore did not injure it, though they took good care not to let me again get it into my possession, which, as may be supposed, I was constantly attempting to do. One of them carried my hat with the fruit in it for some distance, when he emptied the contents out on the ground and replaced it on my head. What their object was in carrying me away I could not tell, and it was not till long afterwards that I discovered it. Had I known it at the time I should not have been so much frightened, for I fully believed that their intention was to kill me.

“It appeared that one of them, who was an old man, had a wife with several children by a former husband. The youngest of these had recently died, and she had told her husband that unless he would bring her back another son to replace the one she had lost, she could not live, intimating that she should prefer a white son to a red one.

“The old man, whose name was Wamegon—at least that was the first part of his name, for it was really much longer—had associated with himself several younger men, who had promised to assist him in carrying out the strange commands of his wife.

“They were on their way eastward for this purpose when they caught sight of our canoe descending the river, and observing that I was in her, resolved to take me prisoner. They had followed the canoe down the bank till they saw us land, when they formed the resolution of attacking our camp during the night, killing all who opposed them, and carrying me off. Fortunately for my father and his companions, I had given the Indians an opportunity of capturing me without executing the former part of their intentions.

“They dragged me along in no very gentle way, threatening me with instant death if I did not keep moving as fast as they wished to go. It was getting rapidly dark, and I hoped that they would be compelled to stop, for I was sure that my father would come after me.

“Had my hands been at liberty, I would have dropped all the articles I had in my pocket to assist him in tracing me.

As it was, all I could do was to jerk off my hat; but one of the Indians immediately picked it up, and replaced it on my head. Whenever we passed any soft ground I stamped with my feet to leave a deeper impression; but my captors on perceiving this took off my shoes, perhaps supposing that I could move faster without them, and hurried on.

"Frightened as I was, I did not altogether lose heart, and resolved to make every effort to escape. We must have gone several miles when two of the Indians, without taking any supper, lay down, placing me between them, with a blanket thrown over all three of us, while the other walked about on the watch, to give timely notice should we be pursued.

"I was so tired that I soon fell asleep, and did not awaken till dawn next morning, when the Indians, holding me tight as before, proceeded on their journey. They stopped at last and gave me a little dried venison, mixed with bear's fat, but I could scarcely eat it.

"Thus for four days we hurried on due west. Every night I hoped that I might have an opportunity of escaping, but was night after night completely overpowered by sleep. My bare feet were so wounded and swollen that at length I could not walk. Old Wamegon on perceiving this examined my feet, and took out a number of thorns and splinters. He then gave me a pair of moccasins, which afforded me some relief.

"I now thought that I might perhaps escape. One night when my companions were asleep I got up, and, snatching my gun, ran off with noiseless steps in the direction from which we had come. I stopped to prime my piece, intending to fight for my life, as I heard them all scampering after me; but before I could pour the powder into the pan I was overtaken and brought back. They did not in consequence, however, offer me any violence, though I expected at least to be well beaten.

"The next day we reached a broad river which was too deep to wade across. The old man took me on his shoulders and carried me over, the water being high above his waist. As I knew that I should be unable to recross it by myself, I almost gave up all hope of immediately escaping.

"It was not till now that I burst into tears; for, thinking that I should never again see my father and mother or Ella, or my dear brother Oliver, I felt very sad at heart.

"We still continued our journey westward. One afternoon the Indians stopped at an earlier hour than usual in a wood. I saw them looking about, when presently they found a large hollow log open at one end. Into this they put their blankets and bottle and other articles. They then made me crawl in, and closed up the end with logs so firmly that I could not possibly break out. A few minutes only had passed after I had been thus unpleasantly imprisoned, when from the perfect silence which reigned around I was convinced that they had all gone away. Had it not been that they had deposited their valuables with me in the log, I should have supposed that they intended leaving me to die of starvation. Though I first entertained this idea, I soon banished it, and after a time fell asleep.

"When I awoke I was in perfect darkness, and no sounds reached my ears. At last I heard the tramp of horses' hoofs. Immediately the idea occurred to me that my father had set out on horseback and had traced me thus far. I shouted out at the top of my voice, fearing that he might pass the log, ignorant that I was shut up within it.

"Presently the pieces of wood which closed the entrance were removed, and bitter was my disappointment to hear my captors' voices. Dawn was already breaking when they dragged me out.

"I found that they had brought a horse a-piece, with another for me to ride on. Old Wamegon making signs to me to mount, which I did, we set off at a rapid rate in the same direction as before.

"We went on for several days, till we reached an Indian village consisting of buffalo-skin wigwams. Out of one of these an oldish woman appeared, who, after a short consultation with Wamegon, bade me get off my horse, and then, taking me in her arms, covered me with kisses, which I would very thankfully have avoided. She was, I found, Netnokwa, my new mother.

"I felt—and looked, I dare say—very melancholy, and though she intended to be kind, nothing she said or did raised my spirits. She then took me to her hut and gave me some food, of which I stood greatly in need. I slept in the hut during the night. Next morning after breakfast she led me forth to a spot at some distance from the village. Here all her own people and several strangers from other tribes had assembled.

"It was, I found, the grave of her son, which was enclosed with stakes, and on each side of it there was a smooth open space. Here all the people took their seats, the family and friends of Netnokwa on one side and the strangers on the other.

"The friends had come provided with presents—pots of sugar, sacks of corn, beads, tobacco, and bottles of fire-water.

"Some speeches having been made, Netnokwa's friends began to dance round the grave, when one of them came up, and taking my hand insisted that I should join them.

"The dance was very like the usual scalp-dance. From time to time one of them came up and presented me with some of the articles they had brought; but as I neared the party on the opposite side they were all snatched from me, and I was left in the end without anything. Thus they continued to dance till near nightfall, when, almost dead with fatigue, I returned with my new mother to the village.

"After this we moved further west, the tents and other property of the tribe being carried partly on horseback and partly by the women, while the men rode on ahead without troubling themselves about the fatigue their squaws were suffering. I was compelled to walk by the side of Netnokwa. She was generally very kind, as were her daughters; but

the men treated me with great harshness, often beating me because I did not understand what they wanted me to do. I had all sorts of tasks—cutting wood and bringing water to the camp.

“Old Wamegon one day put a bridle into my hand, and pointing in a certain direction motioned me to go. I guessed that he desired me to bring him a horse, so I caught the first I could find, and to my satisfaction discovered that I had done what he intended.

“I remembered the words he had used, as I tried to do whenever I was spoken to, and thus by degrees picked up the language of the people.

“Sometimes I accompanied the men out hunting, and had to return to the camp with as heavy a load of meat as I could carry. Though I was almost starved, I dared not touch a morsel.

“My Indian mother, who showed some compassion for me, would lay by a little food, and give it when the old man was not in the way. Another day I felt a blow on the head from behind, and immediately fell senseless to the ground. It was not till many hours afterwards that I returned to consciousness, when I saw Netnokwa bathing my head with cold water.

“The old man coming in exclaimed, ‘What! is he there? I thought that I had killed him. He’ll not come to life again the next time!’

“This remark made me in future carefully avoid the old tyrant.

“On reaching a place where deer abounded, the Indians built up a long screen of bushes, behind which they concealed themselves, and when any deer came near they shot the animals with their arrows. This was, however, an uncertain mode of obtaining venison.

“Some of their more active hunters would go out into the plain, and creep up to leeward of any deer they might see, till they could get near enough to shoot them. Sometimes when the grass was short they were unable to conceal themselves. On such occasions they would lie down flat on their backs, lifting their legs up in the air so as to resemble the branches of a tree.

“The deer, who had much curiosity in their nature, would then frequently approach, now stopping, now drawing nearer, till the hunter would suddenly lift his bow, drawing his arrow to let it fly at the nearest animal, which would in most instances suffer the penalty of its inquisitiveness. Still they often missed.

“At one time, when the camp was in great want of venison, I offered to go out and shoot some deer. The young men laughed at me; but I persuaded the old man to let me have my gun. At first he refused; but induced by Netnokwa, he at last consented, threatening me with severe punishment if I did not bring back some meat. It was the first time that I had experienced anything like pleasure after being captured by the Indians. When I once more got my weapon into my hand, I resolved to make good use of it, and hoped that the time would come when it would assist me in making my escape.

“My Indian mother charged me to be very careful when she saw me setting out, telling me that she was sure that old Wamegon would carry out his threats should I fail to kill a deer.

“Withdrawing the charge, I carefully reloaded my gun, and started off. I had been some hours in the prairie when I caught sight of a herd of branch-horned antelopes, which I knew were likely to be attracted by the device I intended to practise.

“Creeping on as I had seen the Indians do as far as I could venture, I lay down on my back, and then slowly lifted my legs in a perpendicular position, stretching them out so that I could watch the deer between them, while I held my gun ready for instant use.”

Robin made us all laugh by going down on his back as he spoke, and putting himself in the curious attitude he described. He remained in it while he continued his description:—

“The antelopes drew nearer and nearer. Every moment I was afraid that they would grow suspicious and bound away, for they were far more difficult to kill, on account of their speed, than other descriptions of deer or the buffalo. They were evidently attracted, however, by the unusual object they saw on the ground, and advanced towards me.

“They were soon within shot, and selecting a fine-looking buck which led the way, I fired, and the animal rolled over. The instant I had pulled the trigger I jumped up and began reloading my piece, being thus able to send another shot after the herd, which at the report immediately took to flight. Fortunately for me the shot took effect on another antelope, and the animal dropped after going a few paces.

“I rushed forward, and with my hunting—knife quickly dispatched both of them. I then took out their tongues, and having partially flayed them, cut off a haunch from each, and loaded with meat I returned to the camp in triumph.

“The Indians on seeing it could not doubt of my success, and a large party instantly set out to bring in the remainder. After this I was treated with much respect by the young men; but old Wamegon seemed still to have a spite against me, and one morning he even went so far as to drag me out by the hair of the head, and, beating me cruelly, threw me into some bushes, shouting as he went away that he had finished me at last. I had not, however, lost my senses, and returning to the tent told my Indian mother how I had been treated. I cannot, indeed, describe half the cruelties which that terrible man inflicted on me.

“Ofttimes, after the snow had fallen, I was compelled to follow the hunters, and to drag home to the lodge a whole deer, though they might have employed their dogs for the purpose, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I could

move along. I had some relief when old Wamegon was away. He was only preparing, however, to cause me greater grief than before.

"When he came back he exhibited a hat which I recognised as that worn by my father.

"'We have killed him,' he said, with a horrible laugh. 'You will have no one now to whom to go should you run away.'

"I fully believed that my father was dead, and shed bitter tears at his loss. I discovered, however, that what the old man said was false. My father had, as I suspected, pursued me; but while riding on ahead of his party, he had been surprised in the wood by Wamegon and the warriors who had accompanied him. They had secured my father to his horse, and brought him to their camp. Here they bound him to a tree, intending to kill him the next morning.

"Though his hands and arms were tied behind him, and there were cords round his breast and neck, he managed to bite off some of the latter, when he was able to get at a penknife which was in his pocket. With this he cut himself loose, and finding his horse, which was feeding near at hand, he mounted, and though pursued by the Indians, rode off.

"They saw him no more, and he, probably thinking that I was killed, abandoned the pursuit. This, however, as I said, I did not learn till long afterwards. Two years passed away, and I still remained in captivity, though never abandoning my intention to try and escape, however little hope I had of succeeding."

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## Chapter Five.

**"Arrah! now, Mr Injun"—Copper-Snake brings valuable information—Danger ahead—Robin continues his narrative—Shegaw's offer—His new mother Kezha—Indian gambling—Robin kills a bear—Muskgo—Sad plight of Robin and Muskgo—Peshauba succeeds in purchasing Robin with fire-water—Robin shoots an elk—He is chased by a grizzly, which turned out to be old Peshauba—Robin escapes from the Indians—He finds a canoe—His despair on missing the canoe—He is discovered by Sandy—Jack Pipe—Our meeting with Opoiungun—Sandy starts after Mr Jack Pipe—The fugitive party—Blackfeet on the war-path—The Fort is besieged—Robin's courageous proposal—He starts to warn Sandy.**

Some time after Robin had arrived, one evening an Indian was seen approaching the fort.

The gate, as was our custom at that time of day, had just been closed, to prevent the risk of surprise, as there was sufficient cover in the neighbourhood to conceal a body of enemies, who might have taken it into their heads to try to possess themselves of our property.

As the stranger, however, came boldly up to the gate, it was supposed by Pat Casey, who was on watch, that he could have no sinister intentions; still, Pat, wishing to be on the safe side, shouted out, "Arrah! now, Mr Injun, whoever you may be, halt now, and tell us your name and business."

Though the Indian could not have understood a word Pat said, he guessed the meaning of the hail. I, hearing Pat shout, joined him, when the stranger replied in his own language, "I am Miskwandib. I received a kindness from a young pale-face some time back, and come to return it."

On hearing what the stranger said, I recognised him as "Copper-Snake," to whom I had given a portion of food when Pat and I had lost ourselves. I immediately went down with Pat to admit him. He knew me at once, and entering the gate without hesitation, took my hand.

"I am glad to find that you have got safe back to your friends," he said. "I knew that you had, for I tracked your footsteps, that I might be able to guard you from danger. My people never forget a kindness received, and wishing to show my gratitude, I now come to warn you that there are those on the war-path who will before long attempt to take your fort, and possess themselves of the arms and powder and shot, and the rest of your property in it. They are cunning as the foxes, and it may be soon or it may be some moons hence before they appear, and they'll take good care not to give you warning. Miskwandib has spoken the truth."

"I feel very sure that you have, my friend," I observed; "and I'll get you to repeat your account to my brother." Copper-Snake willingly accompanied me, and I introduced him to Alick, who, after he had offered him some food and a pipe, requested him to repeat all he had said to me. He gave also further particulars which induced us fully to believe that he spoke the truth.

Alick invited him to remain during the night, as he looked thin and fatigued. He gladly accepted the invitation, and was greatly delighted when Alick presented him with a musket and some ammunition.

"I shall have no more fear of starving," he exclaimed, as he eyed the weapon. "I can now kill buffalo and deer, and defend myself too against all my enemies."

Altogether, Alick was satisfied that the Copper-Snake, though his name was not significant of good qualities, was an honest man, and he consequently advised him to come with his family and settle near the fort.

The Indian replied "that he would think about the matter, but that though some of the pale-faces he had met with were good men, there were among them many bad ones, and that he had hitherto preferred keeping at a distance from them."

He showed, however, no suspicion of us, and lay down to sleep in a corner of the hall, making himself perfectly at home.



The next morning at daybreak, after he had received as much as he could carry, with his newly-acquired gun in his hand he took his departure.

Alick and I considered that Copper-Snake's warning should be attended to, and that every necessary precaution should be taken to avoid surprise. Sandy, however, was of opinion that he had come with a cock-and-bull story for the sake of gaining credit for the information, and thus getting something out of us, as he had succeeded in doing.

Some days passed by, and as no enemy appeared, nor did we hear of one being in the neighbourhood, we began to think that Sandy was right, and gradually our vigilance decreased, till we no longer took any unusual precautions against a sudden attack.

I must continue Robin's narrative, though, as I said, I only picked it up piecemeal, as he was in the humour to talk about past events. He had not been so long among the Indians without acquiring somewhat of their manner and reticence. I had, indeed, to pump him to draw out what I wanted to know. He was more communicative generally to Martin, to whom he had taken a great liking from the first.

"Did you ever expect to become like an Indian, and to be contented with your lot?" I asked.

"No," he answered, "I did not. I always remembered that I was an Englishman, and resolved to make my escape if I could. I had won the confidence of Netnokwa, and the young men respected me for my skill in hunting. At length my powder and shot came to an end, and I could no longer use my gun. I tried to shoot with a bow and arrows, but it was long before I attained anything like the skill possessed by the Indians, who are accustomed to practise with a bow from their earliest days. I sank, consequently, in the estimation of the tribe. My great wish was to obtain some more ammunition; but the Indians always prevented me from communicating with any white men, from whom alone I could have got it.

"We continued moving farther and farther west, till we met a tribe of Indians with whom we had never before come in contact. They were far better mounted than our people, and looked much more savage. They were Sioux, and from several articles I saw among them I knew that they must have been in communication with the fur-traders.

"They appeared to be on friendly terms, however, with Netnokwa's people. I had soon cause to be sorry for this, as I found that one of their chiefs, Shegaw by name, was bargaining to purchase me for his wife, who had lost a son, as Netnokwa had done. He offered some blankets, tobacco, beads, and knives; but Netnokwa would not accept them.

"'No,' I heard her say; 'I have lost one son, but I will not willingly lose another.'

"Shegaw, however, persevered, and at length appeared at our wigwam followed by several men carrying a ten-gallon keg of whisky, besides the blankets and other things he had offered. This was more than Netnokwa could withstand, especially when old Wamegon came in and declared that he would kill me if she refused it.

"The exchange was at once made. I was handed over to Shegaw, and the whole of Wamegon's tribe set to work to drink up the spirits. They were not long in doing that. When last I saw my Indian mother and tyrannical old father, they both lay on the ground helplessly tipsy. It was not a very edifying spectacle, but I was very well aware that my new owners would, should an opportunity occur, reduce themselves to the same condition.

"I made all the inquiries I could respecting the country and the rivers running through it, that I might know in what direction to go should I effect my escape.

"How my new mother would treat me it was impossible to say, but I thought from Shegaw's appearance that I should not be much better off under him than I had been while living with old Wamegon.

"The tribes now separated, my new owners moving westward, while the others returned towards the east. It was considered a wonderful thing that they should have met without coming to blows. The farther west they went, the less hope I had of making my escape, because, even should I get away from my present masters, I should in all probability fall into the hands of those who had sold me.

"After travelling several days we reached Shegaw's lodges. Making me dismount, he led me by the hand to his own dwelling, where he presented me in due form to his wife, Kezha. She was much younger and better-looking than my former mother, and, I thought, had a more amiable expression of countenance. Thus far I had changed for the better.

"I soon found, however, that I was not to eat the bread of idleness; for I was employed in cutting wood, attending to the fires, and bringing water to the camp. Though Kezha herself did not beat me, she could not prevent others from doing so.

"The tribe with whom I was now living were great hunters; as they were constantly engaged in the sport, food was plentiful among us, and we did not suffer from the extremes of famine which many others are doomed to bear, in consequence of their neglecting to cultivate the ground. They also preserved and laid by a store of provisions for the time when deer or buffalo might become scarce.

"The abundance in which they lived made them despise other people and indulge in many vices. Whenever liquor could be procured, they took it to excess, and I had good reason to be afraid that in some of their drunken fits they would take it into their heads to kill me. They were also greatly addicted to gambling. They had a variety of games; one was that of the moccasin. It is played by a number of persons, divided into two parties. In one of four moccasins a little stick or small piece of cloth is concealed. The moccasins are then laid down by the side of each other in a row, and one of the adverse party touches two of the moccasins.

"If the one he first touches has the thing hidden in it, the player loses eight to the opposite party; if it is not in the

second, but in one of the two passed over, he loses two; if it is not in the one he touches first, and is in the last, he wins eight. The articles staked are valued by agreement. A beaver-skin or a blanket is valued at ten; sometimes a horse at one hundred.

"There is another game played with circular counters, one side of them being plain, while the other is painted black. Generally nine are used, but never fewer. They are put together on a large wooden bowl, which is placed upon a blanket, when the two parties playing, numbering perhaps thirty people, sit down in a circle. The game consists in striking the edge of the bowl so as to throw all the counters into the air, and on the manner in which they fall upon the blanket or into the bowl depends the player's gain or loss. If the player is fortunate in the first instance, he strikes again and again until he misses, when it is passed on to the next. So excited do the Indians become that they often quarrel desperately. They will play on at this game for hours together, till they have staked everything they possess.

"On one occasion Shegaw, who considered me as one of his goods and chattels, staked me, and I was lost to a Cree chief.

"My Indian mother, on hearing that I had been staked and lost with other property, cried very much, and declared that she would not agree to my being given up. On this Shegaw, who was afraid of offending her, agreed to challenge the other Indians to a fresh game, and to stake several packs of peltries, the whole of our remaining property.

"I stood by, watching the game with some anxiety; not that it signified very much to me who became my master. Our party won, and I was restored to Kezha. It was only for a short time, however. She was as fond of the fire-water as are many other Indian women, and when once she began to drink she would give everything she possessed to obtain more liquor. For a short time she made more of me than she had hitherto done.

"I managed to regain, too, my credit with the young men of the tribe. I had obtained a bow and arrows, and by constantly practising, became tolerably expert. During the winter I was allowed to go out by myself, for the Indians could always trace me, and they knew well that I could not travel far should I attempt to make my escape.

"I was one day crossing a small meadow, an open space encircled by trees, when I unexpectedly fell up to the middle into the snow. I easily extricated myself and walked on; but remembering that I had heard the Indians speak of killing bears in their holes, it occurred to me that it might be a bear's hole into which I had fallen. I accordingly returned, and looking down into it, I saw the head of a bear lying close to the bottom of the hole. Had I gone down farther I should have fallen into his very jaws.

"He did not appear to be inclined to move, so fixing an arrow in my bow, I shot it with all my force into the animal's head between the eyes. Immediately I had done so I got another arrow ready, but on looking down I saw that the bear did not move. I ran to the wood and cut a long stick, and returning with it thrust it into the bear's eyes. As the creature still remained perfectly quiet, I was convinced that it was dead, and stooping down, endeavoured to lift it out of the hole.

"Being unable to do this, I returned home, following the track I had made in coming out. As I neared the tent I saw a fire burning and a pot boiling on it.

"'Here, my son, is some beaver meat which we have obtained since you went out in the morning,' said my mother.

"Having eaten some, for I was very hungry, I whispered to Kezha, 'I have killed a bear.'

"'What do you say, my son?' she asked.

"'I have killed a bear,' I replied.

"'Are you sure that it is dead?'

"'Yes,' I answered, 'it is quite dead.'

"On this my so-called mother seized me in her arms, and began hugging and kissing me.

"The bear was sent for, and as it was the first I had killed, it was cooked, and the hunters of the whole band invited to feast with us, according to Indian custom.

"The next day another bear and a moose were killed, and for some time we had an abundance of food. Old Kezha had another adopted son, Muskgo. He and I used to go out hunting together. I suspect that he was set to watch over me, though we were on very friendly terms.

"We frequently hunted two or three days' distance from the camp, but were very often unsuccessful, when we were almost starved. On one of our hunting-paths we had formed a hut of cedar boughs, in which we had kindled fire so often that at length it became very dry. We were lying down at night, after an unsuccessful day's hunt, when we lighted a fire to keep ourselves warm, for the weather was intensely cold. We had just dropped off to sleep when some of the sparks blown by the wind caught the cedar, which immediately flew up like powder. Happily we scampered out without suffering much, but we were left till daylight without any protection.

"At dawn we set off towards the camp, hoping that some of the other hunters would have been more successful than we were. So intense was the cold that the trees as we passed were constantly cracking with frost. We had soon to cross a river which appeared to be frozen over hard, but when we had got a little distance from the shore the ice gave way, and I fell in. At the same moment Muskgo broke through in the same manner.

"I kept upright, and only wetted my feet and legs; but he threw himself down, and was wetted nearly all over. Our hands being benumbed with the cold, it was some time before we could get off our snow-shoes, and we were no

sooner out of the water than our moccasins and leggings were frozen stiff. Our spunk wood got wetted by the water, and when we at last reached the shore we were unable to light a fire. Our clothes also were so completely frozen that we could scarcely move.

"Muskgoo was in such pain that he at once gave in and declared that he should die. I held out, for though I had no enjoyment in the existence I was enduring, I still hoped some day to make my escape. I therefore kept moving about as well as I was able, and at length reaching the forest, found some rotten wood which I used as a substitute for spunk, and was able, greatly to my satisfaction, to raise a fire.

"We immediately set to work to thaw and dry our moccasins, and having put them on, we had strength to collect more fuel for a larger fire. Lying close to this, we completely dried our clothes; and though we had nothing to eat we did not complain, since we had the enjoyment of warmth.

"Next morning again setting out we proceeded towards the lodges. We were still some way from them when we met old Kezha bringing us some food and dry clothes. She said that 'knowing we should have the river to cross, as we did not appear she was convinced that we had fallen through the ice.' It will thus be seen that the old woman had a kind heart, though her temper was very uncertain.

"Sometimes we had an abundance of food in the camp; at others for many days together we were almost starved, and had only nuts or berries to feed on. I cannot describe one-tenth part of the incidents of my life at this period.

"We had again accumulated several packages of peltries, which it was intended to exchange with the fur-traders for blankets and numerous other articles of which the tribe were in want.

"One day, however, another party of Indians, under a chief called 'Peshauga,' or the 'Crooked Lightning,' came and encamped near us. He had been trading successfully with the white men, and had a large supply of blankets, beads, knives, and several casks of fire-water.

"He came into our camp bringing with him a bottle full of the fire-water. He offered some to Kezha. She at first refused, but at length was induced to take a cupful. I watched her as she swallowed it, when her eyes began to roll, and, stretching out her hand with the cup, she begged to have it refilled. This Peshauga willingly did, and cup after cup was swallowed till not a drop remained. She begged to have some more; but Peshauga replied that he could not give it without payment, and that he would only sell a whole cask. She at once offered him all the beaver-skins and a large quantity of buffalo-robos.

"Still he was not content, and insisted on having me and several other articles. She cried with vexation, but at last, finding she could not obtain the fire-water, she exclaimed, 'Take them all, but only bring me the rum.'

"Peshauga got up and, without saying a word, returned to his own camp. He was not long absent, and came back with a party of his young men, who carried the cask of rum. On depositing it they lifted up the bales and other property which they had taken in exchange, and walked off with them, Peshauga leading me by the hand. I knew that there was no use in making any resistance, though I felt very indignant at being thus bought and sold.

"I was sorry, too, at leaving old Kezha, who, although now presenting a very melancholy spectacle as she lay rolling helplessly on the ground, had yet been kind to me on many occasions, and I was not likely to be better treated by any one else.

"It is not the custom of the Indians, however, to trade in slaves; indeed, I was not looked upon as one exactly, but rather as a new member of the family. The idea of making slaves of their fellow-creatures is entirely contrary to the nature of the Indians. They will either kill their enemies or let them go, or, if they wish it, receive them into their tribe on equal terms. I had to obey Peshauga as a son obeys his father. He and his wife treated me with considerable kindness.

"We moved away westward when my former friends turned back towards the Red River. I was allowed as much freedom as before, and as I had become a tolerably good hunter, was sent out by myself. On one occasion Peshauga sent me out to bring in the meat of an elk which he had killed, accompanied by two girls. Finding the animal large and fat, they determined on remaining to dry the meat, that they might have the less weight to carry. I, knowing it would be wiser to obey the order I had received, took up my load and started for home.

"Observing several elk as I went along, I resolved to try and kill one of them. Hiding myself in a bush, therefore, I imitated the call of the female elk. Presently a large buck came bounding so furiously towards the spot where I was concealed that, seeing he would break through the bush, I dropped my load and took to flight. No sooner did he observe me, however, than he turned round and fled in the opposite direction.

"As I should have been laughed at for my fright, I returned, wishing to kill an elk. I again imitated the cry, and after some time another animal came towards me, so cautiously that I was able to shoot him dead. As I could now make my appearance at the camp with some credit, I took up my load and proceeded homewards, intending to return with others for the flesh of the elk I had killed.

"I had gone some distance when I saw what I took to be a bear. At first I believed it to be a common black bear, and prepared to try and shoot it. When, however, the creature continued to advance, I supposed that it must be a grizzly, as a common bear would have fled. I therefore turned, and began to run from the beast; but the more swiftly I ran, the more closely it followed.

"Though much frightened, I remembered the advice Peshauga had given me—never to attempt shooting one of these animals unless trees were near into which I could climb; also, in case of being pursued, never to shoot until the creature was close to me.

"Three times I turned and prepared to let fly an arrow, but each time the bear was still too far off, so I again turned and ran on. Thus I continued till I got close to the lodges, when what was my surprise, on looking back, to see old Peshuba himself! He had on a bearskin cloak, the hood of which he had thrown over his head, thus making himself, aided by the dusk and my fright, resemble a real bear. He laughed heartily at my alarm, but commended me for having obeyed his instructions. My conduct, though I had not exhibited any great amount of bravery, greatly raised me in his estimation. Supposing that I had become reconciled to my lot, he allowed me even greater liberty than at first, and many months passed by spent in hunting, and sometimes by the young warriors in going on the war-path against their enemies. We had moved a long way to the westward, when, being encamped on the plain, I went out with several companions on a hunting expedition towards the north. At the extreme limit of our excursion we found a stream which I learned ran down into a larger river, and I was told that that river flowed on for hundreds of miles towards the ocean.

"On hearing this, the thought seized me that I might possibly by its means make my escape. We had several times been encamped in the neighbourhood of rivers and lakes, on which I had learned how to manage a canoe.

"A long time elapsed, however, before I could carry my plan into execution. Though I several times visited the river on my hunting excursions, I could not find a canoe; though I might have built one, I should to a certainty have been overtaken before I could finish it. I cannot describe all the events which occurred in the meantime. I was often ill-treated, both by Peshuba and other members of the tribe, and often, when game was scarce, almost starved.

"At last I managed to get away from the camp with a small supply of meat which I had secreted, and making a wide circuit, proceeded towards the river. I hoped that I was not pursued, and that it would be supposed I had only gone out with the intention of hunting. Reaching the stream, I continued down it, examining both banks in the hopes of finding a canoe of some description.

"I cannot express the delight I felt when I discovered a small one hauled up on the shore. It belonged, I concluded, to some Crees we had met with. As I could find no traces of the owners, I at once launched it, and seizing the paddle, shoved off from the bank. The current carried me swiftly along. I had got to some distance when I heard a voice calling to me; but I could not have returned against the current, even had I wished it. I continued my course, therefore, till darkness came on, when I landed, and, hauling up my canoe, slipped under it.

"The next morning, as soon as there was a gleam of light, I started off again, stopping only to eat some of the small supply of food I had brought with me. I had my bow and arrows, and I hoped to replenish the stock on my way.

"Not wishing to exhaust all the food I possessed before I had obtained some to supply its place, I one day landed, with the intention of trying to shoot some birds or animals. Seeing no signs of any one having visited the spot, I hauled up the canoe on the bank, and went off into the wood.

"What was my dismay, on returning, to find my canoe gone! I saw tracks on the ground which puzzled me exceedingly, as I was nearly certain that they were not those of an Indian, though I could not surmise who had formed them. I was almost in despair, believing that I should have perhaps hundreds of miles to travel on foot, and might be unable to kill sufficient game to support existence; still, plucking up courage, I resolved to persevere, and was making my way, as far as I could calculate, to the north-east, when I saw a person approaching the spot in which I was hiding myself.

"I could see through the bushes, and great was my joy to discover that he was a white man. On this I immediately showed myself. Though I had great difficulty in understanding what he said, so long a time had passed since I had heard English spoken, yet I quickly made out that he wished to conduct me to a place where I should find my own countrymen.

"As you may have guessed, my new friend was Sandy McTavish."

Such is a brief outline of Robin's narrative. He told us several other events of his life, and observed that there were many more which he had not mentioned, and which we only heard at intervals afterwards. He became very much attached to us all, and he himself was a great favourite with every one in the fort; indeed Alick and I looked upon Martin and him as brothers, and few brothers could have regarded each other with greater affection than we did.

Still Robin was anxious to set out, in the hopes of rejoining his parents and assuring them of his existence. They might have supposed that he had been killed, or perhaps, as was the case, that he had merely been kept in captivity.

His great fear was that his father might have lost his life in attempting his recovery, and should such have happened, he thought of all the sorrow his poor mother must have endured for their sakes. Still some time went by, but no opportunity occurred of sending him on to Fort Garry, the nearest place from which he would be able to make his way in safety to the States. As he did not remember the name of the town in which his mother was living, he would still have great difficulty in finding her.

"I must beg my way through the country till I can do so, but while I live I will not abandon the search," he exclaimed.

"You shall not have to do that," observed Alick. "All the means I possess shall be at your disposal, and I feel sure that others when they hear your history will gladly subscribe to assist you."

"But I may never be able to repay you," said Robin.

"I shall not expect repayment," answered Alick. "What I have shall be freely yours, and if you ever have the power of returning the money, and I happen to want it, I will trust to you to do so."

The spring was advancing; the snow disappeared as the sun got hotter and hotter, and the ice broke up in the river

and went rushing downwards, huge masses tumbling over each other, grinding together till they became small pieces and quickly melted away.

The grass grew up, the wild flowers bloomed—no others are to be seen in that region—the leaves burst forth, and the forests once more assumed their mantle of green.

We were all actively engaged—some in cultivating a field of Indian corn, another of potatoes, and a kitchen garden in a sheltered spot near the fort. Our chief business, however, was hunting; for though some animals are killed in the winter, many more are shot in the spring and summer. We have a spring, though vegetation proceeds so rapidly, when once the winter has taken its departure, that it is a very short one, and rushes, as it were, rapidly into summer.

The trappers were away with their traps to catch beaver. Nearly all other animals are of value—bears, badgers, squirrels, foxes, hares, rabbits, opossums, otters, minks, martens, raccoons, skunks, musk rats, and weasels—but the beaver is one of the most valuable. We one evening had returned after a shooting excursion to the fort, when an Indian, followed by two squaws carrying a couple of packs of skins, was seen approaching. Alick went out to meet him, and invited him in, with the intention of purchasing the peltries, supposing that his object in coming was to sell them.

He declined allowing the squaws to enter the fort, but when invited came willingly himself. Though he spoke the Cree language, he had more the appearance of a Sioux.

Sandy, who was within at the time, warned Alick not to trust him. He set a high price on his peltries, and said that he would only sell them for arms and ammunition, as he had blankets and cloth enough in his lodge for all his wants; he required six muskets and a large stock of powder and shot.

We were not absolutely prohibited from selling muskets to the Indians, but our instructions were to try to induce them to take blankets, cloth, tobacco, beads, and cutlery.

“But you are alone, my friend, and can require but one gun for yourself,” said Alick.

On this the Indian got up and made a long speech. I should have said that he had announced himself as Opoiogun, “a pipe;” on hearing which Sandy at once dubbed him “Jack Pipe.”

“Opoiogun is not alone,” he began; “he has many young men who follow him, who desire guns to supply themselves and their squaws and children with buffalo meat and venison. They know how to clothe themselves with the skins of the animals they kill, and despise those people who wear blankets and cloth garments. What Opoiogun has said he intends to keep to. If his pale-face friends have no guns or ammunition, they cannot hope to obtain his peltries. He has spoken, and is like those mountains in the far west, not to be moved. Lift them up and bring them here, and he will part with his skins for nothing.”

