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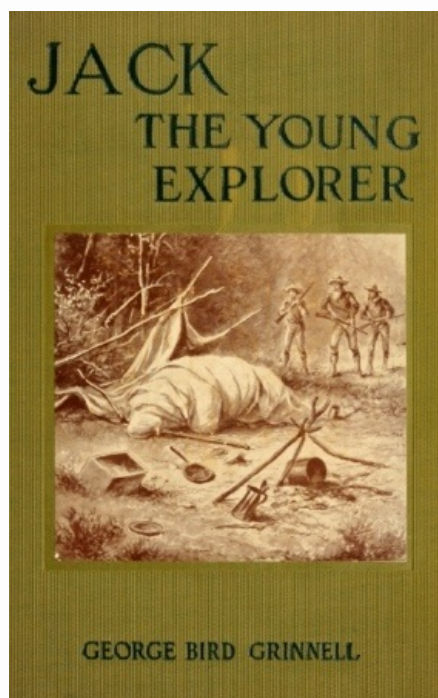
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Every attempt has been made to replicate the original as printed.

Some typographical errors have been corrected; [a list follows the text](#). The illustrations have been moved from mid-paragraph for ease of reading.

(etext transcriber's note)



JACK, THE YOUNG EXPLORER

By the same Author

JACK THE YOUNG COWBOY
JACK THE YOUNG TRAPPER
JACK THE YOUNG CANOEMAN
JACK THE YOUNG EXPLORER
JACK IN THE ROCKIES

JACK AMONG THE INDIANS
JACK THE YOUNG RANCHMAN
PAWNEE HERO STORIES AND FOLK TALES
BLACKFOOT LODGE TALES
THE STORY OF THE INDIAN
THE INDIANS OF TO-DAY
THE PUNISHMENT OF THE STINGY
AMERICAN DUCK SHOOTING
AMERICAN GAME BIRD SHOOTING
TRAILS OF THE PATHFINDERS



"THE TENT WAS SHIVERING AND SHAKING AND FROM IT EMERGED GROANS AND GROWLS."—Page 130

JACK

THE YOUNG EXPLORER

*A Boy's Experiences in the
Unknown Northwest*

BY
GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL

Author of "Jack in the Rockies," "Jack the Young Ranchman,"
"Jack Among the Indians," "Pawnee Hero Stories,"
"Jack the Young Trapper," etc.



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FOREWORD

FOR untold ages the mountain goats had clambered undisturbed along the face of the steep precipices that overhang the St Mary's River and Swift Current. Over the slide rock fallen from their cliffs the wild sheep had beaten out paths and trails zigzagging from the valley below to the heights above. On the lower wooded slopes the elk browsed in spring and fall, climbing high above the timber at the season when the flies were bad, and again when snows fell at the approach of winter, working their way down toward the lower lands and the foothills of the prairie. In the thick swamps and morasses of the river bottom the moose dwelt, sometimes clambering up toward the heights, but more often escaping the summer flies by burying their huge bodies beneath the waters of the lakes, or perhaps by wallowing in some great bog, from which they emerged covered with black mud which, drying, formed a coating that protected them. Everywhere through the valleys, on the hillsides, far up on the bald knolls, and even higher still, where the sheep and goats delighted to climb, the buffalo of the mountains—called by old mountaineers bison, to distinguish them from the yellower, sunburned animals of the plains—wandered singly or in little groups.

These rough and rocky fastnesses protected them well.

The Indians of the plains never tried to pass beneath these gloomy walls. Occasionally a white man or half-breed, more frequently a little band of Kootenay or Stoney Indians, true mountaineers, followed up these rivers for a short distance, hunting the game and trapping the beaver; but in those days game was so plentiful that these occasional excursions made no impression on it. The Indians had few guns and hunted noiselessly, chiefly with bows and arrows. For the most part, it was easier to kill the buffalo of the plains by the swift chase than to go into the rough mountains and hunt the game that lived higher up.

It was into this region, as yet unknown to white people, that Jack and his friends now entered, in order to explore it and learn for themselves what it held.

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JACK, THE YOUNG EXPLORER

CHAPTER I

A MEETING OF FRIENDS

As the train drew slowly into the Helena station Jack's eyes searched the platform, looking for Hugh, and in a moment he recognized the tall form, standing well back from the crowd and looking at the platform of each car as it passed.

"Hurrah, Hugh!" called Jack, as he waved his hand frantically; but he had to jump down to the platform and elbow his way through the crowd before Hugh's eye caught his.

"Well, son," said Hugh, as he grasped his hand in a firm clasp, "I sure am glad to see you. I only got here last night myself, but it's been a long day waiting around here alone, and I was afraid that maybe you wouldn't come on this train."

"Well," replied Jack, "I'm mighty glad to get here. I was a little afraid that maybe something might have happened to keep you, and that I should have to do the waiting. It's all right now though, and I hope we can get off to-morrow. I don't want to stop in towns any more than you do, and I guess we shall both be glad to get into camp."

"Sure, we will," said Hugh. "Now, what have you in the way of baggage? Of course you've got your bed, and I see your gun and bag in your hand. I've got a room at the Merchants' Hotel, and I reckon we might as well go up there, and then after you've eaten we can see the sights."

"Well," said Jack, "I've got a small trunk and my bed, and we can pack those up to the hotel, and then I'll put the stuff I need in my bed and my war bag and we'll be all ready for the stage whenever it goes."

"All right," said Hugh, "I reckon we better take one of these hacks here, and the man can put your things on top, while we ride inside. It isn't much of a walk up to the hotel, only about a mile, but maybe we'd better get there as quick as we can and have our dinner and attend to our business, and then we won't have anything on our minds."

Before long they were rolling rapidly over the smooth road toward the town, which stands at some distance from the railroad. As they passed along, Jack saw, to the right, enormous piles of cobblestones extending for half a mile or more toward the town. For some time he looked at them with curiosity, and then asked Hugh what they were.

"Why, don't you know?" Hugh replied. "That's the old placer ground that they used to work over when this camp was first settled. Last Chance Gulch they called it. That gravel and rock that you see there came out of the sluice boxes. Every little while, I'm told, a man comes down here now and works over some of that gravel, and they say that to-day there's fair wages to be made mining right here in the town. I've heard that there are some Chinamen that work these gravels right along. There's a heap of gold been taken out of that gulch, but, of course, just how much nobody knows. Every now and then, in digging the foundations of a house in town, some man will turn up a little nugget of gold, and then all the workmen quit digging and begin to pan out the foundations."

"That seems queer, Hugh, doesn't it? I suppose the same thing happens in lots of places along the Rocky Mountains, because a great many of the big towns now stand where old mining camps used to be."

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's surely true. There's lots of gold left in the sides of these hills yet, even after the miners have been over the dirt."

"What kind of a trip did you have coming up, Hugh?" asked Jack. "Did anything happen on the road?"

"No," replied Hugh; "nothing of any account. Joe drove me in to the railroad with my stuff. He had to come in for a load of groceries and a keg of nails, and I took the train west to Ogden, and that little narrow gauge road up to Garrisons, and then came east on the main line. I was kind of scared that maybe I'd get lost, making so many changes; but everybody I met was mighty pleasant spoken, and I didn't have a mite of trouble. Of course you know what I saw on the road, for you and I went back that same way two years ago, when we came back from the coast."

By this time they were climbing the hills of the town, and a moment later the hack stopped in front of the Merchants' Hotel. Jack got a room, in which his things were put, and the two friends went down to dinner.

After this was over, it took Jack but half an hour to get from his trunk and pack in his bag the few things that he needed for his trip, and then he and Hugh sallied out and took a long walk out of town, into the high hills which overlook Helena and the great flat through which the river flows.

On the way back they passed the stage office and arranged for two seats on the box of the stage that left the next morning.

"It ain't much use for you to engage these seats," said the man in the office; "I don't believe there's any person going out to-morrow morning except you two, still I'll put your names down for the two seats on the box if you like. It can't do no harm, anyhow. You have your stuff down here to-morrow morning any time after seven o'clock and we'll take care of it and see that it goes on the stage."

Their long walk had given Hugh and Jack a good appetite and they heartily enjoyed their supper. After they had eaten they started out again and walked through the brilliantly lighted streets, looking in at the windows of shops and saloons, each of which seemed to be full of customers. The air was mild and balmy and the beautiful night had brought many people into the street.

As they passed an open door, from which shone a bright light, Jack looked in and saw people sitting at tables playing cards, while toward the back of the room was a long narrow table surrounded by men who seemed greatly interested in what was going on.

"What are they doing in there, Hugh?" said Jack.

"Why, I reckon that's a gambling house," was the reply. "You know there's no law against gambling in most of these Montana towns, the way I hear there is in towns back East. Everybody is free to go in and play if he wants to."

"I've never been in a gambling house, Hugh. Can't we go in and look on? I'd like to see what they are doing."

"Why, yes," said Hugh; "there's no harm in going in and looking on. That isn't the sort of thing that I would do for fun, but there's no harm in it and you may see something that will teach you a good lesson. I never was much on gambling myself. I never had much money to lose, and I never wanted to win anybody else's. It never seemed to me quite square to take money without you worked for it. I never could see the sense of betting, either; but, come on; let's go in."

Hugh led the way into the room, and Jack followed. The people playing at the various tables and those overlooking the game paid no attention to them. All were intent on their own affairs. Hugh walked around to one end of the long table and gradually edged his way into the crowd, gently pushing men this way and that in so good-natured a fashion that no one objected to it. Jack kept close behind him, and presently, when Hugh had reached a point where he had a good view of the table, he squeezed back a little and let Jack pass in and stand in front of him.

Behind the table sat a man smoking a long cigar, while in front of him was a little silver box about the size of a playing card, from which at short intervals the man drew two cards, one after another, which he placed on two little piles by the box. In the middle of the table was a long frame on which were painted representations of cards, and on

these cards, in various positions, were placed circular disks, white, red, and blue. The players placed these disks on the cards, and then when two cards came out of the box, sometimes the dealer took over to his side of the table the chips that were on a particular card, or else put on that card as many more chips as were already on it. Then the player usually removed these chips and put some or all of them on another card. Most of the people about the table appeared to be acquainted with each other, and those who spoke to the dealer seemed to know him, calling him by his first name. For some minutes Jack watched the game intently and began to have a glimmering idea of how it was played. Once or twice he whispered a question to Hugh, but Hugh shook his head for silence, and one or two of the people near by looked frowningly at the speaker. "Evidently," Jack thought, "this is not a place for conversation."

As they stood there, the crowd in the room increased; more and more people gathered around the faro table; the smoke in the air grew thicker, and there was the sound of more or less hum and bustle. Presently Jack felt a hand on his shoulder, and looking back at Hugh saw him move his head toward the door, and the two pushed their way through the crowd and out again into the street.

"Might as well get away from there," said Hugh; "they are playing pretty heavy. Two or three men came in that were full of liquor, and it looks to me as if there might be trouble in there to-night. There's no special reason why we should be there if there's going to be any shooting."

"No," said Jack, "I should say not. It's about the last place in which I'd want to be shot, a gambling house."

"Yes," said Hugh, "you're dead right about that. I don't know as I'd mind about being killed if I had to be killed, but I'd like to have it done in the right sort of a place."

"Is there much of that thing going on in town, Hugh?" asked Jack.

"Right smart," said Hugh. "I reckon from what I saw last night and from what I hear that there must be twenty-five or thirty places like that, and maybe a good many more that are not as decent as that one."

"Well," said Jack, "do men lose much money there?"

"I reckon they do," answered Hugh. "A whole lot more than they can afford, even if the game is straight. There's quite a percentage in favor of the dealer and a good many of the games are not straight."

"How do you mean, Hugh?" said Jack. "Do the gamblers cheat?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "I reckon they do. Some of those fellows are awful slick at dealing and shuffling. They can shuffle the cards just about the way they want them, so that they know just what card is coming out next, and if they see the bets are going against them they can slip two cards out of the box instead of one and make themselves win instead of lose."

"But," said Jack, "I should think they would get caught at it."

"No," said Hugh, "scarcely ever; and if a man does see anything crooked, it's only his word against the dealer's, and the dealer is apt to have two or three friends around the table who will talk for him. If the worst comes to worst, why, of course, the dealer has got to draw quick, and usually he is a man who can do that."

"Do you mean shoot, Hugh?" said Jack.

"Well, yes," said Hugh; "sometimes it comes to that, though generally the dealer can bluff it out, especially if he's got two or three men to wrangle and shout for him."

"Well," said Jack, "that seems pretty rough."

"It is rough," said Hugh; "but that's the way it is in a good many of these towns."

Soon after seven o'clock next morning Jack and Hugh were at the stage office with their beds, their bags, and their rifles. For a time they sat on their rolls of bedding talking, but at length a man came out from a stable near by and spoke to Hugh, and the beds were carried into the stable and lashed on to the rack behind the stage and the bags thrown into the boot under the driver's seat. A little later the four horses were brought out and hitched to the vehicle, and presently the driver, carrying his long whip, came from the office. The stage was led out into the street before the stable, the driver mounted, and Jack and Hugh followed him, all three sitting on the front seat. Then a clerk came from the office and spoke to the driver, telling him that there were no other passengers that morning, and with a parting nod the team started off and trotted swiftly out of town.

"Hugh," said Jack, "is this the sort of stage that they use everywhere in the mountains?"

"No," replied Hugh, "I reckon not. This is the old-fashioned stage, such as they used to drive in crossing the plains away back before the railroad was built, but stage-driving is pretty near over now and the old stages are laid on the shelf. Usually for these short little mountain trips most any kind of a jerky or even a lumber wagon is used. This stage here is one of the real old kind."

It was a high, large vehicle hung on C springs, with abundant room inside and two or three seats without. Back of the seats the roof of the coach was strengthened with slats of wood running lengthwise, and all about this roof was a high iron railing, so that a good lot of baggage might be piled there and lashed firmly to the top.

"I have seen coaches like this more than once," said Jack. "Up in Massachusetts, where my grandfather lives, they have just such a coach as this to send around the village to gather passengers for the train in the morning, and it takes away the passengers that come by the train and leaves them at their homes. Once, too, when I went to the Catskill Mountains, they had a stage like this to take us from the landing at the river up to the hotel, a long drive."

"Well," said Hugh, "these coaches are easy to ride in, but by the time a man's been on the stage about twenty-four hours he is generally in the frame of mind where he is willing to fight with his best friend. You see, the trouble is, he can't get any sleep, and without sleep a man's temper shortens up pretty fast."

"Well," said Jack, "we have got to go more than twenty-four hours without sleep, haven't we? We travel right along, don't we?" he asked, turning to the driver, who nodded in reply and added that it would take in the neighborhood of twenty-four hours to get to Benton. "Of course," he remarked, "we could go faster if there was any reason for it. We change teams about every fifteen miles, but there is no reason why we should hurry the horses. It doesn't make any difference to you, I reckon, whether yet get in at four o'clock in the morning or six, does it?"

"Not a bit," said Jack. "I like this riding on a stage, but I don't know just how long I'll continue to like it."

They had now turned from the flat prairie, over which the smooth road ran straight, and were entering a wide valley of the mountains, which gradually closed in on them until there seemed hardly room for more than the river that flowed through it and the road.

"That's Wolf Creek," said the driver, motioning toward the stream with his whip. "And this here canyon that we are going through is called Prickly Pear Canyon."

On either side of the stream the hills rose sharply, sometimes in steep grassy slopes, shaggy with clumps of small pines and spruces, at others, in a sheer rocky precipice, or yet again in steep slopes covered with small shrubbery through which great knobs of rock showed here and there.

"Any game on these hills?" asked Hugh of the driver.

"Plenty of deer," was the reply, "and some elk; lots of bear, too. Not many people travel over these hills, except prospectors, and they don't do any hunting to amount to anything."

As he finished speaking, Jack, who had been scanning the hillside ahead of the team, suddenly grasped Hugh's arm and said, "There's a deer now, Hugh."

"Sure enough," said Hugh, and all hands looking, a black-tail was seen feeding alone on the hillside, not eating the grass, but walking from one clump of weeds or brush to another and biting a mouthful of food from each. As they drew nearer, the animal heard the trotting of the horses or the rattle of the coach and stood for a few moments looking innocently at the team as it approached. The deer was a young buck, his horns, of course, in the velvet, for it was but the last of June. He studied the team with his huge ears turned forward to catch the sound which it made, and every now and then lifted his head higher, and seemed to feel the air with his nose.

At last, when the coach was fairly close to him, the driver said, "Do either of you want to take a shot at him?"

"Not I," said Hugh.

"Nor I," said Jack.

"Well," said the driver, "I'm glad you don't, for it would take us some time to butcher him, and I don't like to loaf much just after starting out. The end of the day is the better time to drive slowly."

Presently the buck seemed to have satisfied himself that there was possible danger in this great object approaching him, and turning, he bounded lightly along the hillside, gradually working up until at last he passed out of sight.

"Wasn't it fine, Hugh," said Jack, "to see him use his nose. That is what a deer depends on, isn't it? He doesn't trust his eyes very much, nor his ears, but his nose never lies to him."

"Well," replied Hugh, "that's so. And it isn't so only about deer, but about all sorts of game animals. I've had deer walk right straight up to me. So long as I kept still they didn't pay any attention to me, and likely thought I was a stump or a rock, but just as soon as they passed along near enough to catch the wind of me they never stopped to look or listen, but got up and dusted the best they knew how; and yet you can come on a bunch of deer and they'll hear you and jump to their feet and look at you, and maybe you can fire three or four shots at them and kill two or three before they'll run away."

"Yes," said the driver, "that's sure enough true; but you mustn't say that it's only deer or game that acts that way. Take a dog now—"

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's right enough, too."

"Why," said the driver, "I have seen dogs—owned 'em, too—that didn't seem to get any satisfaction at all out of their eyes; they couldn't trust them. I have seen the time when I'd be walking along with my dog, and maybe I'd get a little ahead or a little behind him and I'd stop to talk with three or four fellows, and the dog would start to look for me; and even if he saw me right plain, he wouldn't be sure it was me until he had come up behind me and stuck the end of his nose against my leg so that he could smell me. I remember once standing with three or four men in front of the Bella saloon in Benton when my dog did a trick like that. One of the men I was talking to didn't like dogs; in fact, he was awful scared of them. The dog came up to us and smelt of each man, and when he shoved his nose hard against the leg of the man who was afraid of dogs, the man felt the dog's nose and looked down and saw the dog, and he thought he'd been bit. He jumped about four feet into the air and reached for his gun to try to kill the dog that had bit him, but the others of us got hold of him and held him until we'd explained matters.

"Curious how scared some people are over a little thing, and yet maybe all the time they've got good sand and wouldn't run away in the worst kind of a scrap."

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's one of the queer things about human nature; you never can tell what it is that is going to scare a man. I've seen men that would run a mile to get away from some little bug like a spider or a hornet, and yet I know those men weren't cowards, because I've seen them in tight places and they were always willing to take as many risks as anybody. Why, once I even saw a man that was afraid of a mouse."

"No?" exclaimed the stage driver.

"Fact," said Hugh. "He was afraid of a mouse, and when one ran over his face, just after he had gone to bed, he got up and sat by the fire all night for fear it would do it again."

"Why, Hugh," said Jack, "don't you remember that the great Napoleon was afraid of a cat. It would make him sick if there was one in the room, even though he didn't see it and didn't know that it was there. And Napoleon was one of the greatest soldiers that ever lived, and, I suppose, a brave man."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I reckon he was."

"I have known lots of people," Jack went on, "who were afraid of snakes. It didn't make any difference whether they were venomous snakes or not. Just as long as they were snakes, they scared these people."

"That's so," said Hugh. "I've known one man that was afraid of snakes, and, what's more, he could tell if there was one around, whether he saw it or not. He said he smelled them. That seems queer, too."

"It does for a fact," remarked the driver.

Before they had passed through the Prickly Pear Canyon they reached the stage station where the horses were to be changed. There all hands got down and walked about a little to stretch their legs; but in a very few minutes four fresh horses had been harnessed and they recommenced their journey.

"Do you ever have trouble with road agents on this line?" Hugh asked of the driver.

"No," said he, "we've never been stopped but once. The fact is, we scarcely ever carry anything that makes it worth while for anyone to stop the stage. Early this spring, though, my partner was held up just as he was coming over the Bird Tail Divide. There had been some talk of sending out some dust from Benton by the stage, but it was

given up and the gold went out another way. Of course none of us knew that it was going, but the news must have got out somehow, for that night, just as the stage reached the top of the Bird Tail Divide and the two leaders had got up onto the level, two men stepped out in the moonlight and told Buck—that's my partner—to stop. He started to lay the whip on his horses, but they were all walking, and the men brought down their guns and called to him again that if he started they'd kill the leaders. So he pulled up and asked the men what they wanted, and they said they wanted the treasure chest and told him to throw it down. He said there wasn't any treasure chest, and if they didn't believe him they could come and search the coach. With that a third man that Buck hadn't seen before popped up from the side of the road and climbed up and looked through the boot and searched Buck, and then went through the whole stage. They were a pretty mad lot when they let Buck go on."

"Was it ever known who they were?"

"No," said the driver. "I always had an idea that Buck knew who the little fellow was that searched the stage, but as they didn't get anything and didn't bother Buck any, I reckon he didn't want to say much about it."

All through the day they trotted briskly forward changing horses at regular intervals, so that the teams were always fresh and progress rapid. They had dinner and supper at the stage stations which they passed, and about ten o'clock at night reached Fort Shaw.

By this time both Hugh and Jack were tired and sleepy, but the driver seemed as fresh as ever.

While the horses were being changed, Hugh sat down on the front steps of the building and smoked his pipe, and Jack, trying to get the sleep out of his eyes, walked up and down on the boardwalk. As he was doing this he was joined by a little Irishman, who conversed pleasantly.

"Are you working now?" said the little man, as he puffed at his short pipe.

"No," said Jack, "not now. I'm just going up to Benton."

"Do yez want work?" asked the stranger. "I need a couple more hands on me ranch down below here and I'd like to hire yez. Thirty dollars and board is what I pay; good wages for the time and for the country."

"Well," said Jack, "I'd like the work and I'd like the money, but I'm just traveling through the country and I've got to meet a man in Benton, and couldn't stop now to take even a good job."

"Well," said the man, "I'm sorry. If ever yez come through Shaw again, maybe ye'd be needin' work, and ye'd better come to my place and see if I can't give yez a job. Maloney is me name, on Sun River, five miles below the post."

Jack was quite tickled at this offer, and when they started again, told Hugh about it.

"Yes," said Hugh, "you are getting to be a man now, and ought to be able to do a man's work, and I reckon you are."

All through the night the stage rattled and swung over the prairie, and soon after the sun rose the next morning trotted swiftly across Benton bottom and drew up at the end of its journey.

CHAPTER II

HISTORIC LAND

"THERE are some friends of ours," said Hugh, as the stage approached the hotel, and he raised his hand and made the Indian sign to attract attention.

"Yes," said Jack, "I see them. There is Baptiste and there's Joe, too. It's splendid to see them both again." Jack signaled earnestly and made the sign for shaking hands, to which his two friends responded.

As the stage drew up, Hugh said, "Now, son, you get down into the boot and haul out our bags and throw them to me," and when Hugh had reached the ground Jack passed him the bags and then sprang down himself. There were hearty handshakes and many questions between the four delighted friends, and presently Baptiste said, "Casse-tête, let us go now to my cabane, and there we will eat and smoke. I have many things to ask you."

"All right," said Hugh. "Just wait a minute till I see about our beds."

In the meantime Jack and Joe had engaged in a sort of war dance, followed by a wrestling match, to express their joy at meeting again, and then Jack thought of the beds on the coach and ran and unstrapped the leather apron which covered the baggage rack, and the two boys, loosening the lashings, threw the beds on the ground by the hotel door.

"Hello," said Hugh, "those boys have got our beds off now. We can go on. Just set those beds inside the office, and tell the clerk we'll stop for them with the wagon when we start. Then come on to Bat's cabin."

Before long Hugh and Jack were seated in the cabin, while Baptiste and Joe were busily engaged in the work of preparing breakfast. Soon all were seated at the table. The fare was simple, but heartily enjoyed, for all had healthy appetites and contented minds.

"How are you getting on, Bat?" said Hugh. "How do you live? Just about as you did a couple of years ago?"

"Yes," said Baptiste; "I live well; I always have lived well since you and these boys came in from the north and made me that fine present of the gold that you think I lost many years ago. Every month the bank pays me my money, and then besides I work a little for the company at the furs, so they pay me something, and I have some money that I can spend. I have bought me two horses, and sometimes I go off on a hunt; sometimes I trap a little. It is not much, but it is pleasant; it brings back to my mind the old days. Also, my mind is better than it was. I do not forget things as I used to. It was a good thing for me when you three men came in from the north and found me here, and you would not have found me except for the charger that Jack picked up on the prairie."

"Doesn't it seem wonderful that the finding of that little piece of metal should have changed a man's life as yours has been changed, Baptiste?" said Jack.

"Yes," said Hugh; "we, none of us, can ever tell what influence the smallest thing we do will have on other people. Now, Joe," he went on, "have you got a team here, and are you ready to take us out to the camp, as Mr. Sturgis wrote you?"

"Yes," said Joe, "the team's here and the wagon, and I reckon we can make the agency in three or four days and we can start just whenever you are ready. I've got a mess outfit and some coffee and sugar and bacon and flour, and if you need anything more we can get it here. I'm ready to start as soon as you are."

"Well," said Hugh, "the sooner we get off the better, I expect. What do you say, son?"

"Why," replied Jack, "you can't start too soon for me. I'm anxious to get to the camp, and then into the mountains. I always feel as if I didn't have much time out here anyhow, and I want to make the most of what I have."

"Well, then," said Hugh, as they pushed back their chairs from the table, "let's sit down and smoke a pipe and talk for a little while, and then you and Jack can go and get the team, and Bat and I will sit here and chew the rag about old times until you come for us. Get the beds and the bags when you come by the hotel, and then we can pull right out. I reckon Joe has grub enough and we won't have to buy anything here without it is a piece of fresh meat. We might get beef enough for two or three meals, but the weather is kind o' hot now, and likely there'll be a chance to get meat at some of the ranches we pass if we need it."

For a time Hugh and Baptiste sat together talking about the old trapping days, bringing up one after another the names of men whom they had known, and relating incidents of hunting, trapping, buffalo chasing, and Indian fighting. Jack thought it was good to listen to, but at length Hugh turned to the boys and said, "Well, go on now and get your wagon and we'll pull out. It's a long ways from here to the agency, and every hour we lose on this end we've got to make up on the other."

The boys started off for the team, leaving the old men to sit in the sun and talk about the past. A little later the wagon drew up to the door, and Hugh, after glancing through its contents and tightening one of the ropes that lashed on the load, said, "Well, we may as well be going. Good-by, Bat; we're likely to get back here about two months hence, and we'll meet then. I reckon up in the camp we'll see all the Monroes and old man Choquette, but those are all the old-timers we're likely to meet. So long," and he climbed into the wagon.

"Good-by, Baptiste," said Jack, as he shook hands, and Joe, reaching down from the driver's seat, pressed the old man's hand without a word.

"Good-by, my friends, good-by," said Baptiste. "It has been good to see you. Always your coming brings joy to my heart. I shall look for you to come again."

Joe gathered up the reins, spoke to the horses, and in a moment they were rattling along the street headed for the road leading up the Teton River.

It was a beautiful day. The air was cool and pleasant, yet the sun shone warm. The prairie and the distant hills were still green, and beautiful flowers dotted the plain. From the top of almost every sage brush came the sweet, mellow whistle of the meadow lark. In the air all about birds were rising from the ground, singing as though their throats would burst, and then after reaching a certain height, slowly floating down again on outspread wings, the song ending just as they reached the ground.

After they had gone a short distance away from the town the country seemed as lonely as the wildest prairie. Far off, here and there, grazed a few cattle or horses. Ahead of them the white, level road wound about among the bushes of the sage. To Jack it was all very delightful. The change from the crowded city was absolute, and as he looked about him and enjoyed his surroundings his heart seemed to swell within his breast, and he felt as though he could hardly speak.

Presently Joe said to Hugh, "Have you plenty of room, White Bull? I got this extra wide seat before I started because I thought we'd all want to sit on one seat, but I don't know whether it gives you room enough."

"Oh, yes," said Hugh, "there's lots of room for all of us."

"Yes," said Jack, "we could pretty nearly put another man here."

"Now, Joe," said Hugh a little later, "I want to ask you something about the people. I heard that two years ago, and maybe last year also, they starved, and that many of them died. I heard, too, that even up here the buffalo have all gone."

"Yes," said Joe, "that is true. Two years ago and also last year the people starved, but it was two years ago that the most of them died, that is, one winter back from this winter that has just passed. Old Four Bears kept a kind of count on a stick, cutting a notch for every person that died, and they say that nearly six hundred of the people starved to death. There was no food. The buffalo had not been seen for two winters. The people had hunted and sometimes killed an elk or a deer or a few antelope, but at last these had all been killed, and there was left nothing but rabbits and such birds as we could shoot or snare. It was a hard time; everybody was hungry. Everybody got poor. Even people that had once been heavy and had much fat on their bodies grew lean and thin. When you looked at the old people, the women and the children, you could see their bones sticking out against the skin. The little children and the old people were the ones that died. The men and the women were very hungry and got weak, but they did not die. White Calf, who is now the chief, asked the agent to give us what food there was in the storehouse and let us have one good meal and then die, but the agent would not do it. He told us to go out and kill food for ourselves. You know Father Prando?" Hugh nodded.

"Well, he had seen for a long time what was coming and he had written to people back East, asking that food might be sent out to us, and telling them that unless it was sent we should all starve to death. Besides that, he wrote to the commanding officer at Fort Shaw, and during the winter an officer was sent up to the agency to see how the people were getting on. This officer came and went around through the camp, and asked the people to tell him the truth. He didn't have to ask many questions; he had eyes and could see for himself. They tell me that in some of the lodges that officer sat and cried; that the tears ran down his face as they do down the face of a woman whose child has just died.

"After a while he went away, and we heard nothing more, but presently the news came that wagons loaded with food were coming from Fort Shaw, and then a little while after that came a government inspector who asked many questions and removed the agent and stopped here. This inspector was a good man, I think. He kept sending messages to Fort Shaw and trying to hurry the food along, and they say that he sent telegrams to Washington. Anyhow, about the end of the winter wagons began to come loaded with flour and bacon, and this was given out to the people, and then the suffering stopped, and the people stopped dying. After a little while, too, we got a new agent, a good man, who seems to be trying to help the people. He taught them how to plow the ground and to put seed into it. Maybe that is good. The seed grew, but it did not get ripe. We had plenty of oat straw, but no oats; but

ever since the food began to come a year ago last winter we have been doing better.”

“Well, well, that’s a hard story,” said Hugh. “How did it come that there was not food enough in the warehouses to help the people along?”

“I heard two of the white men that have married into the tribe talking,” said Joe, “and they said that the agent had been writing to Washington that the Indians were doing well and were growing crops and becoming civilized. They said that he wrote those things so that the people at Washington would think that he was a great man and was helping the Indians along. Of course the people never grew any crops; they didn’t know how. They lived well enough as long as there were buffalo, but when the buffalo went away, then the people had nothing to depend on.”

“You say nearly six hundred died?” asked Hugh.

“That is what they told me,” replied Joe.

“Good Lord,” said Hugh, “that was about one-fourth of the people. I don’t suppose there was more than twenty-five hundred or three thousand Piegiens at best.”

“I don’t know,” said Joe, “how many there were, but I know that many died. You can see their bodies in all the trees along the creeks.”

“But, Hugh,” said Jack, “how is it possible that such a thing should occur? Why didn’t the people back East know about this suffering and send food out to relieve it?”

“Well, son,” said Hugh, “you know it’s an awful long way from here back East, and then it’s hard always to get at the truth about any of these stories. An Indian reservation is a great place for getting up kicks and complaints, and I suppose that maybe those people in Washington are so used to hearing complaints that they don’t pay much attention to them.”

“But just think,” said Jack, “of six hundred people being starved to death. It’s almost impossible to believe it.”

“I reckon,” said Hugh, “that we’ll find a good many of our old friends dead when we get to the camp.”

“Yes,” said Joe, “a good many.”

All day long the horses trotted briskly up the level road along the Teton River. The sun was hot, but a cool breeze blew down from the mountains to the west and the whole country was fresh, green, and charming. About three o’clock they camped on the river at the edge of a grove of cottonwood trees, and unhitching the horses, Joe and Jack picketed them on the fresh green grass. Hugh, meanwhile, had brought some wood and built the campfire, and before long supper was ready.

As they sat about after eating, Hugh smoking his pipe, the boys lounging in the warm sunshine, and all watching the sun as it sank toward the west, and the shadows of the cottonwoods grow longer minute by minute, Hugh said to Jack, “We were talking this morning, son, about the hard times the Piegiens have had this winter, and that brought to my mind another hard time that they had a good many years ago.”

“What was that, Hugh?” said Jack, sitting up to listen, while Joe, who had been lying on his back with his eyes shut, rolled over so that he faced the old man.

“Did you ever hear of the Baker massacre?” asked Hugh.

“No,” said Jack, “I never did.”

“I did,” said Joe. “My father was killed that time. I don’t remember anything about it. I was too little. Only I remember my mother, how she cried.”

“Yes,” said Hugh, “lots of people cried that time.”

“Tell us about it,” said Jack.

“Well,” said Hugh, “it’s quite a long story and it made quite a fuss in its time, not so much among the white folks out here as among the Indians and, as I’ve heard, among white people back East. It certainly was a bad killing. You read in the books about the way Indians massacre white women and children when they’re on the warpath, but I reckon Indians never did anything worse than this killing at the Baker massacre. The way the white men killed and cut up the Cheyenne and Arapahoe women and children at Sand Creek down in Colorado, and the way they killed women and children up here on the Marias, no Indians could ever beat.”

Hugh paused, and looked around for a twig with which to push down the fire in his pipe.

“I’ve heard about the Sand Creek massacre, Hugh,” said Jack, “though I never heard the whole story. Some day I’m going to get you to tell me that; but what was the Baker massacre?”

“Well,” said Hugh, “along in ’66-’67, and from that time up to 1870, this country up here in Montana was run over by a whole lot of different Indian tribes. Of course it was Piegan country, and with the Piegiens were the Blackfeet and Bloods, and a part of the time the Gros Ventres of the prairie. They were all on good terms with each other after the Gros Ventres made peace with the Piegiens along about 1868. Besides these, there were the Crows, who were hostile to the Blackfeet, and every now and then the Kootenays would come over the mountains and have a scrap, and the Crees would come down from the north and steal Piegan horses, and Assinaboines and other Sioux would come up from the east and they’d tackle the Blackfeet. Pretty nearly any of these Indians, if they saw a chance to run off some stock or to kill a lone white man would do it, but the Piegiens, being close at home and always within reach, got the credit of most of the deviltry that was done. As a matter of fact, I reckon it was the Sioux and Assinaboines that did most of it. Anyhow, the trappers and traders and freighters in the country, and there were quite a number of them, got to thinking that the Piegiens made all the trouble. I reckon that the Bloods from the north, and sometimes a band of Blackfeet coming down to visit the Piegiens, did considerable horse stealing, and maybe they killed a few white men.

“Along about that time, too, Malcolm Clark took it into his head to pound up a young Piegan and gave him a terrible beating, and this young Piegan, who was a brother of Clark’s wife, went off and got a party of his friends and went back and killed Clark. Meantime all the Piegiens were camping in their country as usual and were passing back and forth, going into Benton and not looking for any trouble at all; but some of the toughs in Benton, whose names I won’t mention, because you may meet some of them, took an old Piegan, a beaver trapper and a good old man, and killed him and threw him into the river; and another man took out a young boy, considerably younger than you are, and just shot him down in the street. A lot of false reports were sent back East about what the Indians had been doing, and the result was that Colonel Baker was ordered to march against a certain village of Indians who were camping up here on the Marias, north of where we are now and about forty miles from Benton. The troops were

guided by two men who are now living on the Piegan reservation, each of them married to an Indian woman. The orders given to Colonel Baker were to strike Mountain Chief's band of Piegans, because from some information they had it was supposed that these people had been plundering and perhaps killing white people. As a matter of fact, the village found by the troops was that of Red Horn and Bear Chief. The camp consisted of less than forty lodges, and probably had in it a little more than two hundred people. The troops got up close to the village in the gray of the morning, without being seen, and their orders were to shoot to kill when they fired. There were but few people stirring when the first volley was fired. They were all killed, and then the people began to stream out of the lodges. At once they saw that they were being attacked by troops, and thought that it was a mistake. Bear Chief, unarmed, rushed toward the soldiers holding up a paper given him by some white man, but before he got to the soldiers he fell, with half a dozen bullets through him. The women and children were killed just as the men were, and of all the village only about forty-five got away, and some of these were off hunting and were not there when the attack was made. There were a hundred and seventy-six Indians killed, thirty-seven of them men, ninety women, and about fifty children.

"There was no pretense of a defense by the Indians. They didn't fight at all. They were just shot down until the troops got tired of shooting. The Indians have told me that most of the thirty-seven men that were killed were old men and young boys. As if to make it a little rougher on the Indians, there was smallpox in the camp at the time.

"You'll see old Almost-a-Dog up at the agency, and if you shake hands with him you'll notice that his hand is crooked. He got that wound at the Baker massacre."

"Why, Hugh, that's one of the most terrible things I ever heard of," said Jack. "A hundred and seventy-six killed, and out of that a hundred and forty women and little children!"

"Yes," said Hugh, "it always seemed to me pretty bad. Of course, when men go to war or try to steal horses or do anything of that kind they take all the chances that there are. It's all right to kill them if you can, but how anybody that's got any sense can shoot down women and children the way that man Baker did gets away with me.

"Well," he went on, "after a while the news of this massacre drifted East, and I heard that the newspapers took it up and told the truth about it, and I reckon the army officers most concerned in it got called a good many names. I've heard that Colonel Baker lost his chance of ever getting very high up in the army on account of this fight, and yet he only did just what he was ordered to do."

"That certainly was terribly cruel," said Jack, "and I don't see how it could be excused."

"Joe," said Hugh, turning to the Indian, who had said nothing, but still lay on the grass with his head resting on his hand, "were you in that camp, or were you somewhere else?"

"No," said Joe, "I was not in that camp. My mother was and a little sister and my father, but I was at Three Sun's Village, stopping with my aunt. I must have been about three or four years old at that time."

"Of the people left alive out of that village," Hugh went on, "there were nearly forty who were women and little bits of children. They were turned loose on the prairie—some of them being sick with the smallpox, you will remember—on the twenty-third of January. Anybody who knows what winter weather is up here in Montana can tell what that means. It's a wonder that any of them lived to get to a camp where they were looked after."

Hugh's story had taken some time in the telling, and by the time he had finished it was quite dark. Jack and Joe got up and went out to where the horses were and changed them to fresh grass, and on their way back brought the beds from the wagon and threw them down close to the fire. Hugh meanwhile had put fresh wood on it and the cheerful blaze lit up the white trunks of the cottonwoods and was reflected on the leaves above. It was a beautiful night, and the three spread their beds near the fire and were soon asleep.

CHAPTER III

THE BLACKFOOT AGENCY

THE next morning they were early on their way, and by noon reached the home of a Canadian Frenchman, formerly in the service of the American Fur Company, but now living on his little ranch on the Teton with his Indian wife and a numerous brood of half-breed children.

From here they kept on up-stream, until just before night they came to another ranch, on the Pend d'Oreille coulée, where lived a man whom Hugh and Joe both addressed as Froggy, also married to an Indian woman.

Just before dark Jack was greatly interested in seeing a procession of five pin-tailed ducks walking solemnly from a little slough to the house. When they reached it the woman drove them into a little coop built of short logs, and closing the door, fastened it with a pin.

"Where did you get your ducks, Froggy?" asked Joe.

"Oh," answered Froggy, "I found a nest out on the prairie at the edge of the slough and watched it until the young ones hatched and then got them and brought them in and raised them. I did have nine, but the coyotes and foxes got away with all but these five. Now I've got 'em trained so that they come up every night, and I shut them up in the house where they'll be safe."

Shortly after they had started next morning Jack asked Hugh some questions about Froggy. It appeared that he had come into the country twelve or fifteen years before and had worked first as a laborer and afterward as a clerk for small individual traders.

"They say," put in Joe, "that he has killed two or three men for their money."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I heard something about that, but nobody that ever talked to me about it really seemed to know anything."

"No," said Joe, "I reckon they never could prove anything against him. Twice men who were traveling through the country and were supposed to have money disappeared on this road and nobody ever knew what became of them. Each time Froggy said that they stopped at his house over night and then started on in the morning, but they never were seen again."

"Well," said Hugh, "we don't know anything about that."

"Hugh," said Jack, "I've been a good deal in the Western country and I'm not a pilgrim any longer, but isn't something going to happen to Froggy some of these days?"

"Why, yes, son," said Hugh, "I reckon some day that somebody will up and kill Froggy, and then the country will be better off; but it isn't your funeral nor yet mine, and we don't want to mix up with things that don't concern us at all."

"No, Hugh, of course, you're right, but it does seem as if the world and the territory would be better off if Froggy did not live here."

"Maybe, maybe," said Hugh, "but, as I say, it isn't your business nor yet mine."

That night they camped on Dupuyer Creek, and Hugh and Joe said that to-morrow they would be at the agency.

"Well," said Jack, "I'll be glad to get there. It's queer, isn't it, the number of times I've been up here and camped with these Piegans that I've never seen their agency, the place which is really their home?"

"Well," said Hugh, "it really has not been their home very long, only since the buffalo gave out. Before that they only came in once in a while, but not long before they saw the last of the buffalo the Government sent out troops to bring them in and tell them that they must stay at the agency."

"That's one reason, I reckon, that they starved, as Joe was telling us the other night. If it hadn't been that the troops kept them there, I believe they'd all have gone up north into Canada and have tried to make the two other tribes, the Blackfeet and the Bloods, give them help. I don't know what help they could have given them, because those people up there must be just as poor as these down here. They all depended on the buffalo and they had nothing else. None of them have any idea of farming, and of course none of them have any cattle."

"But, Hugh," said Jack, "what are they going to do now? The buffalo won't come back; how are they going to live?"

"Why," said Hugh, "the only way they can live is for the Government to support them, to send them out beef and flour and bacon. They've got to be fed until they learn to do something for themselves, either to raise crops or raise cattle, or get jobs as hands on the steamboats or as hands for the ranchmen; but, of course, there are not enough ranchmen in the country to hire even a small part of the able-bodied men among the Piegans."

"Well," said Jack, "they have a pretty melancholy outlook, haven't they?"

"They have, it's true," Hugh answered. "At the same time," he went on, "some of those men are pretty industrious and have a pretty good idea of work, if they only knew how, but as yet they don't know anything. Joe says though—you heard him the other night—that they were trying to learn to farm, but this country up here is so cold that I don't think they can ever do anything with crops. There are a few warm spots where crops might ripen, but they are very few."

About noon the next day they drove down into the valley of a little stream running from the west, and Joe stopped his horses so that they might drink.

"Well, friend," he said to Jack, "when we cross this creek we shall be on the reservation. The Indians have their camps and their cabins up and down this stream, and from here on, wherever there is a creek, there we will see the Indians camped. It is only about eight miles from here to the Agency."

Most of the way was uphill, however, and it was well on in the afternoon before the road passed over the high bluff, and at a distance they saw the agency buildings. These looked gray and inconspicuous, set down in the midst of a wide flat, through which flowed a stream bordered by willows, with a few tall cottonwood trees. As they drew nearer, the buildings seemed to Jack to increase in size, and presently they stopped at the little one-story trading post, a hundred yards below the Agency, that now looked like rather an imposing edifice. From here Jack could see only the stockade, about sixteen feet in height and built of cottonwood logs, which concealed all the Agency buildings behind its walls.

At the store they were warmly welcomed by Joe Bruce and his assistant, Mr. McGonigle. Bruce was, and long had been, one of the characters of the upper Missouri country. He was then only about thirty-six years old, smooth-shaven, keen-eyed, thin and wiry. Hugh had often spoken to Jack about him and Jack looked at him with great interest. He was the son of James Bruce, who was an important figure in the fur trade of the Upper Missouri and long in charge of Fort Union at the junction of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers, and later of Fort McKenzie and Fort Brulé, not far from where Fort Benton was built later.

Bruce's mother was a Mandan, and, as Jack learned a little later, lived with her son at the Piegan agency.

Mr. McGonigle was a Georgian, an old Confederate soldier who had come West "with the left wing of Price's army," as the saying used to be in Montana. Of the great number of Southerners that came into Montana in 1862 and '63 it was said in joke that when Price's army was defeated in Missouri in the early part of the war, the left wing got separated from the others and started westward, and never stopped until it reached the Rocky Mountains. Mr. McGonigle had spent some years as a prospector, but after having made and lost several small fortunes, at last became a trader's clerk, which he had now been for many years.