He went on talking for some time in the same strain.

“Well, Mr Pipe, but suppose you take three guns and the remainder of the price either in blankets or in tobacco, will that not content you?” asked Alick.

Opoiogun, who was smoking, puffed a cloud from his mouth, and pointing to the west said, “Bring those mountains here.”

We knew by this that he did not intend to change his mind. Had Alick consented to do what is done too often—produce some bottles of whisky—he would very probably have obtained the peltries on his own terms. To do this was entirely contrary to his principles. We had some whisky in the fort, but it was dealt out in small quantities only to those who required it.

Though the company instructed their factors not on any account to sell whisky to the Indians, it somehow or other found its way into the forts, and by the same unaccountable means the Indians very frequently got drunk, and parted with the produce of their long days and nights of hunting, receiving very small value in return.

Mr Meredith and Alick had never fallen into the abominable practice of making those with whom they were about to trade drunk, but always gave fair value for the peltries they received; consequently the more soberly disposed Indians resorted to our fort in preference to others which they might in many cases have more easily reached.

Mr Pipe, though he first only asked for the guns and ammunition, now increased his demands, and begged to have some tobacco, and ornaments for his squaws. Alick promised the latter, and advised him to trust to his generosity about other things. At length the bargain was concluded, and the packs being brought in and found to contain the skins the Indian had stated, the guns, powder, and shot were handed to him. Doing them up into two packages, he placed them on the backs of the two women, and ordered them to march, promising soon to overtake them. Alick suggested that it was imprudent to send them without protection. On this Mr Pipe laughed, grimly observing “that they knew how to take care of themselves, and that no one would venture to molest them.”

He then returned into the fort, and after smoking another pipe, got up and went round the place, carefully examining every portion, looking into the stores and the huts and round the walls. We had at the time no suspicion of his object, but thought that he was only prompted by curiosity. At length, as evening was approaching, he bade us farewell, saying that he should overtake his squaws by the time they had encamped for the night.

The next morning Martin, Robin, and I had agreed to go out on a shooting expedition! in order to obtain some wild-fowl, which had assembled in great numbers on a lagoon, a short distance from the fort, near the river. We had concealed ourselves in some bushes, hoping that the wild-fowl would come in the course of their flight sufficiently

near to enable us to shoot them. We had remained in ambush for some time, and were feeling somewhat disappointed at our want of success, when who should we see but Opoiugun stealing by out of a wood. He had taken off most of his clothes, and his black hair was streaming over his back. He looked about cautiously, as if he expected some one to meet him.

Just at that moment up flew a covey of wild-fowl, when Martin, forgetting that it might be of importance to ascertain what Mr Pipe was about, fired at one of the birds, which, however, flew off uninjured.

The Indian looked round with a startled expression of countenance, supposing apparently that the shot was fired at him, and ran off fleet as a deer towards the narrow part of the lagoon, across which it was evident he intended to make his way. We started up from our ambush; but though he again looked round, and saw us, he only fled the faster.

"I say, David, I believe that fellow came here with no good intentions," observed Martin. "I vote we give chase and make him tell us what he was about."

"You know more about the Indian customs than I do, Robin. What do you say?" I asked.

"He was here for some bad purpose," answered Robin; "but I would advise you not to follow him. He has friends in the neighbourhood. We may depend on that, and they may set upon us if we go far from the fort. As I was watching his countenance yesterday, it struck me that I had seen him before, and I am nearly certain that he's a friend of Peshuba's from whom I made my escape. As I saw him again to-day I felt more certain than ever, and I suspect that one of his objects was to get me back, though, as I do not think he recognised me yesterday, perhaps he fancied that I was not at the fort."

Robin was so positive on the matter that we thought it advisable not to follow the Indian. We accordingly retreated towards the fort, though very unwilling to return without some ducks for dinner.

When we told Alick what had occurred, he approved of our conduct.

"There was something not altogether canny about Mr Pipe," observed Sandy, "and I am very glad no harm happened to you boys."

"I didn't like the man's countenance, and suspected his intentions from the first," said Alick; "however, I could not refuse to trade with him, though it's more than probable that he stole the peltries he brought us. We'll send out and try to find out more about him."

Besides the old Scotchman there were fortunately six hunters at the fort, who were immediately dispatched, well armed, under Sandy's command, to follow the trail of Opoiugun, and to ascertain where he had gone and what he was about.

Alick would not let any of us accompany the party, considering that it would be useless to expose us to the danger we might have to encounter.

While they were away we caught sight of a small band of men in the distance coming towards the fort from the south-west. As they got nearer we saw that there were six persons.

"They are Indians, and seem in a great hurry from the way they come along," observed Martin, who was with Robin and me on the top of the tower.

"They do not appear to me to be Indians from the way they run," said Robin. "I should say that most of them are half-breeds, though there is one of them who looks like an Indian."

I thought that they were all Indians, though they had no war-plumes, and I saw no ornaments glittering in the sun.

"Whatever they are, they seem very anxious to reach the fort," said Martin. "We'll soon know the truth of the matter, for they must be here before long."

As the strangers approached, we caught sight in the far distance of another party far more numerous, who appeared to be coming on as fast as the others were; still the latter were certain to reach the fort some time before them.

Upon informing Alick, who was in his room, he said at once that the smaller party were flying from the others, evidently hoping to obtain refuge within the fort.

"We must give it them, whoever they are, whether Indians or half-breeds," he added; and immediately calling the few men who remained in the fort under arms, he and I, with four or five others, went to the gate to receive the fugitives. They soon got up to us, and we found that Robin was right—five of them being half-breeds, with one Chippewa Indian.

They were all panting for breath, having evidently had a long run.

As soon as they could speak, they told us that they had been out hunting buffalo, and had already collected a large quantity of meat, with which they intended to load their horses, when they were surprised by a body of Sioux, far outnumbering them, who had carried off their horses. Believing that to attempt the recovery of their animals would be hopeless, they had been compelled to leave their property behind them, and make their escape from their camp, which they expected would be attacked the next morning.

It was not till daylight, they supposed, that the Sioux had discovered their flight. They had already made good a

considerable distance before, from the top of a hill they were crossing, they saw their enemies in the far distance coming after them. They now discovered, from the number of those who were following, that if they wished to save their lives they must increase their speed, and not stop till they had got safe into the fort.

Alick bade them banish their fears, and promised to protect them.

Though our garrison was greatly reduced by the absence of Sandy and the men who had accompanied him, we lost no time in making preparations for the expected attack.

Unless the wily Indians were very numerous, they would scarcely venture, we concluded, to assault the fort in the daytime, and would probably, on discovering that those they were chasing had got safe within the walls, halt at a distance till they could form their plans.

Our first care was to send out Pat with the other men to bring in the horses and cattle feeding in the neighbourhood, which the Indians to a certainty would otherwise have taken the liberty of lifting, as would be said in Scotland.

There was time to do this—at all events to save the greater number. Those at a distance would have to take care of themselves, and their sagacity would induce them to scamper off on perceiving the approach of the Indians.

We had a well to supply us with water, and abundance of provisions, with arms sufficient for six times the number of our present garrison. These we had loaded, and placed some in each of the four towers, and others at different spots near the walls, so that one man might fire several in succession. A lookout was also stationed at the top of each of the towers, to give due notice of the approach of the enemy, as we could not tell on which side they might attack us.

We were well aware of the cunning they would exercise, and that they would employ every trick and stratagem to take us by surprise. Possibly they would creep along the bank of the river during the hours of darkness and try to scale the walls on that side, or one party might come boldly to the fort to attract our attention, while another might be stealthily approaching from an opposite direction. We had at all events, we knew, to keep very wide awake.

The hunters who had been pursued, overcome with fatigue, were not likely to be of much use in keeping guard, so Alick told them to lie down and rest till they were wanted for the protection of the fort. We anxiously looked out for the return of Sandy and his party, and our fear was that they might be discovered before they could reach us, and be attacked by the Sioux.

The enemy were now seen drawing nearer and nearer, coming over the hill in the distance. We could distinguish even the war-plumes of the chiefs waving in the wind, and the glitter of their arms and ornaments. They formed a large band; indeed, we knew that no Sioux, except in considerable numbers, would venture to cross the Cree country—feeling themselves strong enough to fight their way back, should they be attacked, as they might expect to be, by their hereditary enemies. There is no peace between the Sioux and the Crees.

These we knew from their plumes and war-paint to be Blackfeet, the most savage and warlike of the northern tribes.

They approached till they reached a spot just beyond musket range. They there began forming a camp, so that we knew they intended regularly to besiege the fort. None of our little garrison, however, were in the slightest degree daunted. We had all the requisites for standing a siege—water, provisions, and an abundance of arms and ammunition. A few small field-pieces in our towers would have been of use, but it had not been thought fit to provide the fort with them, and we had our muskets alone to depend on, with some pikes and swords.

Night now came on, and hid the enemy from view, and a short time afterwards their camp-fires blazed up, and we could see dark figures moving about in considerable numbers. Still, Alick suspected that they might have dispatched a party to come round and try to surprise us on the opposite side. When Robin heard this he offered to go out and watch the camp, so that he might track any body of men who might have set out with this purpose in view.

“I cannot let you do that,” answered Alick. “You may know the Indian ways very well, but were you to be caught they would to a certainty kill you, and we can spare no one from the fort at present.”

“But I will, if you’ll allow me, try to find Sandy, and warn him that the Sioux are in the neighbourhood,” said Robin. “I want to prove to you how grateful I am for all the kindness you have shown me. I might be the means of saving Sandy from falling into the hands of the enemy.”

Alick did not answer immediately.

“Your proposal to warn Sandy is an important one,” he said at length; “still I am very unwilling to accede to it. You would run a very great risk of being tracked and discovered by the Sioux, and I should never forgive myself if any harm were to happen to you.”

“Let me go then,” I said; “I would rather run the risk than expose Robin to it. As I am older and stronger, and know the country better than he does, there will be less danger of my being caught.”

“I cannot agree that you know the country better than I do,” said Robin. “During the different excursions we have made I noted every leading object we passed, in the mode I learned to do while I was with the Indians; and though I do not wish to disparage your knowledge, I suspect that I could with more certainty find my way on a dark night than you could.”

I could not help acknowledging that Robin was right, for I had often remarked how perfectly he knew every spot he had but once passed, and that often he could find his way when the rest of us were in doubts about the matter.

Alick was so convinced of the importance of warning Sandy that an enemy was near at hand, that he at last

consented to allow Robin to set out on his proposed hazardous expedition. No one in the fort was so likely to succeed as he was. Martin did not know the country as well, and Pat would probably have made some mistake, and been caught by the enemy. The rest of the men were more accustomed to the river, or to conduct the sleighs or beasts of burden between the different posts. Robin having taken a good supper, and examined his gun and ammunition, declared himself ready to start. The night was dark, and unless any of the Sioux should have crept up to the fort for the purpose of watching us, he was not likely to be discovered on leaving it. Alick, Martin, and I accompanied him to the gate, and each of us warmly wrung his hand.

"May Heaven protect you," said Alick. "Be cautious, my boy, and don't run any unnecessary risk."

We concealed our lanterns, lest the enemy might perceive the light as the gate was opened, and suspect that some one was leaving the fort. We stood for some moments watching our young friend till he disappeared in the darkness, when the gate was again carefully closed.

I believed that Alick half repented allowing him to go now he had set out, for he had endeared himself to us all, and we felt how deeply we should grieve should any harm happen to him.

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## Chapter Six.

**Extreme vigilance in the fort—Fire!—The charge of the Blackfeet—Their terrific war-whoop—The Blackfeet retire—The second attack—"Down with the spalpeens"—A friendly war-whoop heard just as affairs have become desperate—The Blackfeet retreat—Our Indian allies enjoy a scalp-dance—Having eaten all our provisions, they invite us to accompany them on a hunting expedition—Robin's badger—The buffalo hunt—The herd of moose—Watchfulness of the moose—The "Sunjegin"—The Cree Chief's warning—We start for the fort.**

There was to be no sleep for us that night. Alick and I were continually going our rounds, to see that all the men were on the alert.

As soon as Robin had set out I went to the tower nearest to the gate, and watched anxiously for any sign which would show that he had been discovered by the Sioux. I stayed as long as I could venture to do, but all remained perfectly quiet in the direction I supposed he had taken. So far this was satisfactory; I knew how well acquainted he was with the ways of the Indians, and that he was not likely to be surprised. His ear would be quick to detect the sound of their approach; his keen eye would be able to pierce far through the gloom of night. Should any parties, therefore, be moving about, I trusted that he would manage to avoid them.

Midnight came at last, and so tranquil did all remain around that, had we not seen the Indian camp-fires blazing up in the distance, we should not have supposed that the enemy was near us.

Our guests were still asleep with their arms by their sides, ready for instant use. For one thing I was glad that Rose and Letty were safe at Fort Ross, though I had no doubt that they would have behaved as courageously as any girls under the circumstances could have done, and if they had not fired the muskets, would have helped to load them, and would have tended any who were wounded.

We showed no lights from the fort, which might have let the Indians know that we were on the watch. We spoke also in low voices, that, should any of them be skulking round the fort, they might not hear us.

It was about two hours past midnight; though I confess that I was beginning to get somewhat tired, neither Alick nor I had relaxed in our vigilance. Martin was also doing his part in watching from the tower at the south-west angle.

It was agreed that even should we see the Indians approaching we should give no sign that we were awake, so that our fire, when once we opened it, might have greater effect. If one side only was attacked, the whole garrison was to go over to defend it, leaving only a single man at the other angles to watch lest another party might assault it on that side.

I had just gone into the tower where Martin was keeping watch, when, turning round as he heard me enter, he whispered, "They are coming!" and he drew me to a loophole. I looked through, and could distinguish a mass of dark forms just issuing from the gloom, crouching low down, and trailing their arms so as to escape observation. Having satisfied myself that they were really our enemies coming on to attack the fort, I hurried down to tell Alick, and to summon the men for the defence of the side on which I supposed the assault would be made.

"Remember, lads," said Alick, "don't fire a shot till I tell you, and the moment you have fired get another musket ready for a second discharge."

The men sprang to their posts at the loopholes, some going to the upper part of the tower, and some to the lower story. We were all at our posts, when suddenly a most terrific war-whoop burst upon our ears. I never heard so awful a noise, though I had fancied I knew what it was like. So fearful is the sound of the Indian war-whoop that even the most savage beasts have often been frightened out of their wits. Buffaloes have, it is said, been known to fall down on their knees, unable either to run or make any resistance; and the bear has been so terror-stricken as to quit his hold, and fall from the tree in utter amazement and helplessness.

Again that fearful war-whoop arose, piercing our very brains; though neither Martin nor I had ever heard it before it did not intimidate us, nor did it the rest of the garrison.

We waited, as ordered, till we heard Alick shout "Fire!" when each man discharged his musket, and immediately, as



directed, grasped another.

The Indians, supposing that some time would elapse before we had reloaded; sprang forward; but ere they could reach the walls another volley laid many of them low, and we were prepared to pour in a third upon them before they had again moved forward.

The shrieks and cries of the wounded rang through the air, for they were so completely taken by surprise that for the time they forgot their usual stoicism, and gave way to the impulse of human nature to cry out with pain.

“Reload!” cried Alick, who had watched all their movements. “Fire the moment one of them advances.” Instead of approaching nearer, however, the whole band drew back, when several muskets were discharged from among them—the bullets being accompanied by a cloud of arrows; but striking the palisades or flying over our heads, they did no harm.

“Those are the very arms we sold to the Indian the other day, I suspect,” observed Martin. “Sandy at the time said he was sure Mr Pipe had some sinister object in view. He has managed to hand them over to these rascals.”

As soon as the Indians began to fire, Alick ordered us to fire in return, he himself setting the example. As we had managed to reload all the pieces we had already fired, and had several others still unused, our bullets produced a fearful effect among the Indians, who retreated farther and farther from the fort, till darkness hid them from view.

We sent another volley after them, when Alick ordered us to cease firing, hoping that the enemy would not again venture to approach.

Immediately silence reigned throughout the fort. Not a shout was raised, not a word above a whisper uttered, except when Alick in a stern voice exclaimed, “Fire!”

The Indians had discovered that they could have no hope of taking us by surprise; but, at the same time, we knew that they might again venture to attack the fort, and that we must keep as much on the alert as before. We felt confident that as long as they should assault the fort in the same manner as at first we could drive them back, but should they change their tactics the case might be different.

If the chiefs could restore the courage of their followers, they might completely surround the fort; and should they venture to climb over the palisades on all sides at once, we might have great difficulty in driving them back.

Suspecting that they might make an attempt to get in in the way I have last mentioned, Alick sent men to each of the other angles to be ready should the Indians appear.

The remainder of the night went by. It was one of the most anxious times I ever passed in my life. When morning dawned the Indians could be seen in the far distance in as great numbers as before, but none of their bands were visible near the fort. We had little fear of their renewing the attack during the daytime, and Alick gave orders to all the garrison, except a few men at a time required to keep watch, to lie down and get some sleep. He directed me to do the same, promising to summon me when he required to be relieved.

After I had rested about three hours he called me up, and I was very glad to get some breakfast before going on watch. I spent all the morning in one of the towers, keeping a constant lookout on the enemy, who seemed in no way inclined to move, while I frequently turned an anxious eye in other directions, hoping to see Robin with Sandy and his companions returning to the fort.

In vain, however, I looked. No human being could I distinguish, either on the more open prairie or among the trees in the distance. The day drew on; perhaps, if our friends had discovered the vicinity of the Indians, they might wait under cover till dark, but if they had not seen them they would make at once for the fort. Still they did not come, and darkness closed in upon us. We had another night before us of anxiety and watchfulness. The same arrangements were made as on the previous night, and Alick and I, assisted by Martin, were continually making the round of the fort. At any moment we might have the whole horde of savages upon us; yet, in the meantime, we could do nothing to defend ourselves, except to keep our muskets loaded and ready for action. Even though we could tell the direction in which the Indians had retreated, there was no use in firing into the empty air.

The silence we maintained would, however, we knew, have greater effect on our enemies than the loudest shouts we could have raised.

“I wish they would come on,” exclaimed Martin; “the fellows, after all, are but arrant cowards. They make noise enough when they fancy that they are going to have things all their own way. I suspect they are far enough off by this time.”

“We must not depend too much upon that,” I observed. “If they think that they can surprise us they will try again. Perhaps they fancy that we suppose we have driven them away, and will turn in and go to sleep, and they are waiting till our eyes are fast closed.”

“I wonder what o’clock it is,” said Martin.

“Not many minutes to dawn,” I answered. “We shall ere long see the light breaking in the eastern sky.”

Scarcely had I uttered the words when Martin, who had gone back to his loophole, whispered, “There they are again, but coming on very differently to the first time.”

I looked out, and could see a dark line extending round the whole front and side of the fort. I hurried down to Alick, warning the men in a low voice to be on the alert. We went over to the opposite side. From this also we saw the same

dark line slowly approaching nearer and nearer.

It was very evident that the Indians had surrounded the fort, and intended to attack us simultaneously on every side. Alick immediately distributed the men in equal parties round the stockade, and directed them as before to await his order to fire. The war-whoop the enemy had before uttered was terrific enough. Suddenly the air was rent by the loudest and most fearful shrieks rising from every side of us, and the next instant showers of arrows, and a few bullets, came whistling above our heads, and directly afterwards the Indians appeared emerging from the gloom.

Alick waited till they were near enough for every bullet to take effect. Most of our men were tolerable shots, but the Indians, instead of rushing straight forward, kept leaping from side to side, and thus many escaped. Though we had our second muskets in readiness, urged on by their former failure, they sprang forward at so rapid a rate that before we could fire a large number had reached the walls, against which they placed long pieces of light timber, with notches in them to serve as ladders. The most active of our people were engaged in throwing these down as fast as they were placed against the palisades, while the rest by Alick's orders kept firing rapidly away, taking up musket after musket.

Active as we were, several of the enemy climbed to the top of the palisades, but were hurled backwards, or, being shot as they appeared, fell down into the fort. In spite of the fate which had overtaken their comrades, others made most daring attempts to get in. Should two or three succeed, they, with their tomahawks, might keep a space clear for a sufficient time to enable others to follow them, and the fort might be taken. Now they made a desperate assault on one side, now on another, but were each time repulsed. We had the advantage of possessing a platform on which we could run rapidly from place to place as we were required, while the enemy had the ditch to pass and the high palisade to climb before they could reach the top. This enabled us to defend ourselves in a way we could not otherwise have done; still the Indians vastly outnumbered us, and seemed determined not to abandon their enterprise. Several of our men had been wounded, but not severely, while numbers of the enemy had fallen.

Pat Casey was among the most active of the garrison—now firing his musket, now pronging at an Indian who had climbed to the top of the palisade, now using a broadsword which he had secured to his side, all the time shouting out, "Erin go bragh! Down with the spalpeens. Arrah! now you're coming in, are you? Just take that thin, and find out that you've made a mistake."

The last sentence he uttered as he ran an Indian through the shoulder and hurled him back into the ditch.



Each man of our party knew that he was fighting for his life. No mercy could be expected should the fort be taken; still, in spite of the courage and activity displayed by our people, there seemed too much probability that the enemy would succeed. It was not thought likely that they would attack the towers, but Alick considered it necessary to keep a man in each, who was ordered to fire away, while he watched to give notice should the enemy attempt to attack that part of the fort.

The darkness prevented us from observing the movements of the Indians, but I fancied as I was looking out that I saw a considerable number retreating, and I could hear no voices coming from that side; still the rest continued the attack, though perhaps with less energy than before.

Some time elapsed without any effort being made to climb up the palisades. Flights of arrows were continually shot at us, and our ears were assailed with the most fearful shouts and shrieks. Presently, as I was looking out on the west side, I saw a dense mass appear out of the gloom, and to my dismay I discovered that it was composed of men carrying large fagots.

I told Alick what I had seen, and he immediately summoned six of our best men to that side of the fort, for its

defence.

It was clearly the intention of our enemies to throw the fagots down against the walls, so as to fill up the ditch and form a path up which they could climb, or to set them on fire and burn down the stockades. Alick, supported by Pat with half a dozen men, stood ready to receive them; while others in the towers, which enfiladed the walls, kept up a hot fire which struck down several of the Indians as they rushed up to place their fagots.

It being necessary, of course, to defend the walls on the other side, Martin and I were hurrying here and there as we saw the enemy approaching.

"Here they come," I heard Alick shout out.

At the same moment a terrific war-whoop sounded in our ears.

"Fire steadily at them, my lads," cried Alick; "and if they get within reach of our bayonets, let them feel the points."

"Shure! that's what we'll be afther doing," cried Pat.—"Won't we, boys? Erin go bragh!" and a well-directed volley drove back the first body of Indians who were attempting to mount. They had been sent apparently as a forlorn hope, for the next instant another party still more numerous appeared, while, as I hurried over to the other side, I saw a third band, advancing evidently with the intention of making a separate attack.

At the same instant the entire body of our enemies, uniting their voices, uttered another of those dreadful war-whoops. Though we had hitherto kept up our courage, but few among us believed that we should be able to offer an effectual resistance. The next instant, however, ere the shrieks of our enemies had died away, they were answered by other cries which came from the forest. Could a fresh body of Indians be about to attack us? Should such be the case our doom was sealed.

Such were the thoughts that passed through my mind.

Again that war-whoop sounded through the night air. "Hurrah!" cried Pat, "those are friendly Indians. I know it by the sound."

Pat's assertion was corroborated by several of the other men. Our well-nigh exhausted strength and courage were restored.

The Indians had heard these cries, and the formidable party which had been mounting the fagots hurried back, while the last who had been seen approaching retreated. We plied them more rapidly than ever with our musketry. We could hear their chiefs issuing their orders, and in another minute the whole line scampered off and disappeared in the darkness.

Not many minutes afterwards we heard Sandy's voice shouting out, "We have brought some Indian friends to your assistance."

We now, without hesitation, threw open the gate, and the next instant Robin sprang forward and shook our hands, while Sandy with his six men appeared directly afterwards.

"No time to stop," exclaimed Sandy. "The youngster found us, and we fell in with some friends in time of need, who agreed to come along with us. There they are; but they're afraid to come near, lest you should mistake them for the foe, and pepper them. They and we must be after the rascals who have been attacking you. Can't stop to ask questions; only hope you are all safe. Keep Robin fast, or he'll be running after us, and there is no need to let the lad run his nose into unnecessary danger. I hope you are all right, though?"

"Yes, thank you; none of us hurt badly," answered Alick.

"That's well," exclaimed Sandy; and without more ado he and his men hurried after the Indians, who were already cautiously moving on in the direction our late assailants had taken.

"Don't pursue them too far, or you may fall in with fresh bands, and may have a hard matter to fight your way back," shouted Alick.

"Ay, ay!" answered Sandy; "trust me and the Indians for that," and he and his men were soon lost to sight in the gloom.

Several of our men eagerly begged for leave to go out and join Sandy's party. Alick would, however, only allow six of them, including three of the hunters to whom we had given refuge, to go. All being well armed, we had no doubt that they would drive back the Sioux, and probably kill or capture a number of them.

Robin, as Sandy had supposed he would, wanted to go also; but Martin and I held him fast till the gate was closed.

"Now go and lie down, my boy," said Alick. "You have been on your legs a good many hours, and have done us service enough for one day, or for many days for that matter."

Robin somewhat unwillingly obeyed, having first taken some food, of which he stood in need; and as he dropped off to sleep immediately, it was evident that he was pretty well worn out.

We had now to wait for the return of our friends. In the meantime we did our best to dress the hurts of the men who had been wounded. In many cases they could help each other, in their own rough fashion, for they were generally in so healthy a state that injuries which might have proved fatal to people living what is called a civilised life, compelled

them scarcely to lay up for more than a day or two.

Three of our guests had been wounded, but they made light of the matter, and declared that they should at once be able to proceed on their journey.

Martin and I amused ourselves by collecting all the arrows which had been shot into the fort, and a fine number we had of them. We agreed to ornament the walls of one of the rooms with the arrows, and to send others to our friends. We could not find the bullets which had been fired, and concluded that they had all been shot over the fort, and often into the ground on the opposite side, perhaps killing our foes instead of us.

Considering the vast number of the enemy, and the desperate courage they had displayed in attacking the fort, we had great reason to be thankful that we had been preserved. I believe, indeed, that we ought to be thankful every day of our existence, for we know not how many unseen dangers we escape in our walk through life. I know that I did not think so seriously of such matters as I do now; but I am sure that the earlier we begin to think of God's protecting providence, the more anxious we shall be to serve Him, and to refrain from offending One so kind and merciful.

Another day broke, but still neither Sandy's party nor his Indian allies had reappeared, and Alick began to fear that they had followed the enemy further than was prudent. Should the Sioux have turned upon them with the same bravery they had displayed when attacking the fort, our friends would have run a fearful risk of being cut off, while we should probably be again attacked with less prospect than before of success.

Though pretty well tired with our long watching and our desperate exertions in defence of the fort, we were in good spirits. Alick however who was prudent, had the arms reloaded, and made as much preparation for defence as he considered necessary.

The Sioux, I should have said, when retreating, had carried off their dead and wounded, to save them from the ignominy of being scalped, which would to a certainty have been their fate had our Indian allies found them on the ground. We were thus saved the horror of witnessing the spectacle, as also the trouble of burying the dead. The Indians would probably also have killed all the wounded, in spite of the efforts we should have made to save them.

At length, about noon the watchman in the tower shouted out that he saw a party approaching from the south-west—the direction the Sioux had probably taken. We were for some time in doubt whether they were friends or foes. At length Martin, who was on the lookout with me, exclaimed: "Hurrah! I'm sure that's old Sandy marching ahead, with an Indian chief by his side; and there come the men. They have thrashed the Sioux—no doubt about that—and it will be a long time before the rascals venture to pay us another visit."

I was not quite certain that Martin was right, and feared that his imagination had deceived him. While we were discussing the matter, we were joined by Robin, whose eyes were sharper than either of ours. He had at once declared that Martin was not mistaken. We accordingly announced the fact to Alick and the few men who were awake. The sleepers were quickly roused by the shout of satisfaction which was uttered, and there being no longer any apprehension of danger, we hurried out to meet our friends, accompanied by Bouncer and a whole tribe of smaller dogs, which lived under his rule.

"We've given the Sioux a lesson they'll not forget in a hurry," exclaimed Sandy, as we met. "We came upon them while they were encamped, not dreaming that we were near, and before they could stand to their arms we had shot down a dozen or more, including all the fellows who had muskets, which the others in their fright, as they jumped up to fly, left behind them. We took possession of the muskets, and followed up the enemy for an hour or more. How many were killed it would have been hard to say, as we did not stop to count those we shot down; but our redskin friends have got thirty scalps, which would be about the tally, as they looked out for all who fell. I don't approve of the custom, for they are not very particular in seeing whether a man's alive or dead before they lift the hair from the crown of his head."

Alick would gladly have prevented the slaughter which had occurred. It struck us that probably the Sioux in their flight had thrown down the men who had been killed or wounded in the attack on the fort, and that these were included in the number Sandy spoke of.

Our Indian allies, after enjoying a scalp-dance outside the fort—not a very edifying spectacle, but an amusement in which they seemed to take an especial delight—were invited to partake of a feast which had been in the meantime preparing. All our cooks had been engaged on it, and though not of a very refined description, it suited the taste of our guests.

We had buffalo meat and venison, boiled, roasted, and stewed, with flour cakes, and potatoes the produce of our garden. A small amount of whisky was served out; but Alick was careful not to give the Indians enough to make them lose their wits. The chiefs, however, who asked for more, got sufficient to make them loquacious, and some wonderfully long speeches were uttered, expressing the affection they felt for us, their pale-face brothers.

When night came on they encamped outside, as it was a rule never to allow any large body of Indians, whoever they were, to sleep inside the fort. As they were aware of this, they were not offended. The weather being warm they had no great hardship to endure, though unable to put up wigwams for their protection. Before lying down they had another scalp-dance, which they kept up to a late hour.

We were in hopes that they would go the next day, but they showed no inclination to move as long as they could obtain an abundant supply of food. We, of course, were obliged to serve it out from our stores, and should have been considered very ungrateful had we given them a hint to take their departure. They thus consumed nearly the whole of the substantial provisions we had in the fort, including flour and potatoes; and not till Alick told them that we had but little more to offer did they express an intention of going away.

Before doing so they invited us to accompany them on a hunting expedition, which they proposed making in a few days, after they had returned to their own lodges and obtained horses for the purpose. Martin and I were eager to go, as was Robin; and we persuaded Alick to accompany us, as he required a change after the arduous work he had gone through. At first he was very doubtful about the matter; but he consented at length to leave Sandy in charge, which he often had done when compelled to be absent from the fort.

We started from home with our guns, intending to shoot on the way, directing our horses to be brought after us. We were accompanied by Bouncer, who was always our attendant on such occasions; and very useful he often made himself, being expert in attacking all animals, but especially cautious when he met with those with whose prowess he was well acquainted. We had bagged two or three small animals and a few birds, when, forgetting our usual custom of keeping together, we each took a different path, which led us to some distance apart. Martin was nearest to me; I could still see him between the trees, when I heard a shot. I looked towards him; but as I saw no smoke, I concluded that he had not fired. Directly afterwards he shouted, "Come on, David! I heard Robin cry out; something must have happened."

I ran as fast as I could, shouting to Alick, who I hoped might hear me. The ground being tolerably open in the direction I had taken, I quickly overtook Martin.

"It was there I heard his voice," he exclaimed. "Yes; he's still crying out. I can't understand it, but I hope nothing terrible has happened to him."

Guided by Robin's voice, we at last got near him. At the same moment Alick appeared in another direction between the trees.

Instead of being alarmed, we burst into a fit of laughter, for there was Robin holding on to the bushy tail of an animal which with might and main was making towards a hole near at hand. "Help me! help me!" cried Robin, "or the beast will get away."

Robin pulled in one direction, and the beast, which I saw was an unusually large badger, was endeavouring to scramble off in another, dragging Robin after it. Before Bouncer, who had followed Alick, could spring forward to Robin's assistance the badger had reached its hole, down which it was struggling with might and main to descend; but Robin, who had now no fears of being bitten, held on stoutly, while Bouncer flew at the hinder quarters of the beast, of which he took a firm grip.

"Pull away, Robin, pull away," I shouted. "You can have the honour of killing him yourself, with the help of Bouncer."

Robin hauled away, and so did the dog; but for some time it seemed doubtful which party would gain the victory. At last Robin, by a desperate effort, hauled the unfortunate badger out of the hole; and as he did so he fell backwards, still holding on, and drawing the creature almost over him. On this Bouncer seized it by the neck, and Martin, taking up a thick stick which lay at hand, stunned it with a blow, when it was quickly dispatched. We took off the skin, as we had those of the other animals we had shot, and did them up to be sent back by the men who brought our horses.

I mention the circumstance as it afforded us much amusement; and though it will not appear a very important one, it showed Robin's determination not to be defeated in anything he undertook. After that we used frequently to observe, "Stick to it as Robin did to the badger's tail, and you'll get it out of the hole at last."

It is what I would advise others to do when they have difficulties to contend with, whether great or small.

The horses overtook us in the afternoon, when we rode on and camped by ourselves for the night, intending to join our Indian friends the next day. We had brought with us a small supply of provisions, in addition to the game which we had shot on our way, expecting that the Indians would be able to furnish us with buffalo meat, on which we had no objection to live for a few days.

Next morning, having breakfasted and caught our horses, we rode on; but it was not till nearly evening that we reached the Cree camp. We slept in a skin-covered wigwam which they appropriated to our use, and the following morning started for the southward in search of buffalo, which were supposed to be in considerable numbers in that direction. We rode on all day, stopping only to take a meal about noon, but not a buffalo did we see. We had exhausted all our provisions, and regretted that we had not brought more with us for our own private use.

Small fires only were formed, around which we lay down to sleep. It was nearly dawn when the Cree chief, touching my arm, awoke me.

"Listen!" he said, putting his head close down to the ground.

I did so, and could hear a low, dull sound, as if numberless feet were beating the soil.

"That is the tramp of buffaloes," he observed.

When, however, I sat up I could hear nothing. The chief told me to call my brother and other friends, and proposed, as soon as we had had something to eat, that we should set off in the direction from whence the sounds we had heard proceeded.

I roused up my companions, and when they put their ears down to the ground and listened, they also could hear the same tramping sound.

I was not yet perfectly convinced that the chief was right, but he asserted that there was no mistake about the matter.

When we told the chief that we had no food, he looked rather blank, and shortly returned with some dried venison, which we were fain to cook as best we could before the fire. We had a small supply of biscuit, and a stream at hand furnished us with water. Thus fortified, we mounted our horses and rode to the top of a hill near at hand, from which we could command an extensive view of the prairie.

Not a sign, however, of a buffalo could be seen; still the chief was confident that he was not mistaken, and we pushed our horses in the direction of the sounds we had heard for at least ten miles. When we had gone about another ten miles we could just distinguish a black line crossing the prairie.

"I told you so," said the chief; "there they are, and we shall in less than another hour be up to them."

All we could as yet see was the mere margin of the herd, looking, as I have said, like a black line thrown along the edge of the sky, or a low shore just visible across a lake.

We calculated that the place where we first heard the sounds of the animals' feet could not have been less than twenty miles off. As we drew near we observed that the herd was in the wildest state of commotion. The bulls every now and then rushing at each other and fighting desperately, the sounds produced by the knocking together of their hoofs as they raised their feet from the ground, their incessant tramping and loud and furious roars as they engaged in their terrific conflicts, created an uproar which it seemed surprising our horses took so quietly; but we had chosen animals well accustomed to hunting the buffalo, and they were as eager as we were for the chase. Under other circumstances it would have required great caution to approach the herd; but engaged as they now were they were not easily alarmed, and the Cree chief giving the word we rode directly at them.

"Let the bulls alone," cried the chief, as we galloped forward. "Single out the cows; they alone are worth eating. Don't stop to ram down your charges after you have fired, but pour in the powder, and drop down the bullet upon it. 'Twill serve your purpose, for you must not draw trigger till you're close to the animal, or you will fail to bring it to the ground."

We, of course, promised to follow his instructions, and dashed forward. As we got nearer we saw that the herd was so densely packed that we should have the greatest difficulty in making our way into their midst without having our horses injured by their horns; not that the buffaloes would have run at them, but in consequence of the rapid way in which they moved them about, in their frantic rage, in all directions. We therefore galloped along in front of the herd with the intention of getting on their flanks, or finding some opening through which we might reach the cows.

At last the chief proposed that we should dismount, and, leaving the horses under the care of some of the men, try to make our way in on foot. I thought this a very hazardous experiment, and made some remark to that effect.

"Not so hazardous as you may suppose," answered the chief. "The animals will not see you, and you have only to leap out of their way should any come rushing in the direction where you are standing."

"I have often shot buffalo in that way," exclaimed Robin. "Keep with me, David, and we'll see what we can do."

I preferred trusting him to the chief, whom Alick and Martin followed.

Robin and I were soon in the midst of the surging sea of horns. His boldness gave me courage; but it was necessary to keep our eyes round us on all sides, and to be ready to leap here and there, to get out of the way of the animals, which were constantly on the move. The part we had entered was of course far more open than that where we first made the attempt.

Robin's coolness was wonderful. He was the first to shoot a cow.

"Let it alone," he said; "I see some more out there."

As we made our way onwards and were trying to get at the cows, a whole mass of the bulls came surging around us, and presently several, putting their heads to the ground, dashed forward, directly towards the place where we were standing.

"Here! here!" cried Robin; "we shall be safe," and he pointed to a deep hollow which in the rainy season had held water, but was now perfectly dry.

We both leaped in; when the bulls came rushing by us but again stopped, and others joining them, the whole began to fight with the greatest desperation. The only chance we had of getting out of our disagreeable position was to kill the bulls and make our way through them. We fired and loaded as fast as we could, and seven lay stretched on the ground.

"Now," cried Robin, "is our time to escape."

We sprang up and dashed through the herd; but greatly to our disappointment, when we looked out for the cows, we found that our firing had alarmed them, and that they had all run off. Not quite liking this sort of work, we regained our horses and galloped on to where we saw a party of our Indian friends, who had just killed a cow.

Most of the herd had moved away from the spot; but one enormous bull on seeing what had happened, bellowing furiously, came dashing towards us, ploughing up the ground with his horns. The Indians, unwilling to stand his charge, turned and fled; when the animal seeing me rushed forward, determined, it seemed, to wreak his vengeance on my steed.



My well-trained animal, however, bounded out of the way, when I, having my gun loaded, fired at the bull, which was not three yards from me. The ball penetrating his chest, he fell dead. The Indians now returned, and began cutting up the cow. While they were so engaged, another cow, which they supposed to be the mother of the one they had killed, galloped towards us, bellowing loudly. They, not having their arms in their hands, took to flight, declaring that the cow was resolved on revenging herself for the slaughter of her daughter.

I was much inclined to follow them; but Robin asking me to hold the horse, slipped from the saddle, and throwing himself by the body of the dead cow, rested his rifle so that he could take steady aim, and as the raging cow came near he fired. She turned, gave one or two jumps, and fell dead.

We had now an ample supply of meat. Several other cows had been killed, and the Indians employed themselves in cutting them up into pieces fit for transporting to their lodges. We had crossed no rivers on our way, and when we came to encamp at night it was found that no water had been brought, nor were we likely to get any till we reached the encampment.

We all suffered much from thirst. I do not recollect, indeed, having ever endured so much torture as I did during the next day's ride back. The Indians, perhaps, bore the want of water better than we did. It seemed as if we should drink the stream dry which bubbled up out of the hillside near the camp. It took us a whole day to recover.

We had intended returning to the fort; but as we required a large supply of buffalo meat, Alick engaged the chief to hunt for us, and consented to accompany him on another excursion.

Martin, Robin, and I were of course perfectly ready, and set out again with as much glee as at first. The buffaloes had, however, by this time retired a long way to the south, and it took us three days to come up with them. I need not describe another hunt. On this occasion the herd was more scattered. We galloped in among them, firing right and left. Each man, when he shot an animal, dropped some article upon the carcass to show by whose prowess it had been killed.

Full thirty fat animals were killed, and as the meat in its present condition could not be carried so far, we formed a camp, and the Indians cut the flesh up in long strips, which were dried in the sun; a considerable portion also being beaten up into almost a paste, was mixed with the fat to form pemmican. This was then pressed into bags of skin, and done up into packages ready for transport.

The process is a simple one, but much labour must be expended on it.

All this time we had scouts out, not to look after the buffalo, but to watch lest any enemies might be in the neighbourhood. Several horses having been sent for, the pemmican and fresh meat were packed on them, and we set off on our return to the Cree camp.

On our arrival there the chief informed us that he had notice of a large herd of moose being in the neighbourhood; and Alick was very anxious to obtain some, as the flesh is excellent. From their wary nature the moose are, however, very difficult to kill. We accordingly, having dispatched the laden animals with some of our own men, accompanied the chief with another party in the direction where we expected to fall in with the moose.

The moose is also called the elk. It is the largest of all the deer tribe, sometimes attaining the height of seven feet at the shoulders, being thus as tall as many ordinary elephants; the horns are enormous, their extremities widely palmated, and so heavy are they that it seems a wonder how the animal can carry them. It has a large muzzle, extremely elongated, which gives it a curious expression of countenance which is far from attractive. When it moves it goes at a long, swinging trot, which enables it to get over the ground at great speed, and it is surprising how the

creature with its enormous horns can manage to pass through the woods in the way it does. It then throws back its horns on its shoulders, and calculates the measurement exactly, as it rarely if ever is caught by them in the branches. It can swim capitably, and often takes to the water in the summer months for its own amusement. Over hard ground it is difficult to keep up with it. When the snow is deep the heavy feet of the moose sink into it at every step, so that it is easily captured during the winter. Its colour is a dark brown, with a yellowish hue thrown over parts of it.

As it is as wary as most of the deer tribe, it is difficult to stalk. At the same time, if the hunter knows what he is about, and keeps well to leeward and under cover, he can frequently get near enough for a shot; but his powder must be strong and his gun true, or his bullet will not penetrate the animal's thick skin.

We killed three elk in as many different ways: one by stalking up to it, another by lying hid behind some bushes till it came near enough to receive the fatal shot, and a third by following it up on horseback. The last chase was the most exciting, and had we not got on to some swampy ground, I believe that after all the elk would have escaped us; but heading it we got a fair shot at its chest, which brought it to the ground.

The next day Robin and I again accompanied the Indian chief on foot, in chase of moose. We caught sight of a large animal feeding in the open, but could not for a long time get near it. At last it moved off, and we followed till it approached a small pond with a reedy island towards one end of it. The moose plunged into the pond and swam towards the reeds, among which it disappeared. There was apparently no firm footing for it, and it must have remained almost if not entirely under water.

The chief declared that it was hiding itself beneath the surface, and that if we would wait patiently we should see it again come up, when we should to a certainty kill it. We, accordingly, moving cautiously round the pond, hid ourselves among the reeds in a spot from whence we could see the place where the moose disappeared. We must have remained upwards of an hour, when at length the moose rose to the surface, and, swimming a short distance, began to wade towards where we were concealed. We were afraid of moving, even to get our guns pointed at it, lest we should startle it—as these animals are very sharp of hearing—and it should swim off in the opposite direction.

Nearer and nearer it came, till it was well within shot, when the chief made a sign with his head, and Robin and I fired. The moose made one desperate plunge, then fell over dead. The chief had reserved his fire, lest we should have missed. He now, giving us his gun, rushed into the water, and dragged the dead moose to shore. He was highly pleased at our success; for the Indians consider the moose more difficult to take than any other animal. It is more vigilant than either the buffalo or the caribou, more prudent and crafty than the antelope. In the most violent storm, when the wind and the thunder and the falling timber are making the loudest and the most incessant roar, if the hunter even with his foot or his hand breaks the smallest dry twig in the forest, the moose will hear it; and though it does not always run, it ceases eating, and bends its attention to all sounds. If in the course of an hour the hunter neither moves nor makes the least noise, the moose may possibly again begin to feed, but does not forget what he has heard, and for many hours afterwards is more vigilant even than before. Our friend told us that the moose is never found among the caribou, nor the latter among the former. The moose frequents the prairie where the buffalo feeds, while the caribou generally inhabits low and swampy regions.

The chief begged us to remain by the animal we had killed, while he returned to the lodges, that he might send the horses to bring home the meat, with two others for us to ride.

With the supplies our own hunters were likely to obtain, we calculated that we should have enough food for ourselves.

We had now been much longer from the fort than we intended, so we at last bade our friends good-bye, and rode forward northward alone. We should have, we calculated, a couple of nights to pass in the open air; but we were all well accustomed to this sort of life, and thought it no hardship. Our Cree friends purposed moving southward, and told us that we should not be likely to see them again for some time.

As it was impossible for us to carry our share of the moose flesh with us, we had arranged with the chief that he should build what is called a "sunjegwun," a high scaffold, on the top of which it was to be deposited and then securely covered over, so that no birds of prey could reach it, while, from its height, even bears would not be able to climb up to the top. This is an ordinary method employed by the Indians for preserving their provisions, when they have obtained more than they can transport at a time. Of course, it may possibly be stolen by their enemies, but they select such spots as are not likely to be discovered.

Another risk they run is from those arrant thieves the wolverines, which, if they discover what is on the top of the scaffold, though they cannot climb up it, will set to work with their sharp teeth, and try to gnaw away the posts.

As, however, they are likely to find the operation a long one, the owners may return before they have accomplished it, and shoot them for their pains. Our friends agreed not to place the meat "en cache" till they were on the point of starting, and we hoped to be able before that time to send our people to bring it into the fort. We should have taken some with us, but it required more smoking, and we could not wait till it was thoroughly cured.

Alick had consulted the Cree chief as to what had become of the Sioux who had attacked us.

"I am glad you have asked me," he answered: "though they may possibly have returned to their own country, they are very likely to come back, and endeavour to take the fort by surprise. They are cunning as they are daring, and if they can obtain the opportunity, they are very sure to take advantage of it. Perhaps they will wait till they can get reinforced, so that they may make sure another time of gaining the victory."

"They may think that they are sure," answered Alick; "but they may find that they have made as great a mistake as before."



"Well, my friend," answered the chief, "be ever on the watch, and don't trust them."

Such were nearly the last words the chief had spoken to us.

The heat was now considerable, and hardy as we were, we were glad to rest in the shade during the hotter hours of the day, notwithstanding we had a large fire burning during the night, to scare away the wolves and bears; while one of us invariably kept watch, both for our own sakes and that of our animals, which even many of the Crees would not scruple to steal if they could do so without fear of discovery.

We had got within a few miles of the fort, when Alick, alongside whom I was riding, said to me, "I wish that I had not come on this expedition. I ought not to have left the fort so long, with only Sandy as commandant. He is cautious and cunning enough in the field, but I am afraid that inside the walls he may become less careful, and allow himself to be taken by surprise."

I laughed at Alick's anxieties, for I had never seen him in such a humour before.

"I hope you are not exercising the gift of second-sight," I said; "I didn't know you possessed it."

"I trust that I do not," he answered. "Let us push forward, and we shall soon reach the fort, and know what has happened."

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## Chapter Seven.

**Return to the fort—Find it destroyed—Poor Sandy and honest Pat missing—A watchful night—The fish-hawks—Robin's suspicions—No horses—"Up, boys, up!"—We begin our tramp—Turkey eggs very nice for hungry men—The Sunjgwun is reached—Bitter disappointment—The bear and its cub—I kill them—Robin's soup-pot—Crees of the plain—Our new companions—Picheto—The young Cree kills a buffalo—The "pound"—The hunting party—The Chief is willing to trade—Offers us horses for our guns—The feast.**

As we approached the fort towards the end of the day we looked out for the flag, which we expected to see floating over it, but it was not visible.

"Can Sandy have forgotten to hoist it?" observed Alick. "It is yet too early for him to have hauled it down. Expecting us, he would certainly have kept it flying till dark."

"Perhaps your prognostications of evil may have come true," I said, laughing, not at all thinking that such was the case.

"I trust not," answered Alick, in a grave tone. "I shall never forgive myself if any misfortune has happened during my absence from the fort. I ought to have remained at my post; though Sandy is so cautious and vigilant that I considered he would take as good care of it as I could."

Martin and Robin now trotted up to us.

"What has become of the flag?" exclaimed Martin. "Robin says that he has seen suspicious signs of Indians having been in the neighbourhood, and see! I've picked up this arrow-head. It looks as if it had been only lately dropped."

Robin confirmed what Martin had said, and expressed his fears that the fort had been again attacked.

"We shall soon know the worst, at all events," said Alick; and putting our horses into a gallop, we dashed forward.

We all uttered exclamations of dismay when, coming near where the fort had stood, we beheld only a blackened ruin. The towers had been burned to the ground, the palisades pulled down and destroyed, as was every wooden building inside the enclosure.

"This has not happened by accident," observed Alick. "My worst apprehensions are fulfilled. The Indians must have attacked the fort, and having succeeded in capturing it, put the whole garrison to death."

"Perhaps some may have escaped, and are hidden in the neighbourhood," said Martin; and before Alick could stop him, he shouted out at the top of his voice, "Hillo! any one hereabouts? Answer, friends."

"Stay!" cried Alick; "our voices may be heard by foes as well as friends. Keep a look round; in case the former should appear, we may have to fly for our lives."

We followed his injunctions.

"Alas! alas! poor Sandy and honest Pat and the rest. What has been their fate?" I said to myself. We kept tight rein on our horses, ready to turn round and gallop off in the direction Alick might select; but not a human being appeared. We first made a circuit of the fort, and examined the only shelter near at hand in which an enemy might be concealed; but no one was discovered. We then rode into it, expecting to find some signs which might inform us what had become of the garrison.

That the fort had been attacked by Indians was now clear, for several of our men lay dead among the ruins, their bodies fearfully charred, while they had all been scalped. We searched everywhere for Sandy and Pat, but could not discover the corpses of either of them. They might have escaped, or too probably, perhaps, fallen into the hands of the enemy, and been carried off to meet with a worse fate. It made us feel very sad indeed.

Further examination showed us that the fort had been plundered of the stores, provisions, and ammunition; not a particle of food had been left behind. We had too much reason also to fear that the buffalo meat obtained in our late hunting expedition had been captured by the enemy, either before or after it had been brought into the fort.

Darkness found us still occupied in the melancholy task of searching among the ruins.

"What are we to do now?" I asked.

"We must make the best of our way to Fort Ross, with the tidings of what has happened," answered Alick.

"But our horses are knocked up, and we can go no distance to-night," I said.

"That is indeed too true! We shall have to camp out in the most sheltered spot near at hand, and allow our horses time to feed, though we shall have to go without our suppers," said Alick.

With heavy hearts we rode out of the fort towards the nearest spot which would afford a shelter during the night. We might have remained in the fort itself; but the dead bodies of the garrison emitted an odour which would have rendered that disagreeable in the extreme.

Having turned our horses loose, we managed to collect some sticks for a fire, which soon burned up. We then lay down supperless, with our saddles as pillows, and endeavoured to recruit our strength by sleep. One of us in succession tried to remain awake to keep watch, but I am afraid that both Martin and I dozed considerably when we ought to have had our eyes open.

We were unmolested during the night, but when daylight returned and we looked about for our horses, they were nowhere to be seen. They had, perhaps, found their way to their favourite pastures, where they were likely to meet with their former companions.

"We shall have a long tramp in search of them, but I make no doubt shall find them at last," said Alick.

Though my brother tried thus to reassure us, the disappearance of our horses was a serious matter. It was not pleasant to have to carry our saddles in addition to the knapsacks we each of us had at our backs.

"The first thing we have to do is to try and get something for breakfast," observed Martin. "If we had but some fishing-lines or nets, we might easily get some fish which could quickly be cooked."

"As we have neither one nor the other, we must be content with whatever we can obtain," I observed.

Robin proposed that we should at once go down to the river, on the banks of which we might possibly obtain some wild-fowl; and as we were too hungry to discuss the pros and cons for any length of time, we immediately set out. Not far off a stream ran into the river, and we hoped that near its mouth we might meet with some wild ducks. We had not gone far when Martin exclaimed, "I see some birds; we shall have one of them before long."

Great was our disappointment on going a little farther to discover that the birds whose wings had attracted Martin's attention were fish-hawks, whose flesh is anything but savoury; still, hungry as we were, we would gladly have shot one of them and breakfasted off it till better food could be procured. There were several of these birds congregated on a tree overhanging the stream. Presently one of them which had been perched on a branch pounced downwards into the water, and quickly returned with a large fish, with which it rose above the surface. It seemed wonderful that the bird could lift so heavy a weight.

The fish struggled in the claws of its captor.

"We must manage to have that fish," exclaimed Alick. And we ran on, intending to shoot the bird and rob it of its prey; but as it reached the branches, in its desperate efforts to lift so heavy a weight its wings struck them, and letting go its hold, the fish fell to the ground.

"Shout! shout!" cried Alick, and shouting together we frightened the bird at the moment it was about to pounce down to recover its prey.

We could see the fish leaping about, and just as it had almost succeeded in regaining the water, Robin caught it, and carried it again up the bank.

"Here we've an ample breakfast," he exclaimed, as he held it up. "Providence has indeed been kind to us!"

"I propose that we light a fire where we are and cook it at once," said Martin.

"I suggest that we move farther from the tree, as the scent is anything but pleasant. These hawks have made nests here, and see! the ground is covered with the remains of their feasts," I observed.

My advice was followed, and we quickly had a fire kindled, and the fish we had so unexpectedly obtained roasting before it. It was none the worse for having been in the claws of the hawk.

We saw the birds return, and hoped that they would again act as fishermen for us; but after this they only caught small fish, which they swallowed or tore to pieces as soon as they brought them out of the water, and as it was important for us to husband our supply of ammunition, which was not too plentiful, we did not wish to throw a shot away. The ample breakfast which the fish afforded us greatly restored our strength and spirits, and enabled us to consider calmly what course it would be best to pursue.

"The first thing we have to do is to find our horses," said Alick. "We will then return to obtain the meat which our Cree friends were to leave 'en cache' for us. Having obtained as much provision as we can carry, we will then push on to Fort Ross, for it is obvious that we can do no good by remaining in this neighbourhood. When there, I hope that Mr Meredith will send notice to headquarters, and that a body of men may be collected to rebuild the fort before the fall, or, if not, early in the spring. It will not do to let the Indians suppose that they can drive us out of the country."

Notwithstanding the weight we had to carry, consisting of our guns and ammunition, and a change of clothing with the few other articles in our knapsacks, and our saddles and bridles, we walked quickly on. About midday we reached the valley where we expected to find the horses, but not an animal was to be seen.

Robin, on examining the ground, declared that Indians had been there lately, and we discovered before long indubitable signs that such was the case. It was too clear, therefore, that after the attack on the fort they had lifted all our cattle.

What, however, could have become of our own horses was the question. They possibly might have followed the tracks of their companions. Alick thought not.

"I am afraid," he said, "that our enemies may still be hovering about, and that they, either last night or early this morning, having fallen in with our steeds, have carried them off."

As he was not very confident of this, we continued searching about in every direction, following the tracks which we supposed they might have made. We had also to be cautious, lest our enemies should really be near at hand; in which case they might suddenly attack us. Worn out with fatigue, we were at last obliged to sit down near a wood, in a very disconsolate condition.

Had there been any wild fruits ripe, we might have satisfied our hunger, but there was nothing eatable we could obtain.

"Are we to continue our search for the horses, or must we give it up?" I asked.

"It's useless, I fear, to hunt for them further," said Alick. "I feel very sure that the Sioux have carried them off; and we too shall probably fall into their hands, unless we beat a rapid retreat from this part of the country."

Having duly discussed the matter, it was at last agreed that we should at once make our way to the "cache"—that is to say, the high platform I have described—and supply ourselves with food. We might there, if the Indians had not left the neighbourhood, obtain horses and get some of them to escort us.

"But if the Indians have left the neighbourhood, what are we to do?" asked Martin.

"We must tramp it on foot," said Alick. "A couple of hundred miles is nothing; we can accomplish it in ten days, even though we may be pretty heavily-laden. I wish that we could get there sooner, and make more sure of having the fort rebuilt before the winter. I am thinking not only of ourselves, but of the poor Indians who are accustomed to obtain assistance from us when hard pressed for food, as also of the many white trappers who may come to the fort expecting to find shelter."

"But how shall we ever reach the 'cache' without provisions?" I asked.

"We are sure to shoot something or other on the way, and we must not be particular what it is or how we obtain it," answered Alick.

We had nothing to do but to get up and go on, with our saddles on our backs. Had we not hoped to obtain horses from our Cree friends, we should have left them behind us, fastened to the bough of a tree out of the way of bears. Still we sat on for some minutes, lost in our own reflections.

"Up, boys, up! we'll begin our tramp," said Alick, setting the example and springing to his feet. We followed him, and he having laid the course, we pushed forward rapidly.

We were fain to endure the pangs of hunger all that day, for nothing did we see to kill. We talked of the fate of our late companions. Martin thought it possible that some might have escaped. He could scarcely believe that Sandy had allowed himself to be taken, and he suggested that, when everything was lost, he might have slipped down to the side of the river and perhaps got off in a canoe. When he said this I regretted that we had not examined the river more narrowly.

The canoes belonging to the fort were kept in a cave with a shed built in front of it which was not visible from the ground above, and any people escaping from the fort might have got down during the night, and, having launched a canoe, might have shoved off before being discovered by their enemies. Alick differed from us. He was sure that the Indians, when once they had obtained an entrance into the fort, would have kept too vigilant a watch to allow any one to get out without being perceived.

It was now too late to go back to decide this point, but he agreed, should our Cree friends have already gone to the southward, to return, and instead of proceeding overland to Fort Ross, to try to make our way down the river in a canoe. This seemed altogether the most feasible plan. When once embarked, we should run less risk of meeting with hostile Indians; though, on the other hand, we should be unable to kill any buffalo or other wild animals except deer, which we might possibly meet when they came down to drink at the margin of the stream. I felt much happier when this plan was arranged. I knew what it was to trudge day after day over the prairie, and though we might be able to find our way in fine weather, should the sky become cloudy or rain come on we might have a difficulty in doing so.

We marched on till near dark, in vain looking out for game, and at last were compelled to encamp. We chose the spot

on account of a small stream from which we could obtain water. I suppose the cold draught assisted to keep away the pangs of hunger, though substantial food would have been more acceptable. We of course lighted a fire, and lay down to sleep by it.

In the morning we all found that we had been dreaming of buffalo humps and deers' tongues, and only wished that we had the reality before us. Having no breakfast to cook, we were able to start immediately it was daylight. We, of course, kept our guns in readiness to shoot anything we might see, but we could not catch a glimpse of any of the inhabitants of the forest or the prairie.

Martin was nearly sinking with fatigue, for he was less accustomed to the sort of life than we were; and even Robin, though much younger, from having been long habituated to it bore it better than he did.

We were going through a wood when a bird flew out from a thick bush. It was a wild turkey; but before either of us could fire the bird had escaped. Bouncer ran off in the direction the wild turkey had taken, and Alick and I followed him, but were unable to catch sight of it again. On our return we heard Robin and Martin shouting. When we were near them we saw them each holding up an egg.

"There are eight of them," cried out Robin—"two a-piece. We shan't starve to-day."

They were indeed welcome, and we all expected a delicious meal off them.

"Don't be too sure," observed Alick. "Till we have broken one of them, we don't know how long they may have been sat on."

This remark somewhat abated our delight. However, we quickly settled the point by breaking one of the eggs, when, to our infinite satisfaction, it was found to be perfectly sweet. Probably the turkey had only just begun to sit. We, of course, therefore knew that the rest would be equally good. Without stopping to light a fire, we each of us ate an egg. Though they were somewhat strong-tasted, we agreed that we had never had a more delicious meal. We carried the others, intending to dine off them, should we not obtain more substantial fare. We walked on with the same want of success as before; and about noon, feeling the gnawings of hunger, we lighted a fire, and cooked the remainder of our eggs. We found them far more satisfactory than those we had eaten raw. The next day Alick shot a squirrel. That, besides the eggs, was the only food we obtained during the journey. We found our want of botanical knowledge a great disadvantage; for had we been acquainted with the various products of the soil, we might not only have stayed our hunger, but obtained wholesome vegetable diet.

We were now approaching the "cache," where we expected to find an abundance of venison and buffalo flesh, on which we indulged ourselves in the thoughts of banqueting and soon restoring our somewhat reduced strength.

"There it is," exclaimed Martin, who had run on ahead. "We must get a fire lighted, and we shall soon have a fine ham roasting. I feel as if my teeth were in it already."

We reached the platform, and Alick and I climbed to the top. What was our dismay to find that not a particle of food remained on it. How thankful we should have been to find a single ham or a few buffalo steaks! but neither one nor the other gladdened our eyes. We had to descend with the sad intelligence. We looked blankly at each other.

"What is to be done?" asked Martin.

"We must try and kill a moose where we killed them before," said Robin.

"We shall lose three days if we do, and perhaps not get one after all," observed Alick. "We cannot afford the time. We ought to get back at the river, and try to make our way down it as soon as possible."

"But how are we to get along without food?" urged Martin.

"We must do our best to obtain it, and trust to Providence," said Alick. "Though I managed to kill but one squirrel, we may possibly meet with more animals on our return."

Notwithstanding what Alick said, I saw that he was very much disappointed, as we all were, at not finding the meat, as we had expected. We hunted about in every direction to ascertain whether the robbers had left any small portions behind them, but none could we discover.

We came to the conclusion that the thieves, whoever they were, had been watching us and the Crees, and directly we had all left the cache, had hurried up and rifled it.

Robin was of opinion that our friends had quitted their camp directly after we set off, and that, as they must be now at a considerable distance, it would be hopeless to try to overtake them.

"All we can do is to turn our faces once more to the north," said Alick. "Come, boys, there is no use mourning over our disappointment. Let us push ahead and keep our eyes about us. Perhaps we shall even now get something for supper."

We followed his advice, and without another murmur we commenced our march. We got over five or six miles before it grew dusk, when we camped near a pool of fresh water, numbers of which are found in that well-irrigated region.

While Martin and Robin were engaged in cutting wood for a fire, Alick and I went out in different directions, in the hope, before it became perfectly dark, of obtaining something to eat. I had gone some distance, and as it was rapidly getting dusk, believing that it would be useless to continue out longer, I was on my return, when I saw a small animal, the character of which I could not make out, rapidly running between the trees.

Before I could get a shot at it, it had disappeared. I went on in the direction in which I had last seen it, when it again appeared; but before I could fire, a large animal, which I knew at once must be a bear, seized it in its fore paws, and carried it, I felt sure, down a hole which was close at hand. I now knew that the small animal was a bear's cub, and that the large one must be its mother.

I searched about in every direction, when I at last discovered the mouth of the hole. The darkness prevented me from seeing the bear clearly, but I was sure that it was at the bottom of the hole. I accordingly fired right into it, when, on the smoke clearing away, looking down I made out the bear lying, as I supposed, dead.

I shouted to Alick to come to my assistance, but he was too far off to hear me. Hunger made me forget the danger I might be running. Having reloaded my gun—which Sandy had inculcated on me as the first duty of a sportsman shooting in the forest—I placed it on the ground, and stooping down, endeavoured to get hold of the bear to draw her out.

The moment I put my hand on one of her paws I heard her jaws snap. I drew back as quickly as I could. It was providential that I did so, for the bear at the same moment turned and sprang upon me, and as I retreated she kept snapping her teeth so near me that I could feel her warm breath on my face. How it was that she failed to seize me I cannot tell.

As I leaped out of the hole, I caught up my gun and took to flight, hoping to get behind a tree, from whence I could again take aim. Looking round, I saw the bear, followed by the cub, pursuing me. Should I fail to kill her, she might quickly tear me to pieces. I remembered the caution I had received—never to fire at a she-bear with a cub until the shot is sure to prove effectual. The bear was close upon me, when I slipped behind a tree. She stopped for a moment to ascertain what had become of me, thus giving me time to raise my piece, and the next instant firing, I shot her through the head. A blow from the butt end of my rifle stunned the cub, which I afterwards killed with my knife. Taking the small animal on my shoulder, I made the best of my way to the camp, cutting a notch every now and then with my knife in the trees, that we might return to the spot where I had left the big bear.

Alick arrived at the camp just before me. Loud shouts welcomed me as I was seen coming in with the young bear. The little creature was skinned in a very few seconds; and having cut it up, we placed it to roast on forked sticks before the fire. As may be supposed, we did not wait till it was overdone, but as soon as the smaller pieces were tolerably cooked we set to upon them. It was remarkably fat and tender, and with the aid of Bouncer, who had the head as his share with other portions, the whole of it was speedily devoured.

As we could not have found our way through the wood in the dark, we were compelled to let the carcass of the bear remain, hoping that the wolves would not find it out during the night. Next morning, accompanied by Bouncer, Alick, Martin, and I set off to cut up the bear and bring in as much of the meat as we could carry. Robin was left to make up the fire.

"I will see what I can do besides," he said. "I think I can manufacture a pot in which we can boil some of the bear's flesh. It will be more satisfactory than having so much roast meat."

We thought he was joking, as we did not see of what materials he could possibly form his proposed pot.

The notches I had made in the trees enabled us without difficulty to find our way to the bear. The wolves had not discovered it, though we put to flight a couple of eagles which had scented it from afar and were about to plunge down and feast on the carcass.

As we could not carry away the skin, we ripped it roughly away, and were not long in cutting off the best portions of the meat, including the paws, which would make, we knew, excellent soup, should Robin really have been able to manufacture a pot, as he had proposed. Martin and I carried the larger pieces between us on a long stick, while Alick followed with the rest on his shoulders.

We were longer absent than we had expected. When we got back we found that Robin had actually formed a pot of birch-bark, the outside of which he had covered over with thick clay. It stood half full of water, by the side of a hole in which a fire was burning. Round the edge of our former fire was ranged a quantity of clean smooth stones.

"I told you that I should have a pot ready. We shall soon have some soup if you will cut up the bear's paws," he said. "See, I have already put in those of the cub."

"How will you make it boil?" asked Martin, lifting up the pot, and finding that the water was cold.

"All you have to do," said Robin, who was sitting down close to the spot, "is to fill it with the hot stones. We will then rake the fire out of the hole, put the pot in and cover it up, and in a short time we shall have as good soup as you ever tasted."

Bouncer, who seemed to take great interest in what was going on, drew near to examine the pot, and would have poked his nose in had not Martin given him a tap on the tip of it and sent him off somewhat ashamed of himself.

While Robin's directions were being carried out, Alick and I prepared some of the bear's meat for roasting, and cut up the remainder into slices to dry in the sun, intending also to smoke them well before we commenced our journey. Though the flesh of the old bear was not so tender as that of her cub, we ate it with no little relish.

"Leave some room for the soup," exclaimed Robin; "that will be ready in a few minutes, and will do us more good than the roast meat. It's a pity we cannot carry some with us."

We accordingly stopped, and in a short time he produced the pot from the hole. In spite of the want of salt and

vegetables, the soup was pronounced excellent. We fortunately had a couple of tin cups with which to ladle it out.

We were on the point of starting, when Robin asserted that he heard the tramp of horses. Putting our ears to the ground, we were convinced that he was right, and that the sound came from the north-west, the direction from which the wind was blowing. To attempt to hide would be useless, as the fire which was still burning would have betrayed us, even had the sharp eyes of the Indians not discovered our tracks. We could only hope, therefore, that they would prove friends, who would allow us to proceed on our way, even should they refuse to supply us with horses. We therefore, having seen to our firearms, remained where we were, with our backs to the wood, so that we might present as formidable an appearance as possible should the newcomers venture to attack us.

All hope of offering any effectual resistance, however, was dissipated when we saw coming round the edge of the wood a large band of half-naked warriors, armed with bows and arrows, their hair streaming over their backs—perfect savages in appearance.

“They are Crees of the plain,” exclaimed Robin, “and are, I think, on a hunting expedition. If we make friends with them they will not harm us, as they are generally well disposed towards the white men.”

The Crees saw us, and came galloping up, most of them flourishing their lances, while a chief who rode at their head held out his hand as a sign that he wished to be friends with us. The next minute we were almost surrounded by the wild-looking horsemen. The chief dismounted, and Alick advanced to shake hands. We all performed the same ceremony, and the chief then asked who we were and where we were going. Alick replied that our fort had been surprised and destroyed by the Blackfeet, and that we were on our way to Fort Ross to obtain a force for punishing the marauders.