After a brief chat with Joe Bruce, arrangements were made to spread their beds for a night or two in one of his empty buildings, and to live at his mess until they started on their way again. Joe, whose people were camped on another creek further to the northward, was to remain at the Agency for two or three days, and then the whole party would start for St. Mary's Lakes.

While Hugh was talking with Bruce, Jack chatted for a while with Mr. McGonigle, but he was anxious to go up to the Agency and to get inside that gray barrier of logs behind which were hidden many interesting people and things.

Presently Hugh filled his pipe, and after lighting it, rose and said, "Well, son, let's go on up to the Agency and see the agent, and look around and see if we can meet any of our friends."

"All right, Hugh, come on," said Jack, and they set out.

They soon reached the stockade and entered the wide plank gate, which was still in good condition and bore signs of being frequently used. On either side of the gate there were small log buildings, each with a small window, which looked as if they had been built there for purposes of defense; probably, however, they were built only in imitation of the store and warehouse buildings that formerly flanked the gates of all old fur-trading posts. Once within the stockade, they could see the quarters for the employees, a warehouse, a schoolhouse in which were gathered ten or fifteen children, and some other buildings; while in the center of the stockade stood the house

occupied by the agent.

In this house they found Major Allen, who welcomed them cordially, and in response to inquiries by Hugh told them something of the terrible conditions that he had found when he had reached there a year or more before and had first met his starving people. He talked with much feeling about their sufferings and the heroic way in which they had borne them, and while he said nothing in definite terms about his predecessor, what his words suggested made Jack's blood boil with indignation. Major Allen asked Hugh and the boys to stay at the Agency as long as they liked, and said that he would like to have them see the Indians at work.

When Hugh and Jack went up to the Agency the next morning they saw in the field just below the stockade a number of Indians standing about a team of horses, and as they drew nearer they could see that Major Allen was giving instructions in the art of plowing to some of the people. When they reached the group, they were busy for some time shaking hands with old friends, whom they had known under far different circumstances, but after the first salutations all turned to watch the work.

A half breed was driving the team hitched to a plow, and the agent was trying to teach the Indians to hold the plow so as to turn a straight furrow. It was new and not easy work for the red men. The handles of the plow jerked from side to side, the point either coming out of the ground or plunging so deeply into it that the man holding the handles was in danger of being thrown forward on his head. Then Major Allen would take the plow and holding it steadily would cut a smooth furrow of even depth.

Old White Calf, the chief, was anxious to learn plowing. He took hold of the handles and, although at first the plow wobbled from side to side and more than once one of the handles struck him viciously in the ribs, he cut a fair furrow for six or eight feet. Then, however, the point ran deep into the ground, and the old man was thrown forward and nearly fell down. Meanwhile, the Indians who were looking on were making jocular remarks and poking fun at the man who happened to be plowing, but he—after he had performed his small stint—had his revenge by making fun of the next victim.

After he had watched them for a little while and enjoyed the fun, Jack had a chance to look on a scene picturesque and beautiful. The wide valley stretched before him with bluffs rising in terraces one after another, the bright green of the willows and cottonwoods marking the course of the stream; to the west the mountains with their clear-cut outlines sharply defined against the blue sky; the gray stockade stood near at hand, and farther off the conical white lodges of the Piegans up and down the creek, with here and there a low log cabin. Outside the fence Indians passed to and fro, some of them on foot, others on horseback, and their bright-colored blankets, beaded belts and knife sheaths gave life and color to the picture.

For some time the work went on, and then the Major asked Hugh and Jack to come up to his house, where they talked over the Indians and the new problems which they had to face.

"It's interesting work looking after these people, but it's discouraging, too," said Major Allen. "The Indians are willing to work, but they haven't any idea how to perform the tasks we set them, so that their efforts are ineffective, and they easily become discouraged. They have never been used to handling horses hitched to wagons, and they don't know at all what horses can do. They hitch these little riding ponies of theirs to a big wagon and then pile it up with much more of a load than the horses can haul, and whip up the team, which strains and tugs along for a short distance, but presently gives out, and the wagon has to be unloaded or else another pair or two of horses must be attached to it.

"The Indians are as willing as can be and they are not afraid of work, but they don't like to keep at it for a long time. They are absolutely ignorant of all farming matters and it will take them some time to learn. Last summer some of them planted little gardens, but they treated them as children would. For example, they often dug up their potatoes to see how fast they were growing, and as soon as they grew large enough to eat they tried to sell them, although if they had left them in the ground they would have continued to grow for a month longer. Now that the Indians have teams and are beginning to learn something about how to use them, they drive up to the mountains and cut wood and haul it down, either to sell or to use themselves in winter. Some of them have built good log cabins in which they pass the winter, but of course in summer they prefer to live in their lodges."

"Well, Major," said Hugh, "you can hardly expect these Indians, who all their lives have been chasing buffalo, to take hold of work at once."

"No," said the Major, "that can't be expected, and I don't look for it. I am very well satisfied with the way they have taken hold. They're willing and they seem honest."

"Yes, I think so," said Hugh, "and from what I can hear they've had such a hard time that I think they're really in earnest in their wish to learn how to work."

"Their loyalty," said the Major, "is one of the things that has struck me the most. The policemen are absolutely faithful. When I enlist them, I make them take an oath, explaining that everybody who serves the Government has to be sworn in, and that they must do as all the other public servants. They take an oath which I like, though perhaps not a very ceremonial one; still they take it as if they meant it, and I believe they do. Have you ever heard them make this oath, Mr. Johnson?"

"No," said Hugh, "I don't reckon I have. I would like to hear it, and so would son here. What is it?"

"When they are sworn," said Major Allen, "they lift up the right hand and, stretching it toward the sky, say, 'The sun is good,' and then, 'The earth is good,' and bending down they touch the ground with the hand; and as they stand up again they say, 'I will obey the orders of my chief, that I may live long with my family.'

"Now these policemen get only eight dollars a month; they're likely to be called on at any time to ride any distance; they have to furnish their own horses, and yet they never, so far as I have heard, complain. They're a good lot of people, and I ask for nothing better than to stay here and work with them, but I hope that I shall never have as bad a time as I had when they were starving during the first two or three months that I was here."

"Yes," said Jack, "that must have been a terrible time."

As they were walking down to the trader's store, Jack, who had been much impressed by Major Allen's talk about the Indians, said to Hugh, "Now, Hugh, what do you think will become of these Indians? Of course, the buffalo never can come back, so hunting days must be nearly over. How are the people to support themselves, or are they to be looked after in future by the Government?"

"Why, son," said Hugh, "I guess that question is puzzling, and it's going to puzzle a lot of smarter men than you

and I will ever be. It's a sure thing that these Indians can never make a living in this country by farming. They might make a living by cattle if they had any, or had any means of getting them, but of course the Indians have no money and no means of earning any money to buy cattle with. They certainly can't hire out to work, because there is no one in this country that will hire them and pay wages. If they had cattle and would take care of them they might do well, because this is one of the finest grazing ranges in the world, but you know very well that if the Government were to give each one of these Indians a cow to-morrow, a week hence very few of them would still have his cow. They would kill them and eat them, and then sit around and hope that the Government would give them another. They have got to have a lot of instruction before they will look out for the future."

"Well," said Jack, "you can't blame them. In the past when they wanted food they went out and killed something, and they can't be expected to understand that things are changing."

"No," said Hugh, "I don't expect it of them, but if they don't come to understand it very soon they will have to suffer again just what they suffered two years ago."

"Well," said Jack, "it's mighty hard lines; it's heartbreaking to think of."

"So it is," said Hugh. "I feel mighty badly whenever I think of it, but I reckon it's the law. I expect the white people had to go through an awful lot of suffering before they got to the point where 'most every man realized that he had to work hard for a living, and I reckon if you look around back where you live you'll find that there are a good many people in those big cities there that don't realize this yet."

"Yes," said Jack, "I suppose there are, but these Indians are so kindly and generous and hospitable that I feel a personal sympathy for each one of them that, of course, I don't feel for the inefficient people back East."

"Well," said Hugh, "that's natural, of course. You know these people and you don't know the others."

Soon after they got back to the trader's store dinner was ready, and after dinner they lounged about the store talking with Bruce.

CHAPTER IV

A MEDICINE PIPE CEREMONY

TOWARD the middle of the afternoon a wagon drove up to the store and Bruce's wife, carrying a baby, came out and got in and said a few words to her husband. He rose and walked toward the wagon and then turned and said, "I'm just going over with the woman to Red Eagle's camp; the baby's been sick and she wants to have him doctor it. He's going to unwrap his medicine pipe. Do you men want to go along? I don't know if Jack has ever seen a medicine pipe unwrapped."

"No," said Hugh, "I reckon he hasn't. What do you say, son? Do you want to go?"

"You bet, Hugh," said Jack. "I'd be mighty glad to go. We won't be in the way, will we, Mr. Bruce?"

"No," said Bruce, "not a bit. Come along."

It was not a long drive over to Two Medicine Lodge Creek. Red Eagle was camped not far from the old piskun, where in old times the Blackfeet used to drive the buffalo over the cliff, where the fall from the great height killed or crippled many of the herd and gave the people food. As the wagon drove up to Red Eagle's lodge, it was surrounded by a pack of dogs which, with furious barkings and snappings, threatened the visitors, but when no attention was paid to them they quieted down at once, and stood about with welcoming waggings of their tails. Mrs. Bruce climbed out of the wagon and carrying her baby, some food and tobacco and a large sack of dried sarvis berries, entered the old man's lodge, while the men drove the wagon off a little distance, unhitched the horses and tied them to the wagon wheels. Returning to the lodge, Bruce looked in and said, "The old man hasn't begun to get ready yet. We may as well stop outside until he is ready to begin."

"Let's go up to the cliff, son," said Hugh, "and see where the people used to kill buffalo."

The three walked over to the almost vertical bluffs which rose sixty or eighty feet above the valley. Here the ground was strewn with weathered bones of which the soil itself seemed partly composed, for it was filled with minute fragments of the bones and teeth of buffalo.

"Now, son," said Hugh, "this is a sacred place to the Indians. They used to make medicine here and perform ceremonies to bring the buffalo up on the prairie near here, so that they could lead them over the cliff. You see that pile of horns over there?" and he pointed to a great heap of horn sheaths of the buffalo, as big as a hay-cock. There must have been more than a thousand horn sheaths in it.

Jack looked at it in astonishment, for it was something the like of which he had never seen.

"Although they have not used this place now for many years, the Indians still try to keep up that pile of horns, and whenever it is blown down or knocked over by the horses they heap it up again. In old times there were arranged in certain places on the ground a lot of horns all directed the same way, that is, with the points of the horns pointing the way they wanted the buffalo to run. Some of the horns were those of bulls and some of cows. That meant that they wanted bulls as well as cows to fall over the cliff. They used to lead the buffalo up to the cliff, and fix things so that they would be running fast when they got to the edge of the cliff. The leaders might perhaps try to stop, but they could not stop because those behind pushed them along and shoved them over. Those that were behind could not see what was in front of the leaders and kept running until they got to the edge of the cliff and then they went over. The fall killed some of the buffalo and crippled others. Besides that, there was a big pen built about the place where the buffalo fell down; a fence made of stones and logs and brush, and women and children and men were hidden all about it. As soon as the buffalo came tumbling down, these people showed themselves all around the fence, frightening the buffalo, so that those that were still able to travel, instead of trying to run on, simply ran around in a circle inside the fence. Then the men killed them with arrows, and after all were dead the women went into the pen and skinned the buffalo and took away the meat, and then the skulls and most of the big bones were carried off to a distance and the pen cleaned up for the next drive."

"Well," said Jack, "I've heard about this jumping the buffalo over the cut bank and catching them in pens, but I never supposed that I would see the place where it had been done."

"Well," said Mr. Bruce, "this is sure one of the places and you don't need anybody to tell you so, because you can look around and see the bones of the buffalo all about you."

"Yes," said Jack, "that's so; the place speaks for itself."

"There are lots of old-time things hidden in this ground that we are standing on," said Bruce; "old arrow points and knives and fleshers, and maybe other tools. Once in a while some of these things are found, but most of them are covered up by the wash that comes down from the cliff. Old Black Coming In Sight Over The Hill, who lives right above here, has found lots of arrow points. A couple of years ago he showed me a double handful that he had picked up, and also a bone flesher made from the cannon bone of a buffalo. There are a good many other places like this. One of them is up on Sun River, and from that Louis Pambrun got a knife made of that black rock that looks like glass, and a stone ax and a lot of stone flesher points and, oh, a whole mess of stuff."

"My," said Jack, "wouldn't I like to see some of those things that have come from one of these places. It surely seems as if it would make the whole business of killing buffalo in the old-time fashion mighty real to one."

"Well," said Bruce, "we'll try and look around and see if we can't get hold of something of that kind for you before you go."

After a little more examination of the bluffs, the three returned to Red Eagle's lodge. The preparations for the ceremony were not yet completed and all sat down near the lodge, and while the two elder men smoked, Jack looked about him and tried to make friends with the little children who were racing about playing their games. One little fellow only about two years of age quite won Jack's heart by his friendly smile and evident lack of fear. His clothing consisted of several strings of beads, a buckskin string about his neck, to which was attached a stone charm, and a very short shirt which came down to his lower ribs. He had been playing in the stream or in some half-dried puddle, and the lower part of his person was covered by a thick coating of mud. The little fellow marched up to Jack in a confident way, shook hands with him in a matter-of-fact fashion and clambered up on his knee, and after looking at Jack's clothing and buttons and listening to the ticking of his watch, sat perfectly still watching the doings of his fellows. The children were amusing themselves by making miserable the lives of the dogs. When they found a dog sleeping somewhere or playing near them, they would creep up to it and beat it with long twigs and pieces of wood until the dog ran away into the brush with melancholy howlings, which seemed to delight the young Indians.

At length a woman's voice called from the lodge, and Bruce and Hugh rose and passed in, Jack following. A number of Indians were seated around the fire, but Red Eagle, the principal personage, sat at the back of the lodge with the fire between himself and the door. At his left was an unoccupied space, to which the three newcomers were motioned. To the left of the doorway, in the women's place, sat several women, some of whom had babies either on their backs or between their knees. To the right of Red Eagle was his wife and assistant, the Bear Woman.

Red Eagle was a large, fine-looking man of majestic presence. His massive face, kindly and benignant in expression, was framed in long gray hair which hung down over his broad shoulders. He was one of the oldest men in the tribe, and was blind.

After Hugh and the others had seated themselves, there was a little pause, and then the Bear Woman took up a dried willow branch, which had two parallel twigs close together, serving for a pair of tongs, and lifted from the fire a live coal, which she placed on the ground before the Bear Man, who then began to sing a low, monotonous chant in a minor key, in which all the other Indians soon joined. While singing, the old man interrupted himself at intervals to exclaim *ni-ai*, (my shelter or covering), the other Indians keeping up the singing. After a few moments he reached his hand under the robe on which he was sitting and drew out a small pouch, which he passed to the Bear Woman. She slowly untied it and took from it a pinch of the dried needles of the sweet pine, which she held over the coal. Then the Bear Man sang four times, and as the music rose and fell the Bear Woman's hand rose and fell over the coal. At the end of the fourth song Red Eagle stretched out his hand and made a downward gesture, and the Bear Woman let fall the incense on the coal, and immediately the fragrant perfume of the burning pine needles filled the lodge. The singing continued a little longer and then stopped. Then both Red Eagle and his assistant stretched out their hands over the smoke of the burning sweet pine, rubbed them together, and then, seeming to grasp some of the smoke in their hands, rubbed it over their heads and forearms, and reaching out and grasping more of it, passed it over their heads, shoulders, and upper arms. They also seemed to take handfuls of the smoke and eat it or breathe it in, the idea being that they were purifying themselves without and within. Then presently the Bear Man turned his face toward the sun and began to pray. Some portion of what he said Jack could understand, but afterward he asked Bruce to interpret the prayer, and this is what it was:

"Hear Above People, hear Thunder, those Animals [meaning his secret helpers or medicine animals], hear. Pity us, pity us. Let us live, let us live. Give us full life. Let us grow to be old. Listen. Crow Arrow, let him live. In his wandering about let no danger befall him from bad beasts or dangers that are on the trail. Let his wife and his boy, this child with the shining hair, live to be very old and let them have plenty of everything. Let White Bull live, keep him when he is traveling, protect him from all dangers, from perils from animals, and from all dangers on the trail. Let his relations live and have abundance, and White Warrior, let him live, care for him and keep him safe from dangers, wherever he may be. All people let live. O Creator, have pity on the people so that they may live well, free from danger!"

Then he turned his face and appeared to address the bundle hung on the lodge poles behind him containing the pipe: "Oh, tell them to have pity on us. Let the young people grow, increase their flesh. Let all men, women, and children have full life. Harden the bodies of old people so that they may reach great age."

The prayer ended and all the people gave a long-drawn *ah-h-h-h*, meaning yes, about the equivalent of our amen.

Jack sat spellbound as he watched the old man while he prayed. Here, indeed, was a priest who really wished for what he was asking. Here was one who threw himself on the mercy of his God and would not let Him go. He implored, he urged, he insisted, and would not be denied, and as Jack saw the great beads of sweat stand out on the old man's brow his memory went back to one of his Sunday-school lessons of long ago, and he thought of a struggle told of in the Bible, when at the ford Jabbock, another patriarch, wrestled through the long night with his God and prevailed.

But Jack had little time to think about this, for now the singing was resumed; Red Eagle starting it as before, the others after a little time joining in the plaintive refrain. Again the Bear Woman sprinkled sweet pine on the coal, and

again the priest and priestess purified themselves by passing the smoke over their arms, heads, and bodies. Then they seemed again to take handfuls of it and to hold the smoke under the large package tied to the lodge poles above them. Presently, as the singing continued, the Bear Woman rose to her knees and very slowly and reverently untied the package from the poles and placed it on the robe between the Bear Man and herself.

Now Red Eagle began a new song, and after he and the woman had again passed their hands through the smoke, they moved them over the bundle, raising them alternately in time to the music. At first the hands were closed, except the forefinger, which pointed straight out, and the up-and-down motions were quick and sharp, representing the dainty rise and fall of the feet of the antelope as it walks. Then, at a change in the air, the fingers were all bent, but the hand not closed, and the up-and-down motions became deliberate and heavy, representing the slow tread of a walking bear. At another change the old man raised his hands, partly closed, the forefinger extended, pointing upward and slightly bent inward, to the side of his head, and moving his face this way and that, as if looking about him, called out in a shrill voice, *Hoo*. The hand sign meant buffalo and the motion of the head signified looking or watching. This sign, as Bruce afterward explained to Jack, was related to the word *ni-ai*, so often used in the songs, meaning my shelter, my covering, my robe; for the shelter, covering, or robe of these Indians is made from the buffalo.

Again the air of the song changed, and the priest and his wife holding their hands palm downward, all the fingers extended forward, moved them up and down, making the sign for walking, which represented going to war, and the sign for danger or watchfulness, the forefingers pointed straight up and held at the side of the head, like a pricked ear, with a startled expression of countenance and a watchful look.

After this song was ended, Red Eagle began slowly and carefully to remove the wrappings from the package at his side, but he still sang, though the air was again changed to a slower, more monotonous chant. After the strings had been untied from the double-mouthed red cloth sack which formed the outer covering of the package, he drew from it a long bundle, wrapped in cloths of various colors. One by one he took off these cloths, until, after many had been removed, the medicine pipe was revealed. It was a handsome pipe stem about four feet long, wrapped for a part of its length with large showy beads and profusely ornamented with ermine skins and tails and with the feathers of eagles and other birds, which hung from it in thick bunches. Near the lower or pipe end of the stem was a separate plume made of twelve tail feathers of the war eagle, each having its extremity wrapped with red or yellow horse hair, which hung down in a long tuft. The whole stem was handsome and heavy.

After the covering had been removed, the old man bent for a moment in silence over the pipe, and then raised it slowly and tenderly to his face, making a soft, cooing, caressing sound. He pressed it to his lips and whispered to it, while he raised his sightless eyes toward the sun, as if he could look through their veil and through the lodge covering and see some being invisible to others. After a few moments' silence he again spoke to the pipe in a low voice, and passed it over his arms, shoulders, and both sides of his head. Then he began the song again, shaking the pipe in time to the music. When he had finished he again prayed, and said, "O Sun, O Moon and Stars, pity us, pity us. Look down." Then followed again the substance of the first prayer, and he ended with the petition for men who were now away on the warpath, saying, "Little Plume, let him survive. Tearing Lodge and Double Rider, let them survive and return, bringing the heads." Then turning, he passed the pipe to Hugh, who held it before his face and bent his head. Then it went to Jack, who imitated Hugh. Then Bruce took it and made a prayer, and from him it passed to an old blind warrior, who prayed long and fervently, and so it went around the circle, each one who received it making a prayer. Jack listened hard to try to hear what the different people said, but they spoke in low tones, and only now and then could he catch a word: *Kim 'o-kit* (have pity); *na pi* (old man), or *na-tos* (sun). When the pipe went back around the circle to the other side of the lodge, where were the women and their little babies, the women prayed as they took it and then passed the pipe stem over the bodies and heads of their little ones, believing that the sacred influence would benefit the children.

Meanwhile, Red Eagle had taken up a medicine rattle and again began to sing, shaking the rattle in time to the music. When at length the pipe returned to him he put down his rattle, took the stem and repeated rapidly a number of times the words, "Pity us, pity us, pity us." Then, putting the stem on the robe between himself and his wife, he rose, began a new song and began to dance, first to the east, and then turning about toward the west. The people sitting in the lodge accompanied him in a melodious but plaintive minor chant. Presently he stopped dancing, faced about, and, sitting down, prayed again, concluding with these words, "Let the Sun shine upon us and our lives be without shadows." Then he made a sign that the ceremony was over, and all rose and filed out of the lodge.

Jack was mightily impressed by the ceremony that he had just witnessed, yet, though he was anxious to ask many questions, he hardly felt like doing so of Bruce, especially in the presence of his wife, whose faith in the religion of which the old man was the priest he supposed to be strong. It was not until after they had got back to the Agency, therefore, that he said very much about it.

Before supper, however, he had an opportunity to speak to Hugh, and to ask him some questions about the religion of these Indians.

"That is one of the most solemn things I ever saw, Hugh," he said, "and I want to ask some questions about it. I don't know if I ever told you how I felt that time when Last Bull gave me my name and prayed over me. Of course that was two or three years ago, and I was a good deal younger then than I am now; but I never before had had anything make me feel as solemn as that prayer did, and that's just the way I felt to-day when Red Eagle was praying. It seems to me that when these Indians pray, they pray as if they meant what they were saying. They seem to be in earnest about it. Now, when I hear a white man praying,—that is, most white men, I don't mean to say it's the same with all,—they don't seem to be in earnest; they seem to be going through a sort of form. Did you notice how the sweat stood out on that old man's face when he was making his prayer; how solemn he was, and how he acted just as if he were begging somebody for something?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "I noticed that, and it's so that when these Indians pray they are surely in earnest. They are not getting off something that they've learned by heart and just saying it because they have to; they mean all that they say and they are really asking favors. People say that they're nothing but poor savages and that they're pagans, and all that, but I tell you when they're talking to their God they could give points to a whole lot of white folks."

"Well," said Jack, "I've seen some Indians pray, and I've been present at some ceremonies, like the medicine lodge and like opening the beaver bundle, but I never saw anything that seemed to me as real as this that we've seen to-day."

"Well," said Hugh, "I am right glad we went, and I'm glad that you saw it. These Indians and all the other Indians that I know anything about are changing mighty fast. They're losing their old ways and picking up new ones that are not half so good. They're changing all the time, and before you are many years older you won't be able to see any of these old-time ways. There are three or four railroads now running across through the country that used to belong all to the Indians, and now that the buffalo are about gone they've got to come on to their reservations and learn to work to earn a living, and just as soon as they do that you'll see all the old customs go, and when they once go they'll very soon be forgotten."

"But what a pity it is, Hugh," said Jack, "that they've got to change! Why can't they be left out here to live their life in the old way?"

"Why, son," said Hugh, "you are talking now without thinking, talking just as I have felt a great many times; but you know and I know from what we've both seen that before very long these people are all going to be crowded out of the most of this country by the white folks. Don't you remember a couple of years ago when we came back from the coast, how the little towns were springing up all along the new railroad that they were building, and now that the railroad has been finished, all along it, east and west, there are growing up settlements of people that will soon be towns. The white people are coming in crowds, and as soon as they've taken all the best locations along the railroad they'll begin to spread out and take up other locations, and I believe that I'll live long enough to see this Montana Territory full of people. It'll be here just as I've seen it happen in the South. First the cattle will come into the country, lots of them, and for a while it will be all cows and cowboys; and then, little by little, the ranchers will come in, and they'll settle first on one creek bottom and then on another, and then maybe mines will be found in the mountains, and new railroads will be built, and at last there won't be room in the country for anybody but white folks that are working hard to make money out of the prairie and the river bottoms, and even out of the mountains. A few years ago I wouldn't have believed it, but I have seen it happen now in lots of different parts of the country, and I reckon it will happen here, just as it has in so many other places."

"Well, Hugh," said Jack, "I suppose that's so. I remember, as you say, the way the settlements were springing up along the new railroad when we came back from British Columbia, and this time, coming out, I could see the little towns starting all along the Northern Pacific, back in Minnesota and west of there, but it does seem awfully rough that these Indians should all be driven from their own land and should have to be penned up on a little reservation. And I don't see what in the world they're going to do to live unless the Government feeds them."

"Well," said Hugh, "I don't either. I suppose maybe some time they'll have to turn into cattlemen. I always had an idea they'd make good cow hands, if they could be taught to look after cattle. Certainly the Indians used to take awful good care of their ponies, and if they could be taught to take good care of cows, they could make a good living just as long as they've got the range that most any reservation will furnish. You know the Navahoes down South and some others of those Southern Indians have big herds of sheep and take pretty good care of them, but of course sheep and cattle are different things."

That evening in the store Hugh asked Bruce what he thought of the probability of the Indians taking to cattle-raising.

"Why," said Bruce, "they could make good cowmen if they'd look after the stock. This is one of the greatest cattle ranges in the whole country, and the few cattle that I own have done mighty well. I have had two Indians, my brothers-in-law, looking after the stock, and they are getting to understand how to handle cattle well. But the trouble is that the average Indian hasn't much feeling of responsibility, and instead of spending the day on his horse looking after the cattle, he's likely to get off and lie down in the sun and sleep for half a day and let the stock get away from him. They haven't yet got any idea of the importance of staying with a job. They'll work hard until they get tired of it, and then they'll stop, and you can't start them up again. You see, they've never been used to working steadily. They'd work as long as they felt like it, and then stop. That's what they've got to learn before they can accomplish anything toward making a living. They've got to learn the lesson of steady, continued effort, and it's going to be mighty hard to teach them that."

Late in the evening Hugh said to Jack, "Well, son, we've seen about all we need to around here, haven't we? What do you say to our starting out to the mountains to make our trip?"

"Why," said Jack, "I'm ready, and I don't see why we can't go off right away."

"Well," said Hugh, "the sooner we get off the better it will suit me, and if you feel like it, we'll get hold of Joe tomorrow and pack up our stuff and start. I reckon we can have a good time up at the lakes hunting around there. You see, nobody's ever been up to the heads of any of those rivers, and I'd like to go up there and see what there is, and I reckon you would, too."

"Sure, I would," said Jack.

"All right," said Hugh, "let's get hold of Joe to-morrow, and maybe we'll start the next day. I don't think there's anything to keep us here."

CHAPTER V

OFF FOR THE MOUNTAINS

WHEN Joe appeared early the next morning he was at once sent off to get the horses. Jack went with him, and an hour or two later the wagon, two saddle horses, and three loose animals were standing in front of the trading store. Beds, provisions, pack saddles, and a tent were soon loaded into the wagon, and before very long the party pulled out across Badger Creek, above the stockade, and climbed the hills toward the north. Hugh and Joe rode in the wagon, while Jack drove the loose horses ahead of it. For some distance there was a road which was partly wagon road and partly old travois trail, but gradually the track became more and more dim, and soon Jack found himself riding over the unmarked prairie. Before this, however, they crossed Two Medicine Lodge River, just below Old Red Eagle's camp, and climbed the high hill on the other side and saw before them the wide, undulating prairie and pinnacled mountains to the northwest. After reaching substantially level ground Jack pulled up, and when the wagon overtook him asked Joe, "Which way do we go from here on, Joe?"

"Well," said Joe, "keep pretty well off to your left, riding pretty nearly straight for that pointed mountain that you see over there, the one away to the left of Chief Mountain."

"Oh," asked Jack, "is that Chief Mountain that we see sticking up there like a finger off to the north?"

"Yes," said Joe, "that's it, the last mountain to the right. But you want to keep off to the left, and in three or four hours you'll come to a big wide valley with a good-sized river running through it. I reckon we'd better camp there, hadn't we, White Bull?" he asked, turning to Hugh.

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's a good place. We can't get on as far as Milk River to-night; in fact, we'll do well if we get up to the head of it to-morrow."

"All right," said Jack, "I'll go on. I don't believe you will be far behind me, anyhow."

"No," said Joe, "we'll be pretty close to you. There's a big flat in the valley we're going to and some timber at the upper end, and we'll camp there. Maybe you'll see some of the people there, too. Cross Guns often camps up at the head of that flat."

For several hours Jack trotted briskly along over the prairie, keeping the horses well together ahead of him. They drove very nicely and gave him little trouble. He was surprised and pleased to find how easy riding seemed, for it was nearly a year since he had been on a horse. It was pleasant under the bright warm sun, with the fragrance of the sage brush in his nostrils, the green swells of the prairie on either side, the beautiful flowers showing everywhere, and the air full of the sweet songs of prairie birds.

As he rode over a hill about the middle of the afternoon he saw before him a wide valley, through which ran a considerable stream, with large cottonwoods and low willows marking its course at various points, and turning a little more to the left he pushed the horses down the hills, and at length came out on a wide grassy bottom. Still to the left there was a grove of tall cottonwood trees, among which shone two or three white lodges, and he rode up toward them, slackening his pace as he did so. The horses that he was driving at once began to feed, and looking back he saw the wagon coming into sight on the crest of the bluffs that he had just left. Leaving the horses to feed, he galloped to the timber where the lodges stood, and rode up to one of them.

At the fierce barking of the dogs, a woman put her head out of a door, and when she saw Jack, put her hand quickly over her mouth in surprise, and then spoke to someone in the lodge, and a moment later Cross Guns came through the door, and walking up to Jack shook hands with him very cordially. By means of signs and broken Piegan the two held a short conversation, and then, as Cross Guns saw the wagon approaching, he signed to Jack to go and tell his friends to come up and camp here, and Jack, riding off, delivered the message to Hugh and Joe, and then brought the loose horses close to the lodge. Meanwhile Cross Guns had had one of his lodges cleared and a fire built in it, so that the three men at once moved into a house, and thus were spared the labor of putting up their tent. It was a fine, new buffalo skin lodge; perhaps the lightest, warmest, and most comfortable portable shelter ever devised by any people.

After the horses had been turned out and put in charge of Cross Guns' young nephew, who took them off and turned them out with Cross Guns' herd, the wife of their host came in and cooked supper for them, while the others lounged comfortably about on the beds with their feet toward the fire and talked.

"Who is Cross Guns, Hugh?" whispered Jack. "I know his face perfectly well, but I don't remember where I've seen him, nor who his relations are."

"Why," said Hugh, "don't you know? He's one of the sons of Old White Calf and a brother of Wolf Tail. Old White Calf is the chief now, and a good old man, always thinking about what he can do for his people."

"Of course," said Jack, "I know White Calf perfectly well, and I know what a good man he is, but I had forgotten that Cross Guns is his son."

"And this woman here," said Hugh, "do you know who she is?"

"No," said Jack, "I don't. I've seen her before, too, and she's a mighty pleasant-faced woman, but I don't know her."

"Well," said Hugh, "you wouldn't think it to look at her, but she's a granddaughter of one of the chief factors of the Hudson's Bay Company about a hundred years ago. Old James Bull came over here, I reckon, about 1775, and after working for the Hudson's Bay Company for a while he became one of the chief factors. He married a Piegan woman, and his son, Jim Bull, is living here yet. I reckon he must be about ninety years old. This woman is a daughter of Jim Bull. I reckon you never saw him. He's a queer old chap, mighty religious nowadays, but they tell great stories about him in old times, about how wild he was. They say he used to go off on the warpath with the Blackfeet and fight the white traders, run off their horses, and of course kill the men when he could. Of course I don't know whether these stories are true or not, but one of them is that one time he met a party of traders and trappers and the Blackfeet attacked them and were driven off. The fur traders were on one side of the river and the Blackfeet on the other, and after the fight was over Jim Bull, they say, came to the edge of the stream and called across to the fur traders, saying that he was a white man and wanted to make peace. He wanted to know if one of them wouldn't cross over and talk it over with him. There was some talk among the white men as to whether it would be safe to do this, but finally one of them said he'd go over, and did so. The trader went over, and he and Bull sat down and smoked and talked about making peace and what a pity it was to fight and all that sort of thing, and then presently, while they were sitting there smoking, Jim Bull pulled out a pistol and killed the white man and scalped him and gave the war-cry and went off.

"Another time, according to the story, he went into camp dressed up like a Canadian engagé, that is, with a blanket coat, and so on, and told the man that was on guard over the horses that he was ordered to turn them out to feed. They were let go and scattered about feeding, and presently a party of Blackfeet that were hidden near by rounded them up and took them all off, and Bull went with them. He got to be so mean after a while that they say that one of the head men of one of these trapping outfits offered five hundred dollars for Bull's head. Of course, he's an old man now, and he gave up all these boy's tricks a good many years ago. As I say, now he's mighty religious. He had a Piegan woman and quite a number of children here in the country; pretty smart, too, all of them are."

After supper was over Hugh said to Jack, "Now, son, there are quite a lot of trout in the creek there, and if you want to help out our breakfast you might go out and try to catch some."

"A good idea, Hugh; I'll do it," and Jack jointed his rod and spent an hour or two fishing. The trout did not seem to care much for his flies, and at last he substituted for them a plain hook, which he baited with a grasshopper. With

grasshoppers for bait, he caught about a dozen fish, none of them large, but enough to provide a breakfast for the party.

It was about sunset when he returned, and when Hugh saw his catch he said, "That's good; those little trout are going to taste mighty well to-morrow morning, but give them to me and I'll go out and dress them now. You know these Indians won't eat fish nor anything that lives in the water, and I wouldn't be a bit surprised if Cross Guns' wife should refuse to cook them. We may have to fry them ourselves to-morrow morning."

It was full daylight before camp was astir, and the sun was sending long level beams from the eastern sky when Jack went out of the lodge and down to the stream to wash. When he returned Hugh was frying the fish, having thought that he had better get that done rather than to take the chance of Cross Guns' wife refusing to do it. A little later the horses were brought in, and, soon after, bidding their host and hostess good-by, they started on toward the mountains.

As Jack drove his horse across the different channels of the river, which here cut the bottom up into a number of small, gravelly islands, he started a mother hooded merganser and her brood of tiny young from one of the banks, and was interested to see the speed with which they swam and dived to get out of reach. The trees and the prairie were alive with birds, and in a tall cottonwood he saw a great hawk's nest, near which one of the parent birds was perched. As he rode up out of the bottom on to the higher prairie, he began to see the wall of mountains on the left, now much nearer than it had seemed when he had started the day before.

During that day's ride no large animals had been seen. Scattered over the prairie at frequent intervals were the white bones of buffalo killed long ago, but no quadruped larger than a prairie dog or a cotton-tail showed itself.

Through the day, as he rode along, the country became more and more broken; the small streams which he crossed flowed at the bottom of deep valleys walled in by high, steep bluffs, and the pines and spruces of the mountains seemed to be coming closer and closer to him. At length, after descending the long hill, he found himself in the bottom of a rather large stream, and remembering Joe's directions, turned to the left and followed it up toward the mountains. At length it forked, and at first he could not determine which branch of the stream to take, so he stopped, got off his horse, and waited for the wagon to come up.

Presently he saw it coming down the hill, driving toward him. Just before it reached him he saw, a mile or two above him on the river, several large animals hurrying down the bluff. The distance was so great that he could not tell what they were, but thought they acted like horses. After the wagon had come up and he had learned which way they were going, he mounted to go on, and just as he did so a bunch of about twenty horses, herded by two men, burst out of the brush a mile ahead of the wagon, dashed across the wide bottom and up the bluffs on the north side of the valley.

"What do you make of that, Hugh?" asked Jack.

"Well, I don't know, son," said Hugh. "It looks as if there were a couple of men there that wanted to get away and not be seen. What do you think, Joe? Are any of the people camped up in this direction?"

"I guess not," said Joe. "I think maybe those men have been stealing horses and don't want anybody to see them."

"That's the way it looks to me," said Hugh. "But where have the horses been taken from? We don't know and I reckon it's no business of ours, and we'd better go right along."

"I guess they saw us coming a long way off, Hugh," said Jack. "Only a little while ago I saw some of those horses come down the bluffs, away above where they came out of the bottom just now. The men must have seen me coming and begun to gather up their horses and then start them on to get out of the way."

"Well," said Hugh, "it's no business of ours. We'd better keep on and attend to our own affairs. Of course, if we knew who these horses had been taken from it would be different; but it isn't like it was with us that year when we came down through the Park and had to go and steal those horses from Black Jack Dowling."

Joe shook his head solemnly and said, "I don't want no more of that sort of thing," while Jack said, "That was sure a ticklish time. I'll never forget how I felt that night when we were driving those horses off."

"Very well," said Hugh, "let's go on to where those fellows came out of the brush, and see whether there's any sign there that will tell us who they are."

When they reached the trail made by the horses in crossing Jack rode up to the edge of the brush and said, "Why, I believe these people have been here some time. There's a plain trail leading into these willows."

"Hold on a minute, son," said Hugh, and he jumped down from the wagon and went over to Jack, and the two followed the trail on foot into the brush. Evidently the people had been there for some time, for the grass and weeds were worn down where they had passed to and from the stream to a little camp concealed in the thick willows. Here was a place where a fire had been built, and a little shelter of willow stems, built something like a sweat-house, in which the men had evidently slept. A little inspection of the tiny camping ground showed that the men had had no bread or coffee, for there were no coffee grounds lying about, nor was there any place on the ground where a coffee pot had stood, and no crusts or crumbs of bread. It seemed that they had been cooking their dinner when Hugh and his party had come in sight, and this was part of some small black animal, probably a dog. Bits of the hide with the hair singed off were found about the fire, and on one piece were the stumps of the ears, the tips having been burned off. In all respects, the campers seemed to have been poorly provided; but they were white men; the tracks of the shoes told that.

"Well," said Hugh, "I don't know who these men are, nor what they've been doing, but it looks to me as if they had been hiding here with a bunch of horses, maybe animals that they have stolen over in Canada. Anyhow, they haven't taken any horses of ours, and we may as well go on."

When they reported at the wagon, Joe could throw no light on the occurrence, and, giving up the riddle, they kept on up the valley. A few miles further on they turned off to the right, over some low ridges, into another valley overgrown with willows, which came directly from the mountains. Here Jack, as he drove the horses ahead of the wagon, started several sharp-tailed grouse, and at one crossing of a little stream saw a few elk tracks, but no four-footed game. Only once, toward the end of the afternoon, did he see anything larger than a bird or a ground squirrel; then a great gray wolf got up from a hill where he had been lying, five or six hundred yards away, and trotted slowly off out of sight.

They followed the valley toward the mountains until late in the afternoon, when they came to a broad, heavy trail, made, Hugh said, by the carts of the Red River halfbreeds in their journeyings north and south along the mountains. It was a rough road for a wagon and required careful driving, but they made fairly good progress.

Shortly after they had left Milk River it had grown cloudy, and now the wind blew and a storm threatened. Hugh called to Jack, who was not far ahead of the wagon, telling him to look out for a place to camp and to stop at the first one he found. A little later, a small stream appeared on the trail, and on the other side of it was a little meadow, where there would be grass for the horses.

The trail went down to the creek and plunged over a three-foot bank, and Jack held up his hand to stop the wagon, which was following close behind him. It took a little riding up and down the stream to find a place where the wagon could cross, but at length they got over and made camp. Before the horses were turned out, however, a cold rainstorm began, and by the time the tent was up and the fire started all hands were wet and uncomfortable, but the warmth of the fire soon made them feel better. After supper they sat about in the tent, chatting over the events of the day and the probabilities of the morrow. The rain still fell, though the wind had ceased, and they were warm and comfortable.

Before daylight the next morning Jack was roused by a rasping sound made by something scratching against the canvas of the tent. He raised himself on his elbow, but of course could see nothing, and was about to lie down again when Hugh spoke and said, "It's snow on the tent," and a moment later the sound was repeated, and then Jack saw that it was made by wet snow sliding down the steep roof above them. When day came he looked out of the tent door and saw that the ground was white with snow, but that it was not cold, and the rapidly falling flakes melted as they touched his clothing. Joe had gone out to look for the horses, which could be easily tracked, and presently came back driving the bunch, which he had found close at hand. They were caught and tied to the wagon, so that as soon as the storm should cease a start might be made.

Not long after breakfast it stopped snowing, and camp was quickly broken and the party moved on. After a little rough traveling, up high hills and down into deep valleys and across narrow streams, they came upon a long slope dotted here and there with young pines, and a couple of hours' drive brought them to the top of a ridge from which they looked down into the valley of the St. Mary's Lakes.

The scene was beautiful. The sky had not yet cleared and a heavy fog hung about the ridge, so that they could see only a short distance on either side; but in the valley below there was little mist, so that the lower end of the upper lake and the whole lower lake were visible. Rounded hills covered with pale green quaking aspens rose sharply from the water, and here and there a little open park where the green grass of summer showed against the silver poplars or the black pines. The mist clouds were moving and changing constantly, and the travelers could not see the mountain tops, but once, a long way up the upper lake, Jack saw, or thought he saw, the stern black faces of tremendous cliffs rising from the very edge of the water. Now and then a soft fold of mist dropped from the overhanging clouds and floated from the upper, across the lower, lake, now hiding and again revealing the beauty of the scene.

"Isn't that a wonderful scene, Hugh?" asked Jack. "This is the first time I've ever seen the upper lake, and I had no idea how beautiful it was. All I've seen before is the lower end of the lower lake and the river. There's so much more of it than I thought there was."

"Yes," said Hugh, "it's surely a pretty sight, but on a clear day it's prettier than it is now."

"Yes," said Jack, "I suppose so; but just think of the mystery of this fog. It might hide all sorts of things. Nobody can tell what there is beyond it."

For a little while they sat there, looking at the view, and then came the question of getting down the steep hills to the shores of the lake.

"How are we going to get down, Joe?" asked Hugh. "If we start down here I'm afraid this wagon will get away from us, and nobody knows where it will go to. Can't we get around to the road that goes down to the foot of the lake?"

"No," said Joe, "it's an awful long way down there; bad road, too; lots of gulches to cross, and maybe break a tongue, maybe break an axle."

"Well," said Hugh, "I don't like this a little bit, but if there's no other way, why, we'll have to try it. Luckily there's no load in the wagon, and maybe if we rough-lock the wheels and go mighty slowly we can make it; but if that wagon ever gets started with those horses ahead of it, it will sure kill the horses and smash the wagon."

Getting out their ropes and a chain that there was in the wagon, they made preparations for locking the wheels.

"But, look here," said Hugh; "locking wheels isn't going to do us much good. Don't you see that if we lock the wheels we're just turning each pair into a pair of runners, and on this snow the wagon will go faster that way than it would if the wheels were free."

Hugh got out the ax, however, and cutting a green quaking aspen stick lashed it to the wagon so that it dragged on the ground just in front of the hind wheels, and was held down by them. Then with Joe on foot, driving on the upper side of the wagon, and Hugh and Jack on foot with rope tied to the tail of the wagon, they slowly started down the hill. It was ticklish business. The slope was hard, grass-covered gravel, and on this were two or three inches of snow. Sometimes the drag held and sometimes it slid. Hugh and Jack tried hard to keep the tail of the wagon from swinging around and starting down hill backward. Gradually they worked their way down the hill, and presently, just as they were getting near a level piece of ground which promised easier going, the wagon began to slide, and for a little it looked as if it would get away from them. Joe was ready, however, and in response to Hugh's shout, guided his horses into a thicket of young aspens, where the wagon stopped, and by cutting a road through these they worked down the slope until they found better traveling and got below the snow. Then Jack climbed back up the hill, got his horses, and followed the wagon.