“They are far away ere this, and you will not overtake them,” answered the chief. “It is a long journey too to perform on foot, and many days must pass before you can get there. Come with us. We will entertain you, and in the meantime will send out a band of warriors to learn the direction your foes and ours have taken.”

I remarked that while the chief was speaking he had been eyeing our packs of provisions.

“We are somewhat hungry,” he continued, “for we killed nothing yesterday; and if you will share your food with us, we will amply repay you.”

We knew by this that the chiefs offer was not altogether disinterested, and Alick saw that he must make a virtue of necessity.

“You are welcome to our meat, though it will go no great way among so many warriors,” he answered; “but we will show you where the carcass of the bear is to be found, and if the eagles have left any of the meat on the bones, there will be enough for you all.” This answer seemed to please the chief greatly, and I at once volunteered to conduct some of the band through the wood to the spot where we had left the remains of the bear.

Eight of the Crees immediately leaping from their horses, which they gave in charge to their companions, set off with me. We found two white-headed eagles banqueting on the bear; but as they had kept all other birds of prey at a distance, a considerable portion still remained. I shot one of the eagles, and the other flew off; and the Indians having cut up the bear and formed it into packages for carrying—one of them taking possession of the eagle, and another of the bear’s hide—they returned with me to the camp. The flesh thus obtained was quickly roasted, or rather burned, in our fire, when it was rapidly consumed by the hungry horsemen; Bouncer, who at first showed his anger at the intrusion of the strangers, standing by and catching the scraps thrown to him.

The chief condescended to eat some of our store, which was certainly more tempting than the meat just obtained. The eagle, which had been skinned and cut up, formed part of the feast. The Indians, who were put into good humour by the ample supply of food they had obtained so unexpectedly after their long fast, laughed and joked, and assured us of their friendship. Alick on this observed that we should prefer carrying out our previous intentions, for we had still food enough left for our journey; but the Cree chief had evidently made up his mind that we should accompany him.

“I cannot permit you to encounter the risk you would run by making the journey on foot,” he answered. “If you will come with us, you shall have horses, and perhaps some of our people will escort you.”

All the arguments Alick could use were of no avail. We found that, notwithstanding the fair speaking of the chief, we were in reality prisoners. As the band had no spare horses, we each of us had to mount behind a Cree; far from a pleasant position, as we had to hold on with one hand, while we carried our guns in the other, and had also our packs on our backs.

Bouncer followed, keeping at a respectful distance from the heels of the horses, which showed a very unfriendly disposition to kick him when he came near. We rode on for some distance to the south-east, when we came in sight of the skin-covered tents forming a large Cree encampment. The women rushed out to welcome their husbands and brothers, staring at us and inquiring who we were.

The chief, who by-the-bye was called Picheto, having informed them, they invited us into their tents. They had been busy collecting a quantity of the mesaskatomina berry, which they were drying for a winter store. They offered us some of the juicy fruit, which we found most refreshing, after having gone so long without any vegetable diet. They then placed before us pounded buffalo meat, with marrow fat, served up in birch-bark dishes. We followed the plan of the Indians, which was to dip a piece of the pounded meat into the soft marrow fat at each mouthful.

At night we were invited to lie down to rest around the fire which was in the centre of the tent; but the heat and smoke, with the close air of so many human beings crowded together, snoring loudly, after the fresh atmosphere to

which we had been accustomed, prevented us from sleeping till near morning. At dawn, after a hasty breakfast of more buffalo meat and marrow fat, washed down with a drink formed of the mesaskatomina berries, we each mounted a horse provided for us by the chief Picheto.

Just before starting we witnessed the prowess of a young Cree, the son or nephew of the chief. A valley was in front of us, on the opposite side of which a buffalo bull appeared. Urging on his horse the young Cree dashed forward, armed with his bow from the "bois-d'arc," his arrows from the mesaskatomina tree, feathered with the plumes of the wild duck, and headed with a barb fashioned from a bit of iron hoop.

He dismounted at the foot of the steep sides of the valley, which he quickly ascended; leaving his horse at liberty, and approaching a huge boulder, he crouched down behind it. The buffalo was at the time not forty yards from him. While slowly approaching, the animal leisurely cropped the tufts of the parched herbage. When about twenty yards nearer, the bull raised his head, sniffed the air, and began to paw the ground.

Lying at full length, the Cree sent an arrow into the side of his huge antagonist. The bull shook his head and mane, planted his fore feet firmly in front of him, and looked from side to side in search of his unseen foe, who, after letting fly his arrow, had again crouched down behind the rock. The Indian, now observing the fixed attitude of the animal—a sure sign of its being severely wounded—stepped on one side and showed himself. The bull instantly charged, but when within five yards of his nimble enemy, the Cree sprang behind the rock, and the animal plunged headlong down the hill, receiving as he went a second arrow in his flanks.

On reaching the bottom he fell on his knees, looking over his shoulder at the Indian, who was close behind him, and now observing the bull's helpless condition, sat down a short distance off, waiting for the death-gasp. After one or two efforts to rise, the huge beast dropped his head and fell over dead.

Without a moment's pause, the Cree, knife in hand, springing forward, cut out the animal's tongue, caught his horse, which had been eagerly watching the conflict, and came galloping across the valley towards us, being received with loud shouts by his companions.

"He's a fine youth," observed the chief Picheto; "before many years are over he will be able to count the scalps of the Blackfeet he has killed by hundreds."

Towards evening we reached another Cree encampment, from which we could see some distance off, in a dale between low hills, a large pound formed for the purpose of capturing buffalo.

We were hospitably entertained by the Crees, and the night was spent as our former one had been. The next morning we rode forward to visit the pound which I will briefly describe. It consisted of a large circle of stout stakes, driven into the ground perpendicularly, close together. There was one opening, at the entrance of which a strong tree trunk was placed about a foot from the ground, and at the inner side an excavation was made sufficiently deep to prevent the buffalo from leaping back when once in the pound. From this entrance, on either side, gradually widening, extended two rows of bushy posts, stuck into the ground about fifty feet apart. The extreme distance between the outer end of the rows, which stretched to about four miles into the prairie, was about a mile and a half. These bushy posts are called dead-men.

Between each of them an Indian was stationed, their business being, should the buffalo attempt to break through the lines, to show themselves, furiously waving their robes and immediately again hiding. This effectually prevents the buffalo, when rushing on at full speed, from going out of the direct course. The chief invited us to take part in the sport; which of course we readily consented to do. All arrangements having been made, a part of the band, numbering some fifty or sixty men, armed with bows and arrows, with no other garments than their breech-clouts, set off on horseback in two divisions, followed by a number of men on foot, who concealed themselves as we went along in any holes or behind any hillocks they could find.

The two parties gradually separated—the one keeping on one side, the other on the opposite side of a large herd of buffaloes, which we saw before us. They both galloped on till they reached the rear of the herd, leaving a few horsemen behind on the flanks. Having gained this position, the Indians set up a shout which was almost as terrific as the war-whoop we had lately heard, and then dashed forward, shouting as they went.

The startled buffaloes looked round, and seeing no opening free of their enemies by which they could escape, except that in the direction of the pound, throwing up their tails and bending down their heads dashed madly forward towards it. The Indians renewed their shouts, closing in on the affrighted buffaloes, and every now and then, as a horseman got near the animals, he shot one of his arrows, which, though it failed to bring the creature to the ground, made it gallop on still more furiously than before, plunging its horns into the rear of its companions in front.

Thus the herd was rapidly driven between the rows of dead-men I have described. When once here there was but little chance of their breaking through; for immediately they turned to one side or the other, up started several Indians, who had been concealed, shouting and shaking their robes. In this way the terror-stricken animals were kept within the narrowing limits of the two converging lines.

Several had fallen, pierced by the arrows of the hunters. Now and then one would turn upon its pursuers, only to meet with certain death from their weapons. Thus on they went till they reached the trunk at the entrance of the pound, over which they madly sprang, and were now completely hemmed in by the stout palisades. We pursued them till the whole herd was inside.

In vain the animals galloped round and round the pound, endeavouring to find an exit. The instant one of them appeared likely to charge the palisades, the Indians—men, women, and children—who were placed round it started up, shrieking lustily and shaking their robes or any cloths they had in their hands. The places of the women and children were soon taken by the huntsmen, who shot down with their arrows the bewildered animals, which were

rapidly becoming frantic with rage and terror. Utterly unable to make their escape, conscious only that they were imprisoned, and not seeing their foes, they now rushed madly at each other, the strongest animals crushing and tossing the weaker.

Dreadful indeed was the scene of confusion and slaughter—the noise almost appalling created by the shouts and screams of the excited Indians, the roaring of the bulls, the bellowing of the cows, and the piteous moaning of the calves. It was painful to watch the dying struggles of those powerful animals as they found themselves thus caged, and we would fain have avoided witnessing them.

It was sad, too, to think that this waste of life was to benefit but slightly its authors, who would take only the tongues and the better portions of the meat, and leave the rest of the carcass to rot.

“What do you think of it?” asked the chief.

“That you would be wiser to kill only a few of the buffaloes at a time, sufficient to supply your immediate wants,” said Alick. “The time may come when you will repent having slaughtered so many valuable animals.”

The chief laughed. “It is the way of our people,” he answered, and Alick could get no other reply from him.

A considerable portion of the meat, however, was taken off from the carcasses and carried to the tents, where the women were employed in cutting it up into slices, afterwards drying it in the sun or pounding it into pemmican, which was preserved in the fat of the animals.

We now thanked the Cree chief for his hospitality, hoping that he would without demur now allow us to go.

“I cannot let you take your departure yet,” he said, smiling grimly. “We have plenty of good food now, and we will treat you hospitably. My young men will not like to leave the camp while the fresh meat lasts.”

“We should have been happy to have their company, but we are quite ready to set out alone,” answered Alick. “If you will sell us horses, we will give you an order in payment on Fort Ross for blankets, or anything else you may desire.”

“You may purchase horses even now with your guns,” answered the chief. “We will sell you four horses for your three guns, and leave you one with which to kill the game you will require for your support.”

Hearing what the chief said, we now guessed the object he had in capturing us. We were determined, of course, not to part with our guns, as without them we could neither kill game nor defend ourselves.

Alick told the chief that he would think about the matter, but that at present we were not disposed to agree to his proposal. We all looked as little annoyed as we could, and let the matter drop. The Indians were preparing to make a great feast on the meat of the buffaloes they had so ruthlessly slain, and we hoped that when gorged with food they might be off their guard and give us an opportunity of escaping.

The feast took place that night. The squaws had been busy for some hours in cooking the flesh in a variety of ways. We, of course, were invited, and sat down with the chief and some of his principal men. Though generally abstemious, it is extraordinary what an amount of food they consumed, washed down with whisky, of which they had shortly before obtained a supply from the traders.

We took but little, pretending often to be eating while we let the meat drop down by our sides, under the mats on which we were sitting. The Indians feasted on till a late hour of the night, when they crawled into their tents and lay down.

They, of course, might have deprived us of our guns by force, but from a sense of honour as we were their guests, though they carried us off against our will, they would not do this. We had therefore been allowed to retain them, and took good care not to let them out of our hands either night or day. Our packs had been left in the chief’s tent, and we used them as pillows.

In a few minutes the whole of the community were fast asleep; even the dogs, the watchful guardians of a Cree encampment, had so gorged themselves that they were unwilling to get up. Had a party of Blackfeet made a sudden onslaught, the whole of the inhabitants might have been slaughtered before they could have arisen to defend themselves.

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## Chapter Eight.

**Our abrupt departure—Quick travelling—The fortunate discovery of the canoe—Our provisions run short—The chase after the swans—Bouncer in trouble—Our canoe is damaged—Roasted swan rather strong—Our wigwam—A midnight visitor—The morning start—Ducks—Fish-spears—Our canoe wrecked—Our dangerous situation—A rope manufactured—Dry land reached by its means—Swan meat again.**

As soon as Alick was satisfied that the people were sound asleep, he sat up and made a sign to Martin, Robin, and me to follow him. We found Bouncer at the door. When I patted him on the head he opened his eyes, and seeing us got on his legs ready for a start.

We waited for a few seconds to be certain that we were not observed. Had we been questioned, we had agreed to answer that we preferred the open air to the hot tent.



To our great satisfaction, finding that no one had noticed us, we moved on, stepping as noiselessly as possible, till we were free of the tents. The night was starry, and we had noted well the way we had to go. Of course we might have stolen some of the Cree horses, and very little blame would have been attached to us for so doing even had we been overtaken; but some time would have been lost in catching them, and we hoped to get to a considerable distance from the camp before the Indians recovered from their debauch.

As soon as we had got so far that there was no chance of our footsteps being heard, we began to run, keeping close together. The Crees, who always move about on horseback, were less likely than most of the Indians to discover our trail, and we felt sure that they would not follow us on foot. We were all in good wind, and might be twenty or even thirty miles away before they found out that we had escaped; for even when the chief awoke he would very likely turn to again and drink a further quantity of the fire-water.

We went on till we had passed the Cree encampment we had before visited. We might have ventured into it, for the women who were alone there would not have known that we were escaping, and would have consequently allowed us to continue on our way. We thought it wiser, however, to avoid paying our friends a visit, as we had enough food to last us till we could reach the river. After the abundant meal we had taken on the previous evening, we could have gone on all day with very little food or rest.

In crossing a small valley we found a number of the mesaskatomina bushes, from which we obtained a supply of fruit which greatly refreshed us. I am afraid that it will be scarcely believed that we accomplished, according to our calculation, upwards of fifty miles before we stopped to camp at night. Though nothing on a highroad, it was good going over the prairie grass, with occasionally to have to make our way through woods and across streams.

We had the satisfaction of believing that the Crees would not take the trouble of coming after us, and we were thankful that we had not been tempted to make off with their horses, though we might have been justified in so doing. We supped off pemmican, refraining from lighting a fire lest it might betray our position.

We kept, however, a pile of sticks ready to kindle, should it become necessary by the approach of wolves or of bears. As usual, of course, one of us kept watch, that we might have timely warning of danger. The night passed away without any event of importance, and the next morning, the moment the first streaks of dawn appeared in the eastern sky, we pushed forward at as rapid a rate as before. We at last got into the country we knew pretty well, and in the afternoon of the third day came in sight of the spot where Fort Black had stood.

"It looks black enough now," observed Martin, as he surveyed the charred ruins. "I wish I knew where my poor father and mother are! Should the Sioux have paid them a visit, I fear that they will have had great difficulty in escaping."

"I don't think the Sioux would have gone so far north," observed Alick. "They are probably better off than they would have been had they come to the fort, when they to a certainty would have been murdered with the rest of our poor people. Don't let us contemplate misfortunes, before we know that they have happened."

Not a human being was seen in the neighbourhood of the fort; neither cattle nor horses were anywhere visible. The whole scene was one of perfect desolation. Without entering the ruins, we at once made our way down the bank to the spot where we hoped to find the canoes.

The door of the shed was open. One canoe only out of three remained.

"So far that is satisfactory," observed Alick. "I trust that the rest of the men had time to get down and embark before they were discovered by the Sioux. I wonder the rascals didn't search for them. Had they done so, they would have found this canoe and destroyed it."

"It shows, however, that only a few could have escaped—eight or ten at the utmost. If more had got off they would have taken all the canoes," said Robin.

Martin and I agreed with the conclusions at which Alick and Robin had arrived. We examined the canoe, and found it in good condition, only requiring to have the seams gummed. There was not time to do that and to make any progress on our way down the river, so we agreed to spend the night in the shed, and to commence our voyage the next morning.

We had food remaining for only two scanty meals for ourselves and Bouncer, who had been almost starved during the journey, and it was settled that we should start the first thing in the morning and go in search of wild-fowl. As we had no fear of any enemies being in the neighbourhood, we lighted a good fire outside the hut, at which we cooked the remainder of our bear's flesh and ate it for supper.

Martin, while hunting about in the shed, discovered a lump of the gum used for paying over the seams of canoes. This we melted in one of our tin pots, and very soon had the canoe in a fit state to launch. There were several pairs of paddles, and some cloth which could be used as a sail.

"Perhaps we may find something else which may prove useful," observed Martin, and he twisted up a torch from the dry reeds which grew on the bank.

With this we thoroughly examined the cave, and our search was rewarded by the discovery of a flask of powder, apparently dropped by one of the men who had escaped from the fort. We also found an axe and a long sheath-knife. Both were likely to prove very useful.

Altogether we were very thankful that we had decided on returning to the fort. After our long and rapid journey we were all very tired, and as soon as we had finished our search we lay down to rest without any fear of interruption. We younger ones should have slept on, I suspect, till long after the sun was high in the heavens, had not Alick roused

us up.

"Come, boys," he exclaimed, "turn out; we must have breakfast and begin our voyage as soon as we can."

"I thought you said that we were to look out for wild-fowl," observed Martin. "I suspect that if we don't in good time we shall have to go without our dinner."

"We'll have breakfast, and then talk about that," said Alick. "I want to feel that we really have begun the voyage."

Our breakfast was a very scanty one, though we had plenty of water to wash it down; the last few morsels being given to Bouncer, who sat wistfully looking up at us as we ate our food.

The canoe was at last carefully lifted into the water; Alick took the steering-oar, and each of us three a paddle.

"Away then we go, boys; and I pray that we may have a successful voyage," said Alick. As he spoke he gave a shove with his paddle, and we dipping ours into the water, the canoe was soon in the middle of the stream.

We glided on rapidly with the current till we came to the mouth of a broad stream, which ran into it from the opposite side. As we looked up it we caught sight of some white objects.

"They are swans," cried Alick, "and one of them will afford us an ample dinner."

The difficulty, however, was to get near the birds, for they would take to flight the moment they saw the canoe paddling towards them. Fortunately the wind was up the stream.

"We will hoist the sail," said Alick, "and it will assist to conceal us, while the canoe will glide noiselessly towards the swans."

We had two sticks, which we fixed in the gunwale of the canoe, setting the sail between them. Though of a primitive nature, it had the advantage of being lowered in a moment. This was very necessary in so crank a craft as is a birch-bark canoe. We now allowed the canoe to glide on, while we got our guns ready and watched the birds from under the sail. They were mere specks of white in the distance, and as we glided towards them we had no doubt that they were swans.

They must have seen the strange-looking object entering their river, for, turning their arched necks from us, they began to swim up the stream. A strong current was running down, which impeded our progress; while they avoided it by keeping close to the bank, where the water was altogether still, or was running with less force. This gave them a great advantage; still, having once begun the chase we felt no inclination to give it up, hunger urging us on.

The trees in many places overhung the water, shutting out the rays of the sun. Here and there, however, penetrating through more open parts, they struck on the snowy plumage of the birds, enabling us clearly to keep them in view.

"We are getting near them," whispered Robin, who was peering under the sail. "We shall soon be close enough to make our shot tell with effect."

We had no intention on entering the stream of going so far out of our way. Now having begun we were led on and on, still hoping soon to come up with the chase. At last we reached a part where the branches of the trees so densely overhung the water that they cast a dark shadow below, which almost completely concealed the canoe.

The swans, we concluded from their movements, no longer perceived us, for they began to swim about in an unconcerned fashion, some of them even allowing themselves to be carried down by the current. Four of them at length got quite close to us, when Martin and I, lifting our guns, fired, and two, immediately spreading out their wings for an instant, dropped their heads in the water.

Their companions, on seeing their fate, darted off with loud screams; while we, lowering our sail, got out our paddles and propelled the canoe as fast as we could to secure our prey.

One of the birds was quite dead; the other struggled violently as Robin seized it by the neck, and tried to dart its beak at him, very nearly upsetting the canoe. As soon as Martin and I had hauled the other bird on board, we went to his assistance, Martin holding the poor bird tight round the neck till its struggles ceased, when we also got it into the canoe.

We might have been satisfied with our prizes, but we wished to obtain a supply of provisions sufficient to enable us to continue our voyage without stopping to hunt. We therefore rehoisted our sail, and made chase after the remainder of the swans. The appearance of the stream also tempted us to continue our course, as we thought it possible that we might fall in with some animals—perhaps deer coming down to drink, or beavers, or smaller creatures—which might give us a variety of food. Should we be successful our intention was to land and smoke them thoroughly, so that they might last us for the remainder of the voyage.

It would take us several days we knew, at all events, to perform the voyage, for there were rapids to be passed; and though we might shoot them, the attempt, without being well acquainted with the navigation, would be hazardous, and it would be far wiser, Alick considered, to make a portage, or in other words to carry our canoe on our shoulders overland, till tranquil water should be reached.

"If we had fishing-lines and hooks we need have no fear of wanting food," observed Martin. "I must try to manufacture some hooks and lines."

"But where are you to find iron for the hooks or material for the lines?" I asked.

"The first I'll form, as the Indians do, out of bone," answered Martin. "They use them in the upper Saskatchewan, and on the lakes in the neighbourhood. If we can shoot a deer, the skin and the inside will supply us with material for the lines."

"But the deer must be shot first, and fitting bones found to make the hooks; and then, as to bait?" I observed.

"We'll try various sorts. We may find grasshoppers or some other insects on the shore, at which I should think several fish would bite," answered Martin. "If not, we must dig for worms, or try the insides of the birds or beasts we may shoot."

"If we do happen to shoot any; but so much depends on that little word 'if,' that we must not be too sanguine," I remarked.

"At all events, we have already killed two swans, and should not be doubting about our success for the future," answered Martin. "Just think, David, how remarkably we have been hitherto preserved! We are positively ungrateful to Heaven if we doubt that the same kind Providence will continue to watch over us."

"Hush, boys!" said Alick. "We are again getting near the swans, and we may kill one or two more if we approach them carefully. Get your guns ready, but don't fire too soon. Stand by to lower the sail when I tell you. Do you, Martin and Robin, be prepared to get out your paddles the moment you have fired; while you, David, must reload in case the others miss."

Soon after he spoke the wind failed us, and the canoe no longer stemmed the current. The greatest caution was now necessary to get up to the swans. Should we use our paddles, we should frighten them, and they might escape us. The birds, as before, kept swimming slowly up the stream. We waited in the hopes that the wind would again fill our sail. We found that the canoe was slowly drifting down with the current; still we thought that another puff of wind would come and send us along again, and that it would be a pity to risk lowering the sail and exhibiting ourselves to the birds.

They appeared to have recovered from their former fright at the loss of their companions, though we saw their leader every now and then turning round his head to take a look at the suspicious object the canoe must have presented to them floating in the middle of the stream.

Again the wind blew softly, and we once more stemmed the current.

"We are gaining on them," whispered Robin. "We must try to get up before they reach yonder point. If they double it, we may lose sight of them."

The swans were all this time within range of our shot, but had we fired it would not have penetrated their thick feathers, and Alick charged us on no account to pull a trigger. We were thus long tantalised by seeing the swans majestically gliding over the water ahead of us.

"They will get round the point, after all, before we are up to them," said Robin.

"Never mind if they do," answered Alick. "We'll then use our paddles, as they will not see us, and we shall very likely soon overtake them on the other side. There seems to be more breeze on the water out there. Be ready to hoist the sail again the moment we get off the point."

Though we were still making way, Robin's anticipations were fulfilled, and the swans, one after another, disappeared behind the point. The instant they did so we lowered the sail and began paddling away with might and main, as we hoped to find ourselves much nearer to them than we had hitherto been. Bouncer had sat very quietly in the boat watching all our proceedings. He was too well-trained a dog to bark or show any signs of impatience; he probably knew from experience that had he, indeed, attempted to swim out and attack the swans, he might receive a blow from their wings which would make him repent his temerity, for such power does the swan possess that it has been known by a single blow of one of its wings to break a man's leg.

We soon got up to the point, and immediately taking in our paddles and hoisting our sail, glided noiselessly round it.

Great was our disappointment, however, to see only one swan still in the water. What had become of the others we could not tell. Possibly they had plunged into some tall reeds which in dense masses lined the right bank of the river. That bird, however, we resolved should become our prize, and again lowering our sail we all three fired. As the smoke cleared off, however, there swam the swan, stately as before, and apparently uninjured, making for the reeds I have mentioned.

"We must have that fellow, at all events," cried Alick. "Paddle away, Robin and Martin; we shall be soon up to him."

While they obeyed the order, I reloaded, determined not again to miss the swan.

"Wait a moment," said Alick; "he's still rather far off."

"If I wait, he'll get into the reeds. Do let me fire," I answered. But Alick did not give the word, and as we had all agreed to obey him implicitly, I, of course, would not set a bad example, though I felt sure that I could hit the swan.

The bird turning round its long neck saw us coming, and immediately, aided by its wings as well as its feet, with a loud cry darted into an opening among the reeds.

"We shall have him still," cried Alick; "paddle away! paddle away!"

Laying down my gun, I seized a paddle, and in another minute we had reached the reeds where the swan had disappeared.

"Now, Bouncer, see what you can do," cried Alick. The faithful old dog did not require to receive a second order, but plunging bravely overboard, dashed into the reeds, and struggled energetically forward amid them, with leaps and bounds, though he had no firm ground on which to place his feet. We watched eagerly for the bird, which we felt sure from Bouncer's movements could not be far off.

A large tree grew close to the bank, its roots reaching the water. We urged the canoe forward, and presently up rose the swan, no longer presenting the same graceful appearance it did in the water. Though its wings were powerful enough to lift it in the air, its body had a remarkably heavy, awkward appearance.

Bouncer would in another instant have seized it, and have had cause to repent doing so, but the bird rose just beyond reach of his jaws. I lifted my gun and fired, as did Robin. Neither Martin nor Alick, on account of the tree, could take aim. With a loud cry the swan flew off, its white body glittering in the sun; but it had not gone far when down it came with a heavy flop on the reeds. Bouncer dashed forward to seize it. We, finding that the water was deep enough to allow us to make our way through the reeds, pushed the canoe in between them, thoughtless of any snags or branches which might tear a hole in her thin coating.

We had got some way when we guessed, by a white wing every now and then raised above the green herbage, that Bouncer was having a desperate struggle with the wounded swan, and this made us the more eager to advance, that we might hasten to his assistance. Finding at last that the canoe stuck fast, I stepped overboard, followed by Martin. Scarcely had we done so when we sank almost up to our middles in soft mud-and-water, mixed with dead branches.

Being in for it, we determined to proceed, though we advised Alick and Robin to keep quiet, which, seeing the plight we were in, they had every inclination to do. We floundered on for some yards, when our feet reached firm ground. As we got up the bank, we saw that Bouncer had seized the swan by the neck, and that every moment its struggles were becoming less violent than before. Ere we got close up to the combatants the bird was dead; but Bouncer was bleeding at the nose, and moved with a limp.

As we took the swan from him, he looked up in our faces as much as to say, "I have done it, masters; but it has cost me pretty dearly."

We were not aware at that time what a price we had paid for that swan. Finding that it was quite dead, we dragged it along towards the canoe; into which we hauled it. Bouncer followed, though not without difficulty, and we had to help him on board.

"We must get to some better place than this for landing," said Alick. "I don't know whether you are hungry, boys, but I know that I am, and the sooner we have one of these birds roasting before a good fire the better pleased I shall be. Shove off." We endeavoured to obey the order.

"Very well to say shove off, but it's more than we can do," said Martin, turning round.

"Then you must get into the water and lift her off. You are already wet through, so it will not signify."

"Here goes then," I said; and Martin and I stepped into the water, on to what we found to be the sunken trunk of a tree, off which we quickly lifted the canoe, though we found an unexpected resistance. Scarcely had we done so than we saw the water running like a mill stream into the canoe.

"We must get out of her, or she'll fill to the gunwale in a few minutes," exclaimed Alick.

"We can't land here or haul her up if we do," I observed, as I still stood on the sunken trunk. "If we secure the sail under the bottom, we may keep the water from running in so fast till we can get to the opposite bank, where there must be a fit place for landing."

Alick agreed to my proposal, and Martin and I stooping down managed to secure the piece of cloth, as I suggested might be done. Robin also shoved his handkerchief into the worst leak.

The plan answered apparently better than we had expected; and Martin and I stepping on board again, we paddled the canoe as fast as we could in the direction of the opposite bank. We had got scarcely half across the stream, however, when the water began to rush in again more violently than at first. There seemed every probability of the canoe filling. We paddled away with all our force; still the water came in.

"The only chance I see of reaching the shore is to swim for it," cried Alick, throwing off his heavier clothing.

I did the same, and Martin imitated us.

"Sit quiet, Robin," said Alick. "Take the paddle and steer the canoe."

Poor Bouncer would have jumped overboard also, but one of his front legs pained him, and he stood quiet with the water rushing about his feet. Alick took the painter in his mouth and towed ahead, while Martin and I swam astern, pushing the canoe before us. Robin paddled, now on one side, now on the other. We thus proceeded towards the bank, being carried down, however, farther than we intended by the current. We were all three pretty well exhausted by the time we reached the shore, where, as soon as Robin had bailed her out, we hauled up the canoe, he and Bouncer jumping out of her.

"We shall have to camp here," said Alick, "for it will be nearly dark before we can repair the canoe, and cook one of the swans, and get our clothes dried."

"I suggest that we get our clothes dried first," said Martin. "We are hardy fellows, but we may catch cold notwithstanding if we remain in our wet garments."

Agreeing with him, we all set to work to collect wood for a large fire, before which, as soon as it burned up brightly, he and I spread out our clothes, while we sat down wrapped in Alick's and Robin's thick coats, which had been kept dry. They meanwhile searched for some gum and birch-bark wherewith to repair our damaged canoe. Martin and I employed ourselves in plucking one of the swans and preparing it for cooking. I proposed cutting it into several portions, that it might cook the sooner; but he advocated cooking it whole, declaring that it would not take much longer to dress than if cut up, and be far better. We were still discussing that knotty point, when Alick came up and settled it in favour of Martin's proposal.

"One long spit, which we can tend better than several small ones, will then serve the purpose," he observed.

Being hung up close to the fire, our lower garments were soon dried, and while the swan was cooking we again examined our canoe. So extensive was the rent that we found it would be necessary to sew on a piece of birch-bark, and then to cover the seams over with gum. We fortunately found some fibre which would answer the purpose of thread. The operation of sewing in the piece was a long one, as every hole had to be carefully made and the fibre passed through it and secured; the only tool we had to work with being a small pricker from Alick's pocket-knife.

Robin had remained by the fire to tend the roasting of the swan, and as we worked away we every now and then shouted to him to know how the swan was getting on.

"Pretty well," he answered, "but it would be all the better for basting, as it seems to dry very fast, and has somewhat of a fishy odour."

"We must not be particular," said Alick; "and the sooner you can manage to get it done the better, for I am sharp set, and so, I am sure, are Martin and David."

"The scent has taken off my appetite," said Robin, as he continued to turn the spit.

We at last got the piece of bark sewn on, and had then to heat the gum which Alick had collected. It required a good quantity, as it was not equal to what we had before obtained. We were rather afraid that it would fall out and allow the canoe to leak.

By the time we had accomplished part of our task Robin announced that the swan was cooked, and as we found it difficult to labour by the light of the fire, we put off finishing the repairs of the canoe till the next morning. With appetites ravenous from long fasting we sat down round the fire to eat the swan. It had the advantage of being hot, but possessed no other commendable quality, being somewhat tough and of a strong flavour; still it completely satisfied our hunger, and Bouncer, at all events, made no objection to the portion we gave him. He had been much more quiet than usual, having stretched himself by Robin's side, and remained in that position till he got up to eat his supper. He seemed much better after it, though he still limped when he attempted to walk, and his nose showed the scars which the swan's beak had made on it. Had he been capable of any feeling of revenge, it would have afforded him infinite satisfaction to know that he was devouring his late antagonist; but such a thought did not enter his canine mind. There was the food; he ate it, and was grateful.

By the time supper was over all our clothes were dry, and we put them on to prepare ourselves for the night. The air felt much cooler than usual, so we determined to build a wigwam in which to shelter ourselves. It would also give us some slight protection from bears or wolves. We did not expect to be annoyed by any of the latter on this side of the river, but it was very probable that a grizzly or black bear might pay us a visit; for they roam throughout the whole of the Hudson Bay Territory, the white bears taking their place in the more northern regions. The axe we had found enabled us quickly to cut down some long poles to form the framework of the wigwam. As there were numerous large birch trees about, we soon collected a sufficient number of slabs of bark to cover it. Some were of considerable size, and all we had to do was to place them on their ends against the conical framework of poles. In a few minutes we had a serviceable wigwam formed. As after our fatigues we were anxious to have comfortable couches, we cut down the tops of a number of small spruce firs, with which we covered the floor, using our knapsacks for pillows, and before long three of us were fast asleep.

Alick, who was better able than any of us to endure fatigue, agreed to keep the first watch. I took the watch after him. Though I paced up and down before the fire, I had great difficulty in keeping my eyes open. The murmur of the stream as it flowed by, and the suppressed hum of insects with the occasional cry of some bird, had a very soporific effect. I kept walking about and stamping my feet, but every moment my head began to nod; and when I got a little distance from the fire and turned round to look at it, I could not make out whether it was the sun or the moon just rising. I pinched myself, and sang, and walked faster up and down. When I stopped for a moment the same overpowering drowsiness came over me.

I had gone to the farthest extent of my beat, when I thought that I would just lean against a tree for a few seconds to rest, myself. It was an imprudent act, and the consequences might have been serious. I remember that I felt myself sinking down, but the movement fortunately aroused me. I just then heard the cracking of branches and a low growl. Turning round, the light from the fire revealed to me a huge hairy creature not ten paces off.

It was a bear! but whether a black or a grizzly I could not make out. The latter would prove a formidable enemy, and I knew that if I ran towards the fire he would run after me. I therefore stood where I was, cocking my piece and shouting loudly to my companions, "A bear! a bear! Up, up, or he'll be upon us."

In a moment they all three, awakened by my cries, started to their feet.

"Don't fire," cried Alick, "till we are ready; or should you only wound him, he'll make a rush at you."

Alick's advice was sound, though it lost us the bear; for the animal, seeing so many opponents ready to do battle with him, turned tail and ran off through the forest. We followed for a short distance, but he made his way amid the trees much faster than we could; and not knowing the nature of the locality, Alick thought it wiser to return.

The glare of the fire enabled us to regain our camp without difficulty, or otherwise we might have lost ourselves in the gloom of the forest. This incident showed us the importance of being constantly on the watch; for the bear, if a grizzly, might have picked one of us up before we were aware of his vicinity. After this, during the remainder of my watch, I had no inclination to sleep; but the moment Martin relieved me, I was in the land of dreams, or rather forgetfulness, for neither bears nor swans, nor any of the events of the previous days, in the slightest degree troubled me.