He found that it had stopped on the shores of a little curving bay near the head of the lake, where there was good feed for the horses and plenty of wood. A little trout brook coming down from the hills tinkled pleasantly at one end of the meadow and was shaded by half a dozen ancient cottonwood trees. Joe and Hugh were putting up the tent as he reached the camp, and as soon as he had unsaddled he helped them.

Though the sky was still overcast, the air at the level of the lake was clear, and one could see a long way. Jack looked out over the lake, now absolutely without a ripple, and saw a few ducks swimming about.

After supper, as there was still a little daylight left, he jointed his rod and began to fish, at first without any success, but casting out into the lake at the point where the brook flowed into it, he got several rises, and hooked a small trout, weighing perhaps a quarter of a pound, which he soon brought to land.

After a while Joe left camp and sauntered out to join Jack. It was the first time that he had seen a trout rod, and when he saw how slender and how limber it was he shook his head and said, "What do you expect to do with that fishing pole?"

"Why," said Jack, "I want to catch some fish, as I did the other morning."

"Did you catch them with that pole?" asked Joe.

"Yes," said Jack, "caught 'em with this, and I hope to catch some more with it."

"My!" said Joe; "what's the use of fishing with a little thing like that? You can't catch any big fish on that. It will break right off. You better let me go back into the willows and cut you a pole that you can catch fish with."

Jack laughed a little as he replied: "Hold on a bit and see. If any fish will rise I can catch them with this rod if I can catch them at all."

Joe said nothing, but waited, and presently Jack got a rise from a good trout, and, fortunately, hooked it. The fish was a strong one and darted hither and thither with splendid rushes, sometimes making the reel scream as it took the line, which Jack slowly recovered whenever he could. At times the little rod bent almost double, and more than once Joe said, "Look out, you're breaking your rod;" but when the fish yielded, the pliant bamboo sprang back and was straight again. At length, tired out, the fish turned on its side and Jack brought it close to the beach and told Joe to go and grasp it by the gills and lift it from the water. Joe did so, and the fish proved to be a splendid great trout that perhaps weighed two pounds. After the fish was saved Joe wanted to look at the rod. He went over it from butt to tip, feeling it between his fingers and muttering to himself in his astonishment that so slight an implement should have caught so big a fish.

CHAPTER VI

A SHEEP HUNT

THE sun had hardly risen the next morning before the camp was astir, and while they were breakfasting on the excellent trout which had been caught the night before, the question was discussed as to what they should do now. Immediately across the lake rose a high, castellated pile of rock, with almost vertical sides, which the boys had recognized as the mountain under which Joe had killed a mountain sheep with his arrows some years before. Both boys had spoken of this, and Hugh presently said to them, "Why don't you boys go up there to-day and get a sheep. Fish are good, of course, but we want some fresh meat, and a good fat sheep, if you can find one, will help us out amazingly. We ought to have something to eat now, because these flies here are going to drive us away from the lake and we'll have to get high up into the mountains. It's true we may find game anywhere, but it will be lots better to have some fresh meat in the pack than to go along without it, and then perhaps have storms or bad luck for two or three days and have to live on bacon. The flies don't seem very bad this morning, but it's fly time, and they may tackle us any day and be mighty troublesome to us and to the stock."

"Well," said Jack, "there's nothing I'd like better than to get up on that hill again, and if Joe feels like coming I'd like to start right off."

"I'm ready," said Joe. "Come on."

It took only a short time to bring in the saddle horses, and before long the boys were mounted and riding off over the Indian trail that led toward the inlet.

The inlet is a deep, swift river which flows through a strip of land perhaps two miles long by a mile wide, which separates the lower lake from the upper, and carries the drainage of all the great mountain region about the upper lake. The lower end of this strip of land is wooded with spruces and cottonwoods, but the upper end is a wide meadow covered with heavy grass, where, in old times, buffalo, elk, and deer often fed. The Indian trail which the boys were following was originally a game trail made by the mountain bison and the elk. It wound through the bare, rolling hills, now and then crossing some tiny stream running down from the high land, and at last plunged to the level of the inlet, where a large swift stream spread itself over a graveled bar and twisted in and out among the willows and aspens. After crossing this they reached the flat of the inlet, and presently the trail came out into the open meadow, and a mile further on they rode down into the main inlet stream. This was so deep that both the boys had to tuck their feet up behind the saddles to keep from getting wet, and in one place it looked as if the horses might have to swim. The crossing was a short one, however, and presently they emerged on the other side, and in a very few moments began to climb the hill just opposite the lower end of the lake.

The hills here, though smooth, were steep and for the most part covered with a thick growth of small aspens. Here and there along the dim trail were little open parks, in one or two of which were fresh elk tracks. As the boys climbed higher, the aspens gradually gave way to pines, and then to spruces. The way grew steeper and more difficult, and at last, when they reached the top of a high hogback, above which the bare rocks rose sharply, they left their horses and began the ascent on foot. Here the snow still lay on the ground and made the climb harder, because it was impossible to see on just what one was stepping. It was rough and difficult, and the slope was so steep that sometimes the boys had to scramble along on all fours. At first it was over smooth grass made doubly slippery by the snow which covered it; then came the piled-up rocks, which in past ages had tumbled from the face of the mountains, and here progress, though slow, was easier, because the footing was more secure. It was on this slope that they passed the last few stunted spruces, and when they reached the top, they had left all the trees behind.

Nothing was to be seen save a wide expanse of gray rock and white snow, which ran up to a cliff whose top was hidden by dense mist. All the morning the clouds had been hanging about the mountains, and now the boys were fairly among them. They could see but a short distance in any direction, and the prospects for hunting were very poor.

"What do you think, Joe?" asked Jack. "Shall we sit down and wait for it to clear, or keep on?"

"Well," said Joe, "not much use hunting when it's like this. Any animals about are sure to see you before you see

them. I'd stop here and wait a little while and see what happens."

"All right," said Jack, "let's crawl in under this rock and sit there. Our eyes are not much good to us now, but anyhow we can listen and see whether we can hear anything moving around. I guess there are sheep up here all right, and if we can't get them to-day we can to-morrow."

"That's so," said Joe. "There are sure sheep here. This is a great place for them. You know Old Brockey?"

"Yes," said Jack.

"He's always told me that there are always sheep on this mountain in summer. They live around there in that valley where you and I killed one. In winter they live high up on the side toward the lake, but they are always here. The only thing is to find them."

"Yes," said Jack, "we've got to keep looking for them until we do."

The boys sat there for an hour or two, pretty uncomfortable, for both were wet up to the knees. A cool breeze was blowing along the mountainside, and the dense fog, which by this time had settled down over the hills, chilled the boys to the bone; so that after a little while they got up and began to run up and down over the small level space near the boulder which sheltered them, beating their arms against their breasts in the effort to keep warm. Presently, however, and almost without warning, the sky grew lighter, the fog lifted, and they could look out over the mountainside and down on the quiet dark green lakes, and as they looked the sun came out through the clouds, sparkled on the wet foliage below them, and changed the somber lakes into patches of brilliant blue. After a little the sun reached the boys, and it was wonderful to see how their spirits rose and how soon they got warm. At once they started on, gradually working up the rough slope until they had nearly reached the foot of the great wall of rock which overhung it. They made their way slowly around the northern point of the mountain and into the rocky valley which separates it from the next mountain to the northward, but almost as soon as they entered this valley the weather changed again. Black clouds dropped down and a fierce wind began to blow, bringing with it now and then blinding snow squalls. The fog did not descend as low as before, but every now and then a flurry of snow blotted out the whole scene.

Jack and Joe backed up against a huge boulder out of the wind and waited. As they sat there, a curious squeak, almost like that of a little child's penny trumpet, came from the rocks just below them, and both boys recognized it as the bleating cry of the little chief hare. Half a dozen small birds alighted close to the boys, as if seeking shelter from the wind, and with soft whistling twitter walked about on the stones and on the snow, apparently picking up food. They were so close that Jack could see their gray crowns and rosy breasts and backs, and he thought them about the prettiest birds he had ever seen.

"What are they, Joe?" he whispered; but Joe could give him little help. He said, "Snow birds, I guess. Anyway, they only come in cold weather. I reckon they live high up on the mountains."

Presently the little gray-crowned finches disappeared, and only a few minutes afterward they saw a white-tailed ptarmigan walking about among the rocks just below them. Then the sun came out and the wind went down and they started once more on their hunt.

They were following a sheep trail which led along the rocks when suddenly Jack, as his head arose above a rise, saw in a little meadow below him the hips and body of a feeding animal. Instantly he slowly sank out of sight, and Joe imitated him. Jack turned to Joe and made the sign for mountain sheep and pointed in the direction of the animal. Joe signed to him to go ahead, and he crept forward, and when he took another peep he saw a two-year-old ram alone, feeding in the little meadow in the valley below. The distance was a little more than a hundred yards and the shot seemed an easy one. Jack motioned Joe to come beside him and said, "You take the shot, Joe; don't you want to?"

"No," said Joe, "you shoot. I'm out here all the time. I have plenty of chances to kill animals. Now you try that sheep, and see what you can do."

"All right," said Jack, and creeping forward to where a larger piece of rock crowned the knoll, he rose to his knees behind it, and, resting his rifle against the side of it, prepared to shoot. The sheep was still feeding and had his tail toward Jack, but was considerably below the boy's position, so Jack aimed at the animal's back, just in front of the hips, and drawing a fine sight, fired. The ram fell, and the boys scrambled down to it, and found it lying dead. The shot had entered the back just to the right of the backbone and had passed forward and downward through the lungs and heart.

"Good shot," said Joe. "It's pretty hard to shoot down hill that way; 'most always shoot over."

"Yes," said Jack, "that's so; but you see I had two or three chances, because his hips were toward me and that gave me a long surface to fire at. I made up my mind that I'd shoot at the kidneys, and if I didn't hit them I had the chance of cutting his lungs and heart and also of breaking his back."

"Yes," said Joe, "that's so. He gave you good shot."

"Well," said Jack, "we've got to get this beast back to camp, or at least as much of him as we can carry, and I suppose we may as well get at it."

When their knives were out it did not take long to skin the sheep. The head was not worth taking along.

When, however, it came to carrying the animal they found it was much too heavy to be transported in one trip. As a matter of fact, neither of the boys was stout enough to take half the sheep on his back. They were obliged to quarter it.

"Tell you what," said Joe, "we don't know much."

"Well," replied Jack, "I guess that's so; but what do you mean?"

"Why," said Joe, "next time we come out hunting each one of us better take a sack and two or three strings in his pocket, and then if we kill anything we can cut the meat off the bones and put it in the sack, and that saves all the trouble of carrying the bones into camp."

"That's so," said Jack. "What a pity we didn't think of that before. But look here; hold on; why can't we make a sack out of this sheep's hide, cut the meat off the bones and put it in the hide, and then carry the hide between us on a pole all the way to the horses?"

"Well," said Joe, "maybe we could do that. That's a good idea. It's a pretty heavy load to carry that way. It's going to be hard to climb up the hill."

"Well," said Jack, "let's try it anyhow. I don't care much about making two trips from here to the horses if we

can avoid it.”

Accordingly the hide was spread out on the rocks, flesh side up, and the boys cut away all the meat from the sheep's skeleton. Practically the only bones they took with them were the shoulder blades, everything else being cut out and left there. This meat was carefully piled up on the sheep's hide, and this was folded over and tied with strings cut from the sheep's hide and passed through little holes made in the border of the hide.

“Jack,” said Joe, “do you know that this is the way our people used to carry meat into camp, away far back, long before they had horses, and when they had only a few dogs?”

“No,” said Jack, “I never heard that before. Tell me how it was.”

“Not now,” said Joe. “The first thing we've got to do is to see whether we can carry this load to the horses.”

Going down a little way into the valley they cut a stout quaking aspen pole, trimmed off the branches and cut it off to about twelve feet in length. Then, returning to the hide, the skin of the shanks was tied about the pole so closely that the load of meat lay immediately under it and had no swing from side to side.

When Jack took his end of the pole and lifted it on his shoulder the load seemed much heavier than he had supposed. However, Joe raised his end, and the two staggered forward, at first with more or less difficulty, but more steadily as they got used to it. Presently they began to climb the steep trail which would take them over the mountain to a point above where the horses were. Every now and then they had to stop and put down their load to rest and puff for a moment or two, until they recovered their wind. After stopping two or three times, they learned to choose a place where the load could be deposited on the top of a high rock, so that it would not be necessary each time to lift it from the ground. It was slow and weary work, but some progress was made, and at last they reached the top of the shoulder, whence the way would all be over level ground or down hill. As they were sitting there, resting and not talking, Joe put out his hand and touched Jack, and pointing down the hill, showed him a marten, resplendent in his glossy brown coat, running along and whisking his black-tipped tail. The animal did not see the boys, and after he had passed out of sight, Joe said, “You bet your life that fellow will find that sheep skeleton before night and he'll have a good time there.”

A little later the boys reached the top of the slope, and looking down they could see the horses tied to the trees below. They took their load off the stick, tied the strips of skin of the legs tightly together, and then rolled the bundle over the top of the ledge, watching it as it rolled and bounded down the hill, and finally stopped among the trees only a hundred yards or so from the horses. Then they began to climb down the rocks, and before long had reached their animals.

“Now, Joe,” said Jack, “how are we going to carry this meat to camp?”

“I reckon we'd better pack it on my horse and I can walk,” said Joe. “It isn't far.”

“Well, but how are you going to get across the creek?”

“Oh, I can ride on top of the load for a little short way like that,” declared Joe.

“I don't know, though,” he went on, “whether these horses will pack fresh meat like this, but we'll have to try.”

It was soon evident that the horses would strongly object to the load, and it was not until Joe's horse had been blinded by a coat that the boys could lift the meat across the saddle and lash it with Joe's lariat. After that had been done and the blind removed from the horse's head he showed a good deal of disposition to buck, but at last thought better of it, and when Jack led the way down the trail, Joe's horse followed very quietly.

When streams had to be crossed, Joe clambered on the load of meat, and they reached camp long before sundown without further incident.

CHAPTER VII

OLD-TIME HUNTING WAYS

“WELL,” said Hugh, when they rode up to the tent, “I'm glad you got some meat. Now, before you even unsaddle, I'm going to send one of you boys up into that cottonwood tree there. Knot a couple of those sling ropes together and let us haul that meat up above the flies if we can. It'll spoil in a day if we leave it down here close to the ground, where the blow flies can get at it.”

The wisdom of this advice was recognized at once, and Jack promptly scrambled up into the cottonwood and made his way into the lower branches. Joe threw him the end of a sling rope and Jack climbed well into the tree, and then, passing the rope over a branch, the meat was hauled up and tied thirty or forty feet above the ground, out of reach of the flies and exposed to the breeze which blew almost constantly up or down the lake.

As they sat around the fire that night after supper Jack said, “Hugh, a man who was hunting sheep all the time would get to have mighty good wind, wouldn't he?”

“Yes,” said Hugh, “that's surely so. Good wind, strong legs and a mighty steady head come to anyone who hunts sheep or goats much. You've got to be climbing up or down pretty much all the time. You must look for your game on the high peaks and ridges and along the cliffs. Of course, where sheep are plenty you can follow the sheep trails, but sometimes it's just pretty straight up and down climbing over the rocks and in places where, if a man lost his footing, he would roll a long way. I never minded climbing over the rocks, no matter how steep they were, but sometimes it's wearying work to crawl around over the shale, that yields and slips under your feet, and where for every foot you go up you slip back nine inches; and of course, when the mountains are covered with snow and ice it's harder yet, because you never can be quite sure of your foothold.”

“Well,” said Jack, “there are some Indians that hunt sheep almost altogether, aren't there?”

“Yes,” replied Hugh, “the Sheep Eaters get their name from the fact that they used to make their main living by hunting sheep.”

“I've heard of the Sheep Eaters,” said Jack, “but I've forgotten who they are and where they lived. Tell me what you know about them, won't you?”

“Well,” said Hugh, “they live south of here and their main range used to be somewhere near that country that we went through two or three years ago, where those hot springs and spouting geysers are. Sheep Eaters, as I

understand it, are a band of the Bannocks, and the Bannocks are relations to the Snakes.

"In old times they say that these Sheep Eaters used to make drives of sheep. They would build a lot of blinds, and hide along the trails where the sheep were accustomed to go up and down the mountains, and then they'd send men around and scare the sheep, and when they came down near the blinds the Indians hidden there would shoot them. Then, of course, they used to still-hunt them with bows and arrows. I've heard that the men who were hunting sheep used to carry a head and skin and cover themselves with it in part, and disguised in that way, used to get up within arrow shot of the game. The man's legs were rubbed with white or gray clay, and if he went along in a stooping posture, with his body covered with the animal's skin and the head, it's easy to see how he might get up pretty close to the game. I read a book once written by John Franklin, that man, you know, that was lost up in the Arctic a good many years ago and about whom there was a great deal of excitement at the time, in which he told how the Huskies up north used to hunt caribou something the same way, only in this case there were two men, one walking behind the other, both stooping down and the man in the lead carrying a caribou's head. The book said that the rear man carried the two guns, and that the man in front, who carried the head, imitated the deer so well that sometimes they could walk right up to the edge of the herd. Seems to me I've heard something of the same sort about Indians using the antelope head in hunting antelope."

"Well," said Jack, "that's seems queer. I don't believe you could do that with any game in these days." "No," said Hugh, "maybe not, but you must remember in those old times game was plenty; it never was scared by noises, because then they didn't have any guns, and the people in any range of mountain country were not many and were not often seen by the game. Speaking of this way of using game heads makes me think of a story that Wolf Voice told me about something that his grandfather saw a great many years ago. You don't know Wolf Voice, of course, but he's a young fellow—not so very young either, come to think about it; he must be a middle-aged man by this time. He's half Cheyenne and half Minitari, and he did some considerable scouting for General Miles a few years ago. This is what he told me that his grandfather saw: He was one of a war party of Cheyennes that had gone off to try and take horses from the Snakes. One morning they were traveling along through the mountains, fifteen or sixteen of them, walking through a deep canyon. Presently one of them saw on a ledge of the canyon far above them, the head and shoulders of a big mountain sheep, which seemed to be looking out over the valley. The man pointed it out to the other members of the war party, and they watched it as they went along. After a while it drew back from the ledge, and a little later they saw it again, further along the canyon, and it stood there right at the edge of the precipice and seemed to be looking up and down the valley. The Cheyennes kept watching it as they went along, and presently they saw a mountain lion jump on the sheep's back from another ledge above it and both animals fell over the cliff, a long way before they struck the rocks below. The Cheyennes, feeling sure that the sheep had been killed either by the fall or by the lion, ran to the place to get the meat. When they got there, the lion was trying to get away on three legs and one of the Indians shot it with an arrow. Then they went to the sheep, and when they started to skin it they saw that it wasn't a sheep, but a man wearing the skin and head of a sheep. He had been hunting, and his bow and arrows were wrapped in the skin and lay against his breast. The fall had killed him. They could tell from the way his hair was dressed and from his moccasins that he was a Bannock."

"Well," said Jack, "that's an interesting story, and that brings the fashion these people had right home to us, doesn't it?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "I guess there's no doubt but that they made these disguises and used them. Why, Joe here will tell you what he's heard from his grandfathers about the way the men used to dress up and lead the buffalo into the piskuns."

"Yes, I think I've heard about that. They used to wear a kind of buffalo skin dress, didn't they, Joe?"

"Yes," said Joe, "sometimes they wore a kind of a cap and coat made of buffalo skins, and sometimes they just carried their robes. Of course, they didn't show themselves close to and in plain sight of the buffalo. They just showed themselves enough to make the buffalo wonder what they were, and follow 'em to try to find out. The Indians think that it was the power of the buffalo rock that used to make the buffalo come, but I guess it was just nothing but curiosity. Everybody has seen antelope get scared and run away, and then if a man dodges out of sight very likely they'll turn around and run back and close up to him, to try to find out what it was they got scared at."

"Sure, that's so," said Hugh, "and it isn't antelope or buffalo alone. You'll see elk and black-tailed deer do the same thing. They'll stand and look and look, and often you can fire three or four shots at them before they'll start to run away. In the same way if a bear sees something that he don't understand, why, he gets up on his hind legs and looks as hard as he can. Of course, all these animals would rather smell than look; their noses tell them the truth and they don't have to smell a second time to find out whether it's an enemy or not, but often they have to look half a dozen times. Animals are mighty inquisitive creatures. If they see something they don't understand they want to find out about it."

"Why, Hugh," said Jack, "it isn't animals alone. Birds do the same thing. I've never seen this myself, but the books tell about it and I talked with one man, a friend of my uncle's, who had seen it himself. In the winter when the ducks are down South and in big flocks they used to have a way of shooting them that they called toling. The way they did it was this: If a lot of ducks were sitting on the water too far off from the shore to be shot at, the gunners would go down and hide close to the shore and then they would send out a little dog that was trained to run up and down and play about so as to attract the attention of the ducks. The ducks might be sitting far off in a big raft or flock, many of them perhaps asleep; but when they saw the little dog playing, some of them would lift their heads and swim in toward the shore to find out what he was doing. Gradually more and more ducks would lift their heads and swim in, until, finally, the whole flock would be coming. As they got nearer, the dog, which of course was watching them, would make himself smaller and smaller, until finally he just crawled along the shore on his belly and perhaps gradually worked away from the beach and into the grass, but those fool ducks would keep swimming in, trying to see him, until at last they would get within gunshot, and the people hidden there would give them one barrel on the water, and then one as they rose, and sometimes kill twenty-five or thirty of them."

"Well," said Hugh, "that's one on me. I never heard of that before, but since we're branching off onto ducks, I'll tell you what I have heard of and know of its being done, too, though I never did see it done. In spring and fall, in ponds where the wild rice grows, over, say, in Minnesota, there used to be terrible lots of ducks and geese stopping in spring and fall to feed, on their way north and south. The Indians, the Sioux anyhow, and likely Chippewas or Saukteaux, when they found a place where these ducks were right plenty, used to strip off and make a kind of a little

hat or cap of grass that they'd put on their heads, and then they'd wade in the water and move along very slowly so that this cap would look either like a little floating trash or a little group of grass stems projecting above the water, and then they'd work up close to the ducks and catch them by the feet and pull them under and then wring their necks."

"Yes," said Jack, "I guess that's all right, for I've heard of East Indian people doing the same thing, only they fitted a kind of a gourd over their heads and walked around with that, so that it just looked like a gourd floating in the water. Don't the Blackfeet do anything like this, Joe?"

"I guess not," said Joe; "I never heard anything like it. They say in old times, long before the white people came, the Piegiens used to go to the shallow prairie lakes where ducks and geese bred, at the time of the year when they can't fly, and then the dogs and young men would go into the pond on one side and drive out all the birds on the other and there the women and children would kill them with sticks. In the early spring, too, when the birds had their nests, they used to go to these lakes and get plenty of eggs. I bet you never heard the way they used to cook them."

"I don't know," said Jack, "I reckon I never did."

"Why," said Joe, "they used to dig a hole in the ground, a pretty deep hole, and then put some water in it, and right over the water they'd build a little platform of twigs and put on that platform as many eggs as it would hold, and above that they'd build another platform and put eggs on that and so on to the top, maybe have three or four of these little platforms built of willows to hold the eggs up. Then from the top of the ground they dug out a little slanting hole to the bottom of the first hole. Then they covered the big hole with twigs and put grass on that and dirt on the grass. Then they built a fire close to the hole and heated rocks and rolled them down the little side hole, so that they would go into the water at the bottom of the big hole. They would keep rolling these hot rocks in until the water got very hot and made plenty of steam. The steam couldn't get out of the big hole and it just stayed there hot and cooked the eggs. Then when they thought the eggs were cooked they uncovered the big hole and took them from the platforms and there they were all cooked."

"That was ingenious, wasn't it, Hugh?" said Jack.

"Yes, so it was," said Hugh, "but then these people were mighty ingenious in many ways. Just think of the way they used to cook in a buffalo hide, or in the paunch of an animal. You and I would eat raw meat all our lives before we could get up such a scheme as that."

"Yes, that's so," replied Jack. "It's about the last thing I should think of. Practically all their boiling had to be done by means of hot stones put into the water, for, of course, they never had any vessels that could be set over a fire until they got pottery. I don't suppose anybody knows when they first invented it, but it may have been a long time ago."

"Well," said Hugh, "don't be too sure about their not having anything to put over a fire to boil. I never saw it myself, but I've been told by people that I believe, that these Saulteaux up North used to boil water in their birch bark dishes. They say that they could hang a birch bark kettle over the fire and boil water in it, and that the birch bark wouldn't take fire while the water was in the kettle."

"Well," said Jack, "I certainly would like to see that done. I suppose it's so, if you've been told so by people that you believe, but it seems to me that's one of the hardest stories that's been told me since I've been out in this country."

CHAPTER VIII

A BIG BEAR HIDE

THE next morning while the party were cooking and eating breakfast, a swarm of mosquitoes settled upon the camp in great numbers. Not only did they trouble the men, but the horses were greatly annoyed by them; so much as that they stopped feeding and began to wander off, seeking the thickets of quaking aspen and willow, through which they walked in order to brush off the insects. Besides the mosquitoes, the green head flies—bulldogs, Hugh called them—were very troublesome. Before breakfast was over Hugh said, "Look here, boys, we can't stay here. The flies are too bad. We must pack up and go on and get somewhere higher up, or else to a place where the wind is blowing. Unless we do that we are likely to lose our horses. They'll run away on us."

"Yes," said Jack, "we've either got to get high up on the hills or else go out on the prairie. Here the flies are too bad."

"Well," said Hugh, "you two boys build two or three small fires and throw some grass or wet bark on them so as to make plenty of smoke, and then go out and round up the horses and bring them in, so that they can stand in the smoke. Then we'll cache the wagon here in the brush somewhere, and pack up and go on up the river and see if we can't find some place where the flies are not so thick."

It took the boys but a short time to build a line of small fires at right angles to the lake, down which a gentle breeze was blowing, and then, pulling some green grass and stripping the wet bark off an old rotting cottonwood log, they soon had a line of smokes too strong for any insect. Then, going a little way down the lake, they found the horses and drove them back to leeward of the fire, where they stopped in apparently great contentment, with only their heads visible above the smoke.

Meanwhile Hugh had been unloading the wagon, getting out the pack saddles with their riggings and making up the packs. A portion of the provisions he left in the wagon, but the flour and the bacon he tied with extra ropes and, when the boys had finished with the horses, he had one of them climb into a tree and hang the food where it could not be reached by mice or ground squirrels. The sheep meat was lowered and found to be perfectly good and so dried on the outside that the flies would not trouble it. It was put in an old flour sack to go on one of the packs.

Long before noon matters were so far advanced that the horses were saddled and, after three of the animals had been packed and led back again into the smoke, the three riding horses were saddled, and presently the little train set off up the lake over the trail followed by Jack and Joe the day before. While they were crossing the inlet, and for the first mile or two up the trail on the other side of the upper lake, the flies were very bad, but presently, when they

emerged from the growth of young quaking aspens they met a strong breeze blowing down the lake, which made things better.

Hugh had sent Jack ahead, telling him to follow the trail that led up the lake to an old Indian camping ground six or seven miles above the outlet. The trail was plain and it was impossible to lose it, and Jack plodded along fighting mosquitoes and watching the splendid mountains which rose on either side of the lake. As he passed over a little ridge between two of the many streams that ran down from the mountains, he suddenly saw ahead of him and a little to his right, a huge brown bear, apparently looking not at him, but at something behind him on the trail. The bear stood on the hillside at a little distance above the trail, and a rise of the ground had hidden Jack from view. It was a splendid-looking animal, its coat bright and glossy, and Jack could see the long fur ripple as the breeze struck it.

All this Jack's eye took in at a glance, and instantly he had slipped out of his saddle and stepped around his horse's head, holding the reins over his left arm. He pitched his gun to his shoulder, aimed at the bear just behind the foreleg and low down and fired. Then, turning, he sprang into his seat almost without touching the saddle.

At the shot the horse had stepped quickly to one side, but had not pulled back, so that Jack had no trouble in remounting, while the bear had given a loud bawl, and had fallen to the ground, turning its head to bite the wound, and then had rolled over two or three times down the steep hillside.

Jack whirled his horse and spurred up the hill, wishing to be above the bear rather than below it. At the same time he waved his arm to Hugh, who was now in sight, motioning to him to go up the hill. By this time the bear had gained his feet and was coming back along the trail as hard as he could. His head hung low, his ears were laid back and his long tongue lolled from his mouth. The noise of the shot had put every one on the alert, and it made Jack laugh a little to look back and see his two companions and all the pack horses scramble up the hill as hard as they could. The bear covered forty or fifty yards, running fast and strong, and then, seeming to notice the people on the hill above it, turned and rushed toward Jack, but before it had got anywhere near him, it began to go more and more slowly and to stagger a little and presently fell, rolled over backwards two or three times and then lay still. The three men with their pack horses came together on the hill, well above the bear, and Hugh said, "Well, son, what's the matter with you? Do you want to stampede this outfit? Looks to me like you've got quite a bear there."

"Why, yes, Hugh, he's about the prettiest bear I ever saw. He looked so handsome standing there on the hillside that I couldn't help taking a shot at him. I think he has a good hide, too, but maybe I oughtn't to have fired, for it will take us some time to skin him and while we're doing that the flies will be getting in their work."

"That's so," said Hugh, "but now that he's dead, we've got to take his coat off. I'll tell you what we'd better do. You and Joe go on to that little point that you see sticking out there, just this side of where that big creek comes down, and make camp there. Get as far out toward the water as you can. I think maybe the breeze will keep the flies down, and we can stop there with comfort. I'll stay here and start in to skin the bear, and after you've made camp you come back with a pack horse and we'll take the hide into camp."

"Hold on, Hugh," said Jack. "That's a kind of a low-down trick for me to kill this bear, and then leave you here to skin it and fight flies. Let me stop here with you now and take the skin off and let Joe go on and make camp. If the flies are not bad he can do it alone just about as well as we could together, and if they are, he'll have to make a smoke for the stock and unpack, and when you and I get back with this hide, it won't take long to put up the tent."

"Well," said Hugh, "maybe that is better. It'll shorten up the work to skin now."

Hugh explained again to Joe where it was that he wanted to camp, and Joe went on with the pack horses. Hugh and Jack sat down by the bear and began to skin it.

"Now, I want you to take notice, son," said Hugh. "Here it is July and this bear hasn't begun to shed out a bit yet nor even to get sunburned, and yet maybe he's been out of his den now for two months or more. He isn't fat; he's lost considerable flesh since he's come out, but his coat is just as good as it was the day he left his den."

"I've always heard, Hugh," said Jack, "that bears, when they come out of their dens, are just as fat as when they go into them."

"That's what everybody says," said Hugh, "and I reckon it's true. I never happened to kill a bear right fresh from its den, but I've killed them in May and found them very fat. I've a kind of an idea that they lose their fat slowly. Most people say that when they come out and start wandering about looking for food they keep going all the time and get poor right away. I don't quite believe that is so. I'm pretty sure they don't get much to eat at first, and I've a notion that if they lost their fat right away some of them would starve to death before food got plenty. When we get this fellow's skin off, I'm going to look into his stomach and see what he's had to eat in the last twenty-four hours."

"That'll be good," said Jack. "I'd like to see, too."

For some time the skinning went on in silence and the hide began to drop from both sides of the great carcass.

"I tell you, Hugh," said Jack, "this skin beats any one of those that we got last summer down in North Park. I think it's fully as big as the biggest one that we got then, and it seems to me that the hair is twice as long and twice as silky."

"Yes," said Hugh, "it's an awful good hide. I don't know when I've seen one that was much better. You must remember that those we killed last summer were not in good order; the winter coat had only just begun to grow. This hide will make a fine robe if we can get anybody to tan it."

"How do you mean, Hugh?" said Jack. "Won't any woman tan this hide if we pay her for it?"

"Why, no, son, you know a great deal better than that. Haven't I told you a good many times that lots of Blackfeet women won't touch a bear hide on any terms? You know the Blackfeet, anyhow, are afraid of bears and think they're powerful medicine. A good many of them won't call a bear by his name. They call him Sticky Mouth. Most of them won't sit on a bear robe. There are some medicine men or priests that can wear a kind of cap made of a strip of bearskin on the head, but it's hard to find a woman that has the power to tan a bear hide. They are afraid of the spirit of the bear; afraid that it will bring them bad luck."

"Now, Hugh," said Jack, "I don't remember that you ever told me about that before. I know that the Indians think that a bear is mighty smart and has great power, and I know that the Eastern Indians when they killed a bear used to smoke to the head and make the head presents of tobacco, but I didn't know that they wouldn't touch a bear hide."

"Well," said Hugh, "you know it now. There's only now and then one of these Piegan women that would dare to

dress a bear hide. We may find such a woman in camp when we go back, but the chances are against it. However, I reckon we'll manage somehow to get the hide tanned."

While they were talking thus, both workers were plying the knife vigorously and in a little while the hide was free all around and the carcass was slipped off it. Then Hugh, cutting into the bear's stomach, turned out its contents on the ground. It was almost empty, containing nothing but two or three wads of grass and a single ground squirrel, which had been swallowed whole.

"You see," said Hugh, "this fellow hasn't had much to eat, and you see, too, that he's got quite a little fat left on his carcass. I reckon maybe he's been down along the shore of the lake to see if he couldn't pick up a fish or two that had drifted ashore, and not having found anything there, he was going back up onto the mountain to try to dig out a gopher, or a woodchuck, or one of those little rock rabbits."

They now folded the bear hide, and while Jack held his horse, Hugh tried to tie on the hide behind the saddle, but the horse would have none of it. He struggled and pulled back, and it was only by blinding him with a coat—an operation which took some time and involved some trouble because both men were covered with bear's grease, the scent of which frightened the horse—that they could get him blindfolded and the hide firmly lashed in position.

"Now, Hugh," said Jack, "I'm not proposing to get onto that horse on this side hill. The chances are that he'd buck and very likely drop me off on a rock. I'll walk and lead him until he's a little more used to his load."

"Well," said Hugh, "that's pretty sensible. You go ahead and lead him and I'll follow, and if he pulls away from you, why I'll drive him along the trail."

Jack took the blind from the horse's head and taking up his gun went down toward the trail. The horse, however, was afraid of his load and bucked pretty savagely. They had, however, taken the precaution to cinch the saddle tightly, and the lashing held, so that, at length, the badly frightened horse followed more or less uneasily along the trail, Hugh riding behind him and having some trouble in controlling his own animal, into whose nostrils the scent of the bear hide was constantly blown. Their progress toward camp was slow, but an hour after they started they reached it and found the horses feeding near it not greatly troubled by the flies, for a strong wind was now blowing down the lake.

During the afternoon, while Hugh was getting the camp in shape and cooking supper, the two boys stretched the bear hide and went over it with a knife, scraping from it all possible grease. After supper and just before sundown, Jack, casting at the mouth of the turbulent mountain stream which here poured itself into the lake, caught a dozen splendid trout, some of which gave him fine sport.

After nightfall, the breeze which swept down from the mountains was so cool that the mosquitoes ceased to be troublesome, and they sat about the camp fire enjoying its grateful warmth. Presently Joe broke out and said, "Where are we going, White Bull? I never came into the mountains so far as this, and I don't know this country."

"Well," said Hugh, "I ain't much surprised at that, for the Piegiens don't go much into the mountains. They are afraid of the bears and of the bad ghosts that live there."

"Yes," said Joe, "that is true. The Piegiens like the open prairie, where there is always plenty of light and where you can see a long way. The only people here that go much into the mountains are the Kootenays and the Stonies. Sometimes the Bloods go in a little way to hunt or trap beaver, but not far. Plenty of men in my tribe would stop right here; they would not go any further. Up above here, on this lake, I see that the mountains come close together, and there is only just room enough for the water to get through. We don't know what there is beyond there and we do not want to go to meet the dangers that may be there."

"Why," said Jack, "you don't feel that way, do you, Joe? You've been pretty nearly raised among white people. You are not afraid of the mountains, are you?"

"No," replied Joe, "I'm not much afraid of them. I'm a little afraid, but I don't know what there is up behind these rocks that we see ahead of us. Only to-day we saw this awful big bear that you killed. Maybe up in the mountains there are more bears and bigger ones and worse. I would like to see what there is up there, but then I know that it may be very dangerous to go there."

"Well," said Hugh, with a smile, "we haven't talked much about it, but I thought we'd just go up here along the lake and get to the head of it and then follow up the river that comes into it and keep on climbing until we got to the head of that river. Somewhere, not very far away, it must begin, and must come falling down from these high peaks, because not very far beyond here there are other rivers running the other way, so that we are here somewhere near the backbone of this country."

"Well," said Joe, "I'd like to see it. In old times you know the Piegiens were not afraid of the mountains as they are now. In old times they used to cross over these mountains and go beyond, into the country of the Snakes and the Kootenays and the River people,^[A] and used to take horses from them and drive them back through the mountains; also, they used to go through the mountains and make long journeys to war to the southwest, and if they found little parties of white men who were trapping or trading, they would try and take their horses and a scalp or two, if they could. I have heard old people tell about how their fathers used to go on these war journeys and used to fight everyone that they met, white people or Indians."

[A] The Kalespelms, more commonly called Flathead Indians, who dwell on and near Lake Pend d'Oreille.

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's so. In the early days before my time the Blackfeet were thought to be a terrible people."

"Yes, indeed," said Jack, "I've read some of the old books about the early trappers and they are always talking about the danger from the Blackfeet, and how they would lie in wait for the trappers, as they went along the streams gathering their fur in the morning, and kill them, or how they would try to run off their horses. Sometimes they would have big battles with them. The trappers, I think, were mostly at peace with the Snakes and perhaps with other tribes, and often camped with them, and when the Blackfeet were troublesome, if the trappers had Indian allies, they often used to follow up the Blackfeet, and punish them pretty severely for the raids they had made on them."

"Well," said Hugh, "as I was saying, we haven't talked much about this and none of us here know much about the country ahead of us. I came up once, trapping, as far as the head of the lake. I got a few beaver, and once I killed an elk just above the head of the lake, but beyond there I have not been. Still, I guess we'll be able to find our way."

The valley is narrow and the mountains high on either side, and we cannot very well get out of that trough, but, on the other hand, it may be pretty bad going there. The whole valley may be a swamp or a succession of little lakes and it's possible that we can't find a way to the head of it at all. The only way to learn about it is to try. Anyhow, it's new country. I never heard of anybody going up on the river above the lake, except one man, old man Ellis. He told me once about going up there and said that he got across to the other side of the range, but he said it was pretty hard traveling for the animals, and that in one place they had to lower their horses by ropes over some bad places."

"Do you mean to say, Hugh, that no white men have been up here, except that one?"

"He's the only one I ever heard about," replied Hugh. "And I never felt quite sure that he got as far as he thought he did. At all events it won't be a bad trip to make, unless the flies are too awful bothersome, and by the way, son, to-morrow morning before we start, we'd better get out that strip of mosquito bar that you put in. If the mosquitoes are bad we'll need it before very long."

"I'll do that, Hugh," said Jack. "But what do you suppose we'll find up there at the head of the river?"

"It's pretty hard to say," Hugh answered. "I expect we'll find lots of rocks and stone and ice, probably lots of game, and we'll surely see some mighty pretty scenery; high peaks and big snow fields. There sure ought to be lots of sheep and goats up there, some elk, maybe a moose or two, and of course some bears, but that doesn't mean that we're going to get all this game. It only means maybe that we'll see some of it; perhaps only some signs of it. Just how far we can take the horses, of course, I don't know. We'll have to try and do the best we can. Likely enough, we'll know a lot more about it three or four days from now."

"Well," said Jack, "I'll be mighty glad to get up there and see what there is."

"Yes," agreed Joe, "that will be good. I shall have plenty of things to tell the people when I get back to the camp after this trip."

CHAPTER IX

A BLACKFOOT LEGEND

FOR a time all sat silent, and then Joe asked, "White Bull, did you ever hear that the people once lived on the other side of the mountains; that there is where they came from?"

"No," said Hugh, "I don't know as I have. I seem to remember something about such a story, but I can't remember what it is."

"Tell it to us, Joe," said Jack.

"Well," said Joe, "it's a story I heard my uncle tell a good many years ago, when I was a little fellow, but I don't believe it's true. He didn't know whether it was true or not. It was just something that he had heard from some older person. You know the Piegiens believe that they used to live far up northeast, in the timber by some big lake, and that they came this way looking for some place where life was easier, where there was more game and it was easier to get close to the animals. I guess that is true, because there are old people still living whose fathers and grandfathers can remember old Piegiens, who said that they had made that journey. This other story is about some of the people having lived across the mountains. It's a long story, but I'll tell it to you if you want me to."

"Go ahead," said Hugh.

"Well," Joe went on, "the story tells that a long time ago the people lived west of the mountains and in a hot country away to the south. A season came when all animals were scarce and hard to find and the people got hungry. In the camp was an old man and his family, three sons, young men grown up. Now, at last, when there was no food to be had, this old man said, 'Why should I stay here where there is no food? I shall go away with my children and we will try to find a place where there are animals and where food can be had. I will travel toward the rising sun, even to the mountains, to the country where no one has ever been, to a land no one has looked on.'

"They started; the old man and his wife, and the three sons and their wives and children. They did not know the mountains, and supposed that as soon as they had gone over the nearest one they would pass down on the other side to the plain, but they found that this was not so. Beyond the first mountain rose another, and beyond this another. They traveled on, day after day, and climbed ridges and went down into valleys and always in front of them they saw other ridges or other valleys, always steeper, higher and harder to cross. The road was rough, thick timber kept them back, sharp stones cut their feet, wide rivers stopped them. They found no game, except now and then some birds, and soon they grew tired, hungry, footsore and discouraged. At last they had almost made up their minds to stop looking for what they could not find, and to turn about and try to return to their own country and their own people; but one night, as they talked about this, the old man said to them, 'Come, let us take courage, let us keep on a little longer and try to find that country. The road has been long and hard, and we are almost tired out, but let us go on a little further. It may be that we have almost arrived. To-day you saw that high mountain beyond, toward which we are traveling; let us climb over that and if beyond that we see nothing except more mountains, then we will turn about and go back to the place we came from.' The sons said it was good, and the next day they traveled on.

"At length they reached the top of the high peak, and when they looked down on the land below they saw before them a wide prairie. It looked beautiful to these people, who were tired of the lonely, rough, dark mountains. On the plain they could see herds of big brown animals, larger than any that they had ever seen before, animals with curly hair and short black horns. There, too, were yellow antelope, and in the valleys, deer, and on the ridges of the mountain were many elk. Fresh streams ran to the prairie, and the sight was one that made their hearts glad.

"'Ah,' said the old man, 'now it is good.'

"They all stopped, and he sat down and smoked to the sun and said, 'Listen, O Sun, now you have taken pity on us. We believed that we were going to die among these rocks, but you have taken care of us and have brought us safely out of them. Now we can see the things that we may live by.' So he prayed for help, and for plenty to eat and for long life, and when he had finished his prayer and his smoking, they made a present to the sun. Then they went slowly down the mountainside and toward night camped on a stream.

"The next day they hunted, but they could kill no game. They had no arrows, for they had used them all up in crossing the mountains, and the buffalo would not let them get too close to them, so they were still without food and

hungry.

"Then the old man saw that something must be done, and he made strong medicine, a black medicine, which he rubbed on the feet of his oldest son, and after this had been put on his feet, the young man became so swift that he could at once run up alongside the fastest cows and kill them with his knife. This made the young man feel good, and he said to his brothers, 'Now and from this time forth I and my children are Siks' ĭ kā.^[B] This shall be our name.'

[B] Black his foot.

"When the other two sons saw that their elder brother could do so much through the medicine their father had made and that they could do nothing, they felt badly. They went to the old man and said, 'Why do you treat our brother so much better than you treat us? You have made him a swift runner, so that he can overtake the game, while we can kill nothing, and our wives and children have to eat what he gives us. What have we done that you have forgotten us? Come, now, make us also swift runners, so that we, too, can have enough to eat and can have names.'

"The old man answered them and said, 'Why do you do nothing except sit about the fire and eat food which your brother has killed? If you wish names go to war, and when you come back, if you have done well and killed enemies and counted coups, you, too, shall have names.'

"So the young men went back to the lodge, and each asked his wife to make him some moccasins and a war sack, and they made themselves some war arrows and started.

"They were gone a long time. Siks' ĭ kā killed many buffalo, and the women dried the meat and tanned the hides. The berries grew ripe, and the women cut down the sarvice bushes and beat off the fruit over a robe spread on the ground and dried the berries. Then the tops of the mountains became white with snow, the leaves fell. From the north came the wild fowl, the swans, geese and ducks, and their numbers covered the surface of the prairie lakes, while their cries were heard night and day through the air. Then the wild fowl passed on, the snow fell and melted and fell again, and it was winter. After a long time black winds began to blow from the west and the snow disappeared. Then again the wild fowl were seen. Then the Thunder shouted, bringing the rain, so that the berries might grow large and sweet. Then the grass began to spring, the prairie to turn green, and soon it was summer.