Next morning Robin's voice—he having taken the last watch—aroused us at daybreak; and making a hearty breakfast on the remainder of our swan, we set to work to continue the repairs of our canoe. It was a long job, but we hoped that it was effectually done.

Some hours had passed since sunrise, and we could not hope to accomplish much of our voyage before nightfall.

"I wish we had some of that bear," said Martin. "We must try to get some fish, or something better, for dinner. It won't be worth while to carry these swans with us; will it?"

"Don't let us throw away what will keep body and soul together till we have procured something better," answered Alick, who wisely considered that many hours might pass before we could replace what had taken so much trouble to obtain.

We put the birds into the canoe, and followed by Bouncer took our seats. The repairs on which we had bestowed so much labour were satisfactory, for not a drop of water came in. Plying our paddles, for the wind was up the stream, and we could not use our sail, we began to make our way down it. The current being moderate did not help us much, and it appeared as if we should never reach the mouth. In our eagerness when chasing the swans we were not aware how far we had gone up. Of course, we kept our guns ready to shoot any animals we might see on the banks; but though we caught sight of a few birds among the branches, they were too far off to afford us a fair chance of killing them.

We saw no traces, either, of Indian encampments, though from the pleasant character of the country we thought it probable that wood Indians might have made it their abode. We had just rounded a point, and were passing under some trees which overshadowed the water, throwing a dark shade across it, when we saw ahead of us an object moving up against the current. The darkness prevented us from distinguishing what it was.

Robin, who had been talking about the tricks of the redskins, and was, from having lived so long among them, inclined to be suspicious, declared that they were the plumes of Indians who were lying in wait to seize our canoe as we got near them.

"They are more likely to have waited on the shore concealed among the bushes, and to have shot us with their arrows," observed Alick. "I don't think any Indians would venture to attack us in the water."

Still Robin was not convinced, and Martin was inclined to agree with him.

"Be ready, then, to fire if necessary," said Alick; "but not till I tell you. We can easily paddle out of their way, and they'll not venture to follow us; though I repeat that I feel nearly sure that those are not Indians. We will push quickly on, and if they are Indians, when they see that we approach them boldly and have guns ready, they'll keep out of our way."

Soon after this a gleam of light coming through an opening in the wood fell on the objects we had been watching, when our apprehensions were completely dissipated; for we saw that they were coloured ducks, so busily engaged among a shoal of small fry that they did not observe us.

"Paddle on gently, Robin," said Alick.—"Do you, Martin and David, be ready to fire at the birds in the water, and we will do so as soon as they rise."

The current helping us, we rapidly neared the ducks. Martin and I hit two, and Alick and Robin brought down a brace. Hearing the report of our guns, the flock flew towards the wood for shelter. We soon picked up those we had shot; but the flock had got too far off to permit of our killing any others. Those we had obtained were fine fat fellows with rich plumage, and would afford us an ample feast, with some to spare for Bouncer.

Our success encouraged us to hope that we should not want for provisions during our voyage. We at last got into the main river. Evening was approaching, and as we had eaten nothing since breakfast, and a convenient spot appearing on the left bank, we could not resist the temptation of landing to cook our ducks.

It of course took time to collect sticks for our fire. While Martin and Robin were doing this, Alick and I prepared the ducks, which had not, it must be understood, nearly as much flesh on them as tame ducks, and would therefore, after all, not afford an overpoweringly large meal to each of us, considering that Bouncer was to have his share.

We soon saw that by the time the ducks were cooked it would be too late to proceed on our voyage, and therefore agreed to camp during the night where we were. While Alick and I were engaged on our task, Robin arrived with a large bundle of wood sufficient to kindle the fire. We therefore at once set the ducks on to roast, hoping that Martin would soon come in with a further supply of fuel. As he did not appear, Robin and I set off to collect some more, lest our fire should burn out. We were hurrying back when we heard Martin's voice.

He had only a small bundle of wood on his shoulders, while he carried under his arm a number of deer-horns.

"I found these near an old Indian camp," he exclaimed, "and it struck me at once that we could manufacture out of them some heads for spears, with which we may manage to kill some fish."

"I don't know what Alick will think about it, but I suspect that it will take too long a time," I said; "and where are the handles to be found?"

"As I came along I saw some saplings, which we can soon cut down with our axe; besides which I found a quantity of deer sinews, which the Indians must have dropped. Though it is some time since the Indians were at the camp, the sinews are still in good condition."

Alick was better pleased with Martin's idea than I had fancied he would be. Martin indeed was very ingenious, and could turn his hand to anything, as could Robin. As soon as we had eaten our ducks, as there was still some daylight remaining, Alick and I cut down four thin saplings for spear-handles, while our two friends were working away at the deer-horns, which they shaped into barbs.

"We shall not have time to manufacture more than two," said Martin; "and those are as many as we can use, for two must paddle, while the others strike the fish."

"How are we to get the fish to stop and be struck at?" I asked.

"We must try fishing by night," answered Martin.

"Still less likely we shall be to see them," I observed.

"Not if we have a light on board, and I have been thinking about that," he answered. "We must fill our pot with resinous wood, and by placing it on the bows we shall have the means of attracting the fish. When they come up we must spear them. I have seen the Indians on the upper lakes catch fish in this way, and I know that they are caught in the same manner in many other countries."

From Martin's description we all became eager to try to catch fish in the way he spoke of. We soon found the wood he mentioned, a species of fir which contained a large amount of resin, and split up into small pieces it emitted a bright light.

While seated on the bank we had observed a number of fish leaping in the river, which here formed a bay with little or no current; and we agreed that as soon as the spears were ready we would go out and try our luck that night.

As the deer-horns were hard, it took a long time to fashion even two spearheads, so that it must have been past ten o'clock when they were ready, though we all worked away diligently by the light of the fire. Alick proposed lying down and waiting till the following night; but we were all so eager to set out that we persuaded him to start at once, that we might try the sport for an hour or so, and then land again with our fish ready to cook for breakfast in the morning.

We should have time enough for sleep, as, having to sit in the canoe all day, we could do very well with less than usual. All things being ready we started. We still had our two swans, which Alick observed might be useful should our spears not answer as well as we hoped. Martin and I undertook to use the spears while Alick and Robin paddled.

As soon as we had got a short distance from the shore we lighted our fire, which as it blazed up cast a lurid glare over the waters. Though we looked eagerly for the fish none could we see. They had either swum away or were not to be attracted by the bright light.

"Perhaps there may be more out in the stream," said Martin. "Let us paddle slowly down, and ten to one we see some."

Alick consented, and proposed, moreover, that as we had embarked we might as well proceed on our voyage, as the light enabled us to see our way as well as in the daytime, while the air was cooler than when the hot sun beat down on the stream. We had gone some distance when Martin struck down his spear.

"I hit a fish," he exclaimed, "but it got off. We may have better luck the next time."

I shortly afterwards saw another fish, which I succeeded not only in striking but in securing, though it fell off the moment I got it into the canoe. It showed us that our spears were not as perfectly barbed or as sharp as was necessary. This success encouraged us to continue the sport, and we went on and on, though we did not succeed in securing any more fish. Our fire, however, had produced an effect we had not expected. As we were passing a low cliff, loud cries of wild-fowl saluted our ears. The birds, roused by the appearance of the light, flew off from their nests, and came circling around us; so we fired several shot at them, and brought three down.

The rest, not aware of what had happened, continued pursuing us; their numbers increased from the other denizens of the banks. Alick, in his eagerness to shoot the birds, was using less caution than before. I fancied that I heard the rushing sound of water.

"There must be rapids near us," I exclaimed.

Just as I spoke Alick again fired, and two birds fell into the water ahead of us. Taking his paddle, he urged the canoe forward to pick them up. None of us could tell how it was, but all of a sudden we found ourselves whirled onwards by an unseen power. Though we got the paddles out, we had lost all control over our canoe. The next instant, her bow striking a rock, she was whirled round, when her stern came in contact with a snag also fixed in the crevices of another rock.

"Jump out for your lives, lads!" cried Alick, setting us the example.

The water, we found, was rushing over the ledge on to which he stepped. Martin and I followed, carrying our guns. Robin sprang after us, catching hold of the sail; while Bouncer, acting as a brave sailor does, was the last to quit the ship.

I had just time to leap forward and catch hold of the iron pot when the canoe was whirled away down the rapids. On examining our position we found ourselves on a large rock nearly in the middle of the stream, which afforded us a resting-place, but how we were to reach the bank was the question.

We sat down very disconsolate to discuss the matter. It did not do just then to think too much of the future. Our first business was to get on shore where food was to be obtained; though, fortunately, having had a good supper we were not hungry. As far as we could judge in the darkness, the way to the left bank was most practicable; but even in that direction there were broad places to be passed, across which we might be unable to wade.

We had gone through many adventures, but this was the most trying and perhaps the most dangerous. The rapids below us boiled and foamed, and ran with great force. Should we lose our footing we might be carried away and dashed against the rocks.

"Though this is not a pleasant place on which to pass the night, I think we shall do wisely to remain here till daylight will enable us better to see our way," observed Alick.

Our position was too uncomfortable to allow us to sleep; indeed, had we done so we should have run the risk of slipping off into the water. We therefore discussed various plans for getting on shore.

"If we had but a rope we might do it without danger," said Martin, "and I think we have materials enough to manufacture one. The sail cut up and twisted will form a good length."

"You shall have my overcoat," said Alick. "We must try to kill a deer, the skin of which will make a covering for me at night. I can do very well without it in the daytime."

I also had a coat, and imitating Alick offered to sacrifice it for the public good. "A shirt which I have in my knapsack will supply its place," I observed.

"I have a strong linen shirt in mine," said Martin.

Robin had a couple of handkerchiefs, besides which we had the straps of our knapsacks and pouch-belts. With these materials we considered that we could make a rope sufficiently strong for our purpose. It required considerable ingenuity to fasten all these together. The parcel of sinews which Martin had found were exceedingly useful; indeed, I don't know how we could have secured the straps without them. We had to wait, however, till daylight before we could perform the neater work, though there was light sufficient in the open river to enable us to cut up and twist some of the articles we had destined for the purpose. We had thus made a pretty strong bit of rope when day broke.

We then began to secure the straps together. To do this we had to make holes in the ends with the prickers of our knives, through which to pass the threads—a long and tedious operation, as, of course, it was of vital importance that they should be firmly secured: a weak part might endanger our safety. As may be supposed, we worked very diligently, for we were getting hungry, and had no chance of obtaining food where we were. How long it might be after we reached the shore before we could fall in with game of some sort it was impossible to say.

Our spears had been lost, so that even should we see any fish in the rapids we could not catch them.

At last the rope was completed. It was sufficiently long, we calculated, to reach from one side to the other of the broadest passage we should have to cross, as there were several rocks which would serve as resting-places between us and the left or northern bank.

Before using it, by Alick's advice we tried every part, hauling with all our might, two against two. It was fortunate it did not give way, for had it done so we all four might have fallen into the river on opposite sides of the rock.

"Come, that will do," said Alick; "I'll go first, and you three hold on to the other end. If I miss my footing, haul me in; but if I succeed, you, David, remain behind, and let either Martin or Robin make their way across, holding on to the rope. When they are safe over, you fasten it round your waist, and we'll haul you after us."

The plan seemed a good one, with every prospect of success. The water was apparently of no great depth, and did not run with nearly as much force on the north side of the rapids as it did on the south, towards which by a bend of the river the principal current was directed; still, as we looked at the foaming, hissing, roaring waters below us, we saw the fearful danger to which we should be exposed should we miss our footing and be carried away in them. Indeed, without a rope, the passage seemed to be altogether impossible.

Alick, of course, ran the chief danger, as he had nothing to support him, and had, besides, the rope to drag and his rifle to carry. We scrambled over to the west side of the rock, or that which looked up the stream; then Alick fastened the rope round his waist, and offering up a short prayer for protection, he stepped carefully into the foaming water. At first it did not reach much above his ankles, but it soon began to rise higher and higher, until it reached his knees; and as we saw it foaming round him, we feared every instant that he would be carried off his legs.

Though he stepped directly across the stream he kept looking upwards, so that, should he have to swim, he might strike out at once in the right direction. More than half the passage had been accomplished. There was ample length of rope, which we allowed occasionally to run out as it was required. Still the water got deeper.



Alick stopped for a moment, as if hesitating whether he should proceed. Then again he stepped out, and the water surged up almost to his waist, as it seemed to us at that distance.

A cry escaped us. We thought he had gone, but he recovered himself and sprang to a higher level. Again the water reached no higher than his knees. He went on with more confidence, till he stood safe on the rock for which he was making.

“Hold on tightly to the rope,” he shouted.—“Robin, you come next. Don’t let go your grasp, though you may find yourself carried off your legs.”

“Ay, ay!” answered Robin. “I’ll not do that; the rope is what I’m going to trust to.” And without more ado he plunged in, not walking steadily as Alick had been compelled to do, but leaping like a dog in shallow water, so that he got across in much less time with apparently less risk.

Martin followed his example, and was twice nearly carried off his legs.

It was now my turn. The rope, should it not break, would haul me back should I lose my footing; but the danger was that it might break, as it would have to bear my weight with the current pressing against it, as also that of the articles I carried.

There was a piece of rope to spare. I put the end into Bouncer’s mouth, and patting him on the head told him to hold on and swim after me. He understood perfectly what was to be done. I did not for a moment hesitate, as there was no time to be lost; and springing in, instead of going directly across I waded diagonally up the stream, Bouncer holding tight on to the rope, and bravely breasting the current. By this means I found, as I expected, that I was in shallower water, and was able to get across almost as fast as the others had done with the aid of the rope.

The next passage we had to make was shorter, but was quite as deep, and for a few seconds Alick was in great danger of being carried down the stream. Two other watery spaces had still to be crossed; the last looked the more dangerous, but Alick got over and stood safely on the bank. He then went up the stream some way, when Robin and Martin crossed as they had done at the other places. I followed, with Bouncer towing after me, though I had to put no small strain on the rope to enable myself to get over.

Every moment I thought that it would give way, but it held fast, and most thankful we were to find ourselves at length safe on the northern bank of the river. We had kept our guns and ammunition dry, though of course our lower garments were perfectly wet.

“My boys,” said Alick, “we have reason every day to be thankful to God for His watchful care over us, but especially now we should return thanks for our preservation, for I tell you we have run a fearful risk of losing our lives. We might have been all drowned together when the canoe was destroyed, and at any moment in crossing above these rapids we might have been carried off our feet and swept down them.”

We all acknowledged the truth of his remarks, and together kneeling down on the grass, we lifted up our voices in a prayer of thanksgiving. We then hurried away to collect wood for a fire, that we might dry our drenched clothes and consider what was next to be done.

“One thing is very clear,” observed Alick, as we sat round the fire. “We have no food, and being hungry the sooner we can get some the better. Our way is down the stream, and we must set off as soon as possible in that direction.”

The sun and wind assisted the fire in drying our clothes, and we were soon ready to commence our journey. We kept our eyes about us as we went on, on the chance of any birds or animals appearing. Hunger, it is truly said, makes keen sportsmen, and we should not have let a mouse escape us if we had seen one. We kept close to the bank, and for a mile or more the rapids continued, though we saw that on the opposite side a canoe might descend without danger. Alick was constantly examining the bank. “I thought so,” he exclaimed, when we had got about half a mile below the rapid. Running forward he picked up three of our paddles and one of the spears. The others could not be far off, unless they had struck in the crevice of a rock. This, perhaps, they had done, for we could not find them.

Martin immediately took possession of the spear.

“I may still have a chance of killing a fish, if we come to any deep little bay or bend of the river, where some are likely to be at rest,” he observed.

It was getting late, and unless we could kill something soon we should have to go supperless to bed.

“Hillo! I see something,” cried Robin, and rushing forward he held up one of the despised swans.

The sight at all events gave pleasure to Bouncer, who began barking and leaping round it.

“You shall have some directly, old fellow,” cried Robin.

As we saw a suitable spot for encamping a little distance from the bank, we agreed to stop for the night. The wind blowing somewhat colder than usual, a wigwam, or at all events a lean-to, was considered advisable. Martin and I set to work to collect the necessary materials, while Alick and Robin lighted the fire and spitted the swan for cooking.

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## Chapter Nine.

**Wood-pigeons and squirrel for supper—Bear’s meat—Canoe-building—Grasshoppers—She floats even—Row,**

**brothers, row!—The thunderstorm—Our narrow escape—Our hut—Deer—The buck is dead—Venison in plenty—Improvidence of the Indians—Breakers ahead.**

I cannot describe our adventures from day to day as I have been lately doing.

While eating our somewhat unsavoury swan, we discussed how we should next proceed. We knew but little of the bank of the river on which we found ourselves, but at all events we should have a long journey on foot before us, and we did not fancy the tramp through the woods.

“But if we do not go on foot how are we ever to get to Fort Ross?” exclaimed Robin. “We can scarcely expect to find another canoe.”

“Why, of course we must build one,” said Martin. “I have never made one entirely myself, but I have seen them built frequently, and have helped sometimes, and I am very sure that we all together could manage to construct one which will carry us safely down the river.”

There were no dissentient voices. Martin warned us that it would take some time. We should have to shape out all the ribs, and search for birch trees of sufficient girth to afford large sheets of bark. The chief object for consideration was, that it would take us almost as long to build a canoe as to travel to Fort Ross, but then we should be saved the fatigue and dangers of the journey, and we should be more likely to fall in with any of the people whom our friends at the fort might have dispatched to look for us, in the hopes that we had escaped from the massacre at Fort Black. Another great reason for proceeding by water was the state of our shoes: getting so often wet and dry they had become completely rotten. Alick’s were falling off his feet; mine were in a very little better condition; Martin had thrown his away as useless, and Robin had done the same, but as he had so long gone without shoes, his feet were hardened, and he cared very little about the matter.

While the weather was warm it was not of much consequence, but we might expect frost soon to set in, and unless we could manufacture some moccasins we should suffer greatly. If we could kill a deer we might supply ourselves, but hitherto we had seen none along the banks of the river; still we hoped to fall in with some, as both skins and meat would be very acceptable.

“Then I consider that the best thing we can do is to camp in an eligible spot, and commence building a canoe without delay,” said Alick.

We all agreed with him.

“I have no doubt about being able to do it,” said Martin; “but we must fix on some place where the white birch trees are abundant, that we may have a good selection of bark. Much depends on its perfect condition, and many of the trees we have passed are of insufficient size or have holes in the bark, which would render them useless for our purpose.”

We trudged on therefore, eagerly looking out for a spot which would answer all our requirements. Before long we found one with some cedar trees in the neighbourhood, and some young spruce firs not far off. On a hillside a little way from the river grew a number of pines; the pitch which exuded from them we wanted for covering the seams. The wood of the cedar was required for forming the frame of the canoe, while the slender and flexible roots of the young spruce trees would afford us what is called “wattap”—threads for sewing the bark on to the gunwale and securing it to the ribs.

“As we shall be some days building our canoe, we may as well put up a hut and make ourselves comfortable in the meantime,” observed Martin. “It won’t take long to do that, and should a storm come on we should require shelter.”

“We shall want something of still more consequence,” observed Alick. “We have no food, and you fellows will soon be crying out for it. While Martin and David get the camp ready, light a fire, cut some poles for a wigwam, and collect some rough sheets of bark to cover it with, Robin and I will go in search of game. We shall find something or other before dark, if we keep our eyes open and our wits awake, and I shall not feel inclined to return without food, so take care to have a good fire burning to roast it by.”

“But I say, don’t go off with the axe,” exclaimed Martin, as Alick was walking away with it stuck in his belt. “We cannot cut down the poles without it, or strip off the bark from the trees.”

Alick handed the axe to Martin, who, giving a flourish with it, observed, “We shall have work enough for this fellow to do, but I must take care to keep its edge sharp.”

Alick and Robin set off with their guns, while Martin and I commenced the work we had undertaken. We at first collected sticks and had a fire blazing in an open spot from which we had cleared off all the grass for fear of its igniting the surrounding herbage and producing a conflagration—no unusual occurrence in the woods. The feeling of hunger made us very active, for we hoped that Alick and Robin would soon return with some game. As they did not appear, we cut down a number of poles and fixed them up on a spot a little distance from the river, towards which the ground gradually sloped down. Having secured all together at the top, the framework of our hut was complete.

We had then to obtain some slabs of birch-bark. Several lay on the ground stripped off by the wind. Many of these we found lying at the foot of the trees, and though unfitted for building a canoe, they were very well suited for our present purpose. We worked so diligently that we completely covered our wigwam. We now began to look out anxiously for the return of our companions, our hunger reminding us that it was high time for them to be back. While we were working we had not thought so much about it. I had thrown myself down on the grass, having finished my labours.

"Come!" said Martin, who was always very active; "if game is not brought to us, I vote we go in search of it," and seizing his gun he made his way amid the trees.

I followed him. Presently I heard him fire, and directly afterwards I caught sight of a squirrel on a high branch. Taking good aim, I brought it down, and was soon joined by Martin, who had shot a couple of wood-pigeons. We hurried back to the camp, stripped the birds of their feathers, skinned the squirrel, and soon had them roasting before the fire.

"Our friends will be well pleased not to have to wait for their supper," said Martin, as he quickly turned round the wood-pigeons on the spit.

They were soon cooked, and unable to resist the gnawings of hunger we divided one of them and ate it up. We then attacked the squirrel, but restraining our appetites, reserved half for Alick and Robin, for we thought it possible that they might after all return without any game. Having satisfied our hunger, we thought more seriously about them. What could have happened to delay them?

At last I began to fear that some accident must have befallen them. It was getting dusk. Should darkness overtake them, they would be unable to find their way through the woods. We piled up more wood on the fire, and went some way from it in the direction we expected they would come, shouting loudly at the top of our voices to attract their attention.

"I cannot fancy that they have lost themselves," observed Martin. "Robin, with his Indian training, would find his way anywhere; and Alick is not likely to have gone wrong, especially with the river to guide him."

Still I grew more and more anxious, and pictured to myself all sorts of accidents.

"We should never think of the worst till it happens," observed Martin. "They were probably tempted to go farther than they intended. Perhaps we shall see them come back loaded with venison or a few dozen wild ducks, which will supply our larder for many days to come. Hark! I think I hear a shout. Now!" and we again shouted out. A reply immediately came through the trees.

"That's Alick's voice, and I heard Robin's shriller treble," said Martin. "They will be here anon, and will be highly delighted to sit down and munch the remainder of the squirrel and the wood-pigeon."

We hurried forward to meet our friends, as far as the light of the fire would enable us to see our way, and presently they both appeared, carrying huge masses of something on their backs.

"We have got food enough to last us till we reach Fort Ross," exclaimed Alick, as he limped along, and I observed that he had lost both his shoes. "It might have cost us dear, though. Robin was nearly getting an ugly grip. See! we have killed a bear, and brought as much of the meat as we could carry, and a part of the skin to form moccasins till we can kill some deer, which will afford us more comfortable covering for our feet."

We relieved them of their loads, and were soon seated round the fire, Bouncer lying down complacently watching us, while they discussed the provisions we had cooked; he, having devoured as much of the bear as he could manage, was independent of other food. Alick then told us that they had come suddenly on Bruin, who was on the point of seizing Robin when he had shot at it, but had missed; the bear, instead of pursuing them, frightened by the report of the gun, had taken to flight, when they followed and finally killed it. In their chase, while passing over a piece of boggy ground, he had lost his shoes. The chase and the return to camp had occupied a considerable amount of time.

"All's well that ends well," exclaimed Martin, "and now I propose that we smoke some of the bear's flesh."

To this we all agreed, and thus employed ourselves till we turned in at night.

"Up, up," cried Martin the next morning at daybreak. "We must turn to without loss of time, and begin building our canoe. We must first cut out the ribs, which will be the longest part of the operation, and those who like can accompany me to the cedar wood."

We all did so; and Martin, selecting some young trees, cut them down; then, with his axe, he chopped them into lengths. This done, we all worked away with our knives to form them into thin strips. The wood is remarkably tough, hard, and white, and can be bent into any form. We were employed all day in this work, and it was not till the next that we had a sufficient quantity of strips to commence forming the frame.

To form the gunwale we had to fasten a number together. The gunwale was kept apart by slender bars of the same wood, while the ribs were bent into the required shape, which they easily retained. There was no keel, and the bottom was nearly flat. The third bar was broader than the rest, and in it we cut a hole for stepping the mast, though unless with a very light and perfectly favourable wind we should be unable to carry sail.

It took us several days to put the framework together. We had now to cut the bark from the white birch trees. To do this we formed two circles round a tree, about five or six feet apart, and then cut a perpendicular notch down from one to the other; next, putting pieces of wood under the bark at the notches, we without difficulty pulled it off.

Martin having before taken his measurements, the bark exactly fitted the centre part of the canoe, being also very nearly of the required shape. We now sewed it on with the wattap. This was a long operation, as every hole had to be carefully bored. Another piece of somewhat less width formed the bows, easily conforming itself to the required shape. A single thickness of bark formed the sides, but at the bottom we placed some long strips to serve as bottom-boards, which rested on the ribs.

The bark had to be sewn on also to all the ribs, though this did not require the same number of stitches as used at the gunwale. We all worked away at it till some progress had been made, when Robin took charge of the gum-pot, he

having previously concocted a quantity of pitch from the pine trees. This had to be thickened by boiling, and the joinings were luted with it, thus rendering the canoe perfectly water-tight.

The seats were formed by suspending strips of bark with cords from the gunwales in such a manner that they did not press against the sides of the canoe. Our canoe was only about twelve feet long, but was sufficiently large to carry us four. I have seen such canoes thirty-five feet in length, and six feet in width at the widest part, tapering gradually towards the bow and stern, which are brought to a wedge-like point, and turned over from the extremities towards the centre so as to resemble, in some degree, the head of a violin.

These large canoes are calculated to carry sixty packages of skins weighing ninety pounds each, and provisions amounting to one thousand pounds' weight. They are paddled by eight men, each of whom has a bag weighing forty pounds.

Every canoe also carries a quantity of bark, wattap, gum, and pine for heating the gum, an axe, and some small articles necessary for repairing her. The weight altogether is probably not under four tons. The eight men can paddle her across a lake, in calm weather, at the rate of about four miles an hour; and four can carry her across portages. Altogether, for making voyages in this region, no vessel has been constructed in any way to equal the birch-bark canoe, such as I have described. Ours was very different, being much smaller; and the work, though pretty strong, was not as neat as that performed by Indians.

Robin, who was fond of quizzing—a trick he had learned from the redskins—declared that she would prove lopsided, at which Martin, her architect, was very indignant.

"She'll swim as straight and steady as a duck," he answered.

"We shall see," cried Robin; "the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. However, if she does float a little crooked she'll manage to get to the end of her voyage somehow or other, and we can lay her up at Fort Ross as a specimen of our ingenuity."

While building our canoe, one or two of us were compelled to go out in search of game, as it was necessary to dry the bear's flesh as provision for our voyage, and we preferred fresh meat. We generally returned with two or three wood-pigeons or other birds.

Just before the completion of the canoe, I accompanied Alick on an excursion which we intended should be longer than usual. We found the forest extending not more than a mile from the bank of the river, after which the country was open, with grassy land and hollows which had once been the beds of ponds. Here the grass grew especially long.

We had not long started when I observed that the horizon wore an unearthly ashen hue, and it struck me at once that we were about to have a storm. Presently it seemed as if the whole air was filled with light silvery clouds, and what looked at first like flakes of snow falling, which we saw as they approached nearer to be numberless large insects with wings. They were, indeed, grasshoppers, as they are called in the North-West Territory, though they are really locusts. The number in the air in a short time became so great that at intervals they perceptibly lessened the light of the sun. I had seen them before in much smaller quantities; and I at once knew what they were. That I might watch them more conveniently, I threw myself on my back. When looking upwards, as near to the sun as the light would permit, I saw the sky continually change colour from blue to silvery white, ashy grey, and lead colour—according to the density of the masses of insects. Opposite to the sun, the prevailing hue was a silvery white, perceptibly flashing.

On one occasion the whole heavens towards the south-east and west appeared to irradiate a soft grey-tinted light with a quivering motion. As the day was calm, the hum produced by the vibration of so many millions of wings was quite indescribable, and was more like what people call a ringing in one's ears than any other sound that I can think of.

Strange as it may seem, there was something peculiarly awe-producing to the mind as we watched these countless creatures, as it reminded us of those scourges sent by God on the land of Egypt as a punishment to its inhabitants.

At first they took short flights, but as the day increased cloud after cloud rose from the prairie, and pursued their way in the direction of the wind. As the day advanced, they settled round us in countless multitudes, clinging to the leaves of shrubs and grass to rest after their long flight. The whole district where they had settled wore a curious appearance, for they had cut the grass uniformly to one inch from the ground.

The surface was covered with their small round grey exuvia. Had they passed over any cultivated ground, as they do occasionally, the entire crops of the farms would have been destroyed. They leave nothing green behind them, and devour even such things as woollen garments, skins, and leather, with the most astonishing rapidity. Though they fly very high in the air when they are making their journeys, they pitch usually on the ground, not touching the forests, or one could easily conceive that they would in the course of a year or two strip the trees of their leaves, and leave them with a thoroughly wintry aspect.

As, owing to the grasshoppers, we did not expect to obtain any game in the open country, we returned to the wood, and were fortunate in killing a number of wood-pigeons.

On our arrival at the camp, Martin and Robin shouted out to us that the canoe was finished, and only required to have the seams gummed. This task was soon accomplished; and as we were in a hurry to try the canoe, Alick and I, lifting her up with the greatest ease, carried her down to the bank. Without hesitation we stepped in and placed her on the water, when she floated with perfect evenness.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Martin, who stood on the bank, throwing up his cap in his delight at the triumphant success of his undertaking; "I knew she'd do! I knew she'd do!"

Bouncer, who had followed us down, apparently as much interested as any one, leaped up on his hind legs, barking loudly; while Robin, who had remained at the fire attending to the gum-pot, that we might stop any leaks which were discovered, echoed our shouts. We had indeed reason to congratulate ourselves, for though the canoe was not equal to the one we had lost, yet it would answer our purpose, and convey us safely, we hoped, to our destination. As it was too late to start that day, we lifted her up again, and employed ourselves in finishing off two fresh paddles, in lieu of those which had been lost.

We were very merry that evening, as it appeared to us that our difficulties were well-nigh over. We had meat enough to last us for some days, and we might reasonably expect to obtain as much as we could want on the voyage by landing and spending a day or part of a day in hunting; still we were not altogether free from care. Martin was excessively anxious about his parents. He could not avoid recollecting the bad disposition shown by the Indians; and though his father and mother might not have been molested, or might have managed to escape, there was a fearful possibility of their having been attacked and murdered.

We were still also doubtful whether Sandy and Pat had got away in safety from the fort, though we hoped that they had, and had arrived safely at Fort Ross. If so, we might, by keeping a lookout on the right bank of the river, see any expedition which, we felt sure, would be sent up to restore Fort Black.

Having breakfasted, we again launched our canoe, but we found on putting her into the water that she leaked in two or three places, where the gum had been knocked off. We had to haul her up again, light our fire, and heat some more gum to stop the leaks. This occupied us for some time, but at length we were fairly under way; and singing "Row, brothers, row," we began paddling down the stream.

We agreed not to attempt shooting any rapids we might meet with, but rather to land and make a portage with our canoe. Two of us could carry her on our shoulders without difficulty, and, as Robin remarked, she weighed scarcely a feather when four of us lifted her. Though we intended camping on the left bank, we kept over to the right side, that we might have a better chance of seeing any party travelling towards Fort Black.

The morning had been fine, and we expected to be able to continue on all day; but before noon clouds gathered in the sky, from which a vivid flash of lightning darted towards us, followed by a tremendous peal of thunder; then came in quick succession another and another flash, with deafening peals. The wind began to blow up the river, and its hitherto calm surface was broken into angry waves. Down rushed the rain, half filling our canoe.

"We must make for the shore, lads!" exclaimed Alick, as a heavy sea broke over our bows. "Paddle, lads, for your lives! This is no joke," he added; and he had good reason for saying what he did, for our light bark was tossed about in a way which rendered it difficult to steer her.

We all energetically worked at our paddles. We had some way to go. The wind increased, the thunder roared, and the lightning flashed faster than ever.

Alick kept the canoe with her head partly up the stream, so that we crossed diagonally, or the canoe would have been upset, as the increasing waves rolled against her. At length the northern bank was reached, but we had still the difficulty of landing. The waves were washing against it with considerable force, and should our canoe be driven against any projecting branches, a dangerous rent might be made in it in a moment, and before we could get safely on shore we might be carried away by the current. We had therefore to look out for some bay or creek up which we could run, so as to be sheltered from the waves.

The wind blew now rather up the river than across it, and enabled us to stem the current. We had gone some little distance when we saw the place we were seeking.

"Look out, and see that there are no snags or branches ahead of us," cried Alick to Robin, who had the bow paddle. "If you can find a clear space, we will run the canoe alongside the bank."

"There is a spot that will do," answered Robin; "and I'll jump on shore and hold her while you get out."

Gently paddling the canoe, the next moment we got her up to the bank and stepped on shore in safety. We then hauled her up, but we were not free of danger. Tall trees surrounded the place, their tops waving to and fro and bending to the gale. Every now and then fragments of branches were torn off and carried to a distance. There was a risk of one of them falling on us, or on the canoe, and crushing her; but it was impossible to shift our position, so we had to make the best of it and pray that we might be preserved.

We at first ran for shelter under one of the tall trees, and Robin proposed that we should build a hut against it, with a fire in front at which we might dry our wet clothes.

"That would do very well, if it were not for the lightning," observed Alick. "At any moment that tree might be struck, and we, if close to the trunk, might all be killed or severely injured."

As he said this, Robin and I, who were leaning against it, sprang out into the open. The next instant a loud report was heard; a branch came crashing down, and the stout tree appeared riven to the very roots! Happily the branch fell on one side.

"We may thank Providence that we have all escaped," said Alick. "It won't do to be standing out here exposed to the rain. The sooner we can get up a hut of some sort the better."

The branch which had fallen afforded us the framework of a hut. Alick, taking the axe, cut off as many pieces as we required, pointing them so that we could run them deep into the earth. A little way off there was an abundance of bark, which, seizing, we quickly dragged up to the spot.

Hurrying out of the wood again as fast as we could, in a short time we had a roughly-formed hut erected, sufficient to turn off the rain. The spot was almost completely sheltered from the wind, so that we had no fear about lighting a fire. At the same time the wood was already so wet that it cost us some trouble to ignite it. We succeeded at last, and, drawing it close up to the hut, it afforded us warmth and enabled us to dry our wet clothes.

The rain soon ceased, but the wind held and whistled in the branches. The thunder roared, and flashes of lightning illumined the dark sky. We had reason to be thankful that we were so far protected, and hoped that we might escape any other falling branches or the effects of the lightning. Had we ventured to land in a more exposed situation, our canoe might at any moment have been blown off into the river, while we could neither have put up a hut nor have lighted a fire.

We sat on hour after hour, hoping that the storm would cease. The ground was too damp to allow us to lie down with any prospect of comfort; but we had some pieces of bark which afforded us seats, and had we had time to get larger pieces we might have rested with more comfort.

Thus the night passed away, but when daylight returned the storm was blowing with as much fury as before. Though we saw masses of leaves and branches flying over our heads, none of the latter fell into our sheltered little nook. We agreed that it would be wise to remain where we were.

Alick employed himself, with Martin's assistance, in making a pair of moccasins, which, though rough and ugly, were calculated to protect his feet from the thorns and splinters he might step upon in the forest. I mended my shoes, patching them with small pieces of bearskin; but they would not have served for a long walk. Robin improved one of the paddles, which had been roughly cut out at first.

Thus we passed the greater part of the morning seated before our fire, except when we were cooking and eating some bear's flesh to satisfy our hunger.

We had formed also two lookout holes at the back of our hut, through which we could watch should any deer or other animals come near, which we thought it possible they might do for the sake of the shelter it afforded. Robin was continually jumping up to take a look out; but in that respect we were disappointed.

Soon after noon the wind began to fall, as we knew by the decrease of its sound among the trees and the lessened agitation of the boughs overhead.

"Come, boys, we may make a few miles good this evening," exclaimed Alick, jumping up. "If we find the river still too rough, we can but put back and spend the night here; but I suspect that in a short time the wind will drop altogether, and we shall be able to paddle on till dark. We are sure to find some place or other where we can land to camp for the night."

We accordingly lost no time in lifting our canoe into the water and getting on board. Bouncer, observing the careful way in which we stepped into our canoe, imitated our example, his sagacity showing him that if he were to leap on the gunwale he might upset her.

Once more we shoved off, and going down the creek were soon in the open river. By this time it was almost calm, and the water was perfectly smooth.

We paddled on at a quick rate, the river being free of obstructions of any sort, while at the same time we kept a lookout on both sides for the appearance of either friends or foes, or of any game.

The air after the storm was unusually pleasant, and our spirits rose. The banks on either side were wooded, and prevented us from seeing to any distance beyond them. Here and there, however, grassy points ran out into the stream, on which it was possible that deer might be found feeding, while in little bays and indentations of the banks tall reeds grew, likely to afford shelter to wild-fowl.

We were just about to round one of these points when a duck flying up directed its course across the river. Putting in my paddle, I seized my gun, and was on the point of firing at it when Alick exclaimed, "Hold fast! see out there;" and as I looked ahead, I observed on a low, grassy point a herd of five or six deer, which had come down to the river to drink. Some of them, catching sight of the canoe, looked up and stood curiously watching us. Our great object was now to approach without frightening them.

"Keep silence, all of you," whispered Alick. "Paddle cautiously on. Get ready your guns, so as to fire when I tell you."

We did as he bade us.

"We must have one of those fellows, at all events, and two if we can. It will be provoking to lose them altogether," said Alick.

He steered first directly towards the opposite side of the stream, so as not to alarm the deer sooner than was necessary; then altering the course of the canoe, we made directly for the point where the animals were standing, their curiosity still inducing them to remain watching us. We had got almost within shot when they took the alarm, and turning round retreated into the wood.

Exclamations of disappointment escaped from all of us, for we thought that we should see no more of them.

"Don't think they are lost; we may still have them," cried Alick. "Paddle away as hard as you can go, and we'll land and give chase. We may get round them and drive them back towards the water."

Instead of steering for the point where the deer had been standing, he directed the course of the canoe higher up the

river, and as we neared the bank he cried out, "David, you and Martin remain on board, and Robin and I will make our way through the wood, and endeavour to turn the deer."

As he said this, he tried the depth of the water, and finding that it was shallow, and the bottom hard, he stepped out, followed by Robin and Bouncer, when, soon getting on shore, all three hurried off through the wood, which was there considerably open.

We watched them making their way amid the trees till they were lost to sight. I feared that there was little chance of their driving back the deer; still Martin and I kept a lookout along the shore, on the possibility of the animals returning, either driven by Alick and Robin, or, supposing all danger to have passed, to finish their evening's draught.

Several wild-fowl got up and went flying across the stream, some within shot; but we were afraid of firing, lest we should alarm the nobler game. We kept our paddles ready to urge the canoe in any direction which might be necessary.

Our patience was somewhat tried. It was possible, however, that Alick and Robin might get near enough to the deer to shoot one of them, and we listened eagerly for the report of their guns. We waited and waited, when we saw some way down the stream a magnificent buck burst forth from amid the trees and rush towards the water. Without hesitating a moment he plunged in and began to swim towards the opposite bank.



"Paddle away," I cried out to Martin. "We may have him before he lands."

We did paddle, with might and main, feeling almost sure of the prize; but the deer swam rapidly, and the current, which he did not attempt to stem, carried him down. It was, however, impelling our canoe, so that made no difference. As we advanced, we saw a low island of some extent about two-thirds of the way across the river. The deer was making for it. Should he land he would gain considerably on us.

Martin proposed that we should steer for the southern side, so as to intercept him. We were close to the western end of the island, on which the deer was about to land, when I thought that I could hit him. I fired. My bullet took effect—of that I was sure; but the deer still continued his course. Martin now steered the canoe as we had proposed, and we saw the deer land and begin to make his way across the island.

It was evident, however, that my shot had injured him, for he moved slowly, and by exerting ourselves to the utmost we were soon able again to get him within range. He stopped and gazed at us, apparently not expecting to see us again in front of him. Instead of taking to the water he moved on towards the east end of the island. Again he stopped, facing us, when raising my rifle I sent a shot directly at his breast.

Lifting up his head, and vainly endeavouring to recover himself, he slowly sank down on his knees, and the next instant rolled over dead.

Martin and I, uttering a shout of triumph, paddled towards the shore.

"Shall we cut him up at once, or go back and take Alick and Robin on board, and then return for the purpose?" asked Martin.

"It may probably be some time before they get back to the bank," I answered; "and I think it would be best to cut up the deer, and then we shall astonish them with the result of our exploit."

Of course we felt not a little proud of our success. We accordingly landed, and set to work in a scientific manner—first

skinning the deer, and then by means of our axe and long knives cutting it up into pieces. We took only the best portions, with bits for Bouncer's share, leaving the rest of the carcass with the head, excepting the tongue and the antlers, which might be useful for manufacturing spears and other articles.

We extricated also some of the sinews, which we were sure to want.

Having loaded our canoe, we shoved off and began to paddle back towards the place where Alick and Robin had landed, looking out for them, in case they should appear in any other part of the bank. We found it a very difficult matter, however, to get up the stream. When we went in chase of the deer we had the current with us, and the canoe was light. Now we had a cargo on board. Though we exerted ourselves to the utmost, we made but slow progress, till Martin proposed that we should pull up near the right bank, where the current appeared to run with less strength.

Neither of our companions appearing, it did not seem that we need be in any great hurry until we observed that the sun had sunk low, and that, before long, darkness would come on; still, as we were doing our best, we could do no more. We at last got up some way above the spot where we had seen the deer, and after relaxing our efforts for a minute or two to regain strength, we directed the canoe straight across the stream. We hoped, as we drew near the left bank, that Alick and Robin would make their appearance, and we began to be somewhat anxious at not seeing them.

"They were probably induced to follow the deer farther than they intended," observed Martin, "and perhaps, hearing our shots, may have gone down the river; and if so, we might have saved ourselves our fatiguing paddle."

On looking along the bank, however, as we could nowhere see them we finally paddled in for the shore, and very glad we were to reach a spot where we could rest. Throwing the painter round the branch of a tree which projected over the water, we hung on to it to wait for our companions' return. We shouted to them to attract their attention, but no answer came, and we were unwilling to expend a charge of powder by firing a signal, as our stock was limited, and it was necessary to husband it as much as possible.

The shades of evening were already extending across the river, the bright reflection from the clouds gradually giving place to a uniform grey tint, which soon spread over the whole surface. Martin proposed that we should land and light a fire to cook our venison, for neither of us fancied having to spend the night cramped up in a canoe.

"Let us first give another shout. Perhaps they'll hear it, and know where we are," I said.

We hailed two or three times. At last, as there was only just sufficient light to enable us to see our way, we paddled up to the bank, unloaded our canoe, and hauled her up. We then piled up the venison, covering it over with the deerskin, lighted a fire, and began cooking some steaks. We were thus engaged when we heard a rustling in the brushwood. We started up with our guns in our hands, expecting to see a deer or bear, when Bouncer came rushing towards us, leaping up and licking his jaws. Martin examined his mouth and sides.

"Depend upon it he has had a good tuck-out, the rogue, and feels in a happy humour," observed Martin. "They have killed a deer, and we shall see them here before long."

Martin was right, for in a few minutes Alick and Robin came trudging up to the camp, heavily-laden with venison.

"We have brought you something to eat, boys," said Alick. "Thanks to Bouncer's guidance, we followed up one of the deer till we shot him, but we have had a heavy tramp back. We should have brought the deerskin, but the meat was of more consequence, and we must go back and get it to-morrow morning. Hillo! you seem to have got something!"

"I think we have," I answered, exhibiting our pile of venison.

We then described how we had shot the deer; still, as the deerskin would prove of value for many purposes, we settled to go for it at daylight.

We had now an abundance of venison, in addition to some of the dried bear's flesh which still remained. Though the Indians often suffer from hunger in this region, so teeming with animal life, it is entirely in consequence of their own want of forethought, as most of them when they obtain food feast on it till it is gone, and few are wise enough to lay up a store for the future. Thousands of buffalo are slaughtered on the prairies, and their carcasses allowed to rot, which, if distributed among the people, would supply every native in the country with an abundance of wholesome food.

We had never been without provisions, though sometimes we had run rather short. We had, therefore, no fear for the future.

Next morning, Alick and Robin having obtained the skin of the deer they had shot, we proceeded on our voyage. We at first made good way, aided by the current; but as the day advanced, a strong wind arose which created a considerable amount of sea in the river. Our canoe being more deeply laden than usual, with the venison we had on board, the water began to wash over the bows.

We had set Robin to work to bail it out; still there appeared to be no actual danger, and we continued our course. As we went on, however, the wind increased, and meeting the current, which here ran stronger than in other places, the canoe was half filled by a foaming wave into which she plunged.

Robin bailed away with all his might.

"This will never do," cried Alick. "If we meet another wave like that the canoe will be swamped. We must make for the shore. Paddle away, boys, as fast as you can!"



We exerted ourselves to the utmost, for we saw the danger to which we were exposed. Martin proposed throwing some of the cargo overboard.

“Not if we can help it,” cried Alick. “It would be a pity to lose so much good meat. The water looks smoother towards the south bank, and we shall soon be out of danger.”

In this respect he was not mistaken, but we saw that had we continued on longer the canoe would to a certainty have been filled, for line after line of white breakers extended completely across the stream. We found a safe place for landing, with a sufficient number of trees and brushwood to afford us fuel for our fire, the place also being sheltered by a high bank from the wind. We landed our cargo, and hauling up the canoe, turned her over to empty out the water. It seemed a wonder from the quantity there was in her that she had not sunk.

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## Chapter Ten.

**Tanning—The prairie on fire—“Hillo! Pat Casey! What! don’t you remember us?”—Pat’s marvellous adventures and hairbreadth escapes—Vegetable diet—Pat’s hut—Martin’s danger—Alick’s noble conduct—“He is still alive,” cried Alick—Our wigwam—Two men sick in the camp—Indian summer—Snow again—Winter has set in—Wattap nets—Fishing through the ice—Roast fish and boiled fish.**

As the wind continued blowing with great force, we saw that there was no prospect of our continuing our voyage that day. We therefore made preparations for camping as usual.

Martin suggested that we should employ the time in drying some of the venison, which could not possibly last till it was all consumed. He advised also that we should try to manufacture some pemmican, which, though not equal to that of buffalo, would make nutritious food. We were thus busily employed for the remainder of the day. Alick, too, who wished to prepare the deerskins, stretched them out with pegs on the bank. We then carefully scraped them over, and having boiled some wood ashes in water, we washed them thoroughly with it. This we did twice before dark, leaving them to dry during the night.

“I hope no grasshoppers will come this way,” observed Alick, laughing, while we were afterwards seated at supper.

As I looked round on the river, my eye caught a bright glare reflected on it.

“That light comes from a fire somewhere, and not far off,” I exclaimed; and, springing to my feet, I made my way up to the top of the bank, which was somewhat higher than the country farther off.

There were but few trees, so that I had an uninterrupted view to the southward.

There was a fire indeed, and such a fire as I had never before seen. About half a mile off appeared what looked like a vast burning lake, about a mile in width, and extending to a much greater distance.

Presently, beyond it, another began to blaze up, increasing with terrible rapidity; and, farther off, a third bright light was seen, which also began quickly to extend itself. I have never seen a volcano in full activity; but this, I think, must have surpassed in grandeur the most terrible eruption. The flames rose up to an extraordinary height, rushing over the ground at the speed of racehorses, and devouring every tree and shrub in their course. The wind being from the north-east blew it away from us; but we saw how fearful would have been our doom, had we been on foot travelling across that part of the country. We should have had no chance of escape, for the intervals which at first existed between these lakes of fire quickly filled up.

The conflagration swept on to the westward, gradually also creeping up towards us. We continued watching it, unable to tear ourselves away from the spot. It was grand and awful in the extreme. To arrest its progress would have been utterly beyond the power of human beings. What might be able to stop it, we could not tell. As far as we could see, it might go on leaping over rivers and streams, destroying the woods and burning up the prairies to the very foot of the Rocky Mountains, or even making its fearful progress over the whole of the continent.

We knew that prairie fires often took place, and we had seen some on a smaller scale; but this appeared to us more extensive than any we had heard of. Gradually it came creeping up towards us; still, however, at too slow a pace, in consequence of the power of the wind, to make us quit our post.

“This, I have no doubt, has been ‘put out’ by the Plain Crees, to prevent the buffalo from going to the eastward and benefiting the Ojibbeways, Wood Crees, and other natives in that direction,” observed Alick, using a term common among the Indians—to “put out fire” signifying to set the prairie on fire.

I could scarcely suppose that such would have been done on purpose; but he asserted that they very frequently committed this destructive act simply as a signal to let their friends know that they had found buffalo; and that in most instances the fire did not extend to any great distance, being stopped by marshes, or even narrow streams, when there was not much wind, and sometimes by a heavy fall of rain.

Robin corroborated what Alick had stated.

“I think the fire has got much nearer than when we first saw it,” observed Martin. “Should the wind shift, we shall have to run for it, or the burning trees will be tumbling down upon us and our canoe, and we shall be very foolish to be thus caught.”

In the course of a few minutes after this the wind did shift, and the flames came leaping and crackling towards us.

"We will follow Martin's advice," said Alick. "We shall have plenty of time though, I hope, to get our traps on board and shove off. We must look out for another camping-ground to spend the remainder of the night."

We hastened down the bank, followed by Bouncer, who stood for some seconds barking furiously at the fire, as if indignant at its having put us to flight. We were not long in launching our canoe, reloading her, and tumbling in the skins; when, shoving off, we paddled to a safe distance from the shore. In a couple of minutes we saw the flames reach the base of the narrow line of trees which lined the bank; when, aided by the dry creepers which encircled them, it climbed up at a rapid rate, twisting and turning and springing from branch to branch till the whole wood presented a solid wall of fire. It could not injure us, as the wind, blowing in the opposite direction, carried the falling boughs away from the river. The valley a little to the eastward prevented the conflagration from extending in that direction, but it still gave forth sufficient light to enable us to select a sheltered bay, into which we steered the canoe. Here we again landed, hoping to remain unmolested for the rest of the night. As the wind was cold we lighted a fire, though we could find no bark with which to put up a lean-to.

We had therefore to sleep as well as we could on the bare ground. Very frequently one or other of us climbed to the top of the bank to watch the progress of the flames. They were sweeping along to the west and south-west, leaving a space in their rear still glowing with the burning embers.

Alick, who was anxious to get the skins dressed as soon as possible, again spread them out, and those of us who were unable to sleep employed ourselves in beating them with the paddles. As soon, also, as we could scrape a sufficient quantity of ashes from the fire we made a ley, with which we kept them moist, the effect being to render them soft and pliable.

Before morning the fire had got to a considerable distance, but we could still see a thin line of flame extending from north to south. After all, I believe that it was not so destructive as we had supposed. At the same time, such fires constantly occurring on the prairies render them arid and sterile and prevent the growth of forest trees. Were any means taken to put a stop to their occurrence, willows and other trees would soon sprout up, and the prairies would be converted into humid tracts in which vegetable matter would accumulate, and a soil be formed adapted to promote the growth of fine trees.

We were tempted to remain an hour or two after sunrise, for the sake of making progress with the dressing of our deerskins, and also to dry some more venison, as it was very evident that it would not keep fresh wetted as it had been, with the sun beating down upon it, though covered up by the skins.

"We have plenty to eat and plenty to drink," observed Martin, as we were paddling along; "but I should very much like a variety, and unless we can get it I am afraid that we shall be attacked by scurvy, or fall ill in some other way."

"To be sure, it will take us some time to drink up the water of the river, but I don't know that the venison will hold out quite as long," said Robin. "We might find some berries and roots if we were to search for them in any of the woods we may come to, or perhaps we might shoot some birds or catch some fish. I should like some fish amazingly. We have materials for lines, but I have not had time yet to manufacture some hooks, as I intended. If some of you like to search for berries and roots, or to shoot any birds you may meet, I'll undertake to stay by the canoe and work away at the hooks."

"But if we delay, we shall not get to Fort Ross before the winter sets in," remarked Alick.

"But it will be better to be delayed than to fall sick from want of wholesome food," observed Martin. "I have an extraordinary longing for vegetable diet, and would give anything just now for a dish of greens, or mashed potatoes, or strawberries and cream."

While this conversation was going on, we came to the mouth of a pretty large stream, the banks of which were covered with wood of considerable growth, while here and there grassy spots offered tempting landing-places.

My feelings were very like Martin's, and Robin joining us, we all begged Alick to steer up the stream, intending to land and search for what we were so eager to obtain.

We kept a lookout, some of us on one side of the canoe and some on the other, for any animals or birds which might appear on the bank. Martin and I, who were in the bow, fancied we saw a deer on the right-hand side, and called Alick's attention to it.

While we were looking out Robin, whose quick sight had been attracted by some movements in the foliage, exclaimed, "There's a man—an Indian. If he's an enemy, he'll have a shot at us;" and pulling in his paddle, he seized his gun, ready to take aim at our supposed foe. As he spoke we turned our heads round in the same direction, and we all saw among the trees a human being stooping and apparently intently watching us.

"If he sees that we're all armed he won't fire, though he should have a musket," said Alick. "We'll wave to him, and try to make him understand that we have no wish to be foes to any one. Show your fowling-pieces, lads!"

We all lifted up our guns, then laying them down, again took to our paddles. We now steered the canoe towards the shore, where we had seen the man. We soon reached a spot where we could land; but Alick desired us to sit still in the canoe, as possibly there might be other persons besides the one we saw.

The gloom of the forest prevented our seeing his features, but on getting nearer, to our surprise we perceived that the seeming Indian was a white man, though clad from head to foot in skins. There he stood, in an attitude of astonishment, with his mouth wide open, unable apparently to utter a word. Though he was greatly altered, I felt sure that I knew the man before me.

"Hillo! Pat Casey!" I exclaimed. "What! don't you remember us?"

"Och! shure, is it yourself that's spaking to me?" exclaimed Pat, for Pat he was—of that I had no doubt. "I belaved that you were all murdered by the Injins months ago, and niver expected to see your faces again."

"But you see that you were mistaken, Pat, and that we are all alive and well," I said.

While I was speaking, Pat had been slowly approaching, still evidently greatly in doubt whether we were real beings of this world or spirits from another. When at length he was convinced that we were ourselves, he rushed forward towards us, and seizing me by the hand, exclaimed, "Shure, it's a reality, and you have escaped the redskins."

The rest of the party also convinced him that we were alive by shaking him warmly by the hand, and inquiring how he came to be there.

"Och! shure, but it's a sad story," he answered, "and I'll be afther telling you all about it. I need not ask you whether you know that the fort was surprised by the Sioux, and all who could not escape put to death, for if you have been to the place you would have been afther seeing the state those thafes of the world left it in. Sandy McTavish and I, with five others, managed to get away by leaping from the stockade on one side, as the redskins came in on the other; but short time we had to do it and hide ourselves. Making our way down to the canoe, we had just time to shove off before they discovered us and sent a shower of arrows whizzing round our heads. As it was dark, they did not take good aim, and though they came howling along on the top of the bank, we got over to the opposite side, and soon paddled out of their sight. We had no food and only a couple of muskets which Sandy and I carried off, for the other men had dropped theirs in their fright, and what was worse, we found that we had only a few charges of powder and shot. We got on very well, barring the want of food—for we could see nothing to shoot—till we came to the rapids, and faith! it would have been betther if we hadn't thried to shoot them, for though Sandy and the other man had gone up and down them several times, it was always in a large canoe. It was late in the day and getting dusk, and somehow or other Sandy, who was steering, let the canoe strike against a big rock. Over she went, with a hole knocked through her bows! Having no fancy to be drowned, I made a leap on to the rock, and shouting to my companions to follow, with many a hop, skip, and jump, managed to reach the shore; but when I looked out for the rest of us, I could nowhere see them. I shouted again and again, but they did not answer. My belafe is that they were all carried away and drowned. I sat down on the bank, and at last, as I had been awake for many a long hour, I fell fast asleep. When I awoke in the morning, not a sight was there of the canoe, and I thought to myself, What was I to do? I knew that Fort Ross was somewhere in the direction the sun was used to rise, and so thinks I, if I kape along in that direction I shall some day get there. I had only four charges of powder in my pouch, and as I might have been afther starving when I had shot it all away, I felt gloomy enough. However, there was no use sighing, so I got up and set forward. As ill-luck would have it, I missed the first two shots, but with the third I killed an aigle, or bird of that sort. It was not very good ateing, anyhow, but it kept body and soul together for a day or two. I had now got only one charge remaining, and thinks I to myself, I'll never be reaching Fort Ross with this, if I don't manage to kill a deer or some other big baste which would give me mate enough to last me all the way. I went on all day, eagerly looking out for a deer or a buffalo or a bear, and thinking how I could get up to it to make shure. At last, what should I see between the trees but a crayther with big horns cropping the grass all alone. Thinks I to myself, 'If I can creep up and put a shot into his head, I'll have mate enough to last me for a month to come.' There was no time to be lost, so creeping along Indian fashion, I made towards him. I kept my gun all ready to fire, not knowing what moment he might start off. All the time I felt my heart beating pit-a-pat, for thinking what I should do if I missed. 'Take it easy,' says I to myself, but that was no aisy matther. At last I got within twenty yards of the deer, who hadn't yet seen me. It may be if I thry to get nearer, he'll know there's danger near and will be off with a whisk of his tail, and my bullet will be flying nowhere; so, just praying that I might shoot straight, I raised my piece as he was lifting his head to look about him. I fired. He leaped into the air, and I thought he was going to be off; but instead of doing that same, over he fell. 'Hurrah! good luck to ye, Pat Casey,' I cried out, making the forest ring with my shouts. I soon had some slices off the deer, and lighting a fire where I was, I quickly cooked them, for I had had nothing to eat since I had finished the aigle. I had now food enough to last me till I could reach the fort, but how to kape it swate till then was the question. I thried to smoke some, but I did not manage it altogether well. I was still considering what to do when, going into the wood to get some more sticks for my fire, I saw the river running directly in front of me. At first I thought it was the big sthrame itself, but when I looked down it and up it, I saw that it was neither, and that if I was going to reach Fort Ross I must cross it somehow or other, but how to get over was the throuble. I'd be dhrowned if I thried, and be no better off than poor Sandy and the rest, so at last I thought to myself, 'I'll just squat where I am; maybe some canoes will be coming this way, or some friendly Indians will be finding me out.' Well, that's the long and short of my history."

We agreed that Pat, perhaps, had acted wisely, knowing the difficulties he would have had to encounter, had he continued his journey overland. He took us to his hut, which was a short distance from the bank of the river. It was very well formed of birch-bark, and of good size. He had made himself a bed from the tops of spruce firs. Alongside it was a smaller hut in which he had hung up his venison. The top of this smaller wigwam was covered with the deer's skin.

During the summer he might have done very well, but in the winter he would, I suspect, have perished from cold and hunger, as he would have had great difficulty in catching any animals. It was indeed fortunate for him that we had put into that river.

We did not forget the object for which we had visited it, and we immediately set to work, under the guidance of Robin, to search for roots and berries.

Of the latter, Pat had already collected a great quantity for present use, but remembering how nearly poisoned we had been, he was afraid to cook any roots. Robin, however, knew well what were good to eat and what were pernicious, and we had perfect confidence in his judgment.

Altogether we added a considerable amount of what I may call vegetables to our stock. As we all had a peculiar longing for them, we at once cooked as many as we could eat, scarcely touching the venison, of which we had already begun to get tired.

Pat, who appeared to consider himself at home, begged that we would occupy his hut for the night, remarking that it was already too late to make much progress before nightfall. We accordingly agreed to stay where we were till the following morning.

His stock of venison added to ours would enable us to perform the voyage without having again to stop and hunt for game. Martin had been employing himself, as he had undertaken to do, in manufacturing some hooks and lines, aided by Robin, who had learned very ingenious arts from the Indians. The rest of us employed the evening in cutting out some moccasins, for not one of us had a pair of shoes to our feet, and should we have to make any portages we should seriously suffer in having to walk with our loads over the hard ground.

We used but a small portion of our deerskins. We intended the remainder to serve as a covering for our provisions in the daytime, and for ourselves at night, should the weather become cold. Our intention, however, was to kill two or three bears, the skins of which might better answer the latter purpose. It was with evident regret that Pat the next morning left the hut in which he had made himself so completely at home; still, he had no wish to remain behind.

"If I had but a few pigs and praties," he observed, with a sigh, "I'd soon be after making a garden of this wilderness."

Again we were paddling down the stream, with Pat on board. There was room for him, and though his weight brought the canoe much deeper in the water than before, as long as it remained calm we had no fear.

We paddled along, and were speaking to Pat of the possibility that Sandy and the other men had escaped. He, however, declared that they must have been drowned, as he had seen them, he asserted, a long way below the rocks in the seething foam, through which it would be impossible for them to swim; still, we had some hopes—knowing the dangers from which some men manage to escape—that they had saved their lives.

Martin had manufactured some hooks, and had greatly improved his fish-spear, of which he was very proud. We had not gone far when we came to a slight rapid, down which, however, Alick declared he should have no difficulty in steering the canoe; though the water ran swiftly and a few dark rocks appeared above the surface, as there were no waves of any size and but comparatively little foam, there did not appear to be much danger.

Martin, who was seated in the bow, exclaimed, "I saw a sturgeon pass us just now; if I catch sight of any more, I must have one of them."

Presently, before Alick could warn him of the danger he was running, he stood up and darted his spear. The next instant what was our horror to see him fall over headlong into the water, the line attached to the spear catching as he did so round his leg!

I was sitting next to him, and attempted to catch hold of one of his feet, which hung for a moment on the gunwale.

The canoe was nearly upset, the water rushing quickly in. At the same time, her bow being stopped she was brought broadside to the current. Before I could catch Martin's foot, it slipped off the gunwale, and he disappeared under the waves.

"He's Rose's brother, and for his own sake I must save him!" exclaimed Alick, and without considering the fearful danger he was running of losing his own life, he threw himself over the stern, and swam towards the spot where Martin had disappeared.

Robin, who was sitting next to him, seizing the steering-paddle, with great presence of mind brought the canoe with her bow down the stream.

"Back, both of you!" he shouted out to Pat and me.

We did as he advised, but the strong current drove the canoe downwards. Just below us a dark rock of some extent rose above the water, and we had to exert ourselves to the utmost to avoid drifting against it.

With the deepest interest we watched Alick's progress. Presently down he dived, and to our joy returned holding Martin in one hand, and energetically treading water, while with the other hand he released him from the line which had got round his leg. The current was rapidly bearing them down towards the rock.

I should have said that there was another rock, just above where the accident happened, and though it scarcely rose above the surface, it had the effect of deflecting the current, thus causing it to run with less violence than would otherwise have been the case against the larger rock. Lower down, a powerful swimmer such as Alick was could alone have borne up another person, and that person almost senseless, and at the same time have contrived to direct his course amid those furious waters. We were using all our efforts to get up to him.

"Keep off!" he shouted. "You will upset the canoe if you attempt to take us on board. I'll make for the rock."

That he would be able to do so, however, seemed very doubtful, and we trembled for his and Martin's safety, while we still plied our paddles to stem the current and at the same time to avoid the rock.

"Go to the other side," shouted Alick; "and, Pat, you get on the rock and help me."

Understanding his intentions, and seeing that it was the best course to pursue, we obeyed his order, and turning

round into our usual position when paddling, we directed the canoe so as to round the southern end of the rock, and then, though drifted down some yards, we once more paddled up to it on its eastern or lower side. Here we could approach it without difficulty, and finding bottom with our paddles, Pat, as directed, stepped out, and clambered up to the top of the rock.

A minute or more of intense anxiety had passed since we had last seen Alick and Martin; and Robin and I looked eagerly up at Pat to hear his report. Without uttering a word, however, we saw him slip down to the other side of the rock.

“Can they have sunk!” exclaimed Robin. “He would have told us if he had seen them.”

“He would not have gone down the rock had they disappeared,” I answered, but still I felt terribly anxious, and wished that Alick had told me to land instead of Pat; still, under such circumstances, it is always wise to obey orders, and I hoped for the best.

To leave the canoe and go to their assistance would be dangerous in the extreme, as, should she drift away, Robin would be unable by himself to paddle her back. I could not, however, resist the temptation of sending Bouncer, and one pat on the back while I pointed to the top of the rock was sufficient to make him leap on to it and climb to the top.

The loud bark he gave and the wag of his tail, as he looked down on the other side, convinced me that our companions were safe, and presently afterwards I saw Alick and Pat lifting Martin’s apparently inanimate body to the summit.

“He is still alive,” cried Alick; “but we must reach the shore, and get a fire lighted as soon as possible.”

He said no more, except to direct us to bring the stern of the canoe closer to the rock.

This we did, when, wading into the water, he placed Martin on board, he himself getting in, followed by Pat and Bouncer.

We were now, we found, close to the foot of the rapid, and a few more strokes carried us into comparatively still water. A short distance off, on the left bank, was a wood of some size. The bank, which here formed a small bay, was sufficiently low to enable us to land; we paddled rapidly towards it, but when we got near the spot we found that the water was not of sufficient depth to allow the canoe, heavily-laden as she was, to get alongside. Pat therefore stepped out, and loading himself with a couple of packages of meat and all the skins, carried them on shore. The rest of us then getting into the water, we were able to drag the canoe much nearer to the bank. On this, Alick lifting Martin by the shoulders and I taking his legs, we carried him on shore.

He made no movement, and as I looked into his face I certainly feared that he was dead. Robin must have thought the same, for, putting his hands before his eyes, he burst into tears.

“Oh! he’s gone, he’s gone!” he murmured.

We could say nothing to reassure our young friend. An open space being found, Pat spread out the skins, and without a moment’s loss of time began to collect wood for a fire. As soon as Robin and I had unloaded the canoe and lifted her up the bank, we assisted him, while Alick, regardless of himself, was getting off Martin’s wet garments. Having done so, he called and desired me to rub his feet and hands, while we wrapped him up in the skins.

Our friend was still breathing, which gave us some encouragement, and we continued our exertions without ceasing. As soon as the fire was lighted we placed him as close to it as was prudent, while Pat and Robin cut some stakes and collected some bark to form a lean-to, that we might still further shelter him. He at length opened his eyes and recognised us, but was still unable to speak. We continued rubbing him, our hopes of his complete restoration being raised.

Pat, also by Alick’s directions, got water and put some venison on to boil, that we might have broth to pour down his throat as soon as he was able to swallow it. The improvement we looked for was, however, so gradual that I proposed—as it was impossible for us to continue our voyage till the next day—that it would be advisable to build a wigwam, which would afford better shelter than the lean-to during the night.

“I agree with you,” answered Alick, “and the sooner you set about it the better.”

“So we will,” I said; “but I wish that you would get off your wet clothes, or, strong as you are, you may suffer from remaining in them so long.”

Alick laughed at this notion. “This fire will soon dry me,” he answered, “and I’ll stay by it and attend to Martin while you three collect the materials and build the wigwam.”

I in vain expostulated with my brother. Even though my clothes were dry, except my moccasins and the lower part of my trousers, I felt the wind very chilly. At last I was obliged to set off with Pat and Robin.

We settled to put up a good large wigwam, which might hold us all; and we could then have a fire in the centre. This for Martin’s sake would be very important. We accordingly cut down the largest saplings we could find, and we were fortunate in discovering numerous large sheets of bark, some in a sufficiently good condition to have formed a canoe, had we been compelled to build one.

A very short time only is necessary to erect a birch-bark wigwam when materials are abundant, as they were in the present instance; and it is wonderful what a comfortable abode it affords, impervious alike to rain or wind or even to

an ordinary amount of cold.

When in a sheltered situation, the Indians pass most severe winters in these habitations, built in the recesses of cypress groves, through which the chilling blast fails to find an entrance. Having put up the wigwam, we cleared away the grass from the interior, and then dug a slight hole in the centre, which we surrounded with the largest stones we could find. This was to form our fireplace. Four little trenches around it, leading to the bottom, would enable a sufficient current of air to enter and keep it blazing. Our next care was to cut down a good supply of spruce fir tops to form couches.

The wigwam was quite large enough for all of us, including Bouncer, and would have held another guest, leaving ample space between the feet of the sleepers and the fire. We little thought at the time how long we should require it.

As soon as it was finished, we lifted Martin up on one of the skins, and carried him into it. He was aware of what we were doing, for as I bent over him I heard him whisper, "Thank you! thank you!" but he could say no more.