"One night, a year after the young men had gone away, as they sat about the fire in the lodge, they heard the dogs bark and presently the door was lifted and the second son stepped in and sat down. His robe was thin and all his clothing worn by long travel, but his body was lean and hard. The women hurried and set food before him, and while he ate they sang songs about him, telling how brave he was and how he had traveled far to strike his enemies. After he had eaten the old man filled the pipe and smoked and passed it to his son, who spoke, and told of his journeyings to far-off lands and among strange people, and how he had struck his enemies and all that he had done.

"After he had finished the old man said to him, 'My son, you have done well and since you have killed many chiefs, let that be your name, Ah' kāi nāh' (many chiefs). So after that the second son and his children and their children were called Ah' kāi nāh, but now they call them Kāi' nāh.

"Another season passed, the berries ripened, the leaves fell, the water fowl came and went; it was winter. Then again the Thunder spoke, and again the grass grew. The wife of the third son thought much about her husband, fearing that she would not see him again. She used to talk of him to her children, telling them that they ought to be brave like their father.

"One night in summer, when all in the lodge were asleep, the dogs barked loudly, the lodge door was lifted and a person entered and sat down by the fire. 'Who is there?' said the old man. There was no answer. Then the wife of the third son rose from her bed and spread grass on the fire, and soon it blazed up and she saw sitting there her husband. Glad then was her heart, and quickly she built the fire and gave him food, and as he ate, she looked at him and saw that his clothing was torn and ragged, his face thin and his arms and breast scarred, but from his quiver hung scalps, and on the ground beside him was a bundle. Then she began to sing about him and the others in the lodge arose and sat by the fire while he ate. After he had eaten and smoked, he said to the old man, 'I have traveled far and I have seen many people. Look at these scalps,' and he showed them the scalps and the bundle of strange clothing that he had taken from enemies far to the south. He told them all that he had seen and done, and after he had finished speaking his father said to him, 'Because you have taken this strange clothing you shall be called Pī kŭn' ni' (garments), so since that time he and his children's children have been called Pī kŭn' ni."

"That's a bully story, Joe," exclaimed Jack, after the tale was ended, and Hugh joined in and said, "So it is, a mighty good story, but I reckon it's just a story and nothing else. I've always heard, like Joe said a little while ago, that the people came from up north and I've always believed that they were relations of the Crees. I've often wondered, though, about how the tribes got their names. There are lots of stories, but none of them seem to ring true. Now this word Pī kŭn' ni for Piegans, I've always believed came from Ap' ĭ kŭn nĭ, which means a badly tanned robe, one with white spots on it. Isn't that so, Joe?"

"Yes," said Joe, "that's so all right, and you know Ap' kŭn nĭ is a common name in the tribe to-day. There are two or three Indians and one white man that have that name. This story says that Ah' kāi nāh has been shortened to Kainah, and if that is so why shouldn't Ap' ĭ kŭn nĭ have been shortened to Pi kun ni. Then the name of my tribe would mean a robe with hard white spots in it."

"Of course it would," said Hugh, "and I believe that's what it does mean, but I don't know that we'll ever find out for sure.

"Well, boys," he went on, "let's turn in. Get out early to-morrow morning and bring in your horses. I want to start before it gets warm, so as to get rid of the flies. We may have quite a ways to go to-morrow."

CHAPTER X

THE SOURCE OF AN UNKNOWN RIVER

EARLY next morning the tent was down, the beds rolled and the horses brought in, saddled, and tied to the trees. As soon as breakfast was over the packing began and fortunately was soon completed, for before the party started the mosquitoes and flies had begun to be very troublesome. As soon as the last lash rope was tied and the hackamore shanks were looped around the animals' necks, Hugh mounted and rode through the narrow strip of cottonwood

timber, plunged down into the bed of the creek, and then up on the other side and in a few moments reached the foot of a high point of rocks jutting out from Goat Mountain into the lake and began to climb the steep trail that zigzags up its side.

The way was rough and rocky and sometimes so very steep that Jack, hanging to the mane of his horse, threw one foot out of the stirrup in order to be ready to jump in case the horse should fall over backward. The climb was not long, however, and after one or two pauses to breathe the horses, the party emerged on the level top of the point, where the rocks were overgrown with green moss and dotted here and there with young pine trees. Jack had no idea as to where they should go, but Hugh's more practiced eye made out a dim game trail, which he followed for some distance through the timber, and which at last came out on the slide rock, fallen from the side of the mountain far above. Here there was a plain trail made in times past by the mountain bison and the elk which passed up and down from the plains to the recesses of the high mountains. Sometimes the slide rock was bare of vegetation; again there would be half a mile where the soil had slid down from the mountainside and supported a growth of willows or alders. Sometimes the climb was very steep, again it was level, and at last the trail passed around the head of a deep ravine, and after a climb of a few feet, led out on to grassy ledges.

They were riding quietly along here, when Hugh turned and waved his hand toward the rocks that towered far above them, and Jack, following the motion, saw three white goats feeding two or three hundred yards above them. Involuntarily he checked his horses, intending to take a shot at them, but seeing that Hugh had not paused, Jack thought better of it and rode on. After all, there was no special reason for killing them, as the meat was not needed.

As they went on along the side of the steep mountain toward the head of the lake, they saw goats several times, usually merely white dots on the high rocks. These alpine animals seem to suffer greatly from the heat, and even in very cold weather often seek a shaded spot to get out of the sun.

Near the head of the lake the travelers crossed a large stream, which came from a basin running far back into the mountains, where they could see great fields of snow and ice. Then there was a long ride through the green timber, during which they passed the head of the lake.

They were evidently following the river valley, for, off on the left, they could hear the roar of cascades and falls, and once, through the open stems of some tall aspens, Jack thought he saw spray rising from a cataract. Hugh kept steadily onward, though so far as Jack and Joe could see all sign of a trail had now vanished.

At length they came to the edge of a swollen river, on the brink of which Hugh paused, and after looking at it for awhile, shook his head, turned his horse and followed up its bank. Now the going was harder, and through tangled brush, interrupted now and then by deep muddy holes, where springs or small brooklets came down from the hillsides above them. The mosquitoes and flies were very bad, and each member of the party wore gloves and had a handkerchief tied about his neck and turned up under his hat to protect the back of the neck and head. Hugh smoked constantly, but even so, was obliged to use his hands continually to drive away the insects.

They had just wallowed through a particularly deep mud hole in which one of the pack horses had nearly mired down, when Hugh stopped, dismounted and went back to tighten a cinch, while Jack got off to help him. They were pulling on the ropes, and Joe was trying to hold the other horses to keep them from breaking away, when, suddenly, on the hillside above, they heard a crashing of sticks and, looking up, saw a huge black moose trotting along, crossing fallen logs and rocks in his stride, until he finally disappeared in the timber. The moose had been so close that they could plainly see his large horns, still soft, more or less shapeless and velvet covered, but of course they had no opportunity of shooting at him.

"A good big fellow, wasn't he, son?" said Hugh, and Jack assented.

"That's the first moose I've seen, Hugh, since we came down from the Yellowstone Park. Do you remember we killed one there?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "I remember, and I remember, too, that we got a bear or two close to him."

"So we did," assented Jack.

"There," said Hugh, as he knotted the lash rope, "let's go on. The flies make these horses crazy."

All day long they continued on the rough road, through underbrush, over rocks and around enormous boulders that had fallen from the precipice above. About three o'clock they reached a large stream coming from the right, which evidently joined the river that they had been following a little further down. Here it took some time to find a place where the river was fordable. The current was swift and the water looked deep.

No one wished to have the packs thrown down in the stream, for this would wet everything and might even result in the loss of a horse. By following up the stream a few hundred yards, however, they found a riffle, across which stretched a gravel bar, and here they made a crossing in water no deeper than to the horses' knees. Not far above this stream was a wide alder swamp, which gave them much trouble. A little farther on they came to a small stream flowing down the valley, along which ran an old game trail, and following this, they emerged just before sunset on a little round meadow, at the head of which was a lake a mile long and a quarter of a mile broad. About this, on every side except the lower, rose vertical walls of rock, now black in the shadow of the high mountains to the west.

"I tell you, Joe," said Jack, "this is a curious place, isn't it? Cold and gloomy enough."

"Yes," said Joe, "I don't like this much. You can't see far. I don't wonder that my people would rather stay out on the prairie."

"What shall we do with the horses, Hugh?" asked Jack. "Tie 'em up, or let them loose?"

"Well," said Hugh, "you may as well let 'em feed and drag their ropes until it gets dark. They are pretty tired, and the feed is fairly good here. They won't go far, and before it gets dark we'll tie them up."

Away to the left they could see a deep valley running up to enormously high mountains. Snow lay everywhere on their crests, and even in the valley, down to within a few hundred feet of the level of the little lake beside which they camped.

At supper Jack asked Hugh's opinion where they were and whither they were going.

"Well," said Hugh, "it's a pretty sure thing that we can't go any farther up this stream. There's a wall a thousand feet high in front of us and on both sides, but I guess we can get up here to the left by climbing that point of rocks. When we do that we'll get into the snow banks right off, and I don't know that there's much profit for us in

that. However, we can try it. I believe that if we get up there, on or close to the snow, we'll have the everlasting bulge on the flies, for I don't think they'll follow us there."

There was plenty of wood here, and that night they sat about a good camp fire. The horses had been picketed where they could feed and yet would not interfere with each other. Night had settled down cold and frosty and the mosquitoes had ceased to trouble them.

"To-morrow or next day," said Hugh, "I'd like to see where that big river comes from that we followed up all today. I expect it comes down out of that valley and from the big snow, and I reckon we lost it by keeping away to the right. It's a good thing that we didn't have to cross it, for if we had I think we'd have all been swimming. There's a terrible lot of water coming down from these mountains, and this valley drains a big lot of them."

"And of course, it all goes into the lakes, doesn't it, Hugh?" asked Jack.

"Sure," said Hugh, "that's the only place it can go."

"Well," said Jack, "I'd rather travel through a lot of brush than try to get across a big swift river like that."

"Yes," said Hugh, "you're right about that. It's mean to be caught in a stream, especially when you're not fixed for it. I remember, years ago, trying to take some cattle across the Running Water and being carried down. My horse got scared and commenced to flounder and I rolled off to help. It was in winter, and I had an old-fashioned army overcoat on and got kind of rolled up in it, and I reckon I would have drowned if the cape of the coat hadn't caught on a limb of a dead tree that was sticking out over the water and held me there until some of the boys came along and pulled me out."

"That must have been a close call, White Bull," said Joe.

"Yes," answered Hugh, "it was close enough. I don't want one any closer."

"Now, White Bull," Joe went on, "can we climb this point of the mountain over here? If we do we'll go up pretty near to the head of that big river you speak of and cross it where it is only a little small stream."

"I don't know yet whether we can get up here or not. We'll tell in the morning," Hugh replied, "but if we can, I think we'll find good traveling right up over the snow banks and we may find a place up there where we can camp. I don't feel any way sure that we'll find a place where we can get feed for the horses. We'll know more about that when we get up there. If we can't find feed, why, then we'll have to come back and camp here or else find another trail down into the valley of the main river, and take the horses down there over night."

When Jack went down to the shore of the lake the next morning, he was interested to see a pair of little harlequin ducks swimming close to the beach. He recognized them from colored pictures that he had seen of the species, and felt sure that the birds must be breeding somewhere about. Looking at them a second time, however, he saw that both birds were males. They made him think of the time of the year, and he realized that now, of course, the females would be sitting on their eggs, while the males would be enjoying a bachelor existence and getting ready to shed their winter plumage and to put on their brief summer dress.

As Jack squatted on a rock, rubbing his hands, face and head with the icy water, his eyes were busy searching the mountainside for signs of living creatures. With the naked eye he could see no game high up on the mountain, but just as he was about to turn from the shore, he happened to look up the lake and there, lying in a sort of cave in the rocks, only a short distance away, was a white goat. The same impulse to shoot that he had felt yesterday assailed him, but he did not yield to it. Instead, he felt rather ashamed of his desire to kill.

At breakfast he told Hugh about the goat, and his friend rather laughed at him and said, "Wait until you have been out a few weeks and then you won't be so anxious to kill things, unless you need to. I have seen that every time you go back East you catch a little of the pilgrim fever, and you have to be out here for a week or two before you can shake off the disease."

"Maybe you're right, Hugh," said Jack. "It does seem pretty silly to want to kill every wild thing I see."

"Well, yes," rejoined Hugh, "there's no reason for killing anything without you've got some use for it. If you need a shirt or a pair of buckskin pants, kill what hides you need and have your clothing made, or if you need food, kill what you want to eat, but don't shoot at things just to see whether you can hit them or not. That's just a pilgrim trick, and you've been out here too long to be guilty of things like that."

"Now, I tell you what, boys," said Hugh, after breakfast was over, stooping over the fire to pick up a brand with which to light his pipe, "we don't know what there is up above us here. We don't even know that we can climb this hill. Now, what do you say to leaving the pack horses here and taking the saddle horses and going off to prospect? It isn't very far, and if we can find a good camping place we can come back here and get the horses and take them up there."

"Why," said Jack, "that seems to me the best thing to do. We don't want to pack up and take a train up there and then find that we've got to drive back and unpack and camp here again."

"No," said Hugh, "we don't, and I believe we might as well go up first and find out where we're going. There's one thing, though, that we'd better do," he went on, "I've an idea that there's some bears up here, and likely bears that haven't been hunted much. I believe that it would be a good idea for us to hoist up the main part of our grub into one of these trees and tie it there, so that if a bear should come into camp he won't tear it all to pieces. Suppose you boys get a couple of sling ropes and we'll take our flour and bacon and coffee and sugar and put it in a safe place."

The boys brought the sling ropes and before long two stout young pine trees were each decorated with a couple of large bundles. Then they saddled and Jack said to Joe, "If any bears should come prowling around here, Joe, won't they stampede the horses, and make trouble for us?"

"I guess they might," said Joe. "We ought to tie 'em up tight."

Joe took the ax, and going a few steps down the creek, cut some stout alder stems from which he manufactured half a dozen strong picket pins, then going out to where the horses were, they drove a second pin close to each picket pin that stood in the ground, so that the heads of the two pins crossed and supported each other.

"Now," said Joe, "take a half hitch around these two pins with the lariat and I'll bet the pack horses can't get away."

Hugh, who saw what they were doing, nodded approval, and presently they all climbed into the saddles, and Hugh leading the way, they crossed the little brook which flowed out from the lake and headed toward the point of

the mountain which they hoped to climb. Before they had reached it Hugh found a game trail and followed it, for he knew, as all mountain men do, that game always selects the easiest road across natural obstacles. The climb was neither steep nor long, though it was a little slippery, for the upper end of the trail was wet with snow that had just melted. When they emerged on top of the shoulder, they could see extending up the valley before them a long level snow bank, while to the right the steep slope was everywhere strewn with huge boulders and rock fragments that had rolled down from the mountainside; some in past ages and some very recently.

Hugh paused until the two boys came up and then said, "We may as well keep up here along the main valley and see how far we can go and what we can find. We could not take the horses along the mountainside to the west. If we go that way we'll have to go on foot. I'd like to see what there is on the other side of that high wall. I believe it's Pacific Coast water."

"Yes, Hugh," said Jack, "let's go on up the valley and maybe we can cross over to those pine trees on the other side. It looks as if there might be a good camping place there, though I don't see any feed for the horses."

"Come on then," said Hugh.

For a mile or more they rode slowly on over the hard snow field, into which the horses hoofs did not sink at all. On the right rose first a steep slope covered with huge angular rock fragments, and then above that successive walls of vertical cliff, in each recess and crevice of which there was a drift of snow. To the left, the snow field sloped gradually to an almost flat surface of rock, over which flowed a hundred little trickles of water. There was, here and there, a little soil, green with springing grass or weed blades and in many places spangled with beautiful alpine flowers of variegated colors.

At one place Jack dismounted and gathered a handful of these plants, which he looked at as they rode along. Many of them were much like the dog-tooth violet found in the woods in the East in the early spring, others looked something like dandelions, but had tall, straight stems; still others were like the columbine of early summer, but instead of being red were blue and white. All were beautiful and fresh, and all were growing within a short distance of the edge of the snow banks and were watered by the cold trickle from the melting snow.

As they went on the travelers could see at the end of the valley, now close to them, a great wall of rock over which plunged cataracts of white water, while from the mountains on the right came sharp gray lines, which as they drew near them, Jack recognized as moraines—the soil and gravel pushed to one side by the progress of a glacier. He felt sure that this valley along which they were traveling, and perhaps also the narrow valley in which lay the river and the great lakes, had ages ago been carved out of the solid mountains by some vast glacier, such as he had seen two years before on the British Columbia coast and the work of which Mr. Fannin had more than once clearly explained to him.

They were riding quietly along, looking at the mountains, the snow fields and the flower beds when, almost from beneath the feet of Hugh's horse, a bird spotted white and brown rose from the ground and, with a loud cackle, scaled off ahead of them and alighting on a rock, stood with head and tail up, still uttering a sharp cry. Jack recognized it at once as a ptarmigan and reached for his rifle to see whether he could kill it, but Hugh, who had looked around, called back to him, "I wouldn't shoot at it, son. You see these birds have their nests now, and if you kill the old birds that means that the young ones will not be hatched. Besides that, the old ones are not fit to eat now."

"That's so, Hugh, I have got to teach myself not to want to kill everything that I see. I'm a regular pilgrim about that, and you'll have to watch me, and I'll watch myself, too."

A little farther along they left the snow bank and pushed on over bare rounded stones, some of them of great size. On the mountain above him Jack saw two great moraines, gradually approaching one another, one coming down from the right and one from the left, but with a wide space between their lower ends. He was looking at this, when, without warning, he heard all about him the rustle of wings and sweet chirping whistles, and suddenly a large flock of gray-crowned finches alighted on the ground and on the stones about him. They walked busily hither and thither picking up something, though he could not see what, and it seemed impossible that there could be seeds or any other vegetable food on the bare rocks. The birds were absolutely tame and paid no attention to the animals, except when they walked close to them; then a few wing beats would take the threatened bird out of the horse's way, and it would alight and again begin to feed. The ashy crown of the head, the brown body and the rosy tinge of the upper and lower parts were plainly to be seen, and Jack thought again that he had never known such beautiful little birds, or any that seemed so tame or confiding.

By this time the precipice at the head of the valley was close to them and they were obliged to turn to the left and cross the stream, which, though wide and turbulent, was not deep. On the east side the land rose sharply in one or two terraces, and then the travelers found themselves on another snow bank, just beyond which rose some stunted pine timber.

At the edge of this they halted to take a look back over the valley, and when they did so, Hugh said, "Well, I reckon we are smart hunters; look over there."

The boys looked, and not half a mile below where they had passed along, but hidden from them during their passage by several rocky elevations, were seen three bears, one large and two very small ones. They were working along the hillside, apparently looking for insects, for the largest was busily employed in turning over stones, and the little ones were imitating her in so far as their strength permitted, and, at the same time, keeping pretty close to her, and every few minutes rushing to her head and putting their noses down to the ground as if eating.

Hugh took out his glasses and looked at the bears for a long time. "It's an old one and a couple of cubs," he remarked at last, "and I don't believe they've been out very long. They're working hard over there and of course, if we had known they were there, it would be easy enough to get them all as we came along. I don't really know that we need them, except that I suppose we'd all be glad to take in some good bear hides, and hides seem to be prime now. Then, too, those little fellows would be good eating, I reckon, though they are pretty small. Not much bigger, I should think, than young shotes."

"Well, but, Hugh," said Jack, "oughtn't we to have seen them as we came along?"

"No," said Hugh, "I don't see how we could have done so. Of course, if we'd been hunting, we'd have taken a good many looks over into that valley, but as we weren't hunting, we just rode along and, of course, those shelves of rock that you see there hid the bears from us just as they hid us from the bears. Of course, it's possible that they may

be there when we go back to-night, and if they are, why you and Joe can maybe get a shot at them."

"Well," said Jack, "it's too late now for us to do anything. Let's see what there is beyond this timber."

In the timber which grew on a little crest running parallel with the axis of the valley, there was no snow and a good camping place, but on the other side of the little stream, though the ground was bare and some flowers were springing, there was no grass, nor indeed, wherever they went during the day, could they find anything that looked like feed enough to support their horses, if they should bring them over.

"This would be a mighty handy place to camp, Jack," said Joe, "but I don't see anything here for the horses to eat."

"No," said Hugh, "there's no feed over here at all, except those weeds that we passed this morning on the other side of the valley. Maybe there's feed enough there to keep the horses for a day or two, but no more. We'd be a lot better off if we were camped over here; that is, provided we wanted to hunt here or climb the mountains, but we've got to have grass for our horses to eat, and I reckon we'll have to leave them where they are and ride three or four miles every morning, before we begin to prospect around these mountains and the valleys between them."

"Well," said Jack, "there doesn't seem to be any feed here, and I don't see any other way than to do as you say."

"Let's ride up this valley here to the eastward," said Hugh. "There may be some sheltered warm spot up there where the snow will be gone, though it's no ways likely the grass has started yet."

They crossed the stream and pushed up through the snow which lay among the pine timber. It was not deep nor crusted and the going was easy, and after the first steep ascent they found themselves in an open smooth valley, which sloped very gradually upward between two tall peaks. Here the snow was disappearing and, as they ascended, they presently found the ground bare, but as Hugh had said, the grass had not yet started. There were a few tufts of brown dried-up herbage, but nothing that could be called feed, even for so small a pack train as theirs. In the soft earth at the margin of a little lake that lay near the head of this valley, Hugh pointed out the tracks of several sheep, among them two old rams of great size, and a well-worn sheep trail led back from this lake up over the rocks to high pinnacles behind.

"I reckon there are lots of sheep here, son," said Hugh, "but it isn't time to kill them now and we'll have to be satisfied with a young ram now and then. I hope they won't be very strong of garlic."

"I hope not," said Jack.

A little later they turned about to return to camp, following the same trail by which they had come up. As they were going down through the timber, Hugh drew up his horse and pointed out to Jack a porcupine waddling slowly over the snow. "There is some game for you, son, if you want it," he said, "but I wouldn't waste a cartridge on it. If you want to kill it, knock it on the head with a club. Porcupine is pretty good meat—for those that like it. The Northern Indians, those that live in the timber at least, eat them whenever they can get hold of them."

Jack dismounted, and getting a long stick, ran after the porcupine and poked it and the beast stopped, put its nose on the ground between its forepaws, erected its quills in all directions, and stood there thrashing with its great tail as if quite prepared for war. Jack gave it a poke or two and then examined some of the quills, which had been thrust into the end of the stick, and then returning to his horse, remounted and rode up beside the others.

"What," said Hugh, "aren't you going to take it along with you?"

"No," said Jack, "I guess not. We've plenty of food in camp and this time I'll keep myself from killing, instead of having you warn me."

By the time they had started back, the sun had fallen behind the great peak that overhung their road, the air was cold, and the melting of the snow field had stopped. Here in these high mountains winter lingers long, and though in the middle of the day it may be warm, it is cold at night.

When they reached the point in the trail opposite where they had seen the bears earlier in the day, Jack and Joe dismounted and went to look down in the valley to see if they could discover them, but as they saw nothing, they went on.

When they came in sight of camp, however, it became evident that there was some excitement there. The horses were frightened and were running to and fro, apparently trying to pull up their picket pins; but what first attracted the attention of the men was the appearance of their tent, which seemed to have been taken down and transformed into a white bundle, moving a little now and then, but for the most part quite still.

Hugh looked for a moment and then said, "Come on, there is trouble down there, and I'm afraid some of those horses will get hurt if we don't hurry." He put spurs to his horse and galloped down the steep descent as if it had been a bit of level prairie. Jack and Joe, though both suspecting what had taken place, said nothing, but followed, and when they had crossed the little river and rode over the level meadow toward camp, Hugh was sitting on his horse by the tent, with as broad a smile on his face as Jack had ever seen. The tent, converted into a small bundle of less size than a barrel, though somewhat longer, was shivering and shaking, and from it came groans, growls and moans, which sounded mysterious but funny.

"That's a comical thing," said Hugh. "That's one of the funniest things I ever saw. Do you know what's inside that tent, son?" he added.

"No," said Jack, "I don't know, but I guess likely it's a bear."

"Right you are," said Hugh, "and I reckon we'll have to bloody up the tent a little to get him out. Take a shot at it and try to kill the beast."

"All right," said Jack, as he loaded his rifle, while Joe called out, "White Bull, do you see the cubs in the trees?"

Hugh and Jack both turned, and there, perched high up in the stunted pine trees, were two little cubs, each about as large as a small setter dog, though of course not standing nearly so high.

"Well, I swan," said Hugh, "if that old bear and her family didn't come down here to make us grief. Jack, you kill the old one in the tent, and Joe and I will settle these cubs. We'll have some meat to eat now."

Jack fired a shot through the tent and a squawl of rage and pain was followed by a series of struggles, but at last the tent lay still, and below the point where Jack's ball had entered, a little red stain began to appear on the canvas. Hugh and Joe shot the cubs in the trees. The tent was unrolled and the old bear extracted from it. It was evident that she had entered it to investigate its contents and in overhauling things had knocked down the poles. Her struggles had wrapped her so tightly in the canvas that she could not use her legs or paws to tear her way out, and she had

lain there firmly bound in the stout duck, until vengeance, in the shape of Jack, descended on her from the hillside above.

The evening and a part of the next morning were spent in skinning the bears, and stretching their hides; and many were the jokes that the hunters made over this curious capture.

CHAPTER XI

THE RETREAT

It was noon the next day before the various chores about camp were done. The dishes and some small packages of food that had been left in the tent were badly mixed up and a number of packages torn open and their contents ruined. Hugh, fortunately, had put most of the coffee in one of the caches in the trees, but that which had been left in the tent had been scattered and trodden into the ground, so that only two or three cupfuls of the berries could be picked up and used.

"I tell you, Hugh," said Jack, "it was mighty lucky that you put that food in the trees. If it hadn't been for that I expect we should have had to go back to the Agency to get more grub."

"Yes," replied Hugh, "I reckon we would, but I knew there were bears around here, and you never can tell just what a bear will do when it comes to a camp. Sometimes they are so shy that they will run away as soon as they smell the camp, at others they will prowl around it for a day without touching anything, or again, maybe they'll go right into the tent and destroy everything that is there. I remember, one time down in Colorado, a bear came into camp while we were out prospecting and tore up and scattered around everything that we had; he even tore our blankets to pieces. We had to start into the settlements at once for a new outfit. Of course, we followed up the bear and killed him, but that wasn't much satisfaction.

"We are mighty lucky that some of these horses did not break their necks, or get away and get lost in this brush. Of course, the chances are we could have trailed them and found them, but on the other hand if a snow had come before we did find them, we might have lost them for good. They'd have been likely to get tied up in the brush with their ropes and to have starved to death."

"Yes," said Joe, "we came out of it mighty lucky, but I never expect to understand how that bear wrapped herself up in that tent so that she couldn't move."

"No," said Hugh, "that's a mighty curious performance, and the queer part of it is that the tent is just as good as ever it was, except for the bullet holes and the blood on it. She didn't tear it a mite, and that, of course, shows that somehow she must have got wrapped up in it just as the tent fell. If she'd had a chance to use her arms at all she would have torn the canvas to ribbons and we would never have got her.

"Well," he continued, "it's too late to start out prospecting now, and I reckon I'll stay in camp the rest of the day and maybe clean the blood off this tent and generally get things in shape. What do you boys mean to do?"

"Why," said Jack, "I don't know. I believe I'd like to go up around this lake and follow up the valley until I come to that wall of rock at the head. I expect that must be the divide, isn't it?"

"I reckon so," said Hugh. "I believe if we get up on top of this next ridge ahead of us, we'll see the waters running the other way and down into Flat Head Lake and so on into the Columbia and the Pacific Ocean."

The boys started and proceeded up the valley. Close to the margin of the lake was a thick growth of alders, but these extended only a few yards back, and between them and the sharp slope of the mountain there was a level space thickly covered with huge rock fragments, among which they picked their way without much difficulty.

The day was bright and still, but the air so keen that the mosquitoes and flies were not troublesome.

Part way up the lake, Jack, who had been watching something on a great rock which rose above the water's surface, reached out his hand and motioned to Joe not to move, and then, taking out his glasses, looked at the moving object, which proved to be two tiny harlequin ducks busily engaged in dressing their feathers.

The boys approached them slowly and carefully, stopping whenever the ducks ceased the operations to look about them, and then going on when the birds were busy, and at last they had come to within thirty or forty yards of them, and through the glasses could see them almost as plainly as if they had been within arm's length.

They were beautiful birds and their curiously variegated colors stood out plainly. The deep rich blue of the body, spotted here and there with white and rich brown and black, and their trim smooth appearance made them very pretty objects. During one of Jack's inspections, Joe, whose eyes were wandering about up the valley and over the mountainside, touched Jack's arm, and said, "I think I see a goat."

"Where?" asked Jack, without moving.

"Look up the valley down close to the grass on that red cliff. There's something white lying against it. I thought I saw it move just now."

Jack turned his glasses in the direction in which Joe pointed, and after a little search, discovered a goat lying in what looked like a sort of cave in the rock. "Sure enough," he said, "it's a goat, Joe, but how can we get at it? It will surely see us before we can reach any cover."

"Yes," said Joe, "pretty sure to see us, of course; nothing to hide behind at all."

"I don't see how to get at it, except to crawl up to the edge of the hill and there maybe we'll find rocks to get behind. Let's try it anyway," said Jack.

They started, Joe in the lead, and crept slowly toward the edge of the valley, but before they had reached it the goat slowly rose to its feet, and immediately the two boys sank to the ground and waited, without moving. The goat did not seem to be alarmed. It took a long look down the valley and then looked up at the mountainside opposite. Then it turned and very slowly walked away from the cave by which it had been lying, and, turning, began to ascend what looked to the boys like an absolutely perpendicular cliff. The animal did not hurry, but walked along in deliberate fashion, sometimes stopping and lowering its head, as if to take a bite of grass, and again, turning and looking back over the way it had come or out over the valley. Still its advance was steady, and presently it walked behind a projection of rock and was not seen again.

"Well," said Jack, "did you ever see anything like that? That beast just walked right straight up the face of that cliff as a fly would walk up the wall of a room."

"It's queer," answered Joe; "I could hardly believe that I saw what I saw. Those goats must have powerful medicine to be able to do things like that."

"It sure looks so," replied Jack, "but I tell you what I want to do. Let's notice just where that goat was lying and where it went, and let's go over there and see if the rock is right up and down, as it looks. I'd like to see whether a man could go up where that goat went."

"Yes," said Joe, "so would I."

Rising, the boys walked over to the place and had no great difficulty in scrambling up to where the goat had been lying. The tracks which they saw before they got there told them that during the night the goat had been down in the valley feeding, and had gone up to this cave to rest, in the heat of the day. The goat's bed had been stamped out among the shale where a trickle of water came down from the slate above, and this accounted for a dark patch on the goat's side that both boys had noticed. It had been lying in the mud.

Then they followed where the goat had gone after leaving its bed. A shelf of rock about a foot wide led along the face of the precipice for thirty or forty yards and was evidently a much-used goat trail. It was pretty narrow for the boys, but by going very gingerly, holding themselves as close as possible to the rocks, they got to the point where the animals had turned off up the hill. Here the water had worn a little course by following a crack in the shale, and there was a ravine, if it could be called that, a foot or two deep and as wide at the top. Moreover, the face of the precipice, instead of being vertical, leaned back a little from the valley. In the ravine and on both sides of it the rocks were much worn by the passage of animals, and to both the boys it seemed clear that this was the regular trail followed by the goats.

"What do you think, Jack?" said Joe. "Could a man climb up there?"

"Well, I tell you what," said Jack. "If you will hold my gun I'm going to try. I believe anybody can climb up there, but, of course, he wouldn't want to do it with much of a load on his back."

"I'll take the guns," said Joe, "but don't you climb too far, and look out that you don't slip and fall. A man might bump himself pretty badly rolling down here, and it's quite a drop down to the rocks below."

"All right," said Jack, "I'll look out."

He gave Joe the gun and started to climb. It was slow work, for in many places the rock was very smooth, and in others, where there was a little knob or protuberance on which to rest hand or foot, it was rotten and broke under his weight. On the whole, however, the going was easier than he had thought, and he went thirty or forty yards to a point where the climbing became easy, and then determined to return. Going back was harder than coming up, for he could not see where to put his feet and was obliged to feel around blindly for footholds. Sometimes, when he had found one and tested it by resting his weight on it, it broke and gave him a little start, but, on the whole, he had little difficulty in getting down to Joe, and together they retraced their steps to the valley.

"Well," said Joe, "I reckon you had quite a time finding places for your fingers. You cut 'em up considerably."

Then for the first time Jack looked at his hands and found that, in half a dozen places, his fingers were lacerated by the sharp slate fragments to which he had clung.

The boys went on up the valley and, presently, found themselves under the tremendous wall of its head. There was no water falling over here now, but it was evident that in times past there had been a great rush of water at the very head of the valley, for the ground was strewn with water-worn pebbles and fine gravel, among which grew grass and other vegetation. The valley here was rather larger than at the lake below, and there was a wide, level amphitheater, walled in on three sides by the great cliff and by mountainsides that were almost as steep as the cliff.

Sitting down here, the boys studied the sides of the mountains with the glasses and soon made out a number of goats lying in the shade or feeding. In one group there were fifteen and, on the side of the tall mountain to the north, they counted forty-two white spots, most of which they felt sure were goats, though some of the spots showed no motion.

It was the middle of the afternoon and they were talking of going back to camp. Jack was taking a last look with his glasses at the goats on the mountainside, when, suddenly, Joe's gun sounded immediately behind him. Jack dropped his glasses and reached for his gun, asking, "Joe, what is it?"

"I think it was a skunk bear," said Joe, "what you call wolverine. It just came up on top of that rock over there, about a hundred yards off, and I shot at it. I knew if I moved or spoke to you, it would jump down and be out of sight in a second."

"Did you get it?" said Jack.

"I don't know," was the reply. "Let's go up there and see. If I didn't hit it, we'll never see it again. These rocks are full of holes and hiding places, and if it's only wounded it will sure get away."

They hurried up to the rock, which Joe pointed out again as they approached it, and walking around on the other side saw a great splash of blood on the stones below and a moment later, behind a small stone, they found a splendid wolverine, kicking in his last gasp. The ball had passed through both shoulders, making the fore-legs useless. If it had not been for that they would, very likely, not have found the animal, although its wound was mortal. Jack shook hands with Joe and said, "That was a good shot, Joe, and mighty lucky, too. This is a splendid hide. I'd have given a good deal for such a chance as that."

"Well," said Joe, "I'd have spoken to you if there'd be any chance that you would have got the shot, but, as I said before, if the beast had seen me move or heard me speak, he would have dodged out of sight and you wouldn't have seen him again."

"Nonsense," said Jack, "there's no reason why you should have given me the shot. You saw him, and he was yours if you could kill him. It would have been throwing away the chance, if you had tried to get me to see him. Of course, he would not have stayed for me to shoot at. Now, what shall we do; skin him here or take him into camp?"

"Well," said Joe, "I'd rather skin him here, only I don't know much about skinning a wolverine. I don't know whether it ought to be cased or split."

"Neither do I," said Jack; "but I reckon we'll be safe if we case it. Then if it ought to be split we can do that afterward, can't we?"

"Maybe," said Joe. "I don't know. Let's case it, anyhow, and save ourselves the trouble of lugging the carcass back."

The boys' knives were sharp and the skinning did not take them long. It was an admirable fur, and as they worked, Jack did not tire of admiring it.

Soon the job was completed and they started for camp.

Hugh looked at them with some curiosity, as they approached the tent, and was much interested to see the wolverine's skin.

"Who killed it?" he asked, finally.

"Joe," said Jack. "He made a mighty good shot from about a hundred yards off and broke both shoulders. The animal was just dying when we got up to it and had gone hardly any distance."

"You were lucky to kill it, Joe," said Hugh. "It isn't often one gets a chance at one of these fellows, and up here in the mountains—or for the matter of that anywhere else—if you wound one, that's the end of it. You can never find him."

"We didn't know how to skin it, White Bull," said Joe, "and we didn't want to pack it into camp, so, finally, we cased it. Ought we to have split it?"

"Why," said Hugh, "it don't make much difference. I've seen plenty of wolverine cased, and plenty stretched flat. In old times they used to stretch 'em flat, but I never heard they were worth more one way than another. Nice piece of fur, ain't it?" he said, as he ran his fingers through it. "Up here in the high mountains they haven't begun to shed yet and he's just as smooth and glossy as a beaver."

That night, while they were sitting around the fire after supper, Hugh said, "Now, boys, I don't know whether you've noticed it, but feed is getting mighty short here. We've only got a few head of horses, but the grass is only just started and in about one day more they will be gnawing up its roots on this little flat. We didn't find any feed up the valley, though a couple of weeks later, when the snow has melted and the ground has warmed up, there'll be grass growing everywhere. We came in here a little too early. None of us could have known that, because none of us have ever been up here before. It looks to me as if it was a long time since anybody had been here; I don't see any signs of camps, or horses, or chopping. I think we've got to get out of this and do it pretty quick. If we don't, our horses will begin to get poor."

"That's so, White Bull," said Joe. "I noticed to-day that the feed was getting powerful short, and I don't know where we can go except down the valley toward the prairie, where the weather is warm and the grass has started."

"Well," said Jack, "I suppose that's so, but just think how bad the flies will be down there."

"They will," said Hugh, "surely. But we've got to stand them if we're going to be in the mountains for the next month. It's better to be ate up by flies than to have the horses get poor."

"Well, Hugh," said Jack, "isn't there any place we can go, up here in the high mountains, where there will be feed? We crossed a big stream a little lower down. How would it be up on the head of that?"

"I don't know, son," said Hugh. "You know just as much about this country here as I do. It's new to both of us. If you like, we can take a day off to-morrow and prospect a little more. If we could get up to the top of this high mountain on the north side of the valley, we might be able to see something, but, at a distance, it's pretty hard to tell whether ground where there isn't any snow is covered with grass, or weeds, or willows. If you feel like it, we all can make a climb to-morrow, and see if we can get up to the top of this mountain and look over. If we do, I expect we'll find on the other side some valleys and flats, but it's mighty doubtful if there will be any place where there's feed for the animals. I think the best thing we can do is to go on back and maybe camp on those high ledges we passed over coming up. There's some feed there and then we can climb up to the top of Goat Mountain and see whether from there we can see any country that is without snow. There must be quite a basin in back of Goat Mountain, where that big stream that we camped on the other night comes out. It must be a cold place there with big mountains all around it, but we can take a look into it, and, anyhow, at our camp the horses will be able to find something to eat."

"I guess that is so, White Bull," said Joe. "That's the best thing to do."

"Well," said Jack, "I suppose it is. I hate to leave here when there's so much new country to be seen, but we can't stay without feed for the horses."

Early next morning the tent was pulled down and, while Hugh cooked the breakfast, the beds were rolled, the packs made up and the horses saddled. A little later, while Hugh was washing his dishes and putting his kitchen together, ready for packing, the boys loaded the beds, tent and provisions on two of the horses and, as soon as the third was packed, the train moved off down the valley.

The journey down stream seemed much shorter than the ascent had been. The big river which came in from the north was passed without difficulty, and two or three hours later all the snow had been left behind, and they were traveling in the warm sun, over the grassy ledges of Goat Mountain. Here, on a level spot, camp was made, several of the horses staked out in a place where they could not get cast on the hillside, and Joe and Jack set out to try to reach the crest of the mountain.

It was a long, hard climb, breasting the steep shale slopes and then clambering up narrow ravines worn by water falling for ages down the red cliffs. The boys moved along slowly, for neither was in good condition for mountain-climbing, yet their progress was steady, for though they frequently stopped to catch their breath, these pauses were not long. At last they reached the mountain's crest and, standing upon it, looked over into the valley.

A few stunted wind-swept pines crowned the ridge and under them the snow lay deep, while on the north fall of the ridge, the white slope, dotted here and there with black pines or broken by projecting rock points, stretched down into the basin, in which rose the stream on which they had camped a few nights before.

The basin looked dreary, cold and lifeless. No bare ground was to be seen, only the snow, now and then broken by the fresh tracks of goats which seemed to have been crossing the slope.

Jack and Joe followed the crest of the ridge for some distance, and then turned down the hill toward camp, walking among the scattered, stunted pines, over the steeply inclined slide rock. Gradually they worked down the hill, but, at length, Joe made a little sign, at which Jack stopped and looked in the direction in which Joe was pointing. Sure enough, there, a long way off, was a white spot lying at the foot of one of the red cliffs, and the glasses showed it to be a goat.

The boys set out to stalk it, passing very carefully from tree to tree, until, at length, a point of rock hid the animal from sight. Then they hurried forward, but when they peered carefully over the last point of rocks, behind which the goat should have been, they could not see it. It did not seem possible that they could have frightened it. The wind was right, and while they had been within sight, the animal had made no movement.

After a little looking over the ground, they decided that they had mistaken the place which they were now looking at for the one where the goat had been, and that the right place must be beyond one of two points just before them.

On rounding the first of these, they saw no signs of the animal, but on looking beyond the second, there was the goat, on the little shelf, where he had first been seen. He was just a fair rifle shot from them, and Jack drew back, telling Joe to go ahead and take a shot. Jack had killed a number of goats, but Joe had still his first to shoot at.

The Indian boy crept forward and, resting his gun against a rock, took careful aim and fired. The goat sprang to its feet and, as it rushed across the narrow shelf where it had been lying, the boys could see its fore-leg swinging as if it had been broken high up. The animal had been lying a little quartering toward the gun, and the ball that had broken its shoulder must have passed through the heart or lungs. The goat ran to the edge of the shelf, as if to leap off, but the plunge of sixty feet was too much for it. It turned and ran back toward the crevice down which it had come and reared against the rocks as if to ascend, but Jack fired a hasty shot, which struck the rocks in front of it, and made it run back to the edge of the shelf. Just as it reached the brink its knees gave way and it pitched forward, whirled over and over, struck a ledge, bounded out again, and rolled, an inert mass, down the mountainside and out of sight.

"Hurrah, Joe!" shouted Jack, "you got him, all right."

"Maybe so," said Joe, "I don't want to be too sure, for I have heard that these animals are hard to kill."

Without waste of time Joe started down the mountainside after the animal, springing from rock to rock, almost like a goat or sheep.

"Look out, Joe," called Jack, "you'll break your neck."

But Joe kept on. Where the goat had tumbled into the ravine the rocks were smeared with blood, and fifty or sixty yards further down, at the foot of a steep cliff, the animal lay dead.

It took some time to drag the carcass to a place convenient for working on it and to get it in shape to carry down the mountain. The sun was getting low, and as they worked the sky became overcast. After they had partly skinned the goat, Joe wrapped the hide around the shoulders and put it on his back, while Jack followed with the hams. They traveled as fast as possible, but it was dusk before they reached the ledge on which the camp was located.

"Well, boys," said Hugh, who was sitting by the fire and had supper ready, "what did you find and what have you got? I heard you shoot a couple of times."

"Joe killed a fat nanny-goat," replied Jack, "and we brought in the meat and the hide. The hide, of course, doesn't amount to anything, because there isn't much hair on it, but the meat ought to be good."

"Well," said Hugh, "we'll try it. I am no great hand to eat goat meat, but that sheep that we got down on the lower lake is about all gone and it's time we had some fresh meat. What did you see on the other side of the mountain? Is there any feed there? Any show at all for the stock?"

"No," replied Jack, "nothing there but snow and rocks. A goat might live there, but a horse would quickly starve."

"Well, then," said Hugh, "there's nothing left for us to do but to get down toward the prairie. Maybe we've got to go away from the hills to where the grass is good and the flies won't bother much, or else, on a pinch, we can go up Swift Current. There's likely to be feed all the way up there until we get into the right high mountains."

"I've heard a lot about Swift Current, Hugh," said Jack. "What is there up there?"

"Why," Hugh answered, "I don't rightly know. I've only been up it a few miles and hunted in some of the hills there. There's plenty of game, I reckon; moose and elk and bear and sheep and goats, and perhaps a few deer. It's not a long stream and there's a good trail up to the falls; a trail that's traveled by the Indians every year, for the Kootenays or Stonies or Bloods generally make a hunting camp there for some weeks in the fall. There are some beaver there, too, I think, though not as many as there used to be before the Indians took to trapping them. I expect we'll find the flies pretty bad, but we'll sure find feed for the horses, and there's some high mountains that are mighty sightly."

"Well," said Jack, "I'd like to go up and look round, since we can't do anything at the head of the river until the grass starts, and, if you and Joe think best, I say Swift Current."

"Swift Current will suit me," assented Joe, and Hugh added, "It's a go."

Accordingly the next morning the train continued on down the lakes, and about the middle of the afternoon they camped at the foot of the lower lake. Just as they were about to ford the river, a man on horseback appeared on top of a hill behind them. Hugh happened to look back and saw him signal to call a companion to him by riding in a circle, on the top of the hill where he could be seen by anyone at a distance.

A little later, the man with his companion rode down to the river, crossed it and came to their camp. He was a Kootenay Indian, who could talk some Piegan and some Chinook, and it soon appeared that he was camped with fifteen lodges of his people under the chief Back In Sight, not far off on Swift Current Creek.

CHAPTER XII

THE WAYS OF BEAVER

THE next morning Hugh and the boys made an early start, and crossing the wide flat below the lake, entered the valley of the Swift Current River. They passed close to the Kootenay camp, where the women were at work dressing hides and occupied with other tasks, while the children played among the lodges.

The valley of Swift Current is narrow and flanked on either side by high hills which, though at first rounded and grass-covered, grow steeper and nourish a growth of pines and aspens as one ascends the stream. The trail climbs

steeply and, before long, splendid snow-capped mountain peaks cut off the view to the southwest. From time to time the stream enlarges into a series of lakes, in and about which Hugh detected much beaver sign. Trees and bushes had been felled and, floating in the water or lying on the bank, were many lengths of aspen and willow branches, stripped of their bark by the beaver.

"I reckon, son," said Hugh, as the three paused to look at these signs, "that the Kootenays have trapped all along this creek and have got out a good many of the beaver. Nevertheless, there are lots of them left, I expect; and I wouldn't be surprised if a man could make good wages all winter trapping right here. There are some marten in these hills, and now and then an otter and some fisher. It wouldn't be a bad thing to have out a line of traps here."

"No," said Jack, "it wouldn't. I shouldn't mind wintering here a bit. I believe there would be a lot of bears in early spring, to say nothing of the fur that you would get through the winter."

"Yes," said Hugh, "it's a pretty good trapping ground, and I don't believe that it's ever been systematically gone over in winter. A man could live pretty well here, too, for there's lots of sheep and elk, and some deer and moose, to say nothing of the birds and a heap of fish in the lakes and streams."

"I'm afraid I'll never get a chance to winter in this country, Hugh," said Jack. "It seems that I must spend my winters back East."

"Well," said Hugh, "that's right enough, too. The day of the hunter and the trapper has gone by in this country, and now we can only do for sport what we used to do for a living."

All through the morning and until well after noon, the party traveled up the beautiful valley, constantly drawing nearer to the great mountains which towered before them.

Early in the afternoon they came to a wide meadow, bordered by green timber, through which ran the river, flanked on either hand by the towering cliffs of two great mountains. Here Hugh decided to camp, and before long the tent was put up and a smoke built for the benefit of horses and men alike, for the flies were very bad.

After dinner, Jack got from the pack some mosquito netting and, working for a short time with a needle and some thread, and, helped by Joe, made three bags of the netting wide enough to slip over the head and come down to shoulders and breast. When one put on his coat and buttoned it over the net, his head and neck were protected from the mosquitoes. This work done, Jack put together his fishing rod and, drawing on his gloves, went over to the stream to fish for trout, which Hugh said were plenty in the river.

Not far above the camp was a considerable fall, where the water from a lake tumbled thirty feet over the rocks into a deep pool below, in which Jack was interested to see a great school of fish. He drew back and made a number of casts, but the fish paid no attention to his flies, and after he had faithfully whipped the pool for some time, he made up his mind that the fish would not bite. Lying on the rocks, with his face close to the water, he looked down upon the hundreds of them holding themselves in place, head against the current, apparently without moving a fin. As he studied them, he made up his mind that they were not trout, and his disappointment at not catching them was considerably modified.

While he was there, his attention was attracted by a dipper flying across the water and, presently, he saw that on a little shelf of rock, almost directly below the falls, the bird had a nest formed of green moss. There was a little hole in the bundle of moss, at the mouth of which the bird alighted and seemed to pass in food. No doubt his mate was sitting on her eggs, which a little later would hatch into hungry young, to satisfy whose appetites would tax the efforts of both parents, no matter how hard they might work.

But Jack was hungry for fish and soon started down the stream. At first it was so overgrown by willows and spruces that he could not fish, but not far beyond this the trees stood farther back from it and he began to cast. Before he had gone far he had a rise and caught a nice ten-inch trout. Just below was a dark pool, from which he took four large fish, the largest weighing perhaps two pounds. His third fish was different from any of those he had taken before, and so was the fourth. Instead of being spotted with black, these two had red spots on them and heads larger and more clumsy than the black-spotted trout. They were not like the brook trout of the East and Jack was puzzled to know what they were, but felt sure that Hugh would tell him.

Keeping on down stream, he soon had ten fish strung on a willow twig, and the load was so heavy that he turned from the river and, passing through a fringe of timber, found himself near camp.

Joe was sitting not far from the fire half in the smoke, and was rubbing a lot of green leaves between his palms and then passing his hands over his face, neck and arms. Hugh, not so near the fire, was smoking vigorously, but seemed to be little troubled by the mosquitoes. The horses were still standing together, crowded into the smoke.

"Well, son," said Hugh, "that's a nice string of fish you've got. You've done well. That ought to last us for a couple of meals. Did you find the fish plenty?"

"Yes," replied Jack, "there are lots of them, and I want to ask you some questions about them. In the first place that pool right under the falls there is just full of fish, and yet not one of them would rise to my flies. I looked at them pretty carefully and I don't believe they're trout. Do you know what they are?"

"Peamouths, I reckon," answered Hugh.

"Peamouths?" said Jack. "I think I've heard that name, but I don't know what it means."

"Why," replied Hugh, "it's a kind of a brook white fish, I reckon. They're quite a little like the white fish that we catch in the lake here, and yet they're different, smaller, different in color and the mouth is some different, too. Some people call them stone rollers. I don't know just why, unless, perhaps, they turn over the stones at the bottom of the stream when they're looking for food; but that's just my guess from the name."

"Well," said Jack, "if we get a chance I'd like to catch one and see it, so that I'll know it again."

"And now, Hugh," he went on, "what kind of a trout is that?" and he pointed to one of the red-spotted fish on his string.

"That's a bull trout," answered Hugh.

"Well," said Jack, "there's another new fish. I never heard of bull trout before, and I don't know what it is."

"I don't either," said Hugh, "except that I know that it's a trout that we have in these Northern waters and that I never saw in the Rocky Mountains, south of here. I never saw one south of Milk River ridge, I think."

"When I first got hold of it," explained Jack, "I thought for a minute that maybe it was the Eastern brook trout, but it's a very different fish."

"They are mighty good eating," declared Hugh, "but I don't know that they are any better than the regular trout, that fellow with black spots."

"All trout are good enough," said Jack.

Presently Jack went over to Joe, who had finished his operations with the leaves, and asked him what it was that he had been doing, and why he did not wear his net.

"Trying to keep the flies off," said Joe. "There's a kind of a weed that grows in the wet places and I've heard that it's good medicine against flies, so I gathered a lot of the leaves and rubbed them up and then rubbed them over my skin, and it seems to me that the flies don't bother me as much now. That net I don't like. I can't see when I wear it."

"That's so," said Jack. "It does seem mighty warm and sort of takes my breath away, but it isn't as bad as the mosquitoes. What's the weed you've got?"

Joe showed him the plant, but Jack did not know it.

As they sat about the fire that evening after supper, the insects no longer troubled them, for it was very cold; almost freezing. They had had a hearty meal and were feeling as lazy and comfortable as could be. Not much was said, but once in a while some one would make a remark which required no reply.

Presently Jack said, "Hugh, I've been thinking about that beaver work that we saw down the creek to-day and I want to ask you some more questions about beaver. You told me a great deal last year, of course, but I still don't feel that I know much about them. I suppose I do know more than a good many other people, but I don't know much. I'd like to have you tell me something more about them."

"That's so, son, we did talk a whole lot about beaver last year, when we were trapping, and, of course, you saw something about their ways while we were catching them; but you're dead right, you don't know much about them. For the matter of that, though, nobody does. I expect I know a lot more than you, but I've got a whole lot to learn. They're a mighty curious animal."

"Well, Hugh," replied Jack, "of course, it's hard to find out much about animals that spend a good deal more than half their lives out of sight and that one only sees now and then.

"There's one thing," he went on, "that I never thought of while we were trapping, but that I did think of last winter, and it's puzzled me a whole lot. There are the beavers' houses built out in deep water and yet there is a passage from under the water up into the house. I don't understand how that passage is made. Is it possible that the beavers build the house so carefully that a tunnel is left leading from the bottom of the water up into the middle of the house, and then build about a room at the end of that tunnel? That doesn't seem possible, and if they do, how do they get the first sticks to stop at the bottom of the water. Why don't the sticks rise up and float away? I've been puzzling my head over that for some months now, and have wanted to ask you about it. I thought it would be a long story, and so it would not be worth while writing you about it."

"Well," said Hugh, "I ought to have told you about that last year. I don't wonder that it puzzled you. It's enough, it seems to me, to puzzle anybody. But now suppose I go ahead and try to explain it to you the way I understand it. Whatever I have learned comes, of course, from what I've seen a beaver do, but more than anything from the few houses that I have had occasion to tear down."

"Well, I wish you would explain, Hugh," said Jack, "for I want to understand about this."

"Well, now," Hugh went on, "let's suppose you've got a little creek coming down from the mountains where no beaver have ever been, and a couple that have left some colony where they belonged go off and find this little creek, and think it's a pretty good place to stop. Maybe the creek is shallow, and, if it is, about the first thing they do is to build two or three low dams across it, so as to give them deep water for safety. Then from one of these little ponds where the water is deep, they'll dig a tunnel off at right angles to the stream, pretty well under the ground, about on a level, and when they get thirty or forty feet from the creek they'll enlarge it and make a room, and there is where they'll live for a little while. In the bottom of the tunnel there is water for quite a little way, but when they have dug up and made a room it's pretty dry there, except for the water that they pack in on their fur. Maybe they'll stay there for quite a while, but after a little while they dig upward and come out to daylight—on top of the ground in the stream bottom, I mean.

"Now, like enough they go off and begin to cut willows or cottonwood or aspen and bring it down close to the hole that they have in the ground, and very likely they'll pile sticks over that hole, possibly, at first, with the idea of hiding it. They drag down more and more sticks and make the hole from the tunnel bigger, and, presently, they begin to cut out the sticks that were first piled on top of the hole, so that, finally, they have their nest in the lower portion of this pile of sticks. Meantime, very likely, they have been working, more or less, on the dam on the creek below the house, and have raised the water still more, so that perhaps the tunnel is now full of water, and then, instead of using this tunnel to get out of, they'll gnaw a hole through the sticks of the house, making a passage-way from the room they occupy down to beneath the surface of the water. They still keep working at the dam, raising it and making it level, so that the pond gets bigger and bigger all the time.

"Perhaps the water is raised, so that it begins to come into the room in the house that they occupy; the place is getting too wet for them. Then it's quite possible that they will start down at the very edge of the water and gnaw a tunnel upward, in a slanting direction, perhaps quite close to the covering of the house, and, finally, when they get up near the top of the house, they'll gnaw out another room, almost above the two they had occupied before. All this time they're working at the dam and raising the water, and all this time, too, they are packing sticks up on top of the house, raising it higher and higher, and perhaps bringing mud, which they get along the bank, and putting this among the sticks on top of the house so as to bind the whole together and make it tight and warm for winter. If you study some old beaver pond, as I have, you will find that all along the edge of the pond, under the bank, but above the water, but, of course, below the grass-roots, the beaver have tunneled out roads partly hidden by the overhanging sod and grass. They take this mud, as I have told you, and use it on the houses and on the dams, and these hidden ways under the bank enable them to go quietly from one place in the pond to another without ever being seen."

"Well," said Jack, "that gives me a whole lot of new ideas. I never thought of that way of making the passageways or the rooms. I knew that there must be some way, but what it was I couldn't tell, though I figured over it a whole lot."

"Yes," answered Hugh, "that's the way they do it. Now, you've never seen the inside of a beaver house, but I

have told you how the floor is pretty level and not very far above the water, and I've told you also that often they have benches all around the room on which they lie when they are in the house. Now, these benches are made in just the same way that the room is made, that is to say, they are gnawed out of the solid sticks that the house is made of. First, perhaps, one old beaver will gnaw out a kind of a hollow in the wall of the room, with a flat level floor just about big enough for her to lie on, and then, perhaps, her mate will gnaw out another place like this, next to her, and perhaps a place will be gnawed out for the young ones, so that all the beaver that live in the house will have benches to rest on, which, I suppose, are drier, or, at all events, more comfortable, than the floor of the house would be."

"I think I understand, Hugh," said Jack. "Anybody that has seen a beaver's teeth, and the work that they do, the trees that they cut down, and knows the short time that it takes them to do this, can understand easily enough how it's perfectly possible for them to gnaw their way through a lot of small sticks, such as the houses are made of."

"Yes," said Hugh, "it's simple enough, of course, to know how beaver could chew through anything made of wood.

"I've told you," he went on, "about the open canals that the beaver dig to get near where they are gathering their food, so as to get that food to their houses and so as to have refuge in case an enemy should get after them, but I don't believe I thought to tell you about the underground tunnels that they dig, like those we've just been talking about. Of course, after a while, when the water has been raised, these underground tunnels are all covered up. The beaver no longer use them and they are very likely to fall in. Then if you are riding or wading in a beaver pond, you may suddenly step into a ditch that is a foot and a half or two feet deeper than the rest of the pond. Very likely if you are on horseback, the horse will fall down. A beaver pond or a beaver meadow is likely to be full of traps for anyone who goes through it.

"There's another thing," he continued. "Sometimes, if there is a little pond or lake not far off from a creek where the beaver have made a pond they will dig a channel to that. They are more likely to do that if the water in the pond toward which they are digging stands higher than the water in their own pond. They can travel through this channel up to the other pond, and, perhaps, there get a lot of food which they can float down through this channel. I remember once seeing such a place, where the channel had evidently been used to float down the food, but when I saw the place, the water was low in the creek and in the pond, and in many places the channel between the two was nearly dry. At one point the beaver had run up against a big boulder which lay in the channel that they were digging, and they had had to go around it. They had cut a big cottonwood stick in the upper pond, perhaps eight inches through and four or five feet long, and had started to float it down the canal. Then the water seemed to have given out on them, and there was this big stick stranded on the boulder, where, of course, it had to wait until the water was high next spring, when it would be floated down to the place they wanted to get it to."

Jack had been listening eagerly to this account, and when Hugh stopped speaking, said, "Dear me, Hugh, how much you know about this country and the animals that live in it. I wonder if anyone else knows as much. I made a point this winter of reading two or three books on beaver and trying to find out everything that I could about the animal, but none of these books said one word about what you have been telling me; they just said that the beaver built dams and houses and kept talking about how smart he was, but really they didn't know anything about the animal. They were just guessing all the time. There wasn't a word said about how the beaver got into their houses, nor how they made the passage or the rooms. They didn't explain a bit, and yet, from the way they wrote, you'd suppose they knew it all."

"Well," answered Hugh, with a smile, "when they came to a place where they did not understand how the beaver did anything, I suppose they didn't have anybody to go to and ask, and so they had to just keep on writing and pretending that it was all simple enough to them, even if they didn't explain how it was to the people that read the books."

"Well," said Jack, "I think they're frauds; regular frauds. If a man is pretending to tell about anything, and comes to a place where he doesn't know any more, he ought to stop writing there, and then go on and write about something that he does know about."

"Well, now," said Hugh, "ain't you a little mite hard on these fellows that write books? I expect that they don't like to say that they don't know. Of course, a man that don't know oughtn't to be telling people about the things he don't know about."

"No," said Jack, "you bet he oughtn't to, and that's what I'm kicking about."

"Well, son, your kicking may give you some satisfaction, but it won't hurt the men that are writing the books."

"No," said Jack, "I guess not, but it's a fraud all the same."

"Well," said Hugh, "it's about time for us to turn in. Suppose you boys go out and catch two of the riding horses and picket them strongly, and I guess the others will stay with them until morning."

The boys did this, and when they returned to camp all hands turned in for the night.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FORKS OF SWIFT CURRENT

DAYLIGHT was slow in breaking the next morning, and when the earliest riser came out of the tent he saw that the valley was filled with mist which hid the mountain peaks. It was fairly cold, and all hands were glad to wear their coats.

Hugh kindled the fire and began to get breakfast, while the boys went out and turned loose the picketed horses, finding all the animals together.

"No mosquitoes this morning, Jack," said Joe, as they walked back to camp.

"No, indeed," replied Jack. "Any mosquito that came out this morning would be likely to have his wings and beak frozen off. My, but it's cold!" and he crowded close to the fire, stretching out his stiff wet hands to try to get some warmth into them.

"Yes," said Hugh, "it's pretty cold up here in the mountains. Ten miles down the creek, on the prairie, I bet the sun is shining hot."

"Isn't it queer what a difference there is between the mountains and the prairie?" said Jack.

"Yes," said Hugh, "there's lots of difference, but this place up here is the coldest, stormiest country that I know anything about. It seems to me that all these blizzards that we hear about that sweep over Eastern Montana and Dakota and so on, toward the States, get their start right up here. I've been right on top of the mountains along here where the weather would be warm and fine as could be, but a little way down on the eastern slope it would be raining and blowing like fury, and how far the wind and storm reached, I never could find out. Of course, there are lots of bad storms that start up here that never do get as far as the prairie, but there are lots of others that get such a start here that they keep going until they get a long way east.

"Well," Hugh went on, "the grub is about ready and we may as well sit down and eat. I believe this fog is going to lift in a while and we can keep on up the valley and see how far we can go before the mountains stop us. By rights, we ought to wait here until the sun comes out and dries off the ropes and blankets, but I don't believe we've got much further to go, not more than six or seven miles anyhow, before we'll either get to the foot of the mountains or well up on them."

A little while after breakfast the fog seemed to be growing thin and, presently, the sun broke through. From that time the mist gradually disappeared, but before it had wholly vanished from the mountainsides, the packs were on the horses and the train was stringing out up the trail. There was a short, steep climb about opposite the falls, where Jack had tried to fish the day before, and then a stretch of level land, the trail passing through scattered timber close to the shores of a rather large lake. When they had reached the upper end of this, Hugh stopped, and, turning to Jack, said, "Now, which way do you want to go? This valley seems to have three forks, one short one in the middle, and a longer one on either side. The short one is right ahead of us and the easiest, but the longest one is up here, to the right. If we want to find out what there is here, we may as well take them in order."

"Then," said Jack, "what's the matter with taking the right-hand one first? What do you think, Joe?"

Joe signified that he was doubtful which to take, and as he, apparently, didn't care much, Hugh said, "Well, come on then, we'll see if we can find some sort of a trail through the timber up here to the right."

A dim trail, which seemed to Jack like a disused game trail, led through the timber and the road was fairly easy. Before they had gone far, both boys could see that people had traveled up it in previous years, for in a number of places the bark was knocked from the trees, where packs had hit against them and, in one or two places, they saw a thread of red or white worsted clinging to a tree in a narrow place in the trail, showing where a rider's leg had rubbed against the bark and a shred had been torn from his leggings or blanket. Once or twice they saw a tuft of goat hair caught on a branch.

For some hours they wound through the forest, but at length the trees grew smaller and they passed through some open timber into a little park.

The mountains rose high on every side, but there was plenty of grass, a good-sized stream, and abundant wood. At the head of the park, two streams came from narrow valleys, one to the west and one to the east, and immediately before the travelers rose a very sharp mountain slope, terminating in a long high wall or precipice crowned by jagged finger-like rocks.

"Well," said Hugh, as they got to the upper end of the park, "I reckon we've got to stop here. Of course, it may be that we could take the horses higher up, but I don't feel any way sure about it and, if we should take them, we'd probably find the ground covered with snow. Let's make camp, and tie up the pack horses, and then we'll ride farther on and see what there is. It looks to me like there ought to be lots of sheep and goats up here, and we may as well find out."

It was nearly noon before the packs were off and the tent up, and then it was time to cook and eat, so that it was one o'clock before they mounted again and rode off. Hugh followed the westerly branch of the stream and, after a little search, found a game trail which led up the steep bank and brought them to the level of the valley, above the forty-foot precipice over which the stream poured. Here the ground was level and timber-covered, but they soon came out on rolling land which rose steadily toward the mountain and was dotted with clumps of trees.

The stream, which they had been following, came from a beautiful lake of clear, green water, in which two or three harlequin ducks were swimming, among little fragments of ice floating in the water.

The three travelers dismounted and, sitting down beneath a pine tree, looked over the lake and scanned the rocks above it.

Presently Hugh said, "Boys, do you want to see some goats?"

"Yes," replied Jack, "I've been looking for them, but I don't see any."

"Well," said Hugh, "I'll tell you why. You're looking too high up in the air. Look down here in the valley, just below the edge of the snow, and see what you can see."

The boys looked, and there, to their astonishment, saw several herds of goats feeding on the young grass that grew on the slopes of the mountains.

"Plenty of goats," said Joe.

"You bet, they're plenty," agreed Jack. "Let's count them." They did so and found that there were no less than forty-three goats in sight and none of them at a level higher than they were.

"Quite a show, isn't it?" said Hugh. "I don't remember that I ever saw so many goats at one view, as we're looking at now. It wouldn't be much of a trick to get goat meat here, if we wanted it."

"No," answered Jack, "I should think not, but, as you say, we don't want it particularly. I'd rather have some sheep or even an elk. I expect there are some elk here, aren't there? I saw some sign of them, as I thought, coming up."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I reckon there are elk here; not very many, but some. Maybe we can get to kill one before long."

It was pleasant sitting there in the sun and watching the feeding goats, unsuspecting of danger. Suddenly, however, there was a movement in the group nearest the head of the valley and the animals began to walk quickly toward the heights and were soon climbing up over the snowbanks.

"There!" exclaimed Hugh, "I reckon some eddy of wind from us must have crept around and they have smelt us. Just see how they climb."

"Yes," said Jack, "and look at that little kid following its mother. It can't go very fast and see how she stops and turns, and looks, and waits for it. That's mighty pretty, I think."

"Yes," said Joe, "that's nice. That's the way the old ones always do unless they're too badly scared. There, you see the little one has caught up, and now the mother goes on again."

The disturbance among the first group of goats had started the others along the mountainside, and now all were clambering toward the high rocks. The men watched them, until they had passed over the snowbanks and reached the precipice, along which they ran, like flies on a wall, though of course the boys knew that there must be shelves wide enough for them to walk on. Soon, however, the sun sank behind the towering peak to the westward and the air grew chilly, and remounting their horses the travelers returned to camp.

"No mosquitoes to-night, Hugh," said Jack.

"No," answered Hugh, "I guess we're safe."

"White Bull," said Joe, as they were sitting before the fire, "have you ever been up here before?"

"No," said Hugh, "I never have and I never heard of anybody else that has been up here. Of course, we know that the Kootenays and Stonies come up here and sometimes maybe a little party of hunting Crees, but no white men, as far as I ever heard. Along back, fifteen or twenty years ago, there was a party of white men camped below here, on Kennedy's Creek. They were looking for gold. They found a few colors, but nothing that paid at all and, after a little while, they gave up looking for gold, and broke up into little parties, some of them going back to Benton and some hunting along the flanks of the mountains, but I don't believe they or any other party of white men have ever been up here before."

"Well," said Joe, "then, of course, you don't know what there is up this other creek that comes from the east."

"No, I don't," said Hugh. "It can't be very long, because Kennedy's Creek must be pretty close to us, on the other side of the mountains."

"Say, Jack," said Joe. "Let's take our guns and go up this creek afoot to-morrow, and see what there is there. We might see some game and, anyhow, we'll find out where the stream come from. What do you think, White Bull, is it good?"

"Good," said Hugh, "go on up there and see what you can find. I think maybe I'll stop around the camp or perhaps climb up to the top of these rocks right in front of us, and see what stream it is that is on the other side. It looks like a pretty straight up and down wall in front of us, but, often, when you get close to a place like that you find that you can climb it."

"What do you expect to see on the other side, Hugh?" asked Jack.

"I don't know," said Hugh, "but I reckon I'll see more mountains. Those seem to be mostly what grows in this part of the world, but I shouldn't be much surprised if right on the other side of that wall I saw a narrow valley, through which runs one of the forks of Belly River."

"Won't you find lots of snow going up there, Hugh?" said Jack.

"Some, I guess," was the reply, "but you see this is the south face of the wall and the sun is pretty strong now and hits the rocks up there, so that I reckon most of the snow will be melted."

"Well," said Jack, "that will be bully. We will send out two exploring parties from the camp, and then at night both will report."

It was long after daylight the next morning when Jack and Joe set out, but the mountains on either side of the little valley were so high that the sun had not yet melted the frost on the grass. The first mile of their journey was spent in clambering up a series of moss-covered ledges, very steep, but not at all difficult to climb. Then they found themselves at the bottom of a talus, a sharp slope of rock fragments, that had fallen from the cliffs above, and they followed this around point after point, until the narrow valley of the stream opened before them.

This valley was nearly straight and only three or four miles in length, walled in on the west and north by a vertical precipice, not very high, but terminating in the same jagged rock pinnacles that crowned the wall to the north of the camp, and beyond which Hugh thought he might see the valley of Belly River. There was no timber growing at the foot of this rock wall nor on the steep mountainside that lay to the east, but at one time the actual valley where the stream ran and where grass and underbrush now grew, had supported a growth of large timber. All these trees, however, had been broken off twelve or fifteen feet above the ground and their trunks lay piled one upon another among the growing vegetation like a great heap of giant jack-straws.

"Now, what do you suppose broke off all those trees at just that height, Joe?" asked Jack.

Joe looked for a long time before he answered, and then he said, "Snowslide, I reckon."

"By Jove," said Jack, "that's what it is, sure enough. You can see the track of it coming down that mountainside, can't you? What an immense mass of snow it must have been, and what a force it must have had to break off those great, thick trees. Some of them look eighteen inches through. I wonder how long ago it took place."

"Yes," said Joe, "it sure must have come down fast and hit those trees hard, and when it got down here into the valley, it must have just piled up. It couldn't get out anywhere, for big and swift as it was, it could not knock down this wall."

All along the mountainside opposite to them were to be seen places where deep and wide grooves had been cut in the soil and, as they looked more closely, they could see the stumps of many trees that had been cut down by the slide.

"Well," said Jack, "that certainly was a big avalanche."

"Avalanche," said Joe, "what's that?"

"Why," said Jack, "it's just another name for snowslide. That's what they call a snowslide in Switzerland, I believe. A man once wrote a piece of poetry about a fellow that was climbing the mountains in Switzerland, and one of the people that he passed said to him, 'Beware, the awful avalanche.' That meant watch out close for snowslides."

"Well," said Joe, "I've never been much in the mountains and I've never seen a snowslide, but I have heard old people talk about them, and from what they say, they are things to be scared of."

Presently, the boys set out toward the head of the valley, following the lower border of the talus, where the walking was fairly easy. They hardly expected to see any game, yet both kept their eyes open for anything that might

turn up. Presently, immediately in front of them were seen tracks where animals had been running back and forth, and a little examination showed that a small band of mountain sheep had come down from the rocks and had been playing about, no longer ago than this morning.

"If we'd been a little earlier, Joe," said Jack, "we might have got a shot at those fellows."

"We may do it yet," replied Joe, "and if we don't do it to-day, perhaps we can find them to-morrow. Very likely they live right here somewhere, and I don't believe they're a bit scary, so that if we look for them carefully we may be able to get a shot."

They could see where the sheep had come down to the edge of the valley, perhaps to get a bite of green grass, perhaps to drink, though probably not for water, since the melting snow all over the hillsides would have given them many drinking places.

They kept on slowly up the valley, stopping often to look about and, more than once, sitting down and scanning the rocks about, beyond them, and across the valley for game. By this time the sun had climbed over the mountains and was shining down into the valley with a pleasant warmth and, with the rising sun, rose swarms of mosquitoes, which bothered the boys not a little. As they were walking along, Jack slightly in the lead, a brown and white bird suddenly rose from the ground, almost at his feet, and then fell again, and tumbling over and over, fluttered off for a little way, as if desperately hurt, and then lay on the ground, with outspread, quivering wings, and open beak, as if unable to go further.

"Ah," said Jack, "there's a ptarmigan, and there must be a nest right here."

Sure enough, a few minutes' search revealed a nest just in front of Jack. It was a mere hollow scratched in the ground and had no lining, except a few blades of grass, and two or three feathers that had dropped from the bird's breast. In the nest were six beautiful eggs almost covered with purplish spots, mottlings and cloudings, and so nearly the color of many of the stones that lay on the slope that Jack's eye had passed over them two or three times without seeing that they were eggs and not stones.

"Oh, aren't they pretty!" said Jack. "Wouldn't I like to have them safely back East and a picture of the place where we found them, and of the mother bird."

By this time the mother had risen from the ground where she lay and had walked back, close to the boys, and, with bristling feathers and angry cluckings, stalked so close to them that they could have touched her with their outstretched hands.

"Certainly, that's one of the prettiest things I ever saw," said Jack, "and I'm mighty glad to have seen the eggs because I've seen the young ones. Don't you remember, Joe, the little one that we caught three or four years ago, the first time that you and I ever hunted together on the mountains?"

"Sure," said Joe, "I remember. That was the time we got the sheep, just before we went off to Grassy Lakes, where you counted your coup on the Assinaboine."

"Yes," said Jack, "that was the time. I tell you, Joe, you and I have had some pretty good times together, haven't we?"

"You bet," replied Joe, "and two or three times I've been pretty badly scared when I've been with you, but we always came out all right."

"Well," said Jack, "I've been scared, too, but I suppose we didn't either of us show it."

"No," answered Joe, "I suppose we didn't. I hope not, anyhow. I don't mind being scared, if I can only keep it to myself, but I don't like to have people laugh at me."

"Well," he went on, "let's go ahead, and leave this old mother to get on her eggs again."

The boys kept on towards the head of the valley and at last could see that the stream that they had been following had its origin in a tiny, deep, green lake, lying at the very head of the valley and close under the rock wall and the high mountains to the east. When they reached this lake, Jack said, "What do you say, Joe? Shall we cross over and try to get down to camp on the other side of the valley? I don't know whether we can find good walking there or not, but I guess we can, and I'd like to go over new ground if I could."

"I say let's try it," replied Joe. "If we find we can't get down that way, we can come back and go home the way we came."

"Come on then," said Jack, and the two started across the valley, walking on the beach of the little lake. The outlet was very narrow, and the boys jumped across it and then set out directly toward the mountainside. The going was not good, for the soil was full of water and overgrown by thick moss, above which stood a tangle of small shrubs and underbrush. However, the distance was not great, and before long they had made their way over to the mountainside, and there found a talus of slide-rock, much like that along which they passed on the other side. Here the walking was not as good as on the other side of the stream, because springs and trickles of water were constantly coming down from the mountainside.

A couple of miles this side of camp the slope of the mountain grew easier and scattered trees began to clothe its side. They crossed a long, low point of timber and from here there was a gentle descent toward camp, through a dry open forest. They were almost within sight of camp when Jack heard a sound, stopped, and raised his gun, and then a stick cracked in the timber not far off. Jack threw his gun to his shoulder and fired, and in a moment the timber before them seemed filled with animals, which disappeared almost at once, and the noise of their footsteps and of the sticks which they broke in their flight, grew fainter and fainter.

The boys had glimpses of elk running in all directions, but had no chance to shoot again.

"Well," said Jack, "I don't know very certainly what I shot at, but I think it was a young bull elk. Let's go over and see if we can find anything."

Stepping briskly forward, the boys were soon near the point where the animal had stood at which Jack fired. After looking about for a moment or two, Joe said, "You hit him;" and pointed to a dark spot on a weathered tree trunk, which Jack could see was blood.

The boys circled about, looking carefully at the ground, the trunks of the trees, and the leaves of the low-growing plants, and presently Jack saw that Joe had found the trail, which he was following, slowly at first, because the sign was hard to see, and then more rapidly.

Jack walked after him and together they followed the trail which led down toward the camp. The sign was, at

first, slight, but after they had gone some distance they could see a good deal of blood on the ground on both sides of the tracks, and from this Joe declared that the animal was hit in the lungs and would not go far. He was right; a hundred yards further on the graceful form of a young bull elk was stretched on the ground. It was a yearling, of course with its horns in the velvet and as yet quite soft.

The boys dressed the animal and then, walking down to the camp, caught and saddled a pack horse and, bringing it up into the timber, quartered the elk, packed it on the horse and returned to camp, where they unloaded their meat at the foot of a tree and, getting a couple of sling ropes, managed with some labor to haul the quarters into the branches well above the ground.

"Now," said Joe, "when White Bull comes in we'll see what he says and, if he thinks best, we'll cut out and dry a lot of that elk meat, and take it along with us. We can't be sure at this time of the year, that we're going to kill something every day."

All through the afternoon they lounged about the fire, and the sun was still two or three hours high when Jack, who for some time had been watching the mountainsides to the north, saw Hugh coming down the slope a long way off toward the camp.

"Hurrah, Joe!" said Jack, "there's Hugh. Pretty soon we'll find out what he's seen and tell him what we have done."

A little later Hugh reached the camp and, after putting his rifle inside the tent, said, "Well, boys, I see you've got some fresh meat, and I'm mighty glad of it. I've had quite a walk and am feeling pretty wolfish. Let's get supper and then, after we've eaten, we'll have a whole lot of time to talk."

CHAPTER XIV

A LYNX VISITS CAMP

"WELL, son," said Hugh, as the two pulled on their shoes in the gray light of the next morning, "I slept mighty well last night and I reckon your conscience didn't trouble you much, did it?"

"No," said Jack, "I didn't know what was going on two minutes after I rolled my blanket about me."

"It's mighty dark this morning," said Hugh. "Either we got up early, or else there's a big fog;" and when they put their heads out of the tent, sure enough, the mountains were covered with mist and a few flakes of snow were falling.

"Well," said Hugh, "it's no time to climb the mountains to-day, unless the weather clears, and it seems to me that it's mighty cold. Maybe we're going to get snowed in here."

"That wouldn't be very nice," said Jack. "I hope we won't have a big snowstorm."

"Well," said Hugh, "you boys go out and look after the horses. We've got to keep our eyes on them; it would be pretty bad to be left afoot and, if it does snow, the horses will be wanting to get down to the prairie again."

The boys went and did as they were told, and changed the two horses that were picketed to fresh grass, saw that the others were all near at hand, and then returned to the fire.

Meanwhile, the snow began to fall more and more thickly and, after breakfast, Hugh said, "Now, boys, I believe we're going to have a real snowstorm. Let's get these ropes, blankets and saddles covered up as well as we can, and then we'll go down to the point where we came out of the timber and build some sort of a fence there, so as to keep the horses from going back to the prairie. We'll have to picket them all to-day and they're not likely to pull up their pins, but we'll make it as hard for them to get away as we can."

The riding saddles and pack riggings were soon piled under a tree, where they would be protected from the snow and covered with blankets and mantas, and then Hugh began to cut and sharpen a number of pins, while the boys collected lash ropes and lariats enough to tie all the horses. After the animals had been securely picketed, the three men went down to the end of the valley and, after Hugh had cut some tall, but slender, dead pine and spruce trees, the boys dragged them out of the timber and made a fence, which sufficiently barricaded the trail and one or two open places, where the horses might have gone into the forest.

By this time the light snow was two or three inches deep and, when they returned to camp, they found that all the horses were busily at work pawing away the snow, in order to get at the grass beneath it.

"There," said Hugh, "I guess they're all right, and this thing is just a flurry. As soon as the sun comes out again, this snow will all melt."

Joe went into the tent, and covering himself with his blankets, went to sleep, but Jack wanted to be doing something, yet there was not much that he could do, unless he went out to hunt, and, as all the foliage was covered with snow, he could not hunt without also getting wet.

Now and then he would walk out and look at the horses, which could not be seen from the camp. They were all standing with their tails to the storm, each with a crest of wet snow on his mane, a patch on the upper hairs of his tail and, most of them, with a line of white running down the backbone. They looked quite as miserable as Jack felt.

On one of Jack's returns to the fire, Hugh looked up and said smilingly, "You're getting pretty tired of doing nothing, son?"

"Yes," said Jack, "it's pretty slow business, I confess. I've been trying to think if there was anything that I could do and I can't think of anything, unless I go over and take down some of that meat and cut it up for drying."

"Well," said Hugh, "that's certainly not a bad idea. What do you say if we go over there and get a quarter and work on it under a tree where the snow doesn't fall thick?"

"I'd like to, Hugh," said Jack. "Of course, nothing would dry to-day and maybe not to-morrow, but if we could have two or three days of bright weather we could get it so it would keep."

"We sure could," said Hugh; "and even if we don't have bright weather, we can rig up some kind of a scaffold and half dry and half smoke it with the fire. Come on, I'll go with you and we'll get down a piece of meat and go to work on it."

It was but a short distance to where the meat hung, and, before long, one of the hind quarters of the elk was on

the ground. Hugh stopped in front of it and said, "Now, son, take hold of it and, when I get up, raise it, and we'll pack it into camp."

The load was too heavy for an ordinary man to carry a great distance, but this did not seem to trouble Hugh. He threw down the ham under a spreading pine tree, that stood not far from the tent, and then Jack and he removed the skin, and began the work of cutting the flesh into thin flakes, which they piled up on the flesh side of the hide that had been taken off the elk. They worked at this for some hours and before supper time had cut out all the meat of the elk.

"Now, son," said Hugh, "go and get me a sling-rope and we'll hoist this meat off the ground. If we leave it here, likely some animal will come around to-night and want to carry it off."

"Well, Hugh, I don't believe I can climb the tree," said Jack; for the trunk was very large and without branches for twenty-five or thirty feet above his head.

"No," said Hugh, "I don't believe you can and, what's more, we haven't got any sling-rope that will reach from the ground to that lowest branch and back again. We'll tie it up to that little tree that stands close to the tent. Of course, it won't be safe there, but I reckon anything can't get at it without our hearing it."

He made a bundle of the meat, lashing it with a sling-rope.

"There," he said, "that's all right for the present, and we'll put it up here in this spruce tree. Nothing can knock it down without its hitting the tent and waking us, but if we should want to dry it to-morrow, someone will have to stop here and look after it, if the others go off on the mountains. Now let's have supper."

Hugh and Jack washed their hands in the snow, built up the fire, and presently commenced to cook supper. After things were going well, Jack called out, "Get up, Joe, you've been asleep all day, while other people have been working. Supper is nearly ready."

Joe grunted sleepily in response and, presently, his black shock of hair was seen poking out of the tent door.

"I must have been asleep," he said.

"Asleep?" said Jack "I should say so. It's five or six hours since you turned in and here Hugh and I have been working all that time to support you."

Joe was not wide enough awake to appreciate Jack's joke, but after he had walked a little way from the fire and given his face and hands a good scrubbing with snow, he brightened up a good deal and seemed to watch the progress of the meal with interest.

"I tell you what," said Hugh, as they were eating, "let's turn back the flaps of the tent and build a small fire right close in front of it. Of course, we'll have to watch it pretty carefully and put it out when we want to go to bed, but it will seem a heap more comfortable than to be standing about the fire out here."

"Good," said Jack, "let's do it. If you'll wash the dishes I'll cut some small wood and we'll get something as near like a lodge as we can."

When the fire was built and when the three were sitting on their soft blankets under the shelter of the tent, it seemed very comfortable.

"There," said Hugh, "this is lots better than standing out there, boys, ain't it?"

"Yes," said Joe, "it is."

"Bully," said Jack. "We couldn't be more comfortable than this, unless we had a lodge, and this is plenty good enough."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I would like to have brought a small lodge, but then I knew we were coming into a stormy country and very likely often would have to camp high up where we couldn't get lodge poles, and so I thought it was better to bring this little tent with the folding poles. Of course, sleeping out on the prairie in this weather one doesn't need a tent, but in the mountains here, where you're likely to have ten rain or snow storms in a day, it's good to keep your blankets dry."

While he was speaking, Hugh was cutting tobacco, and when he had a pipeful, after grinding it up between his palms, he filled the bowl of the pipe and reaching out took a brand from the fire and lighting his pipe sat there in great comfort, drawing in deep breaths of the fragrant smoke.

"Well," he remarked, when his pipe was going well, "I never would advise a young man to begin to smoke, but I don't know of anything in this world that has given me more comfort than tobacco, and that is one thing that the world has got to thank the Indians for."

"Well, pretty nearly everybody smokes," said Jack, "and I've often thought that maybe I'd like to, especially when I see you sitting there as you do now, Hugh. You seem to take such solid comfort in your pipe."

"Yes," assented Hugh, "I do; but then, suppose I'd never learned to smoke; don't you suppose I'd be just as comfortable as I am now? A man don't miss the things that he's never enjoyed."

"No, of course not," replied Jack.

For a long time the three sat there, gazing at the little fire that flickered before them, Joe occasionally reaching over and carefully laying on it a stick of wood so that it constantly burned bright and warm.

At length Jack spoke up again and said, "Hugh, where were you in 1876, when the Custer massacre took place?"

"I was up camping with the Piegans, not far from the Sweet Grass Hills. I had been trading the year before with the Piegans, and instead of going into Benton and lying around there during the summer, I just stayed out in camp with the people. But look here, son," he went on, "don't make the mistake that pilgrims do and call that the Custer massacre; call it if you like the Custer fight or the Custer battle. It wasn't what I understand a massacre to be; it was just a fair up-and-down fight, and the white men got licked and all of them got killed off. The white men went into that fight with their eyes wide open and knew what they were doing. They just tackled a job that was too big for them, that's all. Now, you might call the Baker fight that I was telling you about a few days ago a massacre, because it was a surprise and because the troops attacked the camp, and killed off mostly women and children and old men. That's my idea of a massacre, but the Custer fight was just a fight, and nothing else."

"That's so, Hugh," said Jack, "I oughtn't to have called it a massacre, but that's what a good many people do call it, you know."

"I know they do," said Hugh, "but it's a wrong name to give it, at least according to my idea."

"Did you ever know General Custer?" asked Jack.

"Yes," said Hugh, "I knew him some. I worked for him part of one summer out from Lincoln; I was one of the scouts on the Yellowstone expedition in '73 and again in '74, when he made his trip to the Black Hills."

"What sort of a man was he?" asked Jack.

"Well," said Hugh, "he was a nice man. Of course, I never knew him, except in what you may call a business way, to take orders from him and to report. He was always right pleasant, and his wife was an awful nice lady. He was a good soldier, General Custer was, and a great hunter. He was just crazy to be hunting all the time. He treated his men well, too; worked them awful hard, breaking camp early in the morning and sometimes marching away into the night, but they thought a heap of him. I remember one time, going into the Black Hills, two of the men were caught stealing canned goods out of one of the wagons. We camped early the afternoon they were caught, and he had them each ride a cannon from the time we went into camp until after dark. Then he had 'em cut loose and brought to his tent, and he gave them a good talking to, and a day or two afterward he appointed one of them, an old soldier and a pretty good man, too, his orderly. The other man he gave permission to go hunting the next day. He was pretty savage with his men when they did wrong, but after he'd punished a man, he always did something to him to make him feel that he did not hold the offense up against him. That made the men have confidence in him, and it made a good many of them careful about how they did anything wrong.

"I haven't told you, have I," he went on, "that Jackson, Billy Jackson, you know, was along with that outfit in 1874."

"Yes," said Jack, "I think you told me that."

"I didn't know him then," said Hugh. "He was just a schoolboy. We had quite a bunch of schoolboys along. They were called scouts, and maybe they thought they were scouts, but, of course, they were just boys out of the Indian schools without experience, and not knowing anything. They were mostly Santee Sioux."

"Well," said Jack, "but Billy is a Piegan, isn't he?"

"Yes, a Piegan," replied Hugh, "a grandson of old Hugh Monroe's and on his mother's side a grandson of a great chief that died before my time with the tribe, a man called Lone Walker. They said he was a great man. An awful big man, brave and rich. He had nineteen wives, and old man Monroe has told me that when he first came with the tribe—that must be nearly seventy-five years ago—Lone Walker had two grizzly bears that he used to keep tied up, one on either side of the door of his lodge. The old man said that the first time he ever went into the lodge, both bears got up and growled and started to attack him. He said he was scared pretty near to death, but Lone Walker spoke to them and they became quiet and went and lay down again. Old man Monroe lived in Lone Walker's lodge for two or three years after that and, of course, the bears got used to him right away and never bothered him; in fact, I believe it wasn't very long after that before the bears ran away and were never seen again."

"But, Hugh, were they tame bears?" asked Jack.