The soup, which was now ready, greatly revived him, and we ourselves, after our exertions, were glad of a hearty meal.

I observed Alick, while we were seated round our fire in the wigwam, shivering several times, while he looked unusually pale.

"I am afraid you're ill," I said.

"Oh, it is nothing; I shall be better after supper and some sleep," he answered. "My plunge into the cold water was somewhat trying, perhaps; and I wish I had followed your advice, and dried my clothes at once."

I begged him to put on my coat, and to cover himself up with one of the deerskins, which was not required for Martin, while his clothes were more effectually dried. To this he at last consented, and we hung them up on the side of the fire opposite to that where Martin lay, so as not to deprive him of the warmth.

On going out into the open air, we were sensible of the great difference of temperature which existed inside the hut and outside. We found it necessary to keep the entrance open, instead of closing it with a piece of bark which we had prepared for the purpose.

Alick's clothes were soon quite dry, when, having put them on, he stretched himself on the bed we had prepared for him. As he did so, I saw him again shiver violently several times. This made me more than ever apprehensive that he had received a chill. He confessed, indeed, that his head ached terribly, and that he felt sometimes extremely hot, and then very cold. Even a mugful of hot soup, which we got him to swallow, did not seem to do him any good; and as he was now unable to attend to Martin, I took his place.

The next morning, as I feared, though Martin was slightly better, Alick was very ill and utterly unfit to proceed on the voyage. We at once made up our minds to remain where we were for that day, or perhaps for longer if necessary. Alick, though very weak, was perfectly conscious.

"Don't lose time," he whispered to me; "but do you and Robin go out and try and shoot some game. If our voyage is delayed we may be running short of provisions. Pat will remain with Martin and me, for as he is no shot, he would only be throwing the ammunition away."

Pat, who was not vain of his powers as a sportsman, readily consented to this.

"Shure, I'll be afther taking good care of the jintleman," he said. "If a bear or a wolf comes this way, faith, he'll be sorry for it to the end of his days."

Bouncer accompanied us, and he was so well-trained that he would assist us greatly should we fall in with a deer. We were more successful even than we expected, for we killed a small deer and three squirrels, and on our return saw several other animals—another deer, a raccoon lodged comfortably high up between the branches of a tree, a black fox, and a wolverine; which showed us that, should we have to remain on the spot, we were not likely to run short of provisions.

"If we have to remain out during the winter, we shall want skins of all sorts to make clothes and bed-coverings," observed Robin.

"Why do you say that?" I asked.

"Because I think that there is a great chance of our not getting to the fort before the winter sets in," he answered. "We have already been a long time about our voyage, and I fear, both from your brother's and Martin's state, that we may be detained here several days. Alick's fever is only just commencing, and Martin cannot recover in a hurry; though he's not worse to-day, he's very little better."

I could not help agreeing with him, and when we got back to the camp we were both confirmed in the opinion he had expressed. Alick's fever had increased, and Martin was still so weak that he could only just open his eyes and utter a few words in a low voice. Pat had been very attentive in feeding him with small mouthfuls of soup at a time—the best thing he could do.

Poor Alick could take nothing, though he was thankful to have his lips moistened with cold water. Robin and I felt very anxious about their condition, but we did not let them see this, and endeavoured to keep up their spirits and our own. The fresh meat we had brought was of great benefit to Martin, as Pat could make better soup with it than he had

before been able to do with the dry venison. The next day we were all too much alarmed about Alick even to leave the wigwam; indeed, for several days he seemed to hang between life and death, till a turn came, and he began slowly to mend—so slowly, though, that we gave up all hopes of continuing our voyage. Martin got better rather more rapidly, and was at length able to assist in attending to Alick. He did so with the greatest care. He was aware of the gallant way, with the fearful risk of losing his own life, in which Alick had saved his.

The Indian summer—that period between the first breaking up of the real summer weather and the setting in of the frost—lasted but a few days. The leaves of the trees changed from green to varied tints of red, brown, yellow, and purple, hanging but a short time, and the first icy winds brought them in showers to the ground.

One morning, when we looked out of our wigwam, the whole face of nature was changed. The boughs of the trees were bending with the snow, and the country on every side was covered with a sheet of white. By closing the entrance of our wigwam, and keeping a fire constantly burning, we maintained a sufficient heat in the interior. The severe frost, however, of that northern region had not yet commenced; but come it would, we knew, and we talked earnestly of the means we must take to enable us to encounter it. Robin and I had been pretty successful with our guns, and we had kept our party well supplied with game. We had killed two more deer, and should have been glad to fall in with three or four bears for the sake of their skins; but, except that of the bear Alick had killed, we had no other. Still, we had reason to be thankful that we had deerskins sufficient to clothe all the party.

As Martin got better he employed himself in making some small nets of wattap, of which we obtained a plentiful supply. He had also manufactured another spear, and he proposed, as soon as he was able to go out, to attempt catching some fish.

During one of our excursions, Robin and I had reached the shore of a fine lake, in the clear water of which we had seen several large white-fish; and when we told Martin, he begged that we would take his net and spear and try to catch them.

“But they are all under the ice now, for the lake must be frozen over,” I observed.

“So much the better; you will catch them the more easily,” he answered. “All you have to do is to cut a hole in the ice, and let down the net, and the fish which will come to breathe at the open water are sure to be caught.”

As Martin himself was unable to go out, Robin and I undertook to follow his directions, at which he appeared greatly pleased. As both he and Alick seemed to wish for fish we set off at once, leaving Pat to take care of them.

We found the lake completely frozen over, and though the ice was not yet very thick, it was sufficiently so to bear our weight. With our long sheath-knives we contrived after some labour to cut a hole in the ice; we then let down one of the nets, holding tight to the upper edge. We had not long to wait, when we felt by the violent agitation of the net that a fish had been caught. We hauled it carefully in, not knowing whether the fish might escape; but it was securely fastened by the gills, and we soon had it safe. It weighed, we calculated, between six and eight pounds.

Our success encouraged us to proceed, and another fish, of a still larger size, was captured.

“This is good fun,” cried Robin. “We shall never want food while we can catch fish in this fashion.”

Again we put down the net; but though we waited long, no fish came into it. Losing patience, we agreed to cut another hole at some distance off, fancying that the fish might have been frightened at seeing their companions drawn so suspiciously out of the water. Having cut the hole, we, as before, let down the net, and shortly afterwards captured a third fish. I suspect that, had we remained at the first hole, we should have been equally successful.

The fish at this early season of the year were probably swimming about freely under the water, and did not require the fresh air which afterwards would become so welcome to them. We cut two or three other holes, and altogether caught five fish—a pretty fair load to carry home. We had the advantage, at this season of the year, of being able to keep them fresh; for they froze soon after they were taken out of the water, and would remain thus perfectly stiff till the return of spring, or till put into water, when the frost would be drawn out of them.

That evening, for supper, we had roasted fish and boiled fish, both of which Alick and Martin greatly relished. We made several trips after this to the lake, and the first day Martin was able to set out on an excursion he accompanied us. On that day we were more successful than ever, owing to his superior skill and practical experience. We each returned home heavily-laden.

Alick was still too weak to go out, but he had sufficiently recovered to take an interest in all that was going forward, as also to consider our prospects for the future.

“One thing is certain, boys: if we are to remain here, we must build a warmer abode than our present one,” he observed. “This does very well to sleep in at present; but, as you all know, we shall presently have weather when we may be frozen in our beds, even if we should manage to keep up a fire all night. We must build a log hut with a chimney of stones and clay. I wish we had thought of it before, when the ground was soft, and we could have dug up the stones and found mud to stop the intervals between the logs. We may still manage it, but there is very little time to lose, I suspect, if we are to escape the fate of the gallant Willoughby and his brave men, who were all found frozen on board their ship to the north of Lapland.”

We were all eager to do as Alick proposed, but as we had but one axe between us, it must be a slow process, I knew; and the axe might break, and the work be stopped altogether. The next morning we commenced operations by marking a number of trees suited for the purpose. Taking the axe, I began chopping away at the first tree we intended to fell. No further progress was, however, made in the work. I had given but a few strokes when I was interrupted in my task.

## Chapter Eleven.

**Indians abroad—The log cabin in the wilderness—The sick man—The old iron pot—The litter—Bouncer is left in a barge—Misticook's sledge—Rabushway's advice—Robin's delight on discovering his father—Preparing to start—Snow-shoes and fur coats—Honest Bouncer works well in harness—Tea and sugar a luxury—Pat's unlucky mishap—Snow-blindness—Coyotes—No food—The deserted fort—Bears and bear's flesh—We start for Touchwood Hills—Wolves and starvation—We go supperless to bed—Thong soup—Bouncer saves his bacon.**

"Whist! Mister David, whist!" exclaimed Pat, hurrying up to me. "There are Indians lurking about, and they will be sure to be afther discovering us before long. I caught sight of one of them not half an hour ago, away there down the river, as I was looking out for a bird or a baste to shoot for Mister Alick's supper, seeing it's fresh mate he wants more than anything else to set him up again. The redskin did not discover me, as his face was the other way; but I saw a wreath of smoke curling up among the trees on the opposite bank of the river, and it was towards it he was making his way."

"The Indian you saw may be a friend quite as likely as a foe," I answered, not feeling much alarmed at Pat's report. "We must, however, find out who he is. I will consult my brother, and hear what he advises."

"But if there are a whole band of Indians, they may come some night and take our scalps while we are aslape," said Pat, who, though brave as need be when it came to the pinch, held the Indians in especial dread.

Shouldering the axe, I called Martin and Robin, who were selecting trees for our proposed hut at some little distance off. I told them of the information I had just received from Pat, and together we returned to the wigwam to consult Alick. He took the matter with perfect composure.

"It is important to ascertain the position of their camp, and whether there are few or many Indians," he observed. "Pat says he has only seen one. If I were well enough I would go out myself; but as it is, I think it will be best for you, David, and Robin to accompany Pat, and to try and get a sight of the camp. As they must, if we remain here, discover us before long, it will be wise to try and get on friendly terms with them. It is possible that they may be well disposed towards the white men, and have been accustomed to trade at the forts. If you can get near their camp without being discovered as evening approaches, you will be able to ascertain how many there are of them, and to what tribe they belong. If you know them to be friends, you can at once go up to them and sit down at their fire. If you are doubtful, it may be better for Robin alone to make his appearance. You, Robin, can tell them that a party of white men, who wish to become their friends, are encamped near."

"I am very ready to do whatever you propose," answered Robin. "I shall have no fear of going among them, whoever they may be, and I fully believe they are likely to prove friends."

"Should such be the case, tell them that we shall be able to assist each other. If they have no firearms they can track out the game for us, and we can shoot it and share the meat; and say that we will reward them liberally for any aid they may render us," said Alick.

Our plan of proceeding was soon arranged. Leaving Bouncer with Alick and Martin, Pat, Robin, and I set out towards the spot where the former had seen the Indian. We then crept forward in single file, carefully concealing ourselves among the bushes, and before long saw a wreath of smoke such as Pat had described curling up amid the trees at no great distance off.

Though Alick had advised us to wait till sundown, as we saw no one moving about and the nature of the ground afforded us sufficient concealment, we advanced farther, when what was our surprise, as we got round a thickly wooded point, to see, not an Indian wigwam, but a substantially built log cabin, with a stone chimney, from which the smoke was ascending.

"The inhabitants, whoever they are, are not likely to be unfriendly," exclaimed Robin. "Let us go across the river at once and announce ourselves."

"The Indians may possibly have taken possession of the log hut, and we should follow Alick's directions," I observed.

"Then, as it seems doubtful, let me go alone," said Robin. "That will be doing as Alick desired me, and I have no fear about the matter."

While Robin was speaking, an Indian appeared at the door, whom we at once knew from his appearance to be an Ojibbeway, and therefore a friend to the English. He retired again into the hut.

This settled all our doubts as to the reception we were likely to meet with. Crossing the river, which was here strongly frozen over, we made our way towards the hut. As we advanced we observed the remains of other buildings, and I now felt sure that it was a deserted missionary station of which I had heard but had never visited, as it lay out of the direct route between the forts.

Who the inhabitants of the hut could be we could not surmise. Probably they were weatherbound travellers like ourselves.

"If Sandy and the other men hadn't been drowned, bedad, I should be afther thinking it was themselves," observed Pat.

I greatly hoped that our friend Sandy had escaped, and that we should find him occupying the hut. It stood a little



way back from the river, on a piece of level ground, surrounded by trees whose branches were now weighed down with the snow. Climbing up the bank, we were approaching the door, when our footsteps must have been heard, for it opened, and the same Indian we had before seen appeared, gun in hand.

On discovering that we were whites, he turned round and uttered a few words, as if addressing some other person within.

"You friends!" he exclaimed; "glad see you."

"Yes, indeed we are, and very glad to see you," I answered, advancing and putting out my hand. He took it, and then went through the same ceremony with Robin and Pat.

"Come in; but not make much noise," he said, looking over his shoulder; "sick man in there—very sick; glad to see you; maybe you do him good."

"I hope that we may," I said, as I advanced into the hut, followed by Robin and Pat.

A fire was blazing on the hearth, and with his feet towards it lay a tall man on a low rough bunk covered over with a buffalo-robe. I saw that a number of things were piled up in the corner of the hut, but the scanty furniture was of the roughest description. The whole was comprised in a table formed of a slab of fir and a couple of three-legged stools.

"Who are you, friends?" asked the sick man on the bunk, feebly raising his head to look at us.

There was no window in the hut to admit light, but the fire showed a bright glare on the countenance of the speaker. It was thin and worn, and deadly pale; it seemed to me as I gazed at him that he could have but a few days to live.

Drawing near and sitting down on one of the stools which he bade me take, I briefly told him of the capture of Fort Black, and of our several mishaps while endeavouring to make our way to Fort Ross. I added that my brother and a friend were at the camp a short distance off, but that the former was too ill to venture on the journey at this inclement season of the year, and that we were about to build a hut in which we might pass the winter.

"You are welcome to share this hut with me, or rather you have as much right to it as I have, except that possession is said to be nine-tenths of the law," he answered. "However, I will not dispute your right, and should be very glad of your company, especially if you bring provisions; for though I have enough for myself and my faithful Ojibbeways, I could not undertake to feed five more mouths."

I assured him that we should be very unwilling to exhaust his store; that we had sufficient meat to last us for some time.

While I was speaking, I saw him looking at Robin and Pat, but he asked no questions about them. I told him that we must now return to the camp, or my brother would be growing anxious, and that I hoped we should be able to join him the next day, provided that Alick was well enough to bear the journey.

"You should not delay," he remarked, "for we may expect the winter to set in shortly with far greater rigour than hitherto, and your brother might suffer from being exposed to it."

"May I venture to ask how you came to be here?" I said, as I was preparing to go.

"By a very simple accident," he answered. "I was on a hunting expedition with several followers when, while in the neighbourhood, I was suddenly seized with an illness. Most of my followers took it into their heads that it was the smallpox, and deserted me, with the exception of two Ojibbeways, who remained faithful and brought me to this hut, of the existence of which they were aware, having received instruction here when it was occupied by a missionary. We found it in a very dilapidated condition; but they repaired the roof and rendered it habitable. Had it not been for their care I should have died, and I am still, as you see, hovering between life and death. Don't let me detain you."

The voice and language of the person whom we found in this deplorable state convinced me that he was a gentleman. I felt, however, unwilling to leave him longer under the care of the Indians, for I saw what he said about himself was too true, and I feared that even before we could return he might die. I proposed leaving Robin with him, and Robin himself said that he should very much like to remain; but then I recollected that we should require four persons to carry Alick, and that he could not be spared.

The sick man's eyes were again turned towards Robin as I spoke.

"Strange!" I heard him mutter to himself. "It must be but fancy, though."

I again expressed my regret that none of us could remain.

"I would not detain you," he answered. "Your companion requires probably more care than I do. I have only to lie here and suffer. My medicine-chest is well-nigh exhausted, and I must now trust to nature. Farewell! I hope to see you all to-morrow."

He spoke in the tone of a gentleman inviting a party of guests to his house. We took our departure, and hurried back as fast as we could go. The shades of evening were rapidly increasing; the cold was becoming intense. We were not likely to lose our way, but that was possible, and the consequences might be serious.

"There is something strange in the tone of his voice," observed Robin, as he walked by my side. "I could almost fancy that I had heard it before, and yet I don't remember ever seeing anybody like him."

Before I could answer, Robin had to fall behind me to follow in my trail, and, indeed, we had to move too rapidly to allow of any conversation. It was becoming darker and darker, and I anxiously looked out for the camp-fire, which I felt sure Martin would keep up to guide us on our way. I should have been thankful could we have moved into warm quarters that night, for I feared that Alick would suffer from the cold.

It was a great relief when I at length caught sight of a bright light between the trunks of the trees, as I knew that it must proceed from our camp-fire. We hurried on, and found Martin busily employed in cooking supper. He had made some soup for Alick. I don't know what we should have done without that old iron pot. He had also lighted a small fire in the centre of our wigwam, which of course required constant attention, lest any sparks should reach the inflammable materials of which our habitation was composed.

"What news?" asked Martin, looking up from his occupation. "Don't stop to tell me here—it's wonderfully cold; but go inside, and I'll come and hear all about it. Pat, you carry the pot, and I'll bring in the roast. You'll want some food, I suspect, after your expedition."

We followed his advice. Pat took off the pot, and we were all soon seated round our wigwam with the entrance carefully closed. Alick was of course much surprised to hear the account we gave him, and declared that he should be perfectly ready to set off the next morning; he would go on his own feet if he could, but if not he must ask us to carry him.

"Shure, it's not on your own feet you're going, Mister Alick," observed Pat; "we'll build you an illigant litter, and carry you on our four shoulders."

Alick felt conscious that the journey would surpass his powers, and thanked Pat for his good intentions. The Irishman, who was sincerely attached to my brother, proposed immediately setting to work to form a litter, and in spite of the cold, as soon as supper was over he went out with the axe on his shoulder; and, aided by the light of the fire, he cut two long saplings and several smaller pieces, with which he returned to the hut.

Before they lay down to sleep, he and Martin put together a litter well suited for carrying Alick. I was thankful the next morning to find my brother so much better, and as soon as we had had some breakfast, having stretched one of the skins over the litter, we placed him on it, covering him up carefully with the others.

Not till we were about to start did we think of the danger to which our camp would be exposed by being left without any protection.

"Shure, Bouncer will look afther that," said Pat. "Here, Bouncer, see that not a wolf, or a grizzly, or an Indian, or any other brute comes to our camp till we are back again to carry off the things."

The dog clearly understood him, and set himself down at the entrance of our wigwam. We then, taking up Alick, commenced our journey to the log hut.

Considerable as was the cold, the excursion we had to make kept us warm, and Alick, being well covered up, did not suffer from it. We felt much anxiety as we approached our destination with regard to the sick stranger, and I was prepared as we got up to the door to hear the worst.

I was greatly relieved when the Indian, appearing at the door, told us that the gentleman was no worse. Sitting up in his bunk, he welcomed us with a languid smile, and begged that we would place Alick by his side near the fire.

We had brought the iron pot at Martin's request, that he might make some soup for the two invalids.

"We want you to assist in bringing our provisions from the camp," I observed.

"Oh! then let me attend to the soup," exclaimed Robin. "I don't want to shirk my duty."

As Martin was now perfectly recovered, he agreed to Robin's proposal.

"The lad will be able to attend to all our wants," remarked the sick man, who seemed pleased that Robin should remain. He then turned to the Ojibbeway, and desired him to accompany us, observing that Rabushway, the other Indian, had gone out hunting in the morning, and would probably not return till late. Misticook, the Indian we found at the hut, expressed his readiness to accompany us, and he, Martin, Pat, and I set off at once for our camp.

In broad daylight the journey appeared much shorter than it had done the previous evening. As we got up to the camp, I examined it with no little anxiety, fearing that during our absence a prowling bear or band of more ferocious wolves might have broken into it, and carried off our provisions, though I knew that Bouncer would have fought to the death before he allowed them to approach. My fears were at an end when he came rushing out with a cheerful bark to welcome us, wagging his tail and leaping up to assure us that all was safe.

Martin and I at once began making up the packages to carry on our backs.

"That not do; I no carry these things," observed Misticook.

"Arrah! thin, why in the name of wonder did you come?" exclaimed Pat.

"You see, I show better way," answered the Indian, and forthwith taking his axe from his belt, he chopped two branches from a neighbouring tree, about ten feet long, turning up at the ends. He then adroitly secured several cross-pieces a little more than a foot long, and in a short time had manufactured a rough sledge. To this he lastly fastened some of the thongs which he had brought with him, to serve as traces.

"Now what you carry?" he asked.

We showed him the packages we had done up. Nearly as much again remained, for which we had intended to return. He placed the whole of it on the sledge, securing it firmly.

"Now ready," he said, and started off.

We took a look round, to see that nothing was left behind, and then followed, but found it difficult to keep up with Misticook, who glanced round every now and then in triumph at us.

"I wish that we also had made a sledge," said Martin; "we might have saved ourselves a good deal of trouble."

However, our pride would not allow us to give in, and we managed to reach the hut soon after the Indian.

We found Robin seated by the side of the sick man, who had fallen asleep. Robin put up his finger as a sign to us not to make any noise. We placed our packages with the other things already there, against the walls, as well as those which had been brought on the sleigh.

I then observed that there were a number of buffalo-ropes and a small tent, and several other articles of traveller's gear. Alick seemed much better.

"I shall be all to rights in a few days, I hope," he said; "but I fear that the days of the poor man there are numbered. He has spoken but little during your absence though I remarked that his eyes were continually falling upon Robin as he moved about the hut."

"We shall see how he is when he awakes. In the meantime, as you must be hungry, I advise you to take the food Robin has prepared."

We very gladly followed the advice, and then lay down to rest.

In the evening Rabushway, the other Ojibbeway, returned with a ground-squirrel, the only animal he had shot; the previous day he had killed nothing; he reported that game was very scarce. Knowing that we were coming to the hut, he expressed no surprise at seeing us. He, however, did not look very well pleased.

"If you wish to live, you must go out and shoot," he observed, "or else we all starve."

"We will do what we can, depend on that," I answered; and Martin and I agreed to accompany him the next morning.

The sick man slept on and on, till at last I began to fear that he would not awake. At length, greatly to my relief, I heard him speaking to Robin, and I went up to the side of his bunk to inquire how he felt.

"As I have done for several days," he answered.

Robin, who had gone to the fire, brought him some broth.

"This will restore your strength, sir," he said, "for it has done Alick much good."

The sick man took it with a faint smile, for he doubted whether anything would do him good.

"Your elder brother will, I hope, soon be well," he observed. "He only requires food and rest."

"He is not my brother," answered Robin; on which, thinking it might interest the sick man, he briefly described how he had been carried off by the Indians, and finally, having made his escape from them, been brought to Fort Black.

The stranger was evidently listening with intense interest.

"Tell me, boy," he exclaimed, interrupting him—"have you no recollection of your parents? What's your name?"

"Oh yes, indeed I have. I remember them well—my father and mother, and my sister Ella, and little brother Oliver. My name is Robin Grey!"

Almost before the words were out of his mouth, the sick man stretched out his arms, exclaiming—

"I thought it was so. Come here, my boy. I am your father. Long and almost hopelessly I have searched for you."

Robin embraced his father. "O papa, I remember you now," he answered, "though you look so ill and sad; but you must get well, you must not die; and dear mamma and Ella and Oliver?"

"They were quite well when I left them many months ago; though your poor mother has never ceased to mourn for your loss," answered Captain Grey. "I could not bear to see her suffering, and year after year, since you were lost, I have set off in search of you, returning home only when driven back by the winter. While I lay here I believed that I must abandon all hopes of restoring you to your mother's arms; and, ungrateful as I was, a merciful Providence has brought you to me."

"O papa! papa! I am so happy," cried Robin. "You must get well, and we'll go back together to mamma and dear little Ella and Oliver."

Captain Grey smiled faintly.

"You must pray with me to God that He will restore me, for He alone has the power," he answered; "and we must never again mistrust His providence."

This unexpected meeting between Robin and his father gave us all sincere pleasure, and made us acknowledge that our course had been directed by a Superior Power. I cannot but suppose that Robin's arrival at that very moment had the effect of giving a turn to his father's complaint; though, for several days, we perceived no change in him.

All we could see was that he was not worse.

Alick rapidly recovered, and in the course of a week was on foot and able to face the wintry cold.

A heavy fall of snow prevented us from leaving the hut, so we employed the time in manufacturing snow-shoes, without which we saw that it would be impossible to go in search of game. On examining our store of provisions, we found that unless we could kill some large game—either a buffalo, a deer, or a bear—we should be compelled to trespass on Captain Grey's stock.

Alick and I discussed the matter when we were out together.

"I see no other alternative, should we fail to obtain an abundance of meat, than to push on at once to Fort Ross," he observed. "You and I and Martin and Pat must go. I shall be very sorry to part from Robin, but we must, of course, leave him with his father, and endeavour as soon as possible to send them assistance. I wish that we could find a doctor to send to them, for I fear that the captain will not recover without medical aid. As it is, should the two Ojibbeways be unsuccessful in hunting, they will be very hard pressed for food."

I agreed in this with Alick, but I thought that Captain Grey would get well in the course of time, without a doctor. I hoped so, indeed, for there was but little prospect of our finding one.

As soon as the weather cleared, Alick, Martin, and I set off on snow-shoes with our guns, but returned without having seen even the trace of an animal. For three days in succession we went out, but came back as unsuccessful as at first. We accordingly, as we had determined, told Captain Grey of our proposal to start forthwith for Fort Ross.

He appeared to be very unwilling to let us go.

"I don't wish to detain you on my own account, though I shall be sorry to lose your society," he said, "but Robin will be very solitary without your companionship; and should death overtake me, I dread to think of the situation the poor boy will be left in with these two Indians alone."

We endeavoured to raise the captain's spirits by promising to send him aid, and pointing out to him that our plan was the best for all parties. We at length succeeded, and as he consented to our proposal, we made immediate preparations for our departure. We first set to work to manufacture fresh knapsacks, with one of which each of us was provided, as also fur coats and caps, that we might be enabled the better to withstand the cold, to which we must inevitably be exposed.

Our snow-shoes were strengthened for the long tramp we had in prospect. Fortunately we found a sleigh in the hut, the wood of which was in good condition. It was simply a thin board, twelve feet long, twelve inches broad, and turned up at one end, from the top of which end to the hinder part, two thin poles were fixed on either side for the purpose of fastening the thongs by which the baggage carried on it was to be secured.

We also manufactured some harness from buffalo thongs for Bouncer, who was destined to drag it. Pat undertook to drag the sledge which Misticook had made to bring the provisions from our camp. The captain insisted that we should take the tent, as it was but small, and would greatly contribute to our comfort; and he also gave us a further supply of powder and shot, of which we had run short.

The morning we had arranged to start arrived. It was snowing, but not sufficiently heavy to delay us. We had tried Bouncer twice before, and he seemed fully to understand the duty required of him. Pat, who was less accustomed to snow-shoes than the rest of us, practised himself frequently, that he might perform the journey without any inconvenience. Robin had been too stoically brought up among the Indians to exhibit the sorrow he felt at seeing us depart, but he was satisfied that it was his duty to remain with his father. After shaking us all by the hand, he resumed his seat by the side of the captain, apparently being unwilling actually to witness our start.

The two Indians came out of the hut to give us their final advice as to how, under various circumstances, we should act. While Alick was securing the cargo of Bouncer's sleigh, and I held the brave dog, who once having got on the harness, was eager to set out. Pat led the way with his sleigh to make a road, the direction we were to take having before been arranged.

"Good-bye! good-bye!" we cried to the Indians, and away we started, Martin following Pat, while I went just ahead of Bouncer, and Alick brought up the rear. It continued to snow harder than we liked, though as there was but little wind, we did not in consequence suffer. Pat, whose sleigh was but lightly laden, went on bravely, he having wisely placed his knapsack and gun upon it. We, having heavier weights to carry, had at first some difficulty in keeping up with him; and as we were compelled to proceed in Indian file, we could hold but little conversation with each other.

Bouncer needed no whip, but followed closely at my heels, assisted by Alick when any hill had to be surmounted.

At first we kept along the margin of the river; then having ascended the bank, we found ourselves on level ground, covered by an almost unbroken sheet of snow, here and there only a line of trees showing themselves above the wide expanse of white.

Captain Grey had given Alick a compass, which much assisted us in directing our course. The snow ceased about

noon, and we halted in the open plain, to enjoy what was decidedly a cold collation, for there was no wood to light a fire, and we did not think it worth while to unpack our sleigh to put up the tent.

We were more fortunate in the evening in reaching a thick grove, sheltered by which we encamped. On Pat's sleigh were three short poles, over which the little tent was stretched. It was large enough to allow us four, with Bouncer, to creep inside, while the sleighs were placed one on one side and one on the other, to prevent the canvas from being blown away.

We made up our fire at a sufficient distance from the tent, to avoid the risk of the flames catching it.

Captain Grey had supplied us with some tea and sugar, and I shall never forget how much we enjoyed the warm beverage, after our long tramp across the snow.

Having taken a good meal, we all turned in, wrapped in our buffalo-ropes, knowing that Bouncer would warn us should any enemy approach. The only enemies we had to dread were bears or wolves, and we should not have objected to be visited by one of the former, provided we had time to get a fair shot at it.

Nothing occurred that night to disturb our repose, and we arose in good spirits, anticipating a successful termination to our journey. In the morning the sky was clear, and the sun glanced brightly over the glittering sheet of snow. It was perfectly calm, and we trudged on cheerfully, every now and then exchanging remarks with each other. We had been walking for some hours, and had agreed that it would soon be time to stop for dinner, when Martin complained of a peculiar pricking in the eyelids.

"Shure, it's the same sort of thing I've been feeling," exclaimed Pat. "It's mighty unpleasant, but I thought I'd say nothing about it."

It did not occur to me at the time that the symptoms were those which precede snow-blindness, and Alick was too far behind to hear what was said. I had found the glare of the sun unpleasant, and had drawn the front of my cap somewhat over my eyes, which I kept partially closed, fixing them only on Martin's dark coat, which served to guide me. It was owing to this that I did not experience the sensations of which my companions complained.

Nothing more was said on the subject for some time, and Pat went forward at his usual pace.

The ground became at length rather more uneven than before, but Pat manfully dragged forward his sleigh without complaining; and Alick, who, though coming last, was really directing us like a helmsman at the wheel, seemed to consider that we were going right.

Presently I heard a cry, and looking over Martin's shoulder, I saw Pat's legs in the air, and the sleigh, the hinder part of which Martin had just caught hold of, tipping up, as if about to follow the Irishman down the hollow into which it was evident he had fallen. I sprang forward as fast as my snow-shoes would allow me, to catch hold of the sleigh, when what was my dismay to see Pat's feet disappear altogether beneath the snow, his stifled cries alone reaching my ears.

"He has fallen into a deep pit, I fear," cried Martin.

"He'll be smothered if we don't dig him out quickly," I said.

Martin and I, going ahead of the sleigh, hauled away at the traces which were secured round Pat's body, but in our efforts to haul him out they broke. We became seriously alarmed, for the snow falling in completely concealed Pat from sight.

Alick, seeing what had happened, came hurrying up ahead of Bouncer, who sagaciously halted. Every moment of delay was of consequence, but before we could do anything we had to take off our snow-shoes. Alick then holding on to the sledge, which we brought close to the side of the pit, plunged into it, feeling with his hands in the hopes of catching hold of one of Pat's feet, while we shovelled away, lying flat with our heads and shoulders over the hollow, endeavouring to throw out the snow.

"I feel one of Pat's shoes!" cried Alick at length. "Here is a foot! Pass the broken trace down to me."

We did as he directed. Presently we caught sight of another foot which was still moving about, showing that the owner was not yet altogether suffocated.

I succeeded in getting hold of it.

"Now, haul away!" cried Alick. "We mustn't mind how we get him out, provided he comes out."

We pulled and pulled, the snow slipping in around us, and at length the Irishman's legs came into view, though, as Alick was on one side of the hole and I on the other, their owner must have suffered no little inconvenience and pain. As soon, however, as Alick could get on firmer ground, the body quickly followed, and at length we heard Pat's voice in smothered tones exclaiming, "Shure, if you pull my legs off, I'll niver be able to walk again at all, at all!"

"Never mind your legs, if we can get your head out," answered Alick, laughing.

We saw that Pat was not likely to be much the worse for the adventure, and in a few seconds we got him safe out of the hole, and in a few more he was all to rights, and we helped him put on his snow-shoes, which were fortunately not broken. His cap had stuck to his head, and he had not even lost his mitts.

"Bedad! I thought I was niver going to stop till I got to the bottom of the airth! I'm mighty obliged to yese, for if ye

hadn't caught me I should have been going on still," said Pat, shaking the snow from his fur dress.

We again put on our snow-shoes, while Pat was knotting the traces. Making a circuit to avoid the pit, which was of considerable extent, we proceeded as before. We had gone two or three miles farther, and were near a wood, when Pat cried out, "For the life of me it's more than I can do to see the way," and Martin confessed that he also had almost lost his sight.

I told Alick what they said.

"It is snow-blindness," he answered—"a serious matter. We must camp without delay. Do you go on, David, ahead of Pat, and show the way."

I told Pat, who was stumbling on, to stop while I took the lead of the train. He then easily followed, and Martin kept after his sledge. We went on in this way till we reached the wood for which I was steering.

On getting under its shelter we lost no time in putting up the tent, in which we immediately placed our two now perfectly blind companions. Alick and I had cause to be thankful that we had not suffered in the same way.

How dreadful would have been our fate had the whole party been struck by snow-blindness!

Alick remembered to have heard that the only cure was to bathe the eyes in cold water, and to remain under shelter. We might thus be delayed for several days, but as we could not tell that we should not be attacked in the same way, we thought this better than attempting to reach Fort Ross without stopping. We lighted a fire, and put some snow into the pot to melt. We had abundance of food for the journey, so that the delay on that account was not of much consequence, though we might have to go on short commons at the end of it.

Our blind companions found great relief from bathing their eyes. We had to take the pot again and again to the fire, as it rapidly cooled and began to freeze. All arrangements having been made, Alick took his gun, and went out in the hopes of finding some game in the wood. Late in the evening he returned without having shot anything. Another whole day passed, and on the third, as Martin began to see a little, leaving Bouncer to assist him in taking care of the camp, I accompanied Alick.

We had been out some hours when we caught sight of a small deer, to which we gave chase. It kept a long way ahead of us, but we followed its trail, determined, at all costs, to have it. It stopped several times, and at last, we having got within range, Alick was tempted to fire.

His shot took effect, but the deer bounded off, though we saw by the crimson stains on the snow that it was severely wounded; still it kept ahead of us, and disappeared behind a grove of larches.

Feeling pretty sure that it would seek for shelter in the wood, and knowing that we could always trace it, as we were both weary of our long run, we sat down for a few minutes to rest.

"Now," cried Alick, "well go and get the deer."

Again we started off, but had not gone many paces when we heard the faint sounds of yelping and barking. The trail was clear enough, but the deer, though wounded, had evidently gone at a great pace. In a short time we discovered that the trail had been joined by that of several other animals coming from the right hand and the left, which we at once knew to be wolves.

"We shall lose our venison, I fear, if we don't make haste," said Alick.

The yelping and barking sounds increased in loudness, when we saw ahead of us, amid the snow, a flashing of tails and flying hair, and directly afterwards a dozen or more dark forms, all tugging and snarling and occasionally biting at each other, evidently employed in pulling away at a body on the ground.

They were "coyotes," or small prairie-wolves; but though small, they exhibit wonderful activity and power of swallowing. By the time we got up to the brutes they had devoured every particle of the deer, and nothing remained but a well-picked skeleton, from which they slunk off when we were almost close enough to knock them over with the butts of our guns. They were not worth shooting, so we let them go, and, bitterly disappointed, set off to return to our camp. We had no difficulty in finding our way, but it was trying to have lost our game after so long a chase, especially as we greatly needed the venison both for ourselves and Bouncer, who required to be well fed.

The next morning Pat, as well as Martin, had sufficiently recovered to set off again. By Alick's advice we fastened some dark handkerchiefs over our faces, with two minute holes in them through which we could look. We could, however, see only directly before us, unless, we turned our heads.

We had been compelled to use up the greater portion of our food during these four days' delay. On the evening of the fifth day after leaving the camp at which we had so long remained, we found ourselves approaching Fort Ross.

All our troubles, we hoped, would now be at an end. We had exhausted the remainder of our pemmican and dried meat at the last, meal we had taken at noon, having given Bouncer a larger portion than usual. That did not matter. We were about to be welcomed by our friends, and to enjoy an abundance. We all felt hungry, and could not help talking of the warm supper which would soon be placed before us. We therefore trudged cheerfully forward, Pat every now and then giving forth one of his merry Irish songs.

At last the flanking towers of Fort Ross came into view through the dim twilight, but no flag was flying, nor did we see anybody moving about.

"Of course they hauled down the flag at sunset," said Martin, "but I wonder they didn't see us. They would be sure to be keeping a lookout."

Alick made no remark. I expected every instant to see Mr Meredith or some of the garrison come out to welcome us.

The gate was reached, but no one appeared. We knocked and shouted, and Bouncer barked. No answer came, neither to his nor our calls.

"The fort is deserted!" I exclaimed. "What dreadful event can have happened?"

"Mr Meredith for some reason or other was ordered to retire. Had the Indians captured the fort, the gate would have been left open," observed Alick.

"The sooner we get in and ascertain what has occurred, the better," said Martin.

"Faix, thin, if you'll give me a lift I'll soon find out," said Pat, taking off his snow-shoes.

The poles of the tent were placed against the gate, and with our help Pat climbed them till he could reach the top with his hands, when, drawing himself up, he got his head and shoulders over.

"Sorra a man do I see," he cried out, "but, bedad, there's a black baste waddling along on the opposite side. There's another, and another. They're bears, and seem to be the only garrison left in the place. Just hand me up my gun, please, for I should not like having them coming to turn me out without the manes of disputing the matter."

We handed Pat up his gun, when he immediately slipped down inside and made haste to undo the fastenings of the gate.

It was opened, and we hurried in, dragging the sledges after us. We loosened Bouncer, that he might be able to do battle should any of the bears venture to attack us. They, however, the very moment we had arrived, were, so it seemed to us, on the point of evacuating the fort, and the last of them must have climbed over the palisades while Pat was engaged in undoing the door. We conjectured that their object in coming to the fort was to search for food.

Having entered, we again closed the door and took possession of one of the rooms, in which was a large stove. Fortunately there was a small store of wood remaining, with which we lighted a fire, and had there been food we should have been perfectly comfortable.

Why our friends had deserted the fort it was difficult to determine.

Martin thought that it was on account of want of provisions. Alick held to the opinion that they were required to strengthen the garrison of some more important fort.

I suspected that Mr Meredith, having heard of the destruction of Fort Black, and believing that Fort Ross would be attacked, and that he possessed inadequate means of defending it, had thought it prudent to retire to another post.

"Surely they would not have gone away without leaving some notice for us behind them, even although they were unable to spare any provisions, should we arrive here," I said.

"They also probably believed that we were all destroyed," said Alick, "and would not have thought about us."

"Whether or not, gentlemen, I'll just take the liberty of hunting about, and seeing if I cannot ferret out some food or other," exclaimed Pat. "If these bastes of bears haven't broken into the pantry, maybe there will be a scrap of something or other to stay our stomachs."

Saying this, Pat lighted the end of a piece of pinewood, and set off on his search. Though we had but little hope of finding anything eatable, we followed his example, and searched in every nook and corner of the fort.

Not a particle of food of any description could we find, which confirmed the opinion Martin had expressed that our friends had been compelled to desert the fort from the want of provisions. Indeed, when I came to think of the matter, I did not believe that Mr Meredith could have been frightened away by fear of an attack from Indians.

As I was returning to the sitting-room across the square, the light from my torch showed me a dark form creeping along near the stockade. I felt sure that it was a bear which had not succeeded in making its escape. I hurried in for my gun, which I had left in the room where Bouncer was lying down by the fire. My companions were at the time in different parts of the fort.

I was afraid of calling to them, for fear of frightening the bear; so, taking my gun in one hand and the torch in the other, I crept forward in the direction in which I had seen the animal. Again I caught sight of him attempting to climb up the palisade.

I advanced a few steps. Whether or not he saw me I could not tell. Marking well the spot, I dropped my torch, and raising my gun to my shoulder, fired.

By the faint light of the almost expiring torch I saw a huge body fall.

The report of the gun of course quickly brought out the rest of the party, when, all of us hurrying forward, to our infinite satisfaction we saw the bear on the ground struggling to get up. My bullet had missed his head, but broken his shoulder. Alick and Martin immediately fired, and the bear's struggles ceased.

"Be aisy, gentlemen; he may not be dead afther all," cried Pat, advancing cautiously with his torch.

I reloaded my gun, in case Pat should be right in his conjecture; but the bear gave no signs of life, and getting up to him we found that he was quite dead.

We lost no time in skinning him, and as soon as we had done so Martin cut a few choice pieces out of the carcass, and hastened back with them to the fire, while we finished the operation. He was a young animal, less active or sagacious than his companions.

We at once carried the meat and skin into the house, where Martin had some steaks ready for us. We lay down after supper with thankful hearts that a supply of meat had been so providentially sent to us.

Bouncer had his share, and then composed himself to sleep near the door, with one eye open ready to warn us of the approach of danger.

Feeling sure that no unfriendly Indians were likely to be in the neighbourhood at that season of the year, we passed the night with a feeling of perfect security.

We had now to determine what further course it would be best to pursue. The meat of the young bear would last us for several days, and perhaps some of its companions might return to the fort and allow themselves to be shot; but the probability was, however, slight. Finding that there was no food and that the fort was garrisoned, they were not likely again to climb over the palisades. Should they not do so we might, after all, be very hard pressed for food.

“What do you say, lads, to pushing forward at once to the fort at Touchwood Hills? The journey is a long one, but we are likely to find game on the way; and if not, the flesh of this bear economised will last us till we get there,” said Alick.

There were no dissentient voices. We agreed, however, to rest that day and keep watch, on the possibility of another bear appearing. None came, and early in the morning we again plunged into the wilderness of snow.

For two days we travelled on without any adventure, looking out for game as we had before done. The second day we encamped rather earlier than usual, as we saw traces of several deer, which we resolved if possible to run down.

Having hurriedly pitched our tent near a small wood, Alick, Martin, and I started off, leaving Pat and Bouncer to guard the camp. Pat had his gun ready, observing that perhaps a deer would come that way, and if so he might hope to kill it.

Though no deer were in sight, their tracks were unmistakable, and we were tempted to go on farther from the camp than we had intended. As the sun set, the wind began to blow colder than before, and clouds to gather in the sky. Alick exclaimed that we must return as fast as our legs could carry us.

Before we had got far, down came the snow, and with good reason we began to fear that we should be unable to retrace our steps. As long as we had sufficient light Alick’s compass guided us, and we had taken the last glance at it, and were scarcely able to distinguish in what direction the needle pointed, when we caught sight of the tent, and heard Pat’s voice shouting loudly to us.

We hurried on, thankful that we had not been benighted; but Pat, instead of welcoming us, as we expected, stood in front of the tent wringing his hands.

“What’s the matter, Pat?” asked Alick.

“Shure! matther enough, Mither Alick dear,” he answered. “Just afther you went away, Bouncer and I caught sight of a deer, far off over the snow. Says I to Bouncer, ‘We’ll have that deer;’ and off we set, making sure that we should come up to him before long. Instead of stopping to be shot, however, the baste took to its heels. To make a long story short, though we followed for many a mile, it got away afther all. Now comes the worst part of the business. As we drew near to the tent I heard a loud yelling, and what should I see but a pack of hungry wolves tearing away at my sledge with all the bear’s mate on it, and by the time I got up not a scrap was left—bad luck to the bastes. Och! shure, shure, what shall we be afther doing?”

We cast blank looks at each other, and Bouncer hung down his head, as if he had been the cause of our loss. Alick could not blame Pat, though he regretted that he did not give him a strict charge on no account to leave the camp.

After our long chase we were desperately hungry, but had not a morsel to eat. There was no use repining, however, and we hoped that we might have better fortune the next day.

Supperless we turned into our little tent, to try to overcome our hunger by sleep. An occasional growl from Bouncer showed us that the wolves were still near.

As we had no breakfast to cook, the next morning we started as soon as there was daylight sufficient to enable us to pack up our tent. Not a trace of a deer did we see the next day; had any passed that way, the snow must have obliterated their footmarks.

The second night was approaching, and we had no food. We came to some hills with a grove of trees near a stream at their foot, but the stream was frozen over, and the hills and trees covered thickly with snow.

As we were looking round for a spot on which to pitch our tent, we heard Pat, who was at a little distance, shout out, “Here’s an Injin wigwam; maybe the owner will give us some food.” On reaching it, however, we found that the wigwam contained no inhabitants. There were, however, several articles within, the household goods of a native—a pot, wallet, basket, buffalo-robe, and other things.



At first we thought that the owner had gone out hunting, and would soon return, but on a further examination we were satisfied that it had been deserted for several days, or perhaps weeks. Too probably, the unfortunate man had lost his life, either killed by a bear or a human enemy, or, unable to obtain game, had perished from hunger.

Alick suggested that the occupants might have died of some disease, and that it would be prudent to pitch our tent and sleep in that, rather than in the wigwam.

Having cut some wood, we lighted a fire and chopped up the thongs of Pat's sledge to make some soup. Though very unpalatable, it would serve to keep us alive; it, at all events, stopped the gnawings of hunger and enabled us to go to sleep.

We were awakened towards the morning by the howling of the wind amid the leafless trees and the falling of the snow from the branches. Looking out of the tent, we could scarcely bear the chilling blast, which drove the particles of snow like pins and needles into our faces much as spindrift is driven from off the waves of the ocean.

To proceed on our journey was impossible. We dared not even light a fire near the tent, lest it might be destroyed by the flames driven against it by any sudden change of wind. All that day we sat helpless and disconsolate. Martin, who had held out bravely hitherto, began to give way.

"Oh! I must have some food," he murmured, "or I shall die."

He repeated this several times.

Alick at length, seizing his gun, started up. I thought he was going out in spite of the bitter weather to search for game, but I saw him put his hand on Bouncer's head and lead him forth.

He had got a short distance from the tent when we overtook him.

"It must be done," he said; "Bouncer must die. I cannot sit by and see that poor boy perish. What should we say to his father and mother, should we again meet them, or to Rose?"

I felt as he did, but, unwilling to see our noble and faithful dog put to death, I turned aside, expecting to hear the report of the gun, when Pat stepped up. "Shure, Misther Alick, you would not be after killing the poor baste!" he exclaimed. "Let us trust to Providence as heretofore. We have not been deserted through all our troubles and dangers. See now! what's that there?" he suddenly exclaimed. "After it, Bouncer!" and he and the dog started off over the snow.

I turned on hearing his voice, and saw a small animal followed by a larger, which I knew to be a fox. The cunning animal, catching sight of us just before I fired, gave a sudden turn, and though my bullet knocked off the top of his brush, he was far away, hidden by some low bushes, before even Alick had seen him.

A "Hurrah!" from Pat at the same instant reached my ears, and he came running back with Bouncer, who had caught the smaller animal.

The faithful dog at once surrendered his prize. It was a ground-squirrel which the fox had chased out of its winter nest. We should have been compelled to eat it raw had we not discovered a small open spot among the trees where we could light a fire.

Skinning the squirrel, we cut it up and put it into the pot to boil, while Bouncer had the head and skin for his share. He looked very grateful at being first served, but licked his chaps, as if he would have been obliged to us for a larger meal.

That squirrel, I believe, saved Martin's life, and perhaps the lives of all of us. We were sufficiently recovered the next morning, and the storm having abated we again set out; for all of us suffered more from hunger than we had ever before done during our adventures.

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## Chapter Twelve.

**"Tripe de roche"—Desolation—Pat's endurance—Leather soup—"It's a cariole; there's another and another"—"Alick McClellan! David! Can it be you?"—A good square meal—Sandy's escape—Honest Bouncer's "rightful position"—The cariole—Night encampment in the snow—Buffalo-hunting—Wolves! Wolves!—Rose and Letty in danger—I defend them—The fort reached at last—Our start for the log cabin—Captain Grey recovers—I accompany Robin to Fort Garry—Ellen and Oliver—Conclusion of my history—Description of the present state of the Red River Settlement (now called Manitoba) and of the "Fertile Belt" beyond it reaching to the foot of the Rocky Mountains.**

A moderate walk on snow-shoes on a fine winter's day, with agreeable companions, when the sky is blue, the air still, and the snow frozen hard, is a very pleasant thing; and so is a hunting expedition, with attendants carrying refreshments, and the certainty, even though game may not be shot, of a good meal after it at a cheerful camp-fire, with abundance of buffalo-ropes for covering; but to go on, tramp, tramp, tramp, day after day over the icy plains, often with a sharp wind blowing, and but a scanty fire and imperfect shelter at the termination of the journey, is a very different matter.

We found it to be so. Often the ground was uneven; sometimes we had hills to ascend, and precipitous elopes to slide down, not knowing what might be at the bottom; and then a wide plain to traverse, without a tree or a shrub to break its monotony or to assist us in directing our course. Soon after we set out in the morning our eyebrows became

covered with frost, our caps froze to our brows, surrounded by a rim of icicles. The fronts of our coats were fringed with similar ornaments; even our eyelashes were covered with our congealed breath.

On several occasions we had to camp that we might go in search of game; but after many hours' toil we returned—on one occasion with a fox, on another with a second ground-squirrel, and on two other days with a single hare.

The fox, though the least palatable, from being larger, lasted us longer than the other animals, and afforded poor Bouncer an ample meal.

We had reason to be thankful at obtaining these supplies, or we should otherwise have sunk down on the snow and perished; for even had we killed our poor dog, as he was nothing but skin and bones his body would not have long sustained us. For two whole days we feasted on *tripe de roche*, which, when boiled in our kettle, afforded us the only vegetable diet we had for a long time tasted. A high ridge had to be crossed, and it cost us much trouble to reach the summit. We had to take Bouncer out of the traces and drag up the sleigh ourselves.

A dreary prospect met our view from thence. Before us was a wide extent of country covered with its wintry clothing, its undulations reminding us of the ocean when the troubled waves begin to subside after a storm. Here and there a few leafless trees partially diversified the chilling scene, resembling the shattered masts of vessels which had suffered in the conflict of waters.

In vain did we strain our eyes to catch a glimpse of anything of human or animal shape. Neither did man, nor fowl, nor cattle, nor beast, nor creeping thing meet our gaze. Animated nature seemed to have abandoned the dreary solitude, and silent desolation reigned around. Yet this was the region we had to cross for many days before we could reach our destination. I could not avoid asking myself, should any of us be able to endure the fatigue we must first undergo, or should we even obtain food to support life?

Already we were greatly weakened, while Martin especially looked a phantom of his former self. Alick, though only so lately recovered from his severe illness, held out the best. Pat never made a complaint, though his wan cheek showed that famine was telling on him. If I sucked in my cheeks, it felt as if my teeth would come through them, and my knees would often scarcely bear me.

Hitherto, except the lichen we had scraped from the rocks, we had had no food that day, and we might be unable to obtain any before night.

"Come, lads; we must push on," cried Alick. "It won't do to be stopping here doubting whether we shall be able to get over yonder country. It has to be done, and the sooner we do it the better."

Allowing the sledge to go first, we all slid down the steep slope in a half-sitting posture, happily reaching the bottom without accident. Honest Bouncer then came up to be again harnessed, and we set off at our usual pace—trudge, trudge, trudge. Hour after hour the click of the snow-shoes sounded in our ears.

"I wonder how long a man can go without eating?" asked Martin in a doleful tone.

"It is possible to hold out for three days," answered Alick, "and perhaps longer, though it would not be pleasant. Don't you think of giving in yet, Martin. We shall have some fresh meat to-morrow, I dare say, if we don't get it to-night; and, at all events, we can have some leather soup before we turn in. We have a spare buffalo-robe or two to eat up before we cry die!"

That night all we had to sustain nature was the leather soup Alick spoke of, with the addition of some *tripe de roche*. Next morning we breakfasted on the same unsatisfactory materials.

We were still some days' journey from the fort, and for the last three days not an animal had we seen.

Alick again began to turn, I thought, wolfish eyes at Bouncer. The poor dog walked on steadily dragging the sleigh, and looking up with an affectionate glance at our faces when any of us passed, happily unconscious of the fate threatening him.

Even Pat was at length beginning to despair. Alick cheered us on. "You must not give in, boys; you must not give in," he exclaimed over and over again.

I felt that his advice, though good, was impracticable. The evening was approaching. I could scarcely drag one foot after another. We yet had some distance to go before we could reach a valley which lay below us, with a stream in summer flowing through it, and a grove of trees by its side.

Unable longer to support myself, I sank down on my knees, my gun dropping to the ground. My eyes were dimmed by my frozen eyelashes.

Alick and Pat were assisting me to rise, when Martin, who was a little ahead, exclaimed, "I see something coming along the valley: it's a cariole. There's another and another."

I passed the cuff of my coat over my eyes. My companions held up their hands and shouted at the top of their voices, Bouncer at the same time lifting up his head and barking with all his might, as if conscious of the importance of being heard.

The carioles came on at full speed along the valley, their drivers running behind them. There were twenty or thirty of them, each drawn by eight or ten powerful dogs. I could now see them clearly.

Then came a number of baggage-sledges with more men on snow-shoes, all keeping up the same steady pace.

Our dread was that the travellers would pass without seeing us. Who they could be we could not tell, but they were evidently coming from the direction of the place to which we were bound. Again we shouted and waved our hands, and then Alick bethought him of firing off his gun. We all discharged ours, and presently we saw the leading sledge stop, the driver making a signal to the one behind him. It was passed along the line, and the whole train came to a halt.

“We are saved! we are saved!” we cried in chorus. The knowledge of this restored our strength.

I was helped up by my companions, and we all, straggling on, reached the bottom of the valley close to the leading sledge.

A gentleman got out of it and came towards us. We at once saw that he was Mr Meredith, though he at first evidently did not recognise any of us.

“What!” he exclaimed at length; “Alick McClellan!—David! can it be you?”

He pressed our hands.

“I little expected again to see you.—And Martin Crisp! can that be you? I know you now, though you look dreadfully pulled down. There are those behind to whom your appearance will give new life.”

“Then have my father and mother escaped?” exclaimed Martin, and he burst into tears.

“Yes,” answered Mr Meredith, “I am thankful to say that they have, and are now returning with us to Fort Ross, on their way to their former station.”

I cannot well describe the greetings we received from Rose and Letty, and indeed from all the party, with many of whom, besides Mr and Mrs Crisp, we were well acquainted.

Fortunately the train was not far from the spot selected for camping that night, and several of the gentlemen insisted upon getting out of their carioles and letting us take their places, while they put on our snow-shoes and ran by our sides. Poor Pat was of course treated in the same manner, and I took Bouncer in between my legs—the first time in his life he had ever enjoyed the honour of being dragged by his fellow-creatures.

The camp was soon reached. A party of men had gone on before to make preparations. Tents had been put up for the ladies, lean-to's near the fires to shelter the gentlemen.

Abundance of food was soon placed before us—soft bread, hot tea and coffee. Far gone as we were, we were not so far gone that we could not enjoy it.

The adventures of our friends were recounted. Mr Meredith, though he had heard that the Blackfeet intended to take the fort, would have remained to defend it had he not been compelled to quit it for want of provisions. He was now returning with reinforcements of men and an ample supply of food; besides which he had a party of hunters with him, and he hoped to obtain an abundance of buffalo meat and venison. So secure did he feel that he was bringing back Rose and Letty and Mr and Mrs Crisp.

The two young ladies allowed Alick and me to sit near them; and I am compelled to confess, though I heard the sweet tones of their voices in my ear, it was not long after supper when I found my head nodding, and that the power to rouse myself had gone. I sunk back fast asleep, and remember nothing more till, opening my eyes, instead of the fair countenances of my young friends, I saw the well-bronzed visage of Sandy McTavish bending over me.

“Vera glad to see you, faster David, though I am loath to rouse you from your sleep; but the sleighs are harnessing, and the train will presently be on the move.” Sandy, taking my hand as he spoke, helped me to rise. I felt extremely stiff, and my joints ached considerably.

While I was drinking a tin of hot coffee which he had brought me, he told me how he and one of his companions, after the canoe had been upset, had clung on under her with their heads just above water, as she floated down the river, till at length, by great exertions, they had managed to direct her with their feet towards the shore. Believing that Pat was lost, they did not look for him, but, as soon as they had recovered, pushed on for Fort Ross, which they reached almost dead with hunger, and were, of course, the first to announce the tidings of the destruction of Fort Black.

Sandy had already found Pat, who had given him an account of our adventures.

I told him how delighted I was, too, to find that he had escaped, as I had given him up for lost. He told me, almost with tears in his eyes, how he had mourned for us, cut off, as he fancied, in our prime.

“But God is vera merciful,” he said, “and He has preserved you, I hope, to be good and useful men.”

“He has indeed taught us to trust Him, for His arm alone could have saved us from the many dangers to which we were exposed,” I answered.

We had not much time, however, for conversation, and Sandy, who had undertaken to look after me, helped me into a sledge, which had been prepared, he said, for my use.

Honest Bouncer, who had slept at the door of the tent, got in after me, seeming to consider that the place at my feet was his rightful position. There was just time before starting to exchange greetings with the rest of the party, who were already in their carioles.

I found that during the night four fresh carioles had been formed, and by taking a dog from one team and one or more from others, a sufficient number of animals had been procured to drag us. Sandy, who drove my team, gave me an account of the various events which had occurred, and of the grief our supposed loss had caused our friends. "The young ladies," he said, "he feared would never again have recovered their spirits, and it was only when some hope was expressed that we might have escaped that they at all brightened up."

Letty afterwards told me, indeed, that she had never altogether abandoned hope. "I could not have borne it had I done so," she added.

After the fatiguing way in which we had been accustomed to travel, it was delightful to be drawn along at a rapid rate over the hard snow, well wrapped up in buffalo-ropes; with a piece of crape drawn over the face to shelter it from the icy blast when the wind blew strong, or to shield the eyes when the sun shone too brightly on the glittering sheet of white.

The cariole, such as I was now seated in, is a somewhat simple vehicle. It is formed of a very thin board ten feet long and fourteen inches broad, turned up at one end in the form of a half-circle. To this board a high cradle, like the body of a small carriage, is attached, about eighteen inches from the end of the floor-board. The framework is covered with buffalo-skin parchment, and painted according to the taste of the builder. The inside is lined with a blanket or buffalo-robe; and when the traveller is seated in it, with his legs stretched out at his ease, he is only separated from the snow by the before-mentioned floor-board. Eight, twelve, or even more dogs form the team of a cariole, dragging it by long traces attached to collars which are ornamented with bead-work and tassels, and a string of small bells, which emit a pleasant tinkling sound.

The driver runs behind the cariole, guiding it by means of a line fastened to the floor which projects behind the seat.

When he gets tired of running, he stands on this projecting board; or should there be any luggage, he sits on the top of it.

When a new road is to be made—as was the case at the present—two or three men on snow-shoes go ahead and beat down the snow, making the road just wide enough for the passage of a cariole. The dogs seldom attempt to go off the track thus formed, though the first four or five teams have the hardest work; after which the road becomes hard, and the rest easily follow. It was curious to look forward and back at the long thin line, like some vast serpent moving over the snowy plain, following all the windings of the pioneers ahead; and it was cheering to hear the tinkling sound of the bells, and the voices of the drivers as they urged on the dogs.

When we encamped for the night, a small tent for the ladies, and another for two or three of the superior officers who required the luxury, were pitched; fires were lighted as close to them as safety would allow, or sometimes one long fire at which the cooks at once commenced operations.

Supper over, a short time was spent in conversation, and then all the party except those on guard betook themselves to repose. The greater number, who slept in the open air, rolled themselves up in their buffalo-ropes in two lines, one on each side of the fire, with their feet towards it. Most of the dogs in the meantime had scraped out for themselves hollows in the snow, while others found out snug berths so close to the fire that they ran no little danger of burning their fur.

Such was the scene which met my eyes just before I fell asleep, rolled up like the rest in buffalo-ropes with a knapsack for my pillow, the snow my couch, and the sky glittering brightly with countless stars overhead; and such was the scene which our camp presented night after night. We had got within three days' journey of our destination, when numerous buffaloes were seen in the far distance; and as it was important to secure some fresh meat, Mr Meredith ordered a halt, that the hunters might go in chase of the animals. It was supposed that the buffaloes were moving away to the westward, and that another opportunity of hunting them might not occur during the winter.

A convenient place for a camp, in a hollow surrounded by trees, was chosen, and wigwams were put up for those who wished to remain in camp. The larger number of the men, however, all of whom were accustomed to hunting, were eager to go in chase, so that comparatively few remained to guard the camp.

I resolved to stay behind, both for the sake of enjoying the society of Rose and Letty, as also because I had had hunting enough, and had scarcely yet sufficiently recovered to undergo the fatigue of a long run in snow-shoes. Alick, though he had held out so well when leading our small party, had knocked up altogether when his responsibilities were over, and was unfit to exert himself in any way; all he could do, indeed, was to step into his cariole and be dragged along over the snow.

Martin was very little better, and this was the first opportunity he had had of spending any time with his parents, who were anxious to hear his adventures. I had been seated with Rose and Letty before the camp-fire, when they proposed putting on their snow-shoes and walking to the top of a slight elevation some distance off, from whence we fancied that a view might be obtained of the herd of buffaloes.

The air was perfectly calm, the sky bright, and as a hard crust had formed over the snow, we found walking especially pleasant. We went on and on, consequently, farther than we had intended, expecting every instant to come in sight of the hunters and the shaggy monsters of which they were in chase.

The ridge on the top of which we were walking was of no great height, and others somewhat more elevated intervened, we found, between us and the plain on which the buffaloes had been seen.

Rose—who had been leading, while Letty and I walked alongside each other—at last proposed going back. We—that is, Letty and I—had forgotten to watch the sun, which was already sinking rapidly towards the horizon. Just as we turned I caught sight of a number of dark objects, moving quickly over the snow. For a moment I thought they might

be the huntsmen, but I was soon convinced that they were wolves. I did not at first apprehend that they were coming towards us, but still I knew that it would be well to make our way back to camp as fast as possible. I begged Rose and Letty to go forward while I kept watch on the proceedings of the wolves.

We had not gone far when to my dismay I felt convinced that they were making towards us, and I could even hear the faint sounds of their yelping and barking coming up from the plain below us.

I urged my companions to hasten on while I followed close behind them. I was in hopes that they were merely coyotes, which are cowardly creatures; but as they got nearer I saw that they were the larger species of prairie wolf, too probably rendered savage by hunger. I now bitterly regretted having allowed my young friends to go so far from the camp. We were still at too great a distance to make any signal for assistance.

I knew that by running we should only encourage the wolves to pursue us, and therefore entreating the young ladies to stop, I placed myself between them and the yelping pack of brutes, who were now within twenty yards of us.

The brave girls not only did not continue running, but came up close behind me—Rose placing herself directly in front of Letty, and holding her hands to her neck, knowing that they were too likely to spring at it. I felt that I must make every effort to drive the brutes away.

Shouting at the top of my voice in order to scare them, I fired at the leader of the pack, and knocked it over; but before I could reload, the savage animals were close upon me.

Taking my gun by the barrel, I used it as a club and struck with it right and left. My first blow beat down a wolf close to my feet, when its hungry companions immediately set upon it, and with fearful yelps and snarls began tearing it to pieces; but others still came on, gaunt, starving animals, barking savagely. Another wolf was on the point of springing at my throat, when I happily struck that down also; but several were at the same time making at Rose and Letty. My courage rose to desperation. I must save them even though I were myself to perish; but how could I hope to drive off the savage pack that came scampering on, eager to tear us to pieces?

There must have been fifty or more of them. Again and again as I struck around me I shouted with all my might. A reply came from behind me. It was that of human voices.

I heard a shot, and another wolf rolled over. I dared not for a second look round to ascertain who was coming to our relief. Presently I heard Bouncer's deep bark and the voices of several more people. Other shots followed, and as the wolves fell their companions as before set upon them, leaving only a few brutes for me to deal with; till Bouncer, seizing by the throat one of the most daring, who was in the act of leaping at Rose, pulled it down as a hound does a deer. Sandy, Pat, and several of the hunting party now came up, and clubbing their guns, quickly laid low many more of the wolves, the remainder, panic-stricken, turning tail and galloping off at full speed. Reloading, we fired at the retreating pack, a number more of which fell over killed or went yelping away. Thankful for our merciful deliverance, we returned to the camp accompanied by our friends. They had followed a buffalo, which they had killed just below the ridge along which we had been walking when the wolves attacked us.

Messengers arrived from the remainder of the hunting party, and sledges were forthwith dispatched to bring in the meat of the animals they had killed. Another day was spent here, and the second hunting expedition which was sent out returned almost as successful as the first.

We then again moved forward and reached Fort Ross, without any further adventure worth recording. The ladies performed the journey without having suffered any unusual fatigue.

The fort was uninjured, and had evidently not been visited except by bears, who had managed to break into one of the storerooms, but had got nothing for their pains.

We had not forgotten Captain Grey and our young friend Robin. Mr Crisp, who had a good knowledge of medicine and surgery, at once volunteered to go to his assistance; and Alick and I having organised a party with four dog-sleighs, we set off, accompanied by the excellent missionary.

We of course felt very anxious, remembering the precarious state in which we had left Captain Grey. The first person we saw as we drew near the hut was Robin, who had heard the sound of our sleigh-bells, and came rushing out to meet us.

"How is your father?" was the first question we asked.

"He is still very low," answered Robin sadly; "but if he had a doctor who knew how to treat him, I think that he would soon get better."

"The doctor is here," I answered, pointing to Mr Crisp.

Robin grasped his hand, exclaiming, "Oh, do come and cure my father!"

"God only can cure the ailments of the body, as He does those of the soul, my boy. I may prove, I trust, a humble instrument in His hands; but I will exert all the skill I possess, and pray to Him for a blessing on it."

We remained several days at the hut; and the good missionary ministered not only, as he had promised, to the physical ailments of the sufferer, but to his spiritual necessities likewise, pointing out to him the great truth that though the all-pure God hates the sin He loves the sinner, and would have all men, though by nature His enemies, reconciled to Him, according to His own appointed way, through simple faith in the all-perfect, all-sufficient atonement for sin which His dear Son Jesus Christ offered up on Calvary.

That truth, which I suspect had hitherto been rejected by Captain Grey, came home with force to his heart, and I heard him say as he took Mr Crisp's hand, "I believe! I believe! and I pray that He will help my unbelief."

In a week from the time of our arrival Captain Grey was sufficiently recovered to accompany us on our return to Fort Ross, where he was hospitably received by Mr Meredith, and carefully tended by Mrs Crisp, Rose, and Letty.

Robin won the affections of all our friends.

Reinforcements having arrived, a strong party was formed which, under Alick's command, was to rebuild and garrison Fort Black on the return of spring. Before the snow had disappeared and sleigh-travelling had become impracticable, I was ordered to proceed to Fort Garry, when I was accompanied by my young friend Robin and his father, who was now perfectly restored to health.

The governor, who was then residing at the fort, made Captain Grey an offer to join the company; which he gladly accepted, provided time was allowed him to return to his wife and family and bring them up. This request was willingly granted; and before I left Fort Garry, where I was engaged for some weeks, he returned, accompanied by his long-suffering wife and their three children. I found that Robin had not overpraised his sweet sister Ella or his little brother Oliver, who, however, by this time had grown into a fine handsome boy.

Robin had told his mother of our kindness to him, and she expressed her gratitude in a way which could not fail to give me very sincere satisfaction. "And oh, how I long," she added, "to thank that good missionary, Mr Crisp, for the change he has been the means of working in my husband!"

We all went back in the spring to Fort Ross, but Mr and Mrs Crisp had by that time returned to their distant station. Martin, however, remained, having been appointed to a clerkship. In a few years afterwards, when Alick married his sister, I became the husband of Letty Meredith. He proposed and was accepted by Ella Grey. Before white hairs sprinkled our brows we were all able to retire from the service, and to settle on adjacent farms in Canada, where we enjoyed the benefit of having Mr Crisp as minister of the district. We formed, I believe, as happy and prosperous a community as any in that truly magnificent colony of Great Britain, to the sovereign of which we have ever remained devotedly attached. We have never forgotten the trials and dangers we went through, or ceased, I trust, to be grateful to that merciful Being whose loving hand guided us safely through them; while we have ever striven to impress upon our children the importance of a loving obedience to our heavenly Father, a confidence in the justice of His laws, and a perfect trust in Him.

### **The End.**

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