"I don't rightly know," responded Hugh. "They were tame to the man that owned them, I expect, and they say that during the day when the camp was moving, the bears used to travel with it, walking along with the dogs. They didn't bother anybody or anything and nothing bothered them; but, finally, I believe, they ran off, and although Lone Walker looked for them he could not find them."

"Well," said Jack, "those seem to me like queer pets for a man to have, but after all I don't know that they are any queerer than poor old Swift Foot that I used to have."

"No," said Hugh, "any tame wild animal may seem strange to a person who never has seen a tame one before, but any wild animal can be tamed, and if he's taken young enough he won't have any fear of man. The trouble is, though, to make him stay tame. He's naturally shy, and while he may be all right when his owner's around, if he gets among strange people, the natural fear that he's inherited from his ancestors will come back to him, and he'll run."

"That's what happened to poor old Swift Foot, I am afraid," said Jack.

"What Swift Foot?" said Joe. "I never heard about that."

"Why, haven't I ever told you about him, Joe?" said Jack. "Four or five years ago, the first year I was in the West, we dug out a den of wolves and kept the puppies, and some of them became very tame. I took one back East with me and had him two or three years. He was just like a dog with me and felt at home with all the other people in the house, but I never dared let him loose on the streets, for fear he would get lost. In the country, when I went there, I'd turn him loose and he would run—Great Scott! you never saw anything so wild to run as he was. Then, when I'd bring him back to the city again I'd have to keep him chained and give him what little exercise I could on a chain. Of course, he grew awfully fat, and I think if I'd had him much longer he'd have gotten cross, too; but finally, one unlucky day, I took him out walking, and over near Third Avenue, a crowded street where there is a great deal of noise and the elevated railroad trains are running all the time, something frightened him and he dodged behind me and gave a pull on the chain, and it pulled loose from his collar, and before I could grab him he got frightened and ran. He ran like a deer, dodging among the trucks and horses and cars, and though I called and whistled he never stopped, and I never saw him again. Father advertised, and we tried our best to hear something of him, but it was no use."

"I don't wonder he got scared," said Joe. "I guess I'd be scared a whole lot with so many people round me, and no place to get away."

"You're right," said Hugh, "so would I. It must be something terrible in those big cities."

"Well," said Jack, "it is terrible the way the people crowd about. Of course, those who live there are used to it and don't pay any attention, but people that haven't been used to hearing the noises and seeing the crowds, could easily enough get scared."

A little later Hugh rose to his feet and stepped out of the tent, saying as he did so, "Boys, I believe we're going to have a nice day to-morrow. It's stopped snowing, all the stars are out and the moon is just rising. It feels mighty warm, too. Likely enough to-morrow the sun will come out hot and take off the heft of this snow. Then we can get round a bit and can dry this meat."

"Well," said Jack, "I'd like to be able to dry our meat. Of course, there's no trouble killing meat here, but one doesn't want to kill a big animal for a single meal."

"No," said Hugh, "you're right about that. Meat is plenty here, but that's no reason why we should waste it."

Now, let's put this fire out and cover it up with snow, so that there'll be no danger of the tent's catching fire, and then we'll go to bed. What do you say?"

At once the boys were on their feet, pulling the fire to pieces and extinguishing the burning brands, by throwing them into the snow, and then bringing a few double handfuls of snow they threw them on to the ashes of the fire, and with much smoke and steam the last sparks were extinguished. A little later the regular breathing of the three men in the tent showed that all were asleep.

It must have been in the middle of the night or perhaps toward morning, when Jack was half awakened by hearing a noise, something like scratching, which he did not recognize, but a moment later he was thoroughly aroused by hearing a loud thump on the ground just outside the tent and then the sound of something galloping. His first thought was that one of the horses had come up close to the tent and knocked something down, but almost at once he recognized that this could not have been the cause of the sound, because the footfalls were not heavy enough to have been made by a horse. Rising on his elbow, he looked about. It was quite light in the tent, for a brilliant moon was shining, and he could plainly see Hugh get up, walk to the door and look out.

"What is it, Hugh?" asked Jack.

For a moment Hugh did not answer, and then said, "Why, something has carried off that bundle of meat. No, he hasn't either. Here's the meat lying in the snow and there is the thing that knocked it down over there under the pine tree, where we were cutting up the elk. I can see it plain in the snow, but I can't make out what it is. It's some animal, because it's moving."

By this time Jack was on his feet and had his head out of the tent door. He could plainly see some not very large animal crouched in the snow and could hear faintly the scratching, tearing sound of an animal gnawing a bone, and at once said, "Why, Hugh, whatever it is, he's gnawing on the bones of that elk we left over there."

"So he is," said Hugh. "Let's see what it is," and, reaching down, he took his rifle and, stepping outside of the tent door, fired at the creature. It paid no attention whatever, but went on eating. Then Hugh fired another shot and then another, and after the fourth shot, the animal sprang into the air and, turning about, bounded off into the shadow and was not seen again. Hugh picked up the bundle of elk meat and put it in among the branches of the tree, and then he and Jack went back into the tent.

"What was it, Hugh?" asked Jack.

"Well," said Hugh, "I don't know. It was either a mountain lion or a lynx or a bob-cat, but whatever it was, it wasn't a bit afraid."

"No," said Jack, "I could see that. We ought to be glad that it didn't come into the tent with us."

"Well," said Hugh, "we'll know what it is in the morning, when it gets light."

For the remainder of the night their rest was undisturbed. They rose early, and while breakfast was being cooked Hugh walked over to where the animal had been, and after looking about, came back and told the boys that the disturber of their rest had not been a mountain lion.

"I wish after we get breakfast you would show me how you know that, Hugh," said Jack.

"I will," said Hugh, "but I can tell you now. The place where it was lying is too small for a mountain lion. There is no mark anywhere on the snow of a long tail, such as a lion would have, and then out there I picked up this," and he took from his pocket a little tuft of hair, gray, mixed with reddish. "Do you recognize that fur?" he said, as Jack took it in his hand and looked at it.

"No," said Jack, "I don't. But then you know I don't know many of the mountain animals."

"No," said Hugh, "you don't, and I don't think Joe does, either. But unless I'm mightily mistaken that came from a lynx, one of those big animals like a bob-cat, only a good deal bigger, and gray instead of red. They've got black tips to their ears and a kind of whiskers around their necks, and they look awful fierce and savage, but it's all looks. Though they seem to be so big, a man can kill one with a stick and not a very big stick, either."

"Well," said Jack, "let's go over there as soon as we've eaten."

After breakfast Hugh and Jack took their rifles and went over to the place where the animal had been sitting, and Hugh pointed out the animal's tracks, which looked very large.

"Now, in this soft snow," observed Hugh, "I can't tell, and I don't believe anybody else can, whether this is a lynx's track or a mountain lion's, but if it was a mountain lion's, every little while as you followed it you'd see some place where the lion's tail had made a mark in the snow. We don't find anything of that sort here. Now, what do you say to following up these tracks, and seeing where the critter's gone?"

"Let's do it," said Jack, eagerly.

Quietly and slowly they followed the trail, which was very plain, and found that only about twenty or thirty steps from the place where the animal had been shot at, it had stopped and lain in the snow for some time, and that in this bed was a drop or two of blood. Apparently one of the shots that Hugh fired had grazed the skin somewhere.

"Well, Hugh," said Jack, "that beast isn't much frightened and it may be anywhere about here. Let's go ahead, as carefully and quietly as we can."

From here the trail led into thick willows, where it wound about, and where, owing to the closeness of the willow stems, it was not easy to go quietly. Every few moments Hugh stopped and looked carefully about, and then went on a little farther. When he had followed the trail for a little more than a hundred yards, the tracks turned sharply to the right, and just as they turned to follow them, Hugh made a motion with his hand and stopped. Jack looked under Hugh's arm, and there, not twenty yards away, saw the animal. A large spruce tree grew among the willows and at its foot was a little open place. The lynx, for such it was, was lying in the sun at the foot of this tree, and only its hips were visible.

Hugh motioned to Jack to shoot, but before the lad could do so, he was obliged to creep several yards to the left under the low-spreading branches of a willow. At last he got far enough to one side to see the animal's body almost to the shoulders, and then fired, trying to send his ball as close to the tree as possible. At the report the animal gave a spring, and, falling back, stretched itself out in the snow. When Hugh and Jack went up to it they could see that it was a Canada lynx of the largest size, and as it lay there, its thick legs, and huge paws, armed with long, strong claws, gave it a more ferocious appearance than it was really entitled to.

Those paws were a marvel to Jack on account of their size, and the way in which they were armed, but when he

took hold of the animal to lift it, he appreciated what Hugh had told him about its really small size, and realized that a great deal of its bulk was due to its long, loose fur.

Hugh took the lynx by the back of the neck and a few minutes brought them to the camp.

Joe was delighted with their capture, and confessed that he had never before seen an animal like this.

"Now, Hugh," said Jack, "I want to skin this beast, that is, if you will give me the skin."

"Sure," replied Hugh, "I'll give you my share in the skin. You killed it, and it seems to me it's yours."

"Yes," said Jack, "I killed it, of course, since you gave me the shot, but by hunter's law the skin belongs to you. Isn't it true that the first shot that draws blood is entitled to half the meat and the hide?"

"That's so," said Hugh, "that's the old-time law that I used to hear down in Kentucky, before I got big enough to pack a gun. That's what they always said down there and I reckon that's been the custom ever since this country was a country. But you can have the hide and all the meat. I'll give 'em both to you. Keep them always."

"Well," said Jack, "I'm mightily obliged to you for the hide, but I don't feel as if I could rob you of the meat."

"Well," replied Hugh, "maybe you don't know what you're refusing. I never did happen to eat bob-cat myself, but I've eaten mountain lion, and that's pretty good meat. A little dry maybe, and tastes a little too much like dry roast pork to suit me, but it's good all the same."

"Well," said Jack, "I'll skin this bob-cat now, I think. How shall I do it, Hugh, split it, or shall I case it?"

"Why," said Hugh, "if I were you I'd case it. That's the regular way to skin a bob-cat, and while you're skinning it, suppose Joe and I go down and see how the horses are and look after our fence. I reckon we don't want to stay here much longer, but while we do stay we must watch the horses."

"Well," said Jack, "that's for you to say. I'm ready to stay or I'm ready to go. I'd like to have a chance to climb up where you went the other day to look down into Belly River. Maybe I can do that to-day or, at least, this afternoon, if I start as soon as I get through my job of skinning."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I reckon you could. Go ahead at it now, and Joe and me will go and look at the horses."

CHAPTER XV

LONE WOLF'S BAY PONY

IT did not take Jack long to skin the lynx, but before he had finished stretching it, Hugh and Joe came back and reported that the horses were all right.

By this time the sun had come out and was shining hot, and the snow melting rapidly. A warm breeze blew down the valley from the westward, and as they watched the mountainsides above them, the boys thought that they could see the dark patches not covered by snow increase in size as they looked at them.

"Well, boys," said Hugh, "if you want to climb up and look over into Belly River, go ahead and do it, and get back as early as you can. This spot here is mighty pretty, but I reckon we've seen about all of it that we want to, and unless you've got some special chore that you want to attend to, we might as well pack up and go up one of the other forks. I don't see any special reason for stopping here. We've got what meat we need, and what we want to see is new country."

"That's so, Hugh," said Jack; "we'll go up to the top of the mountain and then come back and move down to the forks as soon as you like."

"And look here, son," said Hugh, "why don't you go up there alone, and while you are gone, Joe and I will start in to dry this meat we've got cut out."

"All right," said Jack. "I'll do that, or if you like, I'll not go up there, but stay here and fix the meat."

"No," said Hugh, "you go on and make your climb, and Joe and I'll fix the meat, and if you get back in time maybe we can move camp down below this afternoon, or if not we can start the first thing in the morning."

"All right," said Jack; and he took up his rifle and started up the mountainside.

It was a long, slow climb. For the first half, the way was over steep open mountainside, dotted here and there with small spruces and cedars, and the soil was now wet with the melting snow, and often slippery. Still he made good time. The side of the mountain was seamed with ravines, and broken here and there by low rock ledges; and two or three times as he went on he found himself within easy shot of little bunches of goats. When Jack saw these, if he could do it without losing time, he crept as close to them as possible, and then showing himself, hurried on. Some of the goats seemed quite shy and ran off, while others looked at him for a long time until he got quite close to them, and then turned and paced slowly off along the hillside.

When he reached the rocks, he found, as Hugh had told him, a break in the wall, cut by falling water, and entering this, began to climb among the steep rocks and ledges, which it often required some care to surmount, but which were not difficult nor at all dangerous.

An hour and a half of climbing of this sort brought him to the crest of the wall, and creeping upon this he hung over and looked down into a wonderfully deep and dark canyon beyond. From the other side of the canyon a great mountain rose sharply, and its summit was covered with a vast snowbank which lay upon a great mass of ice. Evidently, thought Jack, here is a glacier. The mass of ice was apparently moving toward the valley and would break off over this cliff and then fall a thousand feet into the valley below.

It was a wonderfully impressive sight, yet Jack stayed but a little time. He was wet with perspiration, and up here the breeze blew strong and cold. Besides, he thought of his friends in camp, and was anxious to get back to them and help them with their work. So after some minutes' study of the scene, during which he tried to impress all its features upon his memory, he turned about and slipping off the crest of the rock wall, picked his way down the ravine.

The journey to camp seemed much shorter than the climb, and when Jack strode up to the fire warm and muddy and wet up to the knees, the afternoon had not half gone.

Hugh and Joe had built a large platform of poles supported on four crotched sticks. Under this they had kindled

a slow smoky fire, and on the poles rested flakes of elk meat, which were being dried by the sun above and the fire and smoke beneath. A part of the meat had evidently been already partially dried and was hanging in bundles from the branches of one of the trees.

"Well, son," remarked Hugh, "you've got back, have you? Quite a climb, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said Jack, "it was quite a climb, but I think it was worth it. That's a mighty pretty view from the top of that ridge, and I'm glad I saw it. You're getting on pretty well with your meat, I see."

"Yes," said Hugh, "we've given it all a little touch of the sun and smoke, and I don't believe the flies will get at it right away."

"What are you going to do?" asked Jack. "Wait here and finish with the meat, or go on down and camp at that lake we passed?"

"Why," said Hugh, "I believe we might as well get up the horses and ride down to the lake. It won't take us more than a couple of hours, and we can stop there to-morrow and put this meat out again, go up that short fork that lies in the middle, and then the next day poke over and see if we can get up the other fork that lies beyond the lake."

"All right," said Jack. "Shall I go out and bring in the horses?"

"Say you do," said Hugh. "Joe and me'll pull down the tent and make up the packs, and it'll take us a mighty short time to get started."

The snow had disappeared from the valley. The horses were in sight and Jack got around them and brought them in. Joe helped him catch and saddle them, and by the time this was done, the tent was down and Hugh's packs were mostly made up. The work of packing was speedily finished, and a little later the three were following back their trail of a few days before.

Instead of stopping by the lake, where there was but little feed and not a very good camping place, Hugh went on to their old camp, where the tent was pitched and the scaffold erected and covered with meat. A good breeze was blowing, and Hugh declared that if they stayed here one day more, the meat would be in shape to pack.

By the time the camp was made, the sun was touching the western mountains, and it was too late to do anything that day.

"If we had a little more daylight, son," said Hugh, "I'd send you out with that fishing rod of yours to catch some trout, but it's too late for that. Now, I'll just get supper, and we'll have a good long night and to-morrow morning we can all go up the middle fork of this creek, and see what there is there."

The wind fell with the sun, and after supper they sat around the fire, resting. Toward the mountains they could hear the never-ceasing rumble of the falls from the river, and now and then this sound would be drowned by a thunderous roar from the mountains, ending in a long, hissing sound. After the boys had listened to these noises for some time, Joe said to Hugh, "What is this we hear, White Bull? It sounds like the Thunder Bird flapping his wings at first, and then kind of dies off into a smaller noise."

"Why," said Hugh, "those are snowslides coming down from the mountains here and there. You see to-day has been pretty warm, and the sun has shone hot and heated up the rocks, and in lots of places the snow has melted so much that it lets go its hold on the steep slopes and rushes down the mountainside. You boys have never been in the mountains at this time of the year, but you'll find that when the snow is melting in spring, it's always sliding down the mountains. It's a mighty dangerous time to be in the high hills, because a man can never tell when one of these snowslides is going to start, and when it does, it gets going so fast there's no chance for a man to dodge it. Lots of men have been killed by being covered up by such slides, and often they are so big and come so hard that they smash everything that gets in their way."

"Yes, White Bull, that's so," said Joe. "Jack and I saw two places near where we were camped yesterday where the snow had come down and broken off big strong trees, trees bigger around than your body."

"Yes," said Hugh. "There are lots of such places in the mountains, and we're likely to see more of them before we get out. These mountains," he went on, "are a great place to see what wind and water can do. There's no place that I know of where the wind can blow so hard; there's no place where the snow is worse, and there's no place where the floods are more powerful. Of course, none of those things lasts very long, but any one of them can do a heap of damage in a mighty short time. Down in the high mountains of Colorado I have seen some bad snowslides, and I knew a little fellow down there that used to carry the mail over the range that got caught in a snowslide once. Luckily, he only got caught on the edge of it and it didn't kill him. It just carried him along a little ways, rolling him over and over, and fetched him out on a point of solid rock that he managed to hang on to, but although he wasn't in the snow more than a minute or two, he was all bruised up and felt for a good many days afterward as if he'd been beaten with a club."

"Joe Bruce, too," he continued, "got caught in a snowslide once when he was crossing the mountains, and came pretty near being killed; but he, too, only got caught on the edge and got thrown around some and came out with his life."

"Well," said Joe, "I never heard him speak about that."

"No," said Hugh, "I reckon not. You know Bruce ain't no great talker; he ain't much of a hand to tell about things that have happened to himself. And that reminds me, did I ever tell you about the way Bruce got back a horse that was stolen once from Carroll & Steele, when they ran a trading-post down in Benton in the early days? That's a pretty good story, but it's better to hear Joe Bruce tell it than anybody else. Still, maybe I can give you an idea of what happened."

"That's bully, Hugh," said Jack, "I love to hear your stories."

"I've forgotten," went on Hugh, "what year it was, but it was in the early '60's that Matt Carroll and George Steele were running their trading-post in Benton. Both Carroll and Steele had been working for the American Fur Company in years gone by, but now they had formed a partnership, and were trading on their own account. The country was full of buffalo and there was a big trade in robes. Of course the Piegans did all their trading at Benton, and every now and then a party of Bloods and Blackfeet would bring in a lot of robes from the north. These Indians were masters of the whole country then, and they were pretty independent. They were fighting all their enemies and now and then they killed a white man, when they got a good chance. Of course, they were not openly at war, but any Indian who saw a white man that had something that he wanted was liable to kill him if he got a good chance. Now,

at this time in one of the Piegan camps close to Benton there was a young fellow named Lone Wolf, who did his trading with Carroll & Steele, and one day George Steele bought a horse from him, a bay pony, that Lone Wolf said was an awful good horse and a good buffalo runner. After Lone Wolf had sold the horse he got sorry that he had done so, and he used to come to the store and sit around looking sullen and sad; his heart was pretty bad.

"Bruce, who was then only a boy, noticed that Lone Wolf was sulky, but he did not know what the matter was. He had charge of the horses, and, of course, fed and watered those that were kept in the barn, a big log-stable with a padlock and chain on the door.

"One morning as he was coming back from watering the horses and drove them into the stable, he saw Lone Wolf sitting on the ground not far off. Bruce followed the horses into the stable, tied them in their stalls and fed them, but before he had finished, someone called to him, and he went out of the barn to find out what was wanted.

"He wasn't gone more than a few minutes, and when he came back and went into the stable he saw in a moment that the bay horse was missing. He ran to the door and looked out. Lone Wolf was gone, too; up and down the flat and along the bluffs he could see no sign of the Indian nor of the horse, nor was there any dust rising to show where they had gone.

"Bruce went into the store and told Steele, and Steele blew him up for his carelessness. Of course, there was nothing to be done, but Steele told him that he must look out and not lose any more horses.

"It made the boy feel pretty badly to have had the horse taken right under his nose, and to have had an Indian play such a trick on him. Bruce made up his mind that he would try to get the horse back, but he knew that this was going to be quite a job.

"For some time after that Lone Wolf was not seen in Benton. If he wanted anything at the store, he sent in for it by his wife or some other Indian and did not send to Carroll & Steele's, but to the other trading-store.

"Old Four Bears—the same one that you boys know—used to come into town every day to Carroll & Steele's and tell Bruce about the good luck that Lone Wolf was having chasing buffalo with his fast horse. Every day or two he'd come in and report that Lone Wolf had killed six buffalo or four buffalo or eight buffalo or eleven, and when Four Bears made these reports, why, he used to laugh over them as if they were the best jokes in the world, but you can imagine that they didn't seem very funny to Bruce.

"Every day, when he went out to ride a horse, Bruce would go off toward the Piegan camp, and hide in the brush or on top of some hill, and watch the camp with a field glass, so as to find out how they were treating the stolen horse, in the hope that some day he would have a chance to steal it back again. There didn't seem to be much likelihood that this would happen, because the camp was a big one, and when the horses were sent out they were almost always herded by one or two boys. Besides that, Bruce found that they had tried to change the looks of the pony. His ears were tied back so that he looked crop-eared, and they had painted him with white clay in spots, so that at a distance he looked like a pinto. However, after a while Bruce found out which horse it was and then discovered that he was always necked to another horse.

"After a while, the camp that Lone Wolf lived in moved further away from Benton, so that when Bruce wanted to go to it he had about a thirteen-mile ride to make. It seemed that his chances of getting the horse were growing smaller. However, one afternoon he started out feeling pretty desperate and made his ride and got as close as he could toward the Indian lodges, and commenced to watch again. At length he saw a boy drive the horses to water, and keeping behind some hills and timber he managed to ride within two hundred yards of the place where the horses were drinking, and stopped there, hidden behind some brush. Presently, he saw the boy who was herding them go into a lodge, and in a moment he rushed out, dashed between the horses and the lodges and started the band off toward the prairie. As soon as he got them going he rode through them, roped the bay pony, cut it loose from its mate, and shortening up his lariat and sticking the spurs into his own mount, he started off over the bad land bluffs.

"As he looked back he saw the Indians rushing out of the lodges and looking after him, shading their eyes from the sun. Then they rushed back to get their guns, and the boys brought in the horses.

"It was not long before a string of Indians were riding hot after Bruce. His horse was grain-fed and strong and tough and better able to run for a long time than the Indian ponies, which, of course, had been fed on grass. The captured pony could go fast enough, as he had no load to carry, so Bruce commenced to ride across the roughest country that he could find, down the side of one clay bluff and up the next, following a road that was heartbreaking to a rider. More than that, the sun was about to set, and before long it would be dark.

"For a little while, all the same, the Indians seemed to gain on him, and he did not feel any way sure how matters were coming out. He managed to keep ahead, however, and when it got dark, turned sharp off his course and followed the ravine down to the river, while the Indians kept riding as hard as they could in the direction that he had previously been following, and nobody knows when they stopped.

"Bruce rode down to the river and crossed to an island where he tied the bay horse in the brush with a rope that he had previously left there. Then he went on to the post and went to bed.

"The next morning he went to Steele and asked him what he would give to get the bay pony back again. Steele knew Bruce pretty well, and said to him at once, 'You've got him.'

"'Well,' said Bruce, 'I think I know how I could get him.'

"'Well,' said Steele, 'if I were to get him he'd only be stolen again, and if you've got him you can have him.'

"So, presently, Bruce went over to the island and got the horse and brought him back and put him in the stable. He hadn't much more than tied him and got out of the stable again, when he saw old Four Bears coming. Four Bears had not heard the news, because his band was camped in a different place from that of Lone Wolf, and the old man came up bubbling over with joy and told Bruce how many buffalo Lone Wolf had killed yesterday. He thought this was just as good a joke now as he had the first time he had told a similar story, and Bruce thought it a much better one. However, Bruce after a while remarked, 'Steele's got a new black horse in the stable. Don't you want to come in and see it?' Four Bears went along and went into the stable and looked at the black horse, and then saw the hips of the horse in the next stall, and stepping forward where he could see the whole of the animal, he recognized it. He hadn't a word to say, but just clapped his hand over his mouth in surprise and walked out without a word. You can bet that Bruce watched that stable good after that, so that there was no chance for Lone Wolf to steal the horse back again."

"Well," exclaimed Jack, "that's a bully story, but, what became of the horse finally?"

"Well," said Hugh, "if you'll hold your horses a little bit I'll go ahead. The story ain't half finished yet."

"I beg your pardon, Hugh," replied Jack, "I was in a little too much of a hurry."

"Well," said Hugh, "Bruce took good care of the horse and whenever he rode him after that kept a bright lookout. Nothing happened, and after a while he got a little careless, and one day, as he was riding along and went around a point of the bluffs he saw, not a hundred yards away, Lone Wolf riding along the trail toward him, with his rifle across his saddle. Bruce had a revolver, but he didn't dare to reach for it, because he knew that would mean a fight, and at the distance which separated the two men, the rifle would be likely to get him before he could do anything with his pistol. He was afraid to turn and run, for Lone Wolf might paste him in the back, so he kept on, never letting on that he noticed Lone Wolf, or had any feeling about him. He played with his quirt some and finally after twisting it about a little, let his hand fall on the handle of his pistol. All the time he was getting nearer and nearer to the Indian, which gave him a lot of comfort.

"Lone Wolf never said or did anything, and presently Bruce rode up to him, and turning his horse so as to bring him on the side opposite the butt of the rifle, told Lone Wolf that Steele had sent him out to look for him to ask him to come to the post, where he had a present for him, because he wanted to make friends. The Indian looked at the pony and smiled a little and then said he'd go, and the two rode side by side into the fort, talking in a friendly way, but each one of them on the watch, you can bet.

"When they got to the store Lone Wolf was fed and given a lot of tobacco and ammunition, and he made Steele a present of a handsome parfleche, which he had on his saddle.

"Bruce kept the horse, and Lone Wolf and he never had any trouble again. Lone Wolf was killed a few years afterwards by the Crows.

"Well, that's the end of how Bruce got the horse; and now, if you like, I'll tell you what finally became of him.

"It was some years afterwards, in the late '60's, and the Indians were bad. A good many men had been killed, miners and trappers and freighters; and a lot of horses had been run off. People did not like to go far from the post, and at night they had a guard round the town, fearing that maybe the Indians would attack them. The horses were on short commons; there was mighty little hay in town and the only place folks dared to pasture them was down on the flat where the feed was mighty poor, because that was where the freighters camped and fed their stock. There were a few people whose horses were on ranches at some distance from the post, and as there was nobody traveling back and forth in the country, most of these people thought that their horses were gone and made up their minds to pocket the loss. However, a friend of Matt Carroll's had a couple of fine driving horses that were running on a ranch about fifteen miles below Benton. This man needed his team.

"Two or three times Carroll had tried to get men to go for the horses, but nobody was willing to make the ride. At last it occurred to Carroll that Bruce might go, and he offered him fifty dollars to ride down and bring up the animals. With a good horse, it would take him only two hours to go down and perhaps three more to return, so that by making an early start, he could get back to the post in time for dinner. Bruce never was afraid of much of anything, and he had a good deal of confidence in his luck, and fifty dollars to him looked like a lot of money; so he agreed to go.

"That evening, feeling pretty good about the money that he was going to earn, Bruce started out for a good time in the barrooms and dance-houses of the town, but about the middle of the night, when he started to go home, he remembered that he was on patrol duty for the morning watch, so instead of going to bed he simply slept a little in a chair by the barroom stove until called to go on patrol.

"After breakfast, Bruce saddled up the bay pony that he had got from Lone Wolf and started.

"He was pretty stupid and dull from lack of sleep, and rode much more slowly than he intended to. When he reached the bottom of a steep ravine, down which his horse went slowly and carefully, he was suddenly grabbed by a dozen hands, pulled out of the saddle, his gun taken from him, his horse captured, and a half dozen Indians were standing about him, one of whom had a butcher knife at his throat. He thought they intended to kill him right there, but an old man who was with them stopped the young men, and said that the captive must be taken before the chiefs. Accordingly they stripped off all his clothing, except his drawers, undershirt and moccasins, and then took him up to where a group of warriors were gathered on the bluff.

"The old man who had saved his life was present and seemed to be watching him. It was a war party that had got him. There were no women, no travois, no pack ponies, and the men, wrapped in blankets and robes, carried nothing but their arms.

"Of course, you know that Bruce talks half a dozen languages—Sioux, Mandan, Blackfoot, some Crow and two or three more.

"As they were approaching the group, the old man told him that they were going to question him and that he must answer them truthfully.

"If you do this you will be protected. You and I have slept in the same lodge and have eaten together, but you must answer the questions. The hearts of these young men are bad, and they want horses and scalps.'

When they had got to the chiefs, who were sitting about on the ground, Bruce was asked how many men were at the post, how they were armed, whether they were on the watch for enemies, how many horses there were, and where they were herded.

These questions had to be answered, and answered as truthfully as possible, and when it was proposed to kill Bruce and take his scalp first, for luck, his old friend objected. At last they decided to take Bruce down to the river and send him across, because when he was on the other side, it would be impossible for him to give the alarm. So they tied his hands to the tail of a horse ridden by one man, while another rode behind—to keep him from pulling back, I reckon—and they started for the river.

"His moccasins did him little good now and his underclothing tore at every bush they passed. The horses galloped at an ordinary rate and Bruce had to keep up, for if he had fallen he would have been dragged and kicked to death.

"It took but a little time to reach the river, but it seemed a long time to Bruce, whose feet and legs were cut, and his back and shoulders creased with blows from the quirts.

"When they got to the river, his hands were loosened and the Indians dismounted, took the covers off their guns and signed Bruce to jump in. He jumped and swam under water just as far as he possibly could hold his breath.

"The current was swift, and when he came up he was a long way below the Indians, but he took only one breath and dived again, keeping on until at last he reached a shallow place and dragged himself out on the north side of the river, where he sat down to get back his breath and think what he could do.

"Before this he had no time to think. The prospect had been so black for him that he had been looking only to see what would happen the next minute. He was now in bad shape, bruised and bleeding and half frozen to death, and he just broke down and cried like a little child.

"At last he climbed the bank and found himself at an old cabin, long abandoned. Here, looking aimlessly about, he happened to find an old Colt's revolver, which had been lost or thrown away. It was now entirely useless, and, besides, even if it had been in good order he had no ammunition.

"He took this up, however, and started back toward the post, going in low places and traveling out of sight, like an Indian.

"It was well along in the afternoon when he heard on the wind, that was blowing hard, faint sounds of yelling and shooting. The noise sounded as if it came from the post, but he was not going to take any risks, so he hid himself until after sunset. It was bitter cold by that time, and he was obliged to start on or freeze to death.

"He now traveled at a better speed, and quite early in the evening rounded a lofty bluff and kept along on top of it. Presently on the rising wind he heard the sound of voices, but he could not tell whether they were those of the whites or Indians. He lay flat on the ground and waited, and as the sounds came nearer, presently he could distinguish the forms of men against the sky.



"BRUCE HAD TO KEEP UP, FOR IF HE HAD FALLEN HE WOULD HAVE BEEN DRAGGED AND KICKED TO DEATH."—Page 211

"They stopped not very far away and talked, and he thought then that they were the Indians, and had almost made up his mind to drop over the bluff and take his chances of being killed by the fall, when a sudden whiff of wind brought him some words in English, and he knew that the men were from the post.

"The gale made it useless for him to try to call to them, but he felt that he must do something, for at any time they might see his white clothing and shoot at him. He gave a shout, calling, 'Don't shoot, don't shoot,' and holding both his hands above his head, ran forward and found himself in the midst of a party that had been sent out to look for him. A raid on the town had captured a few horses and had cost the life of a white man, while two of the Indians had been killed, but among the horses lost was Lone Wolf's bay pony, which, so far as I know, was never heard of again."

"That certainly is a bully story, Hugh," said Jack.

"Yes," said Joe, "that story is good. I have heard the people talk about it sometimes, but I never heard it all, as White Bull has told it to us to-night. I like it.

"Those Indians were Gros Ventres," he went on, "and at that time they were still enemies of my people, but soon after peace was made."

CHAPTER XVI

AN ICE RIVER

EARLY the next morning, while they were eating breakfast, Hugh said, "Now, boys, let's saddle and ride up this middle fork. I don't think it goes far, and I reckon we'll not see much up there. We can come back and maybe pack up and get to the head of the other fork to-night. You boys go out right after breakfast and picket the pack horses and bring in the saddle animals, while I'm washing up the dishes and rigging up a scare over this meat, to keep off the birds."

When the boys got in with the saddle horses, after tying the pack horses so that they could not follow, they found that Hugh had put up a pole which slanted over the meat on the scaffold, and to that pole he had tied a cross-stick from which a long strip of cloth was waving merrily in the breeze.

"There," said Hugh, "as long as this wind blows, no bird or animal will bother that meat. Now let's start along."

They rode fast up the valley of the middle fork, for in most places it was fairly open; sometimes in pretty park-like meadows, where the tall white-crowned flower stems of the soap grass waved in the wind, sometimes in broad

flat meadows of wet ground, which looked suspiciously like beaver meadows, and sometimes in scattering pine timber growing from low mounds. As they advanced, the valley grew narrower, and on both sides the mountains rose high and steep, but here and there on the heights above they could see the edges of snow fields, and when they reached the head of the valley they found themselves under a tall precipice, over which flowed two great water-falls, which had their sources in the snow banks far above. It was a cold, gray place, grim and grand, but not picturesque nor beautiful, and soon all three were glad to turn about and gallop down the valley toward the sunlight, which was flooding the lower country.

It was not yet noon when they reached the camp, and Hugh said they would just stop for dinner and then move on.

The boys loosened the cinches of the saddle horses, tied them up, brought in the pack horses and saddled them, and took down the tent and packed up the meat, which by this time was quite dry. An hour later, Hugh mounted his horse and they again set out up the trail.

Jack did not clearly see how they were going to get into the valley of the other fork, as the way appeared blocked by the lake on their left, which seemed to run to the very bases of the mountains which lay on three sides of it. However, he followed Hugh and asked no questions.

Joe, however, said, "How do you suppose we're going to get into that valley, Jack? Are we going to swim this lake?"

"You can't prove it by me," said Jack. "But I reckon Hugh will find a way."

"That's so," said Joe, "White Bull knows how to travel in the mountains. I guess we'll get there."

Hugh followed the trail that they had now passed over several times, until he had reached the head of the lake, and then turning off into the forest to the left, began to pick his way toward the mountains that lay west of the lake. Before long they came to the stream along which they had traveled in the morning. It was wide, but not deep, and the bottom was hard. There was much pine timber and a good deal of marshy land through which they passed slowly and with some difficulty, but at length they came to higher ground where progress was better.

As they went on they could see sometimes through the trees the water of the lake on the left; while to the right the mountainside rose above them.

After a mile or two of this travel they came to more marshy meadow ground and then entered a belt of forest, and passing through this, found themselves in a wide willow-grown park, which evidently had once been the bed of a shallow lake.

Mountains rose on either side, and to the left they could hear the murmur of the stream. This stream they crossed and following it up, before long found themselves on the border of another long, narrow lake, hemmed in on both sides by mountains. The timber on this side grew thickly, and Hugh, instead of trying to go through it, kept out a little way in the lake, riding just beyond the overhanging branches of the trees and in water which was from six inches to a foot deep. The bottom was hard gravel—good going.

The country was absolutely wild and undisturbed, and Jack expected every moment to see or hear game in the timber. He kept looking and listening for this so intently that he neglected the bare sides of the mountains across the lake, until Joe, who was just before him, driving the pack horses that followed Hugh, turned and making a sign to attract his attention, pointed to the mountainside. Then Jack saw, lying down on the face of the cliff, far above the water and really at a great distance from him, a monstrous white goat. He was greatly impressed by the beast, which, as it lay there with its head lowered, its long beard nearly reaching to the ground, the hump on its back and its low hind quarters, reminded him very much of a buffalo.

By the time the travelers had reached the head of the lake the sun had disappeared and long shadows were creeping up the sides of the mountain to the east of them.

Hugh stopped his horse, looked about a little, and said, "Now, boys, I don't know what there is beyond here, and it's getting late in the day. I reckon we may as well stop and camp here and then to-morrow morning look out a trail up above. We're not greatly rushed for time, and if we travel in the dark we're liable to run into some mud hole, or find a lot of fallen timber, and perhaps get in trouble that will take us some little time to get out of. Let's camp here and do our exploring to-morrow. We'll have to pitch the tent in the timber and I reckon the horses can get along in this little park at the head of the lake. There isn't very much for them to eat, and so we'll have to tie them up. Suppose we unload here, and I'll begin to get supper while you boys make some pins and picket the horses, and put up the tent."

They did as he said, and when darkness fell the white tent gleamed among the green timber, and a fire—perhaps the first ever kindled on the borders of this lake—cast its cheerful gleam over the water.

Camp was astir very early the next morning, for this was to be a day of real exploration; a trip up to the head of the narrow valley and then perhaps a climb up the mountains beyond, for Hugh had said that the main Divide was probably near at hand.

During the talk of the evening before, he had expressed the belief that they could go only a little farther with horses, and that when they reached the head of the valley the animals must be left behind, and the mountains, stern and forbidding, the snow-covered peaks which had been in sight ever since they had entered the valley, must be climbed afoot.

While breakfast was being cooked, Joe and Jack changed the pack horses to fresh grass, and brought in and saddled the three riding animals. A little later all three mounted, and Hugh taking the lead, they plunged into the forest to try to find a trail to the foot of the mountains.

It was not easy riding. The timber was thick and stood close together. Hugh made his way down to the stream in the hope that it would be possible to ride up its bed and so avoid the obstacles in the forest, but though they entered the creek, they were soon obliged to leave it, for it was blocked by masses of drift timber, over which the horses could not pass. They had traveled a little more than half a mile up the valley, when they came to the edge of a snowslide, the path of an enormous avalanche, which many years before had rushed down the mountainside, making a path through the forest several hundred yards in width.

From this open space a fine view was had of the mountains, and of a great glacier that lay at the head of the valley—an enormous mass of ice a mile or two wide and a half mile deep, lying in a great cup in the mountainside.

The glacier was covered for the most part with new fallen snow, but here and there broken surfaces showed blue or green in the light of the morning sun.

While the others looked at the ice, Joe borrowed the field glasses and began to sweep the mountains for goats, and presently found one, and then another, until at last he had made out no less than eleven of the animals. Then after a time they went on and entered the forest on the upper side of the snowslide, where the going was open and dry, and a little farther on crossed a large stream coming out of a side canyon. Not far beyond that the timber grew thinner, and presently they rode out into a little grassy park.

Just as they passed out of the timber they heard a noise of stones rattling in front of them, and a moment later the plunge of a heavy body into water, and then the cracking of branches, growing fainter and fainter.

"Ho," said Hugh to Jack, "I reckon we started a moose or an elk here, and he's going up the mountain."

They rode forward and in a very few moments reached the gravelly borders of a lake which was hemmed in on three sides by mountains. Just opposite them and seen against the great dark precipice, which partly hid the glacier from their view, fell a white line of foam, the melting water of the great ice mass which supplied the lake. At the head of the lake was a narrow fringe of willows and then an open meadow of small extent, broken on one side by a low, rocky, pine-grown knoll. Behind the little meadow rose a thousand feet of black precipice, and above this was the glacier. Behind the glacier stood a jagged wall of rock, but on either side to the right and the left rose abruptly high mountains, which seemed to terminate in knife edges of naked rock. The scene was perhaps the grandest and most beautiful that Jack had ever beheld near at hand. It made him feel solemn, while Hugh's look at these tremendous heights was full of respect and admiration.

"Son," said Hugh, "those mountains there seem to threaten one, rather than to ask him to come on. It's a job to get up there, and I don't feel sure that we can do it in one day. If we go, we've got to start right away, and we'd better leave our animals here and take it afoot from this on."

"Yes," said Jack, "we can't get the horses any further; and we may as well picket them here."

Joe asked, "You are going to try to climb up there?"

"Why, yes, Joe," replied Jack. "I want to get on to that ice up there if I can, and maybe look over on to the other side of the mountains."

"Well," said Joe, "I don't like those mountains much; they scare me. I'd like to get back on the prairie where the sun shines warm and you can ride wherever you want to."

"Oh, come on," said Jack; "if you get up there, you'll be where no Piegan has been before. Come along."

"Come on, Joe," said Hugh. "You may as well get used to the mountains now as any other time."

The three tied their horses to pine trees, and took off the bridles so that they could feed. Then Hugh said, "Now, I reckon the best thing for us to do is to try to work our way around this lake and climb up that place where the water is tumbling down. It looks like a bad place, but it's liable to be a good deal easier than it looks. We don't know anything about these mountainsides, and if we try to go up them we're liable to take a whole lot of time, and not get anywhere to-night. Let's go right around this lake, crawl through the alder brush that grows at its edge, and then try to get up that flume where the water comes down. I think we can do it."

They started off without delay, and as they reached the rough shingle at the edge of the lake, Hugh pointed to some tracks where the stones and sand were thrown up and said, "That's what we heard a little while ago." On the large stones it was impossible to tell just what animal had made the tracks, but before they had gone far they saw where it had come down to the lake to drink, and in the grass and in the bare soil above they found the tracks of a good-sized moose.

The work of making their way over the talus at the lake border and through the willows and alders which grew among the fallen rocks was slow and difficult. The stones were more or less covered with moss and care was needed in stepping, lest a slip should send one of the men sliding down the slope and into the cold waters below.

At last, however, they had passed through the alders and reached the rocky promontory where the going was open, and passing over this, were soon in the open meadow below the precipice, where they took a moment's breathing spell, then started on, breasting a steep shoulder which gave an easy ascent for a couple of hundred feet to the lowest step of the cliff they wished to climb. Soon they reached the ledge and walked along it until they came to the very bed of the falls, and here began the serious work of the day.

The icy torrent which for ages had been flowing over this precipice had cut for itself a deep channel. On one side or the other of this channel the rock had fallen away so as to furnish here a crevice, there a projecting knob, which gave hand or foothold to the climber. At times, to be sure, they found before them a smooth, naked cliff which could not be climbed, and then search must be made along its face for a place up which they could pass.

They climbed slowly and carefully, often crossing the stream from one side to the other, clinging to little spruce trees that grew in the crevices of the rock, thrusting their fingers into cracks and fitting their feet on some knob or projecting splinter that would give them support. Slowly they worked their way upward, inch by inch, foot by foot.

Often the crossing of the stream was nervous work, for the boulders which lay in it were worn smooth as glass, and the fine mist which rose from the falling waters froze to the rocks, making them very slippery. Sometimes long jumps had to be made from one to another of these rocks, often in places where a slip might cause a bad fall on rough rocks below.

About two-thirds of the way to the top of the precipice they came out on a shelf perhaps a hundred feet wide, which was almost covered by high heaped rocks and gravel—morainal drift brought down by the glacier from above. This was composed of boulders and stones of all sizes, from masses as large as a small house to grains no bigger than a pin's head.

Here they stopped to rest, and Hugh, with his back against a great rock, smoked a comforting pipe.

Close at hand they could see the beauty of the white, quivering falls rushing down the cliff, often by vertical plunges of a hundred feet or more, or down steep inclines, and in one place they had worn a deep fissure in the slate and shot down with a hissing sound thirty or forty feet back from one who looked in on them from the narrow opening of the crevice. Everywhere there was spray and dampness, and Jack was reminded in some respects of the high mountain torrents which he had seen during his famous canoe trip in British Columbia.

From here the going was much easier. The precipice was no longer vertical, but ascended in a series of huge

steps to the level of the glacier.

There they began to see, at the lower border of the ice, vast quantities of drift spread far and wide, and to the right high naked ridges lying parallel to the course of the ice river. The crests of these ridges were sometimes fifty or sixty feet above the surface of the ice which lay against them and from a quarter to a half mile in length. At its lower border, the glacier had melted and had been covered with stones, so that it was hard to say just where the ice ended and the drift which it had carried before it began.

The main body of the glacier lay in the cup-shaped depression already spoken of, but high up on the rock wall behind it and to the left, was another enormous mass of ice looking like a huge snowball thrown against the wall. Its size was very great, but there was no means of estimating it. Hugh thought that the lower ice was two miles across, and nearly a mile deep.

At first the climbers had eyes only for the ice and the mountains which lay in front of them, but presently Joe happened to look behind him down the valley, and there, far, far away, was the yellow prairie shining in the warm sunshine. Joe called the attention of the others to this, saying, "Don't it look nice down there?"

The climb had taken much less time than had been anticipated, not that the height to which they had ascended had been less than they had thought, but because the way had been very direct and they had wasted little time in resting or loitering.

After their first view, Hugh led the way to a little grassy spot just outside of one of the moraines and, sitting down in a sheltered spot, said, "Let's sit here and smoke a pipe, and then get up as high as we can and see the whole show; and then we can turn around and go back." As they sat there they had a fine view of the valley below them.

"Isn't it a fine thing, Hugh," said Jack, "to get up here and see just how this glacier is acting? Don't you remember how Mr. Fannin explained glaciers to us; how simple and easy he made it to understand how they acted? I don't think I shall ever forget the way he talked about them, and I don't think I shall ever see one without looking for the things that he explained to us."

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's so, he sure did make things plain, and I don't wonder that you remember what he said. I was thinking of him when we got up here, but one of the things that seems queerest to me about this ice is that it's all made of snow. He said it was, and now we can see for ourselves that it is. I was looking as we came along, and you can see places just at the edges of the snow where it seems to be changing to ice. I guess the snow just gets solid and solid, and then gets water soaked and makes real ice."

"Of course," said Jack, "that must be it. When I was a small boy I used to make snow forts and defend them with snowballs, and sometimes the fellows would make the snowballs when the weather was warm and the snow was melting, and if it froze that night, they would be just solid ice. To get hit with one of those ice balls was a good deal like getting hit with a stone."

"Well," said Hugh, "I expect if no more snow fell up here this piece of ice would just melt away and leave nothing but the hole that it's laying in—just a sort of a basin in the side of the mountain."

"Yes," said Jack, "I guess that's so. I think that's what Mr. Fannin told us; that a glacier was a glacier, because it was constantly being added to at its upper end, and the weight of the snow and ice was pushing it along over the mountainside. I take it that a snowbank might be ice at the bottom, perhaps, but that if it doesn't move it isn't a glacier."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I reckon that's so. I took notice of another thing," he went on, "as we were coming along. Did you see how this ice seems to be in layers? Some of 'em are half an inch thick and some of 'em an inch, and there seems to be a thin crust of dirt that separates one layer from another."

"Yes," said Jack, "I noticed that, and I was wondering how it could happen, or what it meant."

"Well, I was figuring on that very thing," said Hugh, "and it seemed to me that these little layers of dirt must be the dust and dirt blown off the mountainside by the wind after each fall of snow."

"Well, Hugh," said Jack, "that seems a natural explanation. We all know how the wind is always blowing up here, and we all know that old snow is always dusty. I guess you're right."

By this time Hugh's pipe was smoked out, and he rose to his feet and said, "Come on, we've got to stretch our legs some more and see if we can go up to the ridge. There looks to be a low place up ahead of us, and maybe if we can get up there we can see over the range. Look out for yourselves when you are walking over this smooth ice. If a man slips on one of these steep places, he's liable to go a long way before stopping."

The caution was a wise one, and for some distance they walked along carefully, keeping either on the moraine or on the very edge of the ice, or choosing a path where the snow was old and hard and gave a firm footing.

At one point, however, Joe tried to make a short cut by climbing over some old snow which was quite steep. Before he had gone very far the others saw him begin to dig his feet into the hard snow as if uncertain of his footing, then he slipped, recovered himself, stood for an instant as if doubtful whether to go backward or forward, took another step and then his feet flew out from under him and he began to slide down the slope. It looked very funny to see him flying over the snow, but Hugh did not laugh, for he feared that possibly the boy might go on until he brought up against rough rocks below. Luckily nothing of this kind happened, and after going about a hundred yards at a high rate of speed, Joe ran into some soft snow and his momentum was checked. He stopped, rose to his feet, and making his way cautiously back to the edge of the rocks, took the safe but longer road that his companions had followed.

Hugh and Jack waited until he had come up, and then Hugh, shaking his head, said to him, "That wasn't very smart, Joe. You'd better not try any more experiments of that kind; it's dangerous. A man may slip any time on one of these smooth icy slopes, and if he does he never can tell where he'll stop. You might have slid down there and brought up against the rocks, and broken some bones or killed yourself, and then we'd have had a hard time packing you down this hill and taking you into the agency. Then, besides that, sometimes these big pieces of ice are all cracked and full of holes, and if anyone should slip into one of those he might go down to the bottom and get killed by the fall on the rocks below, or if he stuck somewhere half way down he'd freeze to death before he could be hauled out. One thing we'll have to do after this when we're climbing in bad places; that is, to bring along a couple of sling ropes and tie ourselves together. It isn't likely that all three of us will slip and fall at the same time, and if only one slips, the other two can haul him out."

"That's a mighty good idea," said Jack; "I was scared when I saw Joe sliding down that ice. I remember reading about people climbing the mountains in Switzerland where they carry ice axes. They're sort of like adzes, with long straight handles and a spike in the end of the handle, and are used for cutting steps in the ice or hard snow. The people who are climbing tie themselves together with ropes and go mighty slowly and carefully, so that there is no danger of more than one man slipping at the same time. They go along one by one, and when one man is moving—I mean, of course, in bad places—the others all stand still and fasten their axes in the ice or hang on to the rope, so that if he does slip, there's no trouble about catching him. I remember reading that most of the accidents happen where people have so much confidence in themselves that they are not willing to be roped together, and some man makes a blunder and falls and the others just have to stand and look at him."

"Well," said Hugh, "if we're going to do much climbing around here, we ought to fix ourselves out in some such way as that. I tell you I'm too old myself to try any of these experiments."

"Come on, now," he continued, as he turned and started up the ridge, "let's get up here to a sheltered place and then we can sit down and eat a bite. I put some bread and bacon in my pocket this morning when we started, and we may as well eat and smoke a pipe before we go on."

CHAPTER XVII

A FAT BIGHORN

IN a sheltered spot at the foot of a great morainal ridge the three climbers sat down and ate their lunch. The air was warm and the sun bright, but every now and then a drift of breeze came down to them which felt cool, for they had been working hard and their garments were damp with perspiration. Hugh smoked his pipe, and then presently they rose and started to clamber further up the glacier. Presently they came upon the tracks of some large animals, either sheep or goats, which had passed over the moraine not long before. The surface of the ground was so hard that they could not be sure what these animals were, but looking over the snow-covered ice before them, they could see the tracks passing up over it, and at last turning up toward the peaks behind a rocky point which ran out from the mountainside. Hugh followed the tracks as far as the snow, and when they reached its unbroken surface they could see that the tracks were fresh, and before long Hugh turned to Jack and said, "They're sheep. A couple of good rams, I guess."

After they had come quite near the rocky point behind which the tracks led, Joe, who was a little to one side, suddenly stopped, and called out: "Look at that ram." From where they stood, neither Hugh nor Jack could see any living thing, but Jack stepped over toward Joe, and as he did so there came into his view a splendid bighorn, outlined against the snow so that every detail of his form could be seen.

The animal's head was up, and he gazed in curiosity rather than alarm at the three strange creatures that he saw below him.

Jack had loaded his rifle at Joe's exclamation and now asked, "How far off is he, Hugh?"

"About two hundred yards, I reckon," said Hugh. "Draw a coarse sight and shoot at his neck."

The animal was standing half quartering toward them in such a position that his head and neck were in line with his shoulders, and a ball through the shoulder would pierce either heart or lungs. Jack did not raise his sights, but following Hugh's suggestion fired at the animal's neck, just below the throat, so as to allow for any drop of the ball. For an instant the smoke hung, and when Jack could see through it, the animal had disappeared.

"Did anyone see where the ball struck?" asked Jack.

"Not I," said Hugh.

"I didn't either," said Joe, "but I thought he turned in an awkward kind of a way, as though he were hurt."

"I have an idea I heard the ball strike," said Hugh.

"Well," said Jack, "let's go up there anyhow. He was certainly a nice ram, and I'd like to get him."

They hurried up the slope, Hugh and Joe ahead, while Jack toiled behind. Presently they heard a cheerful shout from Hugh, "Come on, son, there's blood on the snow, and lots of it."



"JACK DID NOT RAISE HIS SIGHTS, BUT FOLLOWING HUGH'S SUGGESTION FIRED AT THE ANIMAL'S NECK."—PAGE 230

Sure enough, when Jack got up to where the slope was less steep he could see, even at a distance, the pure white mantle of snow splashed with great dark blotches.

The trail seemed likely to be a plain one, and the men hurried along over the snow, up the hill. Presently they could see that the ram was staggering, for his tracks no longer went directly ahead, but wavered from side to side. Then they passed on to the rocks and could not see the trail so easily, but farther ahead came to another snow bank where there was a broad smear of blood, showing apparently that the animal had fallen on its side and slipped along over the snow.

Hugh and Joe ran round a point of dwarfed spruces, but Jack, in his eagerness to cut off a corner, attempted to go through the little trees, and found himself in drifted snow up to his waist and his legs held by the branches of the spruces. For a moment or two he could hear the clatter of the others running over the rocks, and a word or two of their talk, but by the time he had got out on to the rocks, his companions were far ahead of him. As they saw him coming, however, they sat down to wait for him.

He followed the blood trail, and when he came up he, too, sat down.

"Have you seen anything of him?" he asked.

"No," said Hugh, "but he's going down hill, bleeding, as you see, and falling down every little while. We'll find him before long."

"All right," said Jack, "he's our meat, I guess. If he keeps on bleeding like this he can't go very far. We can't go down there after him and then come back here, and I want to go up and look if we can't see across the range. How do you feel, Hugh, do you want to go down and get the sheep, or shall we leave him there and all go up and look over the range and then go back?"

"Why," said Hugh, "I'd better go down and butcher him, and you and Joe can go up to the top of the rocks here and see what you can see on the other side. It isn't far. That low place, just above where the sheep stood when you shot, is the point to make for, and I reckon you can see all you want to from there. Then you come back, and come down to me. We've got quite a job to get that sheep into camp to-night. The fact is, I don't believe we can do it. It's too large for the three of us to carry down in one trip."

Jack and Joe went back in the direction that Hugh had suggested, and keeping well up the hill, soon found themselves close to a little saddle, where one of the side arms of the glacier started. It was an easy matter to climb up here and presently they stood on the crest of the Continental Divide, looking over a broad valley in which nothing was to be seen except rocks and stunted pine trees, and dimly through the thick, hazy atmosphere a distant lake and some high, snow-covered mountain crests.

"Do you know anything about this country, Joe?" asked Jack.

"No," said Joe, "not much. I reckon that big lake we see over there may be Lake McDonald, but I don't know these mountains, nor this country close to us."

"Well," said Jack, "I reckon Hugh will know something about it when we tell him what we've seen. Now let us go back on the ice, and then get down to him. It looks as if we were going to have bad weather."

The sky had become overcast, and the wind began to moan among the peaks. It looked like a snowstorm.

They walked down the glacier, keeping as nearly as possible on its comb, for they did not wish to slip, as Joe had done in the morning.

After they had looked down the valley of Swift Current into the flat at the foot of lower St. Mary's Lake and taken a last look over the glacier, they turned aside and, working out to the rocks, began to make their way down to Hugh.

At a little distance the side of the mountain looked absolutely vertical, and it did not seem possible that man, nor even sheep, could have passed along it, but as they went on they found no difficulty in making their way, and

recognized one of the deceptions of these grand and mysterious hills. Joe, when they first started down, had been not a little alarmed, and said, "I'm afraid we never will see White Bull again. He could not have gone down such a place as this; he must have fallen and been killed."

"Nonsense," said Jack, "of course he went down all right, and we are going to follow him down. You'll see it won't be bad as we go on."

Before long they came to the blood trail of the sheep, and following that kept on their way until they saw Hugh standing by a fire in a little valley below them.

"Hurrah!" said Jack, "Hugh is cooking meat. I'm mighty glad, for I feel hungry."

When they had worked their way down to within a few hundred yards of him, zigzagging this way and that over the steep ledges, Hugh saw them and waved his hand, and presently when they got down within speaking distance, he called out, "Well, son, you killed the best piece of meat in the mountains."

"Good," said Jack, "I hope you have put some of it on the fire."

"That's what the fire is there for," said Hugh. "Come on down."

The boys at length reached a point about fifty feet above Hugh, and then had to go off to one side to find a way down the cliff. When they had come near the fire, however, Hugh showed them the ram lying at the edge of the snow bank from which he had drawn him.

"You see," said Hugh, "when I got almost up to him, he was lying on the rocks right at the top of this cliff with his head down and pretty nearly dead; but when I got quite close to him he heard me walking and got on his feet again and just walked over the cliff and fell into this snow bank down here. When I got to him he was dead. Nice ram, isn't he?"

Indeed, he was a beauty; perhaps six or seven years old, with horns that were not very large, but perfectly symmetrical and unbroken. His coat was thick, smooth and glossy, dark brown and with a white rump patch. Short of limb, strong of back, sturdy and stout, plump and round as a bull elk in early September, he made a picture such as even the successful hunter does not see every day.

It was evident to all that the whole animal could not be taken in that night, and that another trip must be made to bring in the meat. The best that could be done would be to carry down the head, which Jack wanted to save, and a couple of light loads of the meat, and then the next day they could return and bring in the rest. However, they sat down for a little while and feasted on some of the delicious ribs cut from the animal. Then, taking the head and the two shoulders, they set out for camp. Hugh was inclined to think that by keeping along the mountain, he might reach camp by a route considerably easier than that which they had taken in coming up, though, of course, it would be much longer. He also declared that he thought it possible that they might be able to pick out a trail by which they could bring up a pack horse to carry down the rest of the meat.

As soon as they had finished eating they started down along the mountainside, keeping on the ledges where the walking was good, and descending by easy steps from one ledge to another. They had gone but a short distance when they passed a ravine in which lay a long snow bank hollow beneath. Into this snow cave Hugh went to look for a drink of water and presently called to the boys, telling them to come in to him.

They found themselves in a most beautiful ice grotto. The snow bank was an old one and the rushing waters of spring had tunneled under it, while it melted from above, so that a heavy roof of blue ice stretched across the ravine from side to side. The grotto was eight or ten feet from floor to roof, thirty feet wide and perhaps a hundred long. A drift of snow which had blown in from an opening at its upper end, lay in the bottom of the ravine. The roof seemed not very thick and admitted the light freely. It was a beautiful sky blue and reminded Jack vaguely of some blue grotto in Italy of which he had read and had often heard his mother talk.

The sun was getting lower and lower as the three hurried along the mountain. In most places it was easy going, and in the snow banks, which they were constantly crossing, fresh tracks of goats were seen, but the travelers paid no attention to these and kept on their way as fast as possible.

Long before they had reached the level of the valley the sun had set, but there was light enough for them to go a little way down the stream and then cross on a log-jam which brought them to the other side of the stream. Here they mounted their horses, and in a short time were standing by their tent.

Presently, when the coffee-pot was bubbling and some fat sheep meat sputtering in the pan, when the horses had been looked after and the day's labor was over, it was pleasant to talk of the wonderful things that they had seen since sunrise.

The next morning the boys saddled a pack horse, and crossing the little stream which pours out of the lake, Hugh, Jack and Joe climbed the mountainside, dragging the pack animal behind them.

After they had once got through the thick brush it was not difficult to lead the horse along the ledges, almost to the sheep's carcass. They did at last come to a place where the horse could not get up, and though by taking half a day's time they could probably have found a way to take him to the meat, it seemed simpler and shorter to leave him where he was and to carry the meat to him.

"Now," said Hugh, as they were eating their luncheon, "we've got a little idea of this fork of the stream, what do you say to turning around now and going back to the head of St. Mary's River, where we came from? I believe that by this time the snow has melted some and we will find feed for the horses, so that we can stop there for a while, and do a little hunting and maybe climb the mountains that you've been talking about. What do you say?"

"What do you say, Joe?" asked Jack.

"Why," said Joe, "I'm ready to go 'most anywhere or do 'most anything. I think I like the country at the head of the lake, where the bear tore down the tent, better than I do here."

"Well, Hugh," said Jack, "that's the way I feel. Of course, it is nice here and interesting, and we could spend a lot of time and see a great many things; but it seems to me that the country at the head of St. Mary's River is bigger and more interesting than this."

"All right," said Hugh, "let's go if you say so, and if we're going, why not pack up and roll now. We ought to be able to get down nearly to the mouth of Swift Current before dark. Maybe we can even camp in the big flat of the St. Mary's River. If you boys want to start, round up your horses and I'll be making up the packs, and we'll move mighty quick."

By the time the horses had been brought in and saddled, Hugh had his packs made up, and it took but a few minutes to lash the loads, and soon the train was moving off down the valley.

As they crossed the snowslide, Jack turned aside and looked back toward the great mountain behind them and wondered again at the mighty mass of ice that lay in its lap. It hardly seemed to him possible that he had been up walking on that ice, and on those rocks that now seemed so far away and so difficult of access.

He had but little time, however, to think about this, and, turning his horse, hurried on after the others, who were just entering the timber.

They had gone but a little way, when Hugh stopped his horse, and all the others came to a standstill. He called back to Jack, "Son, have you got a piece of string in your pocket?"

"Yes," said Jack, fishing it out, "I have, but it's only about three feet long."

"Well," said Hugh, "get off your horse and come up here."

When Jack reached Hugh's side, Hugh pointed to the ground a few feet from him, and there, standing close together, were three beautiful Franklin grouse, while on a little spruce tree, two or three feet above the others, sat a fourth bird.

"Now, son," said Hugh, "I reckon you've heard me talk about the way these fool hens are gentle, and how you can kill them with a rock or sometimes with a club, or can even slip a noose over the head of one, as he sits on a branch in front of you. Do you want to try and catch one?"

"Why, yes, Hugh," said Jack, "I'd like to do that. I don't want to kill one particularly, because we've got what meat we need, but I'd like to catch one."

"Well," said Hugh, "you can, and if you get it in your hands quickly enough, you can take off the string and let it go. There's a straight dead branch over there. Just make a noose of your string, and then tie the string to the end of that branch, leaving about a foot hanging down from the branch, and try it."

Jack arranged his snare, tying it to the end of a straight branch about six feet long, and then advanced very slowly toward the grouse.

They paid no attention to him until he was within three or four yards, and then one of those on the ground appeared to notice him and stretched out its neck to look at him. Jack stood still and in a few seconds the bird seemed satisfied and resumed its huddled-up position. Then Jack went on, very slowly, and when he had come within six or seven feet of the bird he held his stick before him and tried to pass the noose over the bird's head. This was not easy to do, and two or three times the noose struck the side of the bird's head without passing over it, yet the grouse merely moved to one side to avoid the string. Presently, in making this movement, the bird itself passed its head through the noose, and Jack, lowering the point of the stick, pulled it toward him, drew the bird off the branch, and brought it flapping furiously to his feet. He at once seized it and, loosening the noose, took it from the bird's head. Then he smoothed the bird's feathers and in a moment or two it seemed to lose all fear.

"Isn't it a beautiful bird, Hugh?" he said, as he held it up for Hugh's inspection.

"Yes," said Hugh, "they certainly are right pretty little birds. It's a pity they don't know better how to take care of themselves, for everything that runs across them can kill them."

"Well," said Jack, "I'm glad I caught this little fellow, but I'm mighty glad I didn't kill him, and now I'm going to turn him loose."

He walked over to the other birds and put the grouse that he held gently on the ground and then stood up. The grouse raised itself to its full height and stretched up its neck, looking at him with an air of great curiosity. Then, seemingly satisfied, it lowered its head and with very deliberate steps walked over toward its fellows, while Jack remounted his horse, and the three travelers started on.

An hour later they were in the main valley of Swift Current and marching at a good gait down the trail.

Quite a long time before sunset they crossed Boulder Creek, and a little later came out on the wide flat below the lower lake. Over by the river were some white lodges and a bunch of horses feeding, and Hugh said, "I believe our friends, the Kootenays, are still camped here. Let's go over and camp with them. I'd rather be right among them than at a little distance. The dogs and children won't trouble us so much in the camp as they would if we were close to it."

They found in the camp all their acquaintances of a week or two before. Evidently the hunting had been good, for there were scaffolds covered with drying meat, and many hides pegged upon the ground.

While the white men were making camp, some of their acquaintances came up and spoke to them, and a little later old Back In Sight, the chief, paid them a call, and on Hugh's invitation sat down and ate with them.

The Indians said they were soon going north and west to their own country. The hunting had been good, and they had killed many beaver. Now the fur was no longer at its best and they did not wish to trap any more this season.

Just before dusk something occurred that immensely interested Jack. A man clad in a blanket and a battered felt hat walked through the camp haranguing the people, who gathered in the middle of the small space within the lodges. Standing in the middle of the group, this man repeated what were evidently prayers. Then to Jack's intense astonishment he crossed himself; rang a little bell, offered up another prayer and crossed himself again, while all the people followed his example. This went on for some little time until, finally, at the end of one prayer, followed by the tinkle of the bell, the people dispersed.

"Say, Hugh," said Jack, "I wish you'd ask that Indian that you can talk to what this means. It looks to me like some sort of a church service."

"Well," said Hugh, "I wouldn't be surprised a mite. You know lots of these Indians, especially on the west side of the mountains and to the north, believe in the Catholic religion, and I wouldn't be surprised if these people do, or think they do. As a matter of fact, I believe they worship the sun, but maybe they think they're Christians. Wait until I talk a little bit with this man that speaks some Chinook and Piegan."

Hugh had quite a long talk with the Kootenay, then turned to Jack and said, "Now, son, that's a mighty queer thing that we've seen. This man says that what we saw them doing was worshipping, and that this worship was taught their fathers by a Black Robe a good many years ago. Their fathers taught them how to worship in this way, but they themselves don't know exactly what it means; all they know is that they are praying to the Black Robe's God. This

Black Robe taught their fathers to say these prayers, to ring this bell and make these motions, touching themselves on four places on their bodies. They try to do this just as their fathers taught them."

Jack clapped his hands in astonishment. "That is certainly a most extraordinary thing; a real case of survival. I guess if I tell people back East about this they will laugh at me, and say I'm crazy."

"I reckon, son, if you tell them all the things you have seen out in this country that if they don't call you crazy they'll at least call you a liar."

"That is sure so, Hugh," said Jack. "I've seen people turn their heads away and laugh when I was telling them some common enough story about things out here. You see they don't understand anything about it, and so when they hear anything that is outside of the range of their own experiences they think I'm lying to them; but this holding Mass in a Kootenay Indian camp beats me. It's hard to believe that I've seen it."

"It does seem mighty queer, that's so, son," replied Hugh, "but we all know what great fellows the Indians are for hanging on to anything that they ever get hold of. They are a great people for old customs, and accept and stick to what their old people have told them. Of course, in these days they are changing all the time. The young fellows around the agencies are becoming civilized in spite of themselves, but take these old fellows that live out in the camps, the old buffalo hunters, and others of that sort, and they haven't changed much, and they never will change much either. They'll die old buffalo hunters."

Early the next morning the little party left their Indian friends and started up the lake. By ten o'clock they had crossed the inlet and were on their way along the upper lake. The packs, well put on in the morning and constantly watched, gave them no trouble and there were no delays. Not long after noon they passed their previous camp just below the Point of Rocks, and climbing that steep ridge, kept on their way along the mountainside.

They traveled until after sunset and at last camped in a little park in the narrow valley, and by noon the next day had reached the old camp at the little lake where they had killed the bears.

Here the aspect of the mountains was greatly changed. Much of the snow had melted, the grass was well started, and the landscape looked more like summer.

CHAPTER XVIII

AMONG THE ICEFIELDS

THE next morning they rose late, for the previous day had been long and hard. At breakfast Hugh said, "Now, to-day, let's picket the pack horses and ride up on the mountains prospecting, and see whether we can camp over there where that big snow bank lay when we were here last. I have an idea that we'll find most of the snow gone and that we'll have dry ground to camp on and some little feed near by for the horses."

Soon after breakfast they made ready to start.

"They say lightning don't strike twice in the same place," remarked Hugh, "but then it might, so I'm going to hang up all our stuff in one of these trees, where it will be out of the reach of the bears. If they get to mixing up our things once or twice more, we won't have anything to eat, and we'll have to go back to the Agency for grub. They'd like mighty well, I reckon, to get at this sheep meat, and if they could ever get hold of that sheep head of yours, son, they'd carry it off in the brush, and you never would find it."

Some little time was spent in making up the bundles and in putting them in places of safety in the trees. Then they saddled the horses, and climbing the steep game trail that led to the valley above, found themselves once more on the high bench on the mountainside. Here on the flat rocks there were still great expanses of snow, but it was melting fast, and clear torrents of water ran toward the river in the valley below.

Among the rocks was the same wealth of wild flowers that they had seen when they were here before, but the flowers were much more advanced and many of the blossoms had withered and seemed now to be forming seed-pods.

They had not gone far when an old mother ptarmigan hopped up in front of them and performed the familiar ruse of fluttering along the ground with hanging wings, as if wounded. They looked carefully for the chicks, which they knew must be near at hand, but could not see them. No doubt they were lying immediately under their eyes hidden in crevices of the rock, looking just like the little stones that were scattered everywhere.

Across the valley the green timber was now showing black above the paler grass which carpeted the soil, and Joe said, "I reckon we can camp over there all right, White Bull."

"Yes," said Hugh, "it looks so, doesn't it? Anyhow, we'll go over and see. You can't always tell so far off as this."

They crossed the stream at its head among the great rounded boulders that had been carried down by the ice, and the roar of the fall coming over the precipice almost deafened them. When they had left it a little behind, Jack asked Hugh, "Where do you suppose all that water comes from?"

"Why," said Hugh, "I reckon it comes from an awful lot of snow and ice that lies on the mountainside up above there. I wouldn't be a mite surprised if up there we were to find a glacier two or three times as big as the one where you killed the sheep. There's an awful lot of room back between this place where the water falls over and the tops of the mountains. We'll get there in the course of a day or two, if we find a good camping place, as I think we will."

Hugh's prediction as to the possibility of camping here was right. The snow was gone, the ground had dried off, and the grass had started thick and green.

Hugh seemed well pleased and selected a place for the camp, declaring that the best thing they could do would be to go right back, pack up and move here.

"It's true," he said, "there isn't feed enough just now to keep the horses, but we can turn them loose over across the creek, where there is good feed, and can bring them in here and tie them up nights, if we want to. I don't believe that they'll go off, even if we leave them over there, though it's rather far from camp, and of course something might scare them and give us some trouble to hunt them up."

When they reached camp they put the packs on their animals and returning, pitched their tent in a pretty little grove of stunted spruces, close to the edge of a tiny rivulet, where wood was plentiful and there was some grass.

From here they could look out on a dozen splendid mountain peaks, some of them covered with perpetual snow, and with great fields of white snow on the sides of others that seemed to indicate glaciers flowing down their slopes.

Early next morning the three set out to explore this alpine valley, or rather, the mountains which surround it. Opposite them, to the west, rose the huge mountain along whose sides they had now passed several times. To the south of it was a saddle, beyond which again rose a rocky ridge, rising toward a point that was hidden from view by the high cliff to the south, over which came the great water fall that fed the large stream which was the main river. Opposite this saddle, and so to the east of the camp, was a valley in which grew some pine timber, and which seemed to rise by a gentle ascent to very high rocky peaks that were bare of snow.

"Which way shall we go, Hugh?" said Jack. "We have a lot of country to travel over, though of course we don't know how far we can go in any direction."

"No," said Hugh, "we've got to learn that for ourselves. Now the horses are a little tired; they've been traveling pretty steadily for two or three days now, what do you say to leaving them to feed here and crossing over the creek and walking up that snow slope to yon saddle, and seeing what there is on the other side of it? I reckon that here we're about as close to the Divide as we can get, and I guess likely that if we can reach that crest of rock that lies above the snow and look over it, we'll be seeing waters that flow into the Flat Head Lake, and so into the Pacific Ocean. If we can get up on to that ridge, we may be able to see what it is that lies off to the south of us here, which is toward the Cut Bank Pass."

"I'd like to do that," said Jack. "How do you feel about it, Joe?"

"Well," answered Joe, "I'd like to see it, only I don't want to go sliding round, the way I did the other day. I tell you I was scared that time. I couldn't hold myself back, and I didn't know what was going to happen to me."

"Yes," said Jack, "I was scared, too. It would be pretty bad luck if one of us got hurt and had to be nursed up here in the mountains, or packed in to the Agency to find a doctor."

"Well," said Hugh, "you boys have got to be careful wherever you go, and you must think about what your carelessness might cost other people."

"Now, if we go up over that snow, we've got to try to fix ourselves out for it. We'd better each one of us take a kind of walking stick to hold on with, and a rope, so that if we get in any place where the going is right bad we can tie ourselves together, and go mighty careful, one at a time, the way Jack was telling us the other day that those mountain-climbing fellows do in Europe. I'll take the ax and go over into this small timber across the creek, and cut some sticks for us to use."

The boys went with Hugh, and in a few minutes returned with three long slender poles, from which, with ax and knife, all the branches and roughness were soon trimmed. Hugh pointed the larger ends of the poles and then told the boys to thrust them into the fire so that they might become charred and hardened. In that way they would last and be effective much longer. Then Hugh took a couple of sling-ropes off the pack saddles, and coiling them up, put one over his right shoulder and under his left arm, and gave the other to Joe, who carried it the same way.

It was but a few minutes' walk over meadows, green with new springing grass and bright with wild flowers, to the ledges down which they passed to get to the stream. This was easily crossed by springing from rock to rock, and a little later they were slowly trudging over the old snow upon an icefield.

Just before reaching the snow, Hugh pointed out little brooklets running through the drift and gravel, whose milk-white waters showed that they came from under a glacier.

"You remember, I reckon, son," he said to Jack, "what Fannin told us about the way the masses of ice and the loose rocks under it ground up the soil and rock over which the ice passed, and made the water milky with this powdered rock. This must be what we see here, and we can be sure, I reckon, that this is a glacier."

"Yes," said Jack, "I guess there's no doubt about that, especially when we see that big moraine off there to the right. That must have been made by the glacier, though it looks as if that had been done a long time ago."

"That's what," said Hugh, "a long time ago. But seeing that moraine there makes me think that maybe it would be a good plan to get on that and walk along as far as it goes. I've seen these glaciers sometimes that were all cracked and full of holes, and sometimes the holes were bridged with snow, so that a man might break through the snow and fall into one of them. Let's get on the moraine and walk along that, and then when we have to walk over the snow, rope ourselves together."

Edging to the right, they soon came to the steep-sided moraine, and after a little search found a place where they could ascend it and walk along its very sharp crest. It was a place for careful walking, since the crest was a sharp knife-edge and they had to walk with one foot on either side of the ridge, with a drop of fifty or sixty feet below if a misstep were made. Before they had gone very far, Joe, who was bringing up the rear, called, "I don't like this very much. I am afraid I am going to fall."

"Nonsense," said Hugh, "you won't fall, but if you feel as if you were going to, you better sit down astride of the ridge, take your rope and tie one end of it about your waist and throw the other end to Jack. Then he can tie that about his waist, and I'll throw my rope back and he can tie himself to that, too."

Joe stopped and stood there for a moment and then called out, "No, I'm all right now. Go ahead and I'll follow, but don't go too fast."

They went on very deliberately, and presently Hugh reached the end of the moraine and stepped off on to the snow, where a moment later he was joined by Jack and Joe.

"Now," said Hugh, "let's put these ropes on, leaving a little slack in our hands. Then if any one of the three sees that one of the others is going to slip or fall, he must stand still and do the best he can to support his partner. Look out, too," he went on, "about where you're stepping. Try to follow as nearly as you can just where I go, and I'll try the snow with my stick, and if I find a soft place we'll go around it."

They started up the snow slope, directing their course toward the side of the great mountain, until they had come pretty close to it. Then Hugh turned off to the left, and plodded steadily along, vigorously punching the snow with his pole. Occasionally he stopped to rest and to draw a few deep breaths, and on one of these occasions Hugh said to Jack, "You can see, son, why I don't want to get close to the mountains here," and he waved his hand toward the rocks, at the foot of which Jack saw many places where recent snowslides from high up on the mountain had rushed down and thrown great masses of snow and even great pieces of rock far out on the slope which they were

ascending.

"As the sun gets higher," Hugh went on, "and the rocks get warm, this snow loosens its hold on the mountain, and sometimes a very little thing will break the last hold it has, and the whole mass will come rushing down. We don't want to get close enough under the rocks to have any of that stuff hit us."

"Well, White Bull," asked Joe, "why don't you keep far out from the mountain?"

"It's like this," replied Hugh; "you see out there in the middle of the ice the slope is steepest, and there in the middle is where the ice moves fastest. For that reason it's more likely to be cracked and broken there, and it's into those crevices that a man might slip and get hurt. We want to dodge those cracks in the ice on the one hand, and the falling snow and rocks on the other, and that is just what I'm trying to do."

"I tell you, Hugh," said Jack, admiringly, "you seem to see everything and to think of everything."

"Oh, no," replied Hugh, "there's lots of things that I don't see and lots of things that I don't think of, but, of course, a man that's been a long time in the mountains gets to know some things, and if he's got any sense he tries to keep himself out of danger."

For an hour or two more they climbed steadily, always keeping near the rim of the great basin, yet well away from the rocks, and at last they were on snow that was almost level, and well up toward a wall of rock, which sometimes stood up high, or again was broken down and so low that it was but six or eight feet above the level of the snow. Gradually they drew near to this wall, which was bare of snow and from which, therefore, Hugh anticipated no danger, until at last they had come so close to it that it seemed that they might reach it at almost any point.

Hugh kept on to a place where the wall was quite broken down, and then, turning, reached the edge of the snow and stepped across to the rocks, where the others joined him.

Through the opening where they were standing they could see mountains, and, taking two or three steps forward, looked into a black gorge full of snow and ice, from which a narrow valley led away to the southwest. It was the coldest, most desolate place that any of them had ever looked into. Below, a precipice fell away a sheer thousand feet, and then, piled up in the valley, one could not tell how thickly, was the snow, sometimes broken and showing green ice beneath it, and sometimes with an immense peak of rock sticking out through it. There was no life to be seen, and no green thing; only black rocks, white snow and dark ice.

"My," said Jack, "that's a terrible place."

"Yes," said Hugh, "it would be mighty lonesome for a man who was put down anywhere in there."

"I don't like to look at it," said Joe, "it scares me. I don't like these mountains. I like the prairie, where it's warm and where you can see a long way."

"Do you suppose that anything lives down there, Hugh?" said Jack.

"Well, I don't know," was the answer. "I reckon likely the goats go down there in summer to get cool, but how they get up here again if they go down there, I don't know. Maybe there are some places where a goat or a man could get down, but I can't see them from here."

"Well," said Jack, "I'd hate to go hunting down there, and I don't believe I'd go if I saw a dozen goats."

"No," said Hugh, "I don't reckon you would. I think it would be better to try to find some easier place to do your hunting. It's scary looking."

They spent a long time looking down into this gulf, and the longer they looked the more dark and forbidding it seemed. Hugh said that the waters from the melting snow and ice must run down into some river that entered Flat Head Lake, but what river it was he did not know, for he had never been in the mountains on the other side of the range.

At length, retreating from the edge of the precipice, they went out to the other side of the rocks, and, sitting down, ate the little lunch of fried sheep meat and bread that they had brought in their pockets. Then Hugh smoked his pipe, and presently they started to return to camp.

"How are you going back, Hugh?" asked Jack. "The way we came or some other way?"

"No," said Hugh, "the way we came is good enough for me. I know I can get back that way, and, if we try some other road, I don't feel sure that we won't meet some steep slope or some big crack that will stop us. I took notice as we came up this morning that the snow on the other side of the basin looks mighty steep, and I don't want to imitate Joe and go sliding around the way he did. Let's go back the way we came, and then if we want to try some other way, if we ever come here again, we can try it from the bottom, and if we get stopped we can go back to camp."

Adjusting their ropes, they started on the return journey. The heat of the sun had decidedly affected the snow, and it was much softer than when they had come up a few hours before. This made the walking easier, and their progress down the slope was much more rapid, so that the afternoon was only half spent when they found themselves once more in camp.

None of the horses were in sight, and they at once set out to look for them, and after considerable search found them all together not very far from camp, but a little way down the hill, where the grass grew thicker and greener than close to the camp.

"Now, boys," said Hugh, "I'll tell you what we've got to do. We can't afford to lose our horses and we can't expect them to stay close to camp where there's no grass, so let's take them over across the creek, and turn them loose on the other side, where the feed is better and they can't very well get away. If they come back and cross the creek to go down hill, we will hear them, and in the morning if any of them are gone from the place where we turned them loose, we can go down the hill on this side of the creek and catch them before they have gone far."

Hugh's advice was acted on, and then returning to the tent they found that it was time for supper.

After supper the question came up as to what they should do to-morrow. After talking for a little while, Hugh said, "Now, son, of course, we want to keep busy and see and do all that we can up here in the mountains, but then we must remember that we've got pretty nearly all the time there is. We don't need to make a labor of our fun and climb these hills every day. If you boys want to do so, you can just as well stay in camp for a day now and then, and kind of rest up. These rocks here are not going to get away, and you don't have to climb them all to-morrow. If you feel like doing it, we can all stay in camp to-morrow and take things easy, and then start out on our travels the next day."

"I think maybe that's a good idea, Hugh," said Jack. "We've been on the go pretty steadily ever since we came out, and maybe it would be a good idea to loaf for a day."

"I think so, too," agreed Joe, "and then something else, my eyes hurt me to-night. I think maybe the shine of the sun on the snow is what makes them pain."

"Yes," said Hugh; "we did a fool trick this morning. I didn't think of it until we got well up on the ice, and the sun commenced to get strong. We ought to have blackened our noses before we started out. We're all of us likely to have sore eyes to-morrow. I don't think it will last long nor hurt much, but the sun is strong now. You see it's mid-summer and, of course, the glare from the ice is pretty bad. After this, we must not start out over the snow without fixing up our faces."

So after a little more talk it was determined that the next day should be spent in and about camp.

The boys were lazy about rising the next morning, and when they got up they saw Hugh sitting by the fire smoking, and noticed that the brilliant sunlight which was cut off from the camp by the great mountain that rose to the east of them, was slowly creeping down the ice field across the valley. It was late.

"Why, Hugh," said Jack, "I guess I was more tired than I thought. I slept right through, and I had no idea it was as late as this."

"Yes," said Hugh, "it's pretty late. I've had breakfast cooked for two or three hours, and I reckon you'll find everything pretty well dried up when you get to eating; but no matter about that, the grub is ready for you; are you ready for it?"

"I'll be ready in about five minutes," said Jack, as he hurried down to the little stream where they had scraped out a pool where the water had collected and which made a very good place for washing their hands and faces. Presently they were all at breakfast and enjoying their food, even if it was dried up.

After Hugh had washed the dishes, he said, "Now, boys, I'm going over to the other side of the creek there to look at the horses and see how they're getting along, and I'll be back in two or three hours. Anybody that wants to go with me can, and anybody that wants to stay here can stay."

"I'll go," said Joe, "if you won't make me climb over that ice."

"No," laughed Hugh, "I promise not to take you on to the ice, but I want to see how those horses are making out over there, and if there's plenty of feed for them. They seemed to be well satisfied this morning."

"I don't believe I'll go," Jack said. "My eyes hurt me a little, and I think I'll just sit here in camp, and then if I get tired of doing that I'll take a little walk up the valley."

CHAPTER XIX

A FOUR-FOOTED HUNTER

HUGH and Joe started off to look at the horses, while Jack stayed in camp and watched the mountains, and noticed how their shadows grew shorter and shorter as the sunlight crept toward the place where he was sitting.

It was quiet here. Now and then a bird's note sounded in the trees above him, and once he heard the shrill whistle of a mountain woodchuck and always the dull sound of water falling over the cliff. Despite the quiet, there was yet much that was delightful in his surroundings.

As he sat there doing nothing, the forest, which to the casual traveler seems so silent and so destitute of life, began to give out little sounds and to show movements that Jack hardly expected. Down by the stream a friendly little water ouzel came along feeding, and stopping near the place where Jack sat, perched himself on a dry stick, and sat there for a long time, practicing his thrush-like song. He seemed to be a young bird and, though low, his song was very musical. He tried it over and over again, stopping sometimes when he thought he had made a mistake, and beginning anew with great patience and perseverance. He was a humble bit of life as he perched there, clad in quaker gray and hardly to be distinguished from a stub of the dead branch on which he rested, and Jack could not but admire the little fellow and be delighted by his liquid notes.

On one of the trees hung the shoulders of the sheep, which, shining red against the dark green, attracted the notice of a vagrant company of gray jays, which were flitting from point to point among the pines. Jack had seen many of these amusing rascals, sometimes known as meat hawks or camp robbers, and was always ready to admire their astonishing impudence.

A gray jay has little fear of human beings. He is likely to alight within three feet of one's face, and to wink at one in daring fashion. He will stand on the legs of a deer which is hanging in a tree while you are skinning it, and from his perch will dart down to the ground after every little bit of meat or fat that drops from the knife. One can entice them almost up to his hand by tossing bits of food to them, making each bit fall a little nearer than the last; yet, notwithstanding all their impudence and apparent tameness, they are watchful and well able to take care of themselves. They scan you suspiciously with keen black eyes, and are always on the alert.

A group of these bold fellows darted down from the tree tops, some of them perching on the meat in the tree, but two or three plunging close to the fire, and alighting with an audacious flirt and spreading of the tail, which made Jack feel that the camp belonged rather to the birds than to him, and that he, if he had any modesty at all, ought to go off and leave them to occupy it.

The jays raised themselves to their full height, as if standing on tiptoe, and looked round, and then seeming perfectly satisfied, hopped about and picked up little pieces of bacon, morsels of fat and crumbs of bread. Some of these they ate at once, some they took up and carried off bodily to a neighboring branch, where, holding the food under one foot, they hammered and tore the piece until it was so divided that they could swallow it.

One of the jays got hold of a bone of the sheep to which some flesh was clinging, and as it was too big to carry off, pecked at it until he got a beak full of the food, and then flew off to eat it, but immediately returned for more.

Jack noticed that the jays that were working at the meat hanging in the trees sometimes clung to it, hanging head down, like titmice, which, indeed, they somewhat resembled. They did not seem very good-natured among themselves, and Jack noticed that if two alighted on the same piece of meat, one of them always retired and waited

until the other had satisfied himself and gone off. Once or twice there seemed a possibility of an active quarrel between two of them. One of the two would draw himself up very straight indeed, slightly raise the feathers of his head and give a low flute-like whistle, and when the other saw this attitude and heard the warning he at once flew away.

Jack supposed that the jays would eat what they wanted, and then go away, but this was not the case. After satisfying their appetites, they continued their foraging, carrying off their booty and laying it up in secret storehouses on the branches, or in the little festoons of moss that hung from the trees.

Jack noticed that they seemed to store away quite a little bit of food in their throats, and that when they had all they could carry they went off and deposited it, and came back for more. The gray jays were so persistent and such wholesale robbers that Jack contemplated throwing sticks and stones at them to drive them away, but before he had made up his mind to do this another bird appeared, which at once scattered the jays.

While they were hard at work gathering plunder from the camp a dark shape flashed across the opening, and a moment later a beautiful Steller's jay alighted in a small tree near the tent, raised his long crest, looked about him for an instant, and then hopping from one branch to another, reached the topmost spray of the tree, where he hung for an instant, swinging backward and forward on a slender twig. Then he darted down and alighted on the meat, and after another glance about him, attacked it with much vigor, sinking his sharp bill into the tender flesh at every stroke. He was a fine fellow, this Rocky Mountain blue jay, beautiful in color and shape, with dark blue wings and tail, a smoky brown body and head and a long crest, with light blue dots on his forehead. He was trim, graceful, alert and quick in all his motions, but he remained about the camp only a little while and then dashed away into the forest.

After the blue jay had gone, and the coast was clear, the gray jays came back again, and so persistently did they assail the meat that Jack finally drove them off, and threw a coat over it to protect it.

The daring and impudent gray jays were not, however, the only birds about the camp. Modest little juncos—birds like the black snow bird of the East—now and then crept out of the forest and made cautious advances to the neighborhood of the fire, where they feasted on the bread crumbs that had been dropped on the ground.

When Jack first saw them they seemed to him the most timid, shrinking little creatures imaginable, and he was astonished later to see two of them almost come to blows over a choice bit of bread that one had found. When another bird approached the dainty which its discoverer was picking to pieces, the owner grimly lowered his head and bristled up his feathers, prepared to defend his rights. The other little bird threw itself into a defensive position as if quite prepared for battle, but the two did not quite come to blows. After eyeing each other for a few seconds one made a little hop to one side and then the other moved off, and presently the ruffled feathers were smoothed down.

Back in the woods, Jack could hear now and then dull tappings and drummings, which told him that the carpenters among the birds were at work, and after a while one of these woodpeckers dashed into camp, and, alighting near the top of an old stub, stood there for a while as if waiting to be admired.

He was a handsome fellow, with a glossy black back, relieved by white shoulder knots and wearing a satiny cap of red. He was also an energetic worker, but liked frequent intervals of rest.

He hammered away on the wood as if his life depended on it, making the chips fly this way and that, but when he secured the grub that his keen ear told him was concealed there and had swallowed it, he would sit still for some moments as if considering its excellent flavor.

A sudden movement of the gray jays, which still loitered about in the hope of being able to steal something more, occasionally alarmed this visitor and caused him to dodge around to the other side of the stub with a little shriek of alarm, but he would at once peer out from behind it and, finding that he had been frightened without cause, went to work again.

Two rather distant cousins of this woodpecker also came into the camp. They were banded three-toed woodpeckers, somewhat more modestly clad in black and white, with yellow silk caps.

Jack noticed that they worked most on the trunks of the higher trees and on the larger limbs, corkscrewing about them and pecking away in modest fashion, as if anxious to escape observation.

One of them crept into a hollow in the bark of a great spruce and stayed there for a long time, and Jack thought that he was taking a nap before starting out for his supper.

For some hours Jack sat there watching the birds and having a delightfully lazy time. Once in a while he looked across the creek to the place where the horses were, and could see two figures, which he knew must be Hugh and Joe. They seemed in no hurry to return to the camp, but had gone beyond the horses and almost to the crest of the hill above the old camp where the bears had been killed.

At length when the birds had all gone off and he felt a little tired of doing nothing, Jack took up his rifle and crossing the tiny stream which lay before the camp, clambered half a mile or more up the mountainside. It was steep, but not bad going.

There was little sign of game, but, presently, on one of the ledges, Jack walked into a little brood of Franklin's grouse; a mother and half a dozen young ones as big as a quail.

At first the old bird seemed rather uneasy, but not sufficiently alarmed to resort to any of the common tricks for leading an intruder away from her young, and Jack sat down on the ground close to them and watched them for a long time. They did not seem very active birds, nor did they display much energy in searching for food. They seemed to him rather lazy, and at last he rose and, leaving them, went on.

From his high perch he could see far into the distance and could now overlook the great cliff lying south of the camp, which he discovered to be the northern boundary of an immense snow field which ran back a long way to a vast mountain and to the ridges which extended from it on either hand.

"My," said Jack to himself, "that will be no fool of a climb to cross that ice and get on those ridges. We will have to do that before very long."

Looking down across the valley he could now see Hugh and Joe returning to camp, and turning about retraced his steps and got to the tent soon after the others.

The next morning Hugh proposed that they should explore still further the valley which lay to the east of the camp, up which they had ridden when they had been here before. There was no special reason for hunting, since they still had plenty of the sheep killed a few days before.

It took some little time to go across the stream and bring in the horses—the pack animals along with the others, since there was no place over where they were feeding where they could be tied up. The long level ledges of rock that formed the floor of the bench gave no opportunity for driving a picket pin down into the soil, and indeed the feed was so scattered that a picketed horse would get nothing to eat.

Jack suggested that they should tie up the pack animals near camp, but Hugh said no, that it would be better to let them follow, and perhaps graze in the little valley up which they were about to go. There was no likelihood that they would get out of this narrow trough, and even if they did not follow the saddle horses, they could be picked up on the return to camp and taken back to their feeding ground.

As the three riders passed among the scattered pines that grew in the valley they were again impressed by the vast height to which the mountains rose on either hand, by the stillness of the place, and by the glimpses they had from time to time of new snowfields and rock pinnacles.

When they had passed the little lake that lay high up in the valley Jack rode down to its edge, and saw there the fresh tracks of mountain sheep and one huge footmark of an immense bear. He got down from his horse and measured the length of this track, which was very large, reaching from the heel-plate of his rifle to the hammer.

Remounting, he followed Hugh and Joe, whose horses were clambering up a steep slope which presently ended in a tumbled mass of rock lying at the foot of a low cliff.

When the travelers reached the rocks they tied their horses to some little spruces and started to breast the steep ascent on foot.

It was a long, hard climb, but in no way dangerous, simply the mounting one after another of low ledges or steep rocky slopes, wearying to the legs and making the climbers puff.

At last they reached a very high point from which they could look out over the upper lake and see to the northeast a number of cold snowy basins. Over some mountain points they could see also what they believed to be the prairie shining in the hot sun, but the lower lake was hidden by the mountains.

"Come on now," said Hugh, "let us see if we can work our way over on to this next ridge to the south. If we can get there, I believe we can see down into the head of Red Eagle Creek."

Following the ridge as well as they could, and going down hill but little, the three soon stood on another crest of rock, from which they looked down into a long valley, carpeted at its head with grass and low willows, but farther down supporting large spruces and pines. In the timber a long way off shone a bit of silver, which Hugh told them was Red Eagle Lake.

"Who is the lake named after, Hugh?" asked Jack. "It cannot be our Red Eagle that we saw back at the Agency."

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's just who it is. A man that thought a great deal of him came up that valley and found the lake and named it after the old man, and the creek and the valley take their name from the lake, I reckon."

"That's interesting, Hugh," remarked Jack, "I'm glad somebody has given Indian names to these mountains. I think that is the way that mountains, lakes and rivers ought to be named. The first thing we know there won't be any Indians left, and unless we name the main features of the land after them, the Indians will all be forgotten."

"Well," said Hugh, "I don't know but you're right. It seems to me a great deal better to call things and places after Indians than to call them after the names of European cities. Haven't you got a Rome in New York State? I know we've got a Paris in my State, and I don't think either name is a very good one for an American city."

"Not a bit good," replied Jack.

While Hugh and Jack had been discussing names and places, Joe had been studying the mountainsides, to see whether he could discover any game. Presently he picked up a little bit of snow and tossed it toward Hugh and Jack. It hit Hugh's leg and he turned around and looked at Joe, who made, with his lips, a side motion toward the valley, and after a moment's search Hugh, and then a little later, Jack, discovered several sheep feeding far below them.

Taking out their glasses, they sat down on the rocks and began to search the valley for sheep, and before long discovered a number.

Jack thought that there must be eighteen or twenty, though it was not easy to count them, for some would occasionally disappear, hidden behind some bush or rise of the ground, while others would be found in unexpected places.

Those feeding at the upper end of the valley seemed to be rams, some of them with very large horns, while those farther away were harder to identify, but appeared to be ewes and lambs.

"Well, son," said Hugh, "there are your sheep all right, but as near as I can see they're pretty safe."

"I guess they are, Hugh," answered Jack. "I don't see any way of getting at them without going down into that valley, and the way it looks to me you couldn't go and come in the same day."

"No," said Hugh, "it's a long way."

They spent some hours looking at the sheep, all of which after a while stopped feeding, and the ewes and lambs lay down on the grass, while most of the rams left the valley and climbed some distance up the rocks and lay down.

"Well," said Hugh, "I don't know but we've seen enough of Red Eagle Valley and its bunch of sheep, especially as we're not going to get any of them. What do you say to turning round and going back to camp?"

The boys were ready, and they started back, following along the rim of rocks on which they were until they came to the high cliffs, down which they had to climb to get to their horses.

They were descending these, sometimes jumping from ledge to ledge, and in bad places lowering themselves by their hands, when Hugh, who was a little below the others, gave a low hiss, which caused the boys to stand motionless. After a moment he said in a low voice, "Come on down to where I am, and be quick about it."

Cautiously and silently the boys descended to the broad ledge on which Hugh stood.

He pointed across the valley to a mountainside not more than three hundred yards away and said, "Do you see that hill there with the ridge running down toward camp? Well, a minute ago three young rams passed behind that, and behind the rams came a lion stalking them."

"Well, what became of them, Hugh?" asked Jack. "Are they still behind there?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "I haven't seen them come out and I don't know as we will, but if the lion jumps on one of them, the other two ought to show up soon."

Almost as he spoke they saw the three young rams climbing toward the upper ledges of the mountain, evidently undisturbed as yet, and a moment or two later the panther appeared on the trail that the rams had followed, eagerly looking after them.

The sheep climbed higher and higher and then stopped, and after standing for a little while, two of them lay down.

Meanwhile, their pursuer had not been able to advance, for if he had followed the trail which the rams had taken they would surely have seen him and run off. Two or three times he put up his head to look at them and then drew it back again.

"What can we do, Hugh?" asked Jack. "I'd like to get a shot at that lion, but he's a long way off, and doesn't show himself."

"No, you can't do anything now," declared Hugh, "except wait. Maybe if the rams move, he will come out so that you can shoot at him with some chance of hitting. As it is now, it's a thousand to one that you wouldn't come anywhere near him and would just scare the game and make a noise for nothing. If you were 'round on the other side of that hill you could probably get a good shot, but so you could if you had wings and could fly right over the beast."

"Nothing to do but wait here, I expect?" said Joe.

"Nothing else," said Hugh.

Eager though Jack was to get a shot at the panther and strong as were his sympathies with the sheep, he could not help being interested as he sat there and watched the three rams which stood unconsciously so near their deadly enemy, and the patience and caution of the great cat. He hardly marked the passage of time, so anxious was he to see the lion as it took an occasional peep at the sheep, and then settled back again out of sight. At last, however, he whispered to Hugh, "Isn't there anything we can do, Hugh? I'd like that lion."

"I don't know of anything unless we want to end the show right here. If you make a move the rams will see us and go off, and likely enough when the lion sees them go away scared he will see us, and then he'll go."

For a long time they sat there, but at length the two rams that had been lying down got up, and after moving about a little, started on, passing out of sight, round the side of the mountain, and long before they had disappeared the lion was cautiously creeping after them.

"Now, Hugh," said Jack, "can't we go over there and follow that lion and perhaps get him?"

"Well," said Hugh, "there's a chance, of course, of getting him and a good many chances that we may not see him again. If you feel like it, we can get up on the ledge along which the animals passed. We'll make quite a procession, I think, the sheep in the lead, the lion after the sheep, and we three after the lion. I think it will be rather a funny sight to see, and I'm willing to be one of the procession, if you like."

With due caution, and making as little noise as possible, they crossed over to the hill and started in pursuit of the lion.

As Hugh supposed, the chase was fruitless. When they got round on the other side of the hill they could see the three rams a long way off descending the rocks toward the meadow at the head of Red Eagle Valley, and after a careful inspection with the glasses the lion was also seen, still following them, but some distance behind.

"You see," said Hugh, "we can't catch that lion and the lion can't catch the sheep. I believe we might as well turn round and go back to camp. We can come up here again some day before long and kill a sheep, if we need one, I reckon, and possibly get a shot at the lion, but we can't to-day."

On the way down they picked up the pack animals, and as they passed the camp Hugh stopped to cook supper, while the boys took the horses across the river and turned them loose to feed, returning to camp on foot.

The day had been warm, and from the mountains all around them, sometimes loud and sometimes faint and far off, came the rumble and roar of avalanches sliding down the heights.

As they were eating supper, and the sun was sinking over the great mountain to the west, Hugh pointed toward the mountain, and they saw what seemed to be the greater part of a vast snow bank start, at first moving slowly and then more rapidly, slide for some distance down the mountainside, pour in a cloud of what looked like white spray over the great cliff at the mountain's foot and then pile in a bank at the base of the cliff.

"Lots of snow falling to-day," said Hugh.

"Lots of it," assented Jack. "But, say, Hugh, is this going to keep up all night?"

"No," said Hugh, "just as soon as it gets a little bit cold these slides will stop falling, and then if the sun shines hot to-morrow they'll begin again toward night."

"Don't the animals sometimes get caught in these slides, White Bull?" asked Joe.

"I don't know," replied Hugh. "Sometimes I've thought they do. One time I found a bunch of sheep bones at the foot of a cliff lying all mixed up together, and I had an idea that maybe they'd been caught in a snowslide and killed there. I heard, too, of a man that found half a dozen goats once in just such a place, and he thought they had been killed by a slide.

"In neither case had the animals been torn to pieces or skinned. Their hair and wool lay all about them. Still, I reckon these mountain animals are pretty well able to take care of themselves, and that they don't often get into places where snowslides can harm them. Nowadays, most of the sheep live too high up to be caught by slides."

"You say nowadays, Hugh, as if there had been a time when the sheep did not live high up. I have always thought that they were a mountain animal and always lived among the rocks," said Jack.

"Hold on, son," said Hugh. "I don't know if I've ever talked with you about these things before, but even if I haven't you've seen sheep down on the prairie yourself, where there were no mountains, living around among the Bad Land Bluffs just where the black-tailed deer or elk may be found, and where the buffalo often go. What about the first sheep that you ever killed? Was that in the mountains?"

"That's so, Hugh; you are certainly right. Sheep don't need the mountains."

"No," said Hugh, "they don't. Of course, they always try to run to broken land when they're scared, but that broken land need not necessarily be mountain land. I have seen sheep a good many times feeding out on the flat prairie and a long way from any hills; feeding with the antelope, in fact. Haven't I ever told you old Hugh Monroe's story about how the Piegans used to hunt sheep in old times?"

"I don't know, Hugh," replied Jack. "If you have I've forgotten it."

"Well," said Hugh, "all through the Piegan country there are great big buttes rising up out of the prairie, and in old times there used to be lots of sheep on all these buttes. They fed on the prairie down below, and then if they got scared for any reason, they'd run up on the rocks and get away. Old man Monroe says that in old times when he was a young man the Indians used to start out on horseback and go to one of these buttes where sheep lived and make a big circle around it. Then two or three of them would climb up on top of the butte and run the sheep off the top. Then they would go down to the prairie and the horsemen would chase them and kill them. They used to do this only occasionally, when they wanted mountain sheep hides for war shirts or women's dresses."

"Is it possible that the sheep here were ever so plentiful that they could be killed in that way, Hugh?" said Jack.

"Yes," said Hugh, "there's no doubt about either of those things. A sheep can run pretty fast and can climb well, but on the level a good fast dog can overtake it after a fairly short chase. When I first came into the country, the Indians used to say that of all the animals, except the buffalo, the sheep were the gentlest and easiest to kill."

"Well, they've changed since then, haven't they, Hugh?" said Jack.

"Yes," replied Hugh, "they're pretty sharp now. We saw to-day one of the worst enemies that a sheep has, and one that along the mountains here probably kills more than all the men that are hunting them do."

"What was that, White Bull?" asked Joe, "the lion?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's just what it is. You see, the lion is at work all the time. He's got to eat every two or three days, and to eat he's got to kill something. Now and then he may pick up a bird or a rabbit or a woodchuck, but his main dependence is these animals here in the mountains. High up like this there are not so many lions, and I was surprised to see that one to-day, but lower down there are a good many, and, of course, in summer they work up higher. On the other side of the range, where deer are plenty, they kill lots of deer and a few elk, but they also kill a great many sheep and goats, most of them, perhaps, young ones.

"You know about their killing goats, son, for you've seen them do it, and you remember that story that I was telling you the other day about a lion jumping on what he took to be a sheep. Now, there's a place down south of here on Boulder Creek up near its head, where two men, both of whom I know well, Colonel Pickett and Billy Hofer, found eighteen or twenty skulls of sheep all by one rock. They had been killed at different times. Some of them were mighty old and all falling to pieces, and some of them were pretty fresh. They had all been killed under a high rock, not in a place where they could have been hit by a snowslide, but in a place where a lion could lie by the trail without being seen, but could himself see both ways. The rock was right over the trail, so close that a lion could jump right down on it.

"The two men who found these skulls were both good mountain men and they both believe that this was a place where a lion lay and killed his food as the sheep passed along the trail under the rock.

"There's another interesting thing about sheep that most people don't know. A sheep is awful easy tamed, especially if you get him young. I knew of one owned by a man in Salt Lake, caught when a little lamb and as tame as any dog. He was good-natured and liked to be petted. He spent most of his time lying on the roof of the house, but sometimes he'd jump down and feed in the yard and sometimes go quite a way along the street. Sometimes the dogs would chase him and he'd come back as hard as he could pelt, and then jump up on the roof, where he was safe.

"I once knew an Indian that had a lamb that was perfectly tame and was not afraid of the Indian dogs around the house. This Indian lived in a cabin and was always complaining about the sheep because it would jump up on the windowsill, sometimes breaking a light of glass out of the window.

"You take a young sheep, though, and tame him and let him grow up into a big ram and he isn't afraid of anything and is likely to get real cross; and I expect that a big ram can hit a terrible blow with those horns of his.

"I reckon there are sheep found all the way up and down the mountains, maybe from the Arctic to Mexico. I've heard of a white sheep up North and of a black one, and I've been told that sheep were plenty down in the hot desert country in California and Arizona, but I never have been down there and don't know anything about them. They say that down there they kill 'em by watching the water holes."

"I suppose," said Jack, "that there are not many sheep found on the prairie now, are there?"

"No," replied Hugh, "I guess there are very few, if any at all. You see the prairie is getting covered with cattle now, and where there are cattle there are cowboys, and the cowboys don't like anything better than the fun of chasing and roping any wild animal that they come across.

"A sheep don't bear chasing very well. If they get much harried in any place, they get up and move away to where they think they'll be safer."

By this time the sun had set and it was quite dark. The roar of the snowslides, heard less and less frequently as the air grew cooler, had now ceased, and before very long Hugh smoked a final pipe, and advised all hands to turn in.

CHAPTER XX

CLIMBING A GREAT MOUNTAIN

At breakfast the next morning it was decided that they should try to learn something about the great mass of ice that lay in the basin south of the camp, which supplied the water for the river that fell over the cliff.

"Now, if we're going up there," said Hugh, "we've got a long tramp over the ice, and we want to go as well fixed as we can. We ought to have one gun with us, but we must go roped and take our sticks along. We may find that the ice up there slopes sharply and is smooth, and we ought to have something to help ourselves with."

"All right," chimed in both boys, "you tell us what to do and we'll do it."

"Well," said Hugh, "the first thing is to point the ends of those walking sticks again, then shove them into the fire to harden. Next take some charcoal and break it up in your fingers and blacken your noses and cheek bones and your faces under the eyes. Each one of you ought to have a handkerchief or a rag to tie around your heads over the bridge of your nose if the sun gets very bright. That's a good protection against snow-blindness."

The preparations that Hugh advised were soon made, and the sun had not yet showed itself above the eastern mountains when the three set out on foot. For several hundred yards they had to climb a steep slope, and then as they went on toward the precipice, they came to a level bit of land, over which were strewn immense masses of stone, huge monoliths that made Jack think of the stories that he had read about the ruins in the old places of worship of the Druids.

Beyond this level land was a talus fallen from the cliff and then a morainal trough, up which they passed to the ice above. From this point the whole basin of the great glacier was spread out before them, and Hugh began to examine it with a view to making the ascent by the easiest and safest path.

Hugh studied the situation with the field glasses for a long time and then, passing them to Jack, asked, "What do you see, son? Which road seems to be the best?"

"Well, Hugh," answered Jack, after he had looked over the ground, "it's a little hard for me to say, for I don't know much about these places. The shortest way, of course, is to cross over to the right and try to climb up the rocks there, but the snowslides and rockfalls seem to be coming down all the time, and I shouldn't suppose that would be safe. The same thing is true about going close to the mountains on the left, and, of course, we can all see that we can't go up in the middle. It looks to me, too, as if the ice were steeper on the right hand than it is on the left, so I should say that it was better to keep to the left, just as near the middle of the glacier as we can without getting in among crevices."

"What do you say, Joe?" asked Hugh.

"I don't know," said Joe. "I guess I'll just follow where you go, but it seems to me that Jack's talk is good."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I think so, too, and I believe that's the best way for us to go. I ain't so much afraid of falling in those cracks in the ice as I am of being hit by one of those rocks that comes down a thousand feet or two. Even a little bit of a rock could crack a man's head open, and if one of those big rocks ever hits him I believe it would go right through him."

"I think Jack is right and we'd better go where he has said. Now, before we start, we must tie ourselves together with this rope, and if we get to a place where the ice is any way cracked we'll have to go pretty slowly, so that only one man can fall in at a time, and the other two can pull him out."

They started without further delay; and now for two or three hours followed a slow plodding walk up the face of the ice. Sometimes they came to a long crevasse, which they had to go around, but at no time did they approach very near the edge of the snowfalls. Several times, however, they passed near great stones which had fallen from the mountain far out onto the ice.

At one point, when they had passed over three-fourths of the distance, they heard a low, rumbling sound behind them, and, turning, all three were in time to witness the fall of a great avalanche, which threw itself far out onto the ice.

It was afternoon when they found themselves immediately under the ridge of rocks which was their destination, and a little search showed them a place where they could get off the ice and on to the rocks, and they were soon reclining on the grassy soil crowning the slope. There they rested while Hugh smoked a pipe, and then went on. To their left, that is on the side of this ridge of rocks opposite from the one by which they had approached, lay another great mass of ice, which, however, sloped the other way, and which Hugh said must run into the Flat Head or else into the head of Cut Bank River.

The crest over which they were passing was substantially level, and before them stood the tall rounded summit of the great mountain, the top of which they hoped to reach.

When they had come to the end of the ridge, it was a short climb down to the ice, and passing over this for a short distance, they came to more rocks and, surmounting these, found themselves at the edge of a dome-shaped snow bank, which seemed to stretch away by a gentle slope to the very top of the mountains. To the north was the slope they had to cross, and immediately below the edge of this a tremendous drop of perhaps a thousand feet to another ice field below.

"Here's a bad place," said Hugh; "if this snow is real hard there's a chance that some one of us may slip. We must go across slowly. Come to the edge and then we will go forward, one at a time, always keeping the rope tight between us, the two men that are standing still anchoring themselves solidly by means of their sticks. If one of us should slip he'll need all the help the other two can give him."

Hugh put his gun down on the rocks and said, "I reckon I'll leave that here till I come back. I may want both my hands crossing this snow."

When they started they proceeded with great caution, following Hugh's instructions. Occasionally the snow was so hard that it was impossible for them to dig their feet into it, and it was even difficult for them to punch their sticks down into it. Each one as he advanced went slowly and carefully, while the other two stood still to support him in case anything happened.

If the traverse was slow, it was steady and safe; and before very long the three found themselves clambering over the broken rock near the top of the mountain. At the moment, they had little thought for the wonderful view, since the minds of all were turned toward the summit which lay before them, and now only a few steps distant.

A moment later and the peak was gained, and the three threw themselves down in a sheltered place among the great rocks that formed the mountain crest, where the view was entrancing in its extent and grandeur.

In all directions, as far as they could see, mountains lay beyond mountains. Far away to the north were two which seemed higher than any of those nearer at hand. The whole circle of the horizon could be seen except that, to the north, the view was interrupted by the tall mountain close to them, which equaled in height the one on which they were sitting, and behind them to the south was another peak equally high. Away to the westward the eye traveled without interruption over lower rocky peaks and great stretches of forest, until it met other mountain ranges running north and south, so far away that only their dim outlines could be seen. To the north there was no such low country as to the west, for peaks and ridges thrust their sharp points up toward the sky, and one gained the impression of a world set on edge. Although they could not see them, they knew that between the ridges and beyond each peak lay some narrow valley or canyon, and that only by following such water courses could the country be traversed.

Immediately before and below them lay the great ice that they had just passed over, and behind or to the south, that other extensive ice field, which Hugh now said flowed into a tributary of the Flat Head River, and which, years before, had been named after a man who crossed the mountains through the Cut Bank Pass, the Pumpelly Glacier.

"I tell you, Hugh," said Jack, "this is a wonderful place up here. It beats anything I ever saw. I can't help wondering how these mountains got tipped up in this way, and what the force was that changed them from level or rolling ground to these sharp peaks and ridges."

"Well, son," replied Hugh, "you can't prove it by me, but I expect that most of these valleys, if not all of them, were cut out by the ice, just as we see below us this valley here being cut out."

"I suppose that is so," Jack replied, "but it doesn't seem quite possible to me."

"Well," answered Hugh, "you must remember that if our understanding about these glaciers is correct, they may have been working for thousands of years, and if they only ground away six inches or a foot of the rock under them in each year, a thousand years or so would make a mighty deep valley. And besides that, I reckon that in those ancient times these glaciers were a heap bigger and heavier than they are now, and maybe they moved a lot faster, and in that case they'd work a lot faster, wouldn't they?"

"I suppose they would," agreed Jack. "But it's mighty hard to realize such things. You see we human beings are such little bits of things, and we live so short a time, that it's mighty difficult to comprehend the forces of nature that never stop working."

"You bet your life it is," said Hugh. "It's only within a few years, since I began to talk to people who understood something about these things, that I began to look back a little. In my young days, so long as I had my blankets and a few charges of ammunition I never thought much about what was behind me or what was ahead. Of course, I always looked out for myself as well as I could, but I never thought very much about the world and the things that are going and have gone on in it. But of late years it's different, and when a man does think about those things it kind o' takes his breath away once in a while."

"That's so," replied Jack. "People say that we can't count the stars in the sky, and that we can't understand how many miles away from the earth the sun or the moon is, and, of course, that's true, but it's just as hard for us to understand some of the things that are going on right under our noses, as it is to understand time or space."

Up on this mountain peak the wind blew cool, and it was not long before they were ready to turn about and begin the descent.

"We'll go back the way we came," said Hugh, "and we want to go just as carefully over this snow as we did when we were coming up. Only one man must move at a time, and the others must fix themselves firmly, so as to hold him if he slips."

The traverse back across the snow was made in safety, and before very long they found themselves on the low rocky ridge over which they must descend to return over the ice.

Before leaving it they sat down under the lee of the ridge in the warm sun, and while Hugh smoked a pipe the others looked out over the wide white field before them.

Presently Joe called out, "Look at the sheep," and pointed in front of him.

Jack looked, and at first could see nothing, but after Joe had told him where to look, he saw half a dozen tiny dark objects moving swiftly about without order over the ice a couple of miles away. Borrowing the glasses, he looked at them, and could plainly see that they were four-legged animals running to and fro over the ice field, apparently playing with each other.

Hugh looked at them and said that they were indeed sheep, as Joe had said, but confessed that he only called them sheep because he knew that no other animals could be found in such a place.

In the soil of the rocky ridge where they were sitting Jack discovered some beautiful pink flowers, but neither Hugh nor Joe could give them a name. They grew on exceedingly short stems from little round bunches of green leaves shaped like a pincushion and with the general aspect of what Jack remembered in Eastern gardens as phlox.

He would have liked to take some of these flowers back with him to have them identified, but had no way of carrying them.

Still roped together, the three once more descended to the ice, and started toward camp.

The walking was easier now, partly because it was down hill and partly because the snow had been softened by the sun's heat and gave them a better foothold.

Hugh advised the boys to tie their handkerchiefs over the bridge of their noses, and to pull their hats well down on their foreheads to shield their eyes as much as possible from the glare of the sun.

As they went on down the glacier, they could see that even since they had passed up in the morning new cracks had opened in the ice and some that they had gone around on the way up had lengthened. Two or three of these were so narrow that they could step across them, but Hugh still kept as far from the rocks as the broken condition of the glacier would permit.

They were walking along, the boys perhaps a little carelessly, though Hugh's vigilance never seemed to relax, when Jack's left foot seemed to meet with no resistance as it struck the snow, and in a moment he was in a crack or hole in the ice far above his waist. Luckily he had turned his staff as he fell, so that it reached across the crack and held him, and but little strain came on the ropes which attached him to his companions. Hugh had heard the fall and had braced himself, and a second later Joe had done the same.

It took but a moment to pull Jack out onto the hard ice, and Joe, making a detour to the left, avoided the opening into which Jack had fallen. When they were all once more together and on the hard ice, Hugh said to Jack, "Son, you're old enough not to have done a trick like that."

"Yes, Hugh," replied Jack, "I know that now, and I'm sorry and ashamed. If I had followed in your tracks, I wouldn't have given you and Joe a scare, and I wouldn't have had one myself. Every now and then I do some stupid thing that makes it seem as if this was my first trip out West, and I didn't know anything at all. I was thinking of something else besides the trail and looking off toward the valley, and I left your tracks and tumbled into that hole."

"Well," replied Hugh, "of course, you're new to traveling around on the ice. You can't be expected to know much about it, but you can be expected to look out for yourself as well as you know how, and to try hard not to make other people uncomfortable. I guess Joe was scared up good when he saw you go down, and I know I wasn't a bit

comfortable."

"No," said Jack, "I know you weren't and I know it's a good thing for you to talk to me in this way. Your talking doesn't make me feel any worse than I feel already, and I hope I've learned a lesson, but, of course, I don't know."

"We all make mistakes every day," said Hugh, "and it's no ways likely that you've made your last; only, as I've told you before, try not to make the same mistake twice. If you do that it shows that you don't learn anything."

The rest of the way to camp passed without adventure, and when they reached the moraine above the cliff, they took off the ropes and scrambled down the rocks, when a short walk, and a slide by the boys down a long snow bank, brought them to the little stream by which the tent was pitched.

The sun hung low over the western mountain and all were hungry after their long walk, and they at once busied themselves getting supper.

All through the evening Jack's heart was low. He was sorry to have made such a blunder as he had, and knew that his carelessness had disappointed Hugh. It was certainly humiliating to have done what he felt Hugh might justly call a "fool trick."

As they sat around the fire, Hugh, who for some time had been smoking thoughtfully, said, "Well, boys, we've seen quite a lot of things up here on this patch of mountains, and time is passing. What do you say to turning around and going back? I'd surely like to stay up here longer, but we must remember that son here has got to get back East, and we have quite a little way to go before we strike the railroad. I reckon if we roll to-morrow morning we ought to be able to get down to the inlet by night. We can stop there for a day or two and hunt and fish a little, and then pull out for the Agency and from there go to Benton."

"I suppose we've got to go before long, Hugh," replied Jack. "I was counting up the days only the day before yesterday, and figured that we hadn't much more time here in the mountains. I hate to go, but there's nothing else to do, I suppose."

"It seems to me that each year I dislike more and more to go back. I've never had such good times as I've had with you. I think of them all winter when I'm back in New York; for about six months I think of the good time I had last year, and then for the other months I think of the good time I'm going to have next year. I hope we'll have lots more of them."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I hope we will. I don't know, though; I'm getting old, and I don't think I get about quite as easily as I used to. Of course, I can ride and walk as far as I could when you first came out, but it's sure that a time is coming when I'll get crippled up and won't be able to do as much as I can now. I've got some old hurts that sometimes bother me a whole lot now in winter, when I'm not moving around very much, and the older a man gets the more things like that trouble him."

"Well," said Jack, "you can still ride farther and do more than any man I ever saw, and I guess it will be a long time before you are laid up."

The next morning Hugh roused the boys while it was still only gray dawn and sent them across the creek to bring in the horses, and by the time they returned breakfast had been cooked, the tent taken down and many of the packs made up, and an hour or two later the little train was retracing its steps toward the lower country.

As they started, Hugh said, "Of course, we could make quite a cut off in distance by going down on this side of the creek and I don't believe we'd have much trouble, but then none of us have been over the ground. We might find some place where we couldn't get the horses down easily, and worse than all, we might have trouble crossing the river. It'll take us an hour or more longer perhaps to go around the way we came, but that way we know we can keep out of trouble, and that's the way we better go."

All day long they traveled down the river, following the trail that they had made coming up. At one point, one of the horses mired in a bog-hole and there was some difficulty in getting him out, but by pulling and urging and getting some willow brush and throwing it under him so that he could get his front feet on it, he finally managed to pull himself out without having his load taken off.

As they were passing through an open place, from which they could see the towering precipice of the great mountains across the creek, Joe remarked, "I think I see three bears."

All stopped and looked in the direction in which he pointed, and there, sure enough, far up on the precipice above them, they saw one very large bear and two much smaller ones, industriously feeding below the ledges. They did not see the travelers, but were much too far off to be shot at. Joe asked Hugh at what he estimated the distance, and Hugh said, "Anywhere from six hundred yards to half a mile."

Of course, Jack was strongly tempted to suggest that they should stop here and try to hunt the bears, but he knew that the prospect of getting them was small and so said nothing about it, and after watching the unconscious animals for a time, the train moved on.

The sun was only an hour or two high when they descended the point of rocks and struck into the open trail along the upper lake. Here Hugh increased the speed of his horse, and the boys, keeping the pack horses up, reached the inlet just before dark and made camp.

CHAPTER XXI

TROUBLE WITH WHISKEY TRADERS

THE travelers remained here for several days, climbing the mountains to hunt, fishing and leading a generally lazy life. The weather was bright and clear, with a warm sun, and these idle days were greatly enjoyed.

In some of the deep holes in the inlet were great schools of monster trout, to the capturing of which Jack gave much time. Crossing the inlet and going up on the flat to where the great river left the lakes, he found several places where he could cast his flies over the swift-running water, and from behind the great rocks over which the stream flowed in a deep smooth current he took some goodly fish.

Joe delighted to sit on the bank and watch the casting, for he said, "Jack, some day you'll get one of those big fellows, and he'll smash that little limber pole of yours all to pieces. That's what I'm waiting for."

On one or two occasions Jack almost feared that Joe was to have his wish; the biggest fish that he caught came very near taking away his tackle, for the fish was so powerful that when he ran down stream Jack was obliged to race along the shore as hard as he could, jumping from rock to rock, and plowing through shallow water before he got to a deep pool where the fish stopped of its own accord, and he was able to recover his line.

It seemed to Jack a full hour before he had tired the fish sufficiently to tow it on its side into the shallow water of a little bay.

Joe, who had followed him in much excitement, went around and very cautiously approached the fish from the water and at last threw himself upon it and getting his fingers into its gills dragged it triumphantly ashore.

When it was fairly landed Jack was astonished at its size, for it seemed to him bigger than any Hudson River shad that he had seen, and when he took it to camp, Hugh, lifting it with one hand, declared that it weighed more than eight pounds.

They had all talked several times about starting for the Agency, but were reluctant to leave this charming spot, and still remained. One afternoon when Jack and Joe returned from fishing at the head of the inlet stream, they saw just below their own tent another, about which two or three men were moving. Moored to the shore of the inlet was a flat-bottomed boat by which the men had come, though Jack could not understand how they had pushed it up the swift stream to this point.

As they came to the border of the stream and were about to ride in, Jack said to Joe, "Do you know any of those men, Joe?"

"Yes," said Joe, "two of them I know, that white man and the half-breed down by the water. The white man is John Williamson and the half-breed is Louis Legros. I don't know that other big man."

When they unsaddled, Jack noticed that Hugh, who had come out of the tent, looked rather grave, and after the horses had been turned loose, he said to the boys in a low voice, "Those fellows down below here look to me like whiskey traders. There has been a bunch of Bloods up here to-day, and when they went away some of them were drunk, I think. These men have been singing and making plenty of noise this afternoon, and they may give us a little trouble. I want you boys to be careful and not have any words with them, no matter what they do. If there's going to be any rowing or jawing let me do the talking."

While supper was cooking, the neighboring tent grew more and more noisy. The men there were singing and shouting and sometimes giving Indian warwhoops, and once or twice the big man came out of the tent and, calling out, invited the three travelers to come over and have a drink with them, but they returned no answer to the invitation.

The sun was still an hour or two high, and Hugh, Jack and Joe were eating their supper, when suddenly a shot sounded from the neighboring tent and at the same time a chip flew from the front tent pole, showing that the ball must have passed three or four feet over their heads.

Hugh called out, "Be careful with your shooting irons over there. You came pretty near hitting one of us," but the only reply was a volley of angry curses from the adjoining tent.

A few minutes later the big man came out and stood not far from his own tent and raising a revolver which he held in his right hand, fired two shots in quick succession over the heads of the three who were still eating. The boys did not know what to do, but Hugh slowly rose to his feet, and saying to the boys, "Keep quiet now and don't mix up in this unless you are told to," walked over to the big man.

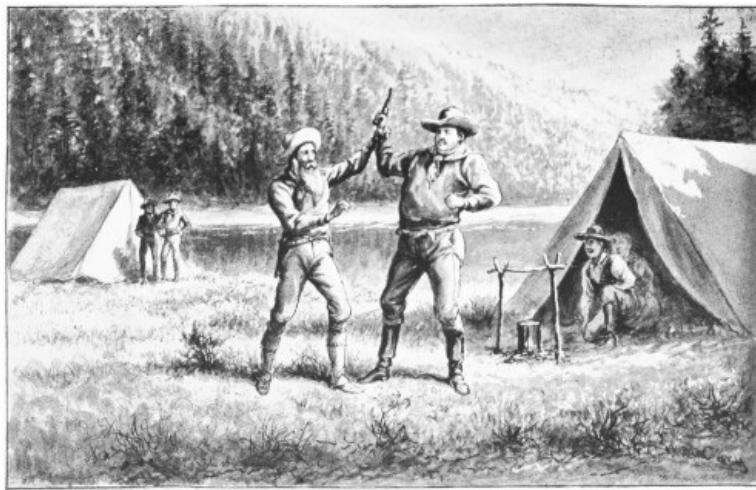
As Hugh walked up close, the big man began to abuse him violently and once or twice half raised his hand to point the revolver at him, but evidently thought better of it.

Meanwhile, the man's two companions had come out of the tent, the white man laughing in a silly fashion and the half-breed more or less frightened and earnestly imploring his companion, whom he addressed as Tony, to come away.

The latter, however, seemed fascinated by Hugh, and no longer moved nor spoke, while Hugh took hold of his wrist, wrenched the revolver away from him and threw it on the ground, where Jack picked it up. Then turning Tony about, so that he faced his friends, Hugh said: "Now you three men break camp quick and get out of here. I won't have you round any longer."

Hugh's speech seemed to break the spell under which the man had been laboring, for he raised his fist and struck at Hugh. Before the blow reached him, however, Hugh had thrown his arms about the big man just below the shoulders, pinioning both his arms to his sides.

Tony tried to free himself, but he could not. He struggled violently and then tried to kick, but Hugh stood firm, seeming to hold the man tighter and tighter to his chest, and in a moment Tony had forgotten all about fighting and was screaming with the pain of the pressure.



"HUGH TOOK HOLD OF HIS WRIST AND WRENCHED THE REVOLVER AWAY FROM HIM."—Page 292

It was exciting to both the boys, and they waited, not knowing what to do, astonished to see this man, who looked like a giant, held as if he were a little child by Hugh, who, though tall, was rather slender, and on account of his white hair and beard appeared to them venerable.

After a few seconds Tony was weeping and praying to be released, and promising to do anything he was told to if only he were set free. Hugh somewhat relaxed his embrace and said, "Now, you Williamson and you Louis, are you ready to go?"

"Yes, Hugh," said the white man, "you bet we'll go quick;" and Louis assented.

"Have you got any arms, any pistols or guns?" said Hugh.

"Yes," said Williamson, "I've got my rifle here and Louis has a six shooter."

"Well," said Hugh, "bring 'em out and put 'em on the ground here, with all your ammunition, and we'll take 'em into the Agency and leave them there for you." Then, raising his voice a little, he called, "Boys, come over here."

Jack and Joe came up and Hugh said, "Now, take these men's guns and ammunition and carry them over to our tent and then come back."

The men gave up their arms and cartridges, and the boys took them away and then returned.

"Now," said Hugh, "take down that tent and get everything you've got into the boat. Now, Tony," he said, addressing the man whom he held, "if I let you go, will you be quiet, and go and get into that boat and go away?"

"You bet I will," said Tony, "I'd like to get as far from you as I could."

"Go on," said Hugh. "Go down to the boat and sit there," and the man staggered off.

"Now," said Hugh, "you men are drunk, both of you; and sometimes drunken men tell lies. I want to look through your baggage and see if you have any arms."

He searched their blankets, but found nothing. Then he and the boys helped the three men take down their tent and carry their property down to the boat, and then before they pushed off, Hugh said, "Now, I know you've got some friends down here, Bloods, I think, and you may as well go down and camp with them, but don't try to get the Indians to trouble us. You Williamson and you Louis, know me. This man here," and he pointed to Tony, "does not.

"You two men know that I want trouble with no one, but you know also that I don't mean to be imposed on by anyone. If I find any of you men lurking around my camp, I shall probably shoot you for horse thieves. As for your property that I've taken, I'll leave it at the trader's store, and you can get it when you come in. I suppose your whiskey is cached in the brush somewhere here, but you can get along without it for a day or two. We are going into the Agency pretty soon, and after we have gone you can come and get it, if you want to. Go now, and don't let me see you again on this trip."

Hugh loosened the painter from the old log to which it was tied, tossed it into the boat, and when Louis and Williamson had gotten out their oars, he put his foot against the bow and pushed the boat off into the swiftly running water.

For fifty or sixty yards it went down stream stern foremost, and then the two men by clumsy strokes turned it round, and in a few minutes it vanished around a bend, and the last thing the boys saw was the bowed form of the burly man sitting in the stern, still nursing his crushed ribs.

Hugh walked slowly back toward their camp, the two boys following him, half awed and whispering to each other; for both were astonished at what seemed to be a new phase of Hugh's character.

Hugh did not stop at the tent, but remarked that he was going out to look at the horses, and the two boys sat down by the fire.

"I tell you, Joe," said Jack, "wasn't it wonderful to see Hugh walk up to that man with the pistol and take it from him?"

"Sure," said Joe, "it was fine, but then White Bull is not afraid of anything. That's what people have said about him ever since I can remember."

"And wasn't it fine to see him take that big man and squeeze him until he yelled? I should have laughed myself to death if I hadn't been so scared," said Jack.

"Yes," said Joe, "he must be powerful strong. I should have thought that that man could have eaten White Bull up in a minute. He must be powerful strong; I should hate to have him get angry with me."

"That's the wonderful thing about Hugh," Jack went on, "that he makes people do whatever he wants 'em to. Of course, we do what he tells us to, because we know that he knows what's right, but he makes other people do what he tells them. Of course, he doesn't order them to do things, but he'll say it would be a good idea to do something,

and then he'll talk for a few minutes and then presently the people will go off and do just what he wants."

"That's so," said Joe, "I've seen that, too. I've seen him talk sometimes in a council of old men. Maybe they all think that something was the best thing to do, and then White Bull would get up and say that it seemed to him that something different ought to be done, and he'd talk a little while and presently one after another would stand up and say that he thought that White Bull was right; and then they'd all do just what he said."

"Yes," said Jack, "he's a great man, and I believe if he'd lived back East, he would have been a mighty big man among the white people."

"Well," said Joe, "if he lived in an Indian camp, he could be the chief any time he wanted to."

A little while before dusk Hugh came back and said, "Well, boys, I've tied up all the horses and I guess maybe to-morrow, if you like, we may as well start for the Agency. The fact is we couldn't stay out here much longer anyhow, because if it came on to rain now, we'd all get wet, our tent has so many holes in it."

Joe said nothing, but Jack shouted with laughter at Hugh's mild jest, and said, "Tell me, Hugh, were you at all scared when you walked up to that man with his pistol in his hand?"

"Well, really son, I don't know. I don't think I thought much whether I was scared or not. I was a little bit cross with him for acting like a fool, and I made up my mind we couldn't have them around here any longer, and that I would send them off."

"But, good Lord, Hugh," replied Jack, "he might have killed you."

"Yes," said Hugh, "perhaps he might if he had been sober and could have hit me, but I didn't think that he'd try to shoot, and if he had I don't believe he would have hit me."

"Hugh," said Jack, "do you know what I thought of when you were holding that man in your arms and he was yelling like a stuck pig?"

"No," said Hugh, "I don't."

"I couldn't help thinking about a story that Mr. Fannin told us when we were out in British Columbia, about how the bears used to come in and take a pig out of the pen and hold it in their arms and walk off on their hind legs, the pig squealing all the time."

Hugh's eye twinkled as he said, "I believe I do remember that story. So when you saw me holding Tony that way you took me for a bear and him for a pig, did you?"

"Well," said Jack, "not that exactly, but it made me think of that. It seemed awfully funny for a minute, but I was too scared and too excited to laugh, although I wanted to."

"Do you suppose those men will come back, White Bull?" asked Joe.

"No," said Hugh, "I don't reckon they will. They'll go down to the head of the lower lake and then they'll go ashore there somewhere, and build a fire and lie down and sleep their liquor off. If we start in to-morrow, we'll likely see them across the lake when we stop to get the wagon. I think they'll camp on this side, and to-morrow morning they'll be feeling mighty mean and mighty cross with each other, and about the time we get down to the wagon and hitch up, they'll be waking up and quarreling with each other about whose fault it was that they got sent away from camp the night before."

"You think there's no danger, then?" said Jack, "that we'll have trouble with them?"

"Not a particle," said Hugh. "In the first place John Williamson hasn't got the sand of a cotton-tail rabbit, Louis Legros is a good fellow, but foolish. Who that big man Tony is, I don't know, but I reckon he may be Tony Beaulieu. He has a kind of a look of that Beaulieu gang. They're good enough fellows when they're sober, but mighty troublesome when they're drunk."

"We'll never have any further trouble with them; in fact, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if they were to come up to us, the next time we see any of them, and say that they were sorry for what happened."

It was early next morning when Hugh had the boys up and the start was made. The sun was little more than an hour high when they stopped at the wagon, gathered their property together and loaded it, and set out for the lower end of the lower lake, intending to follow the wagon road up to the Duck Lake Hill, for this would be easier on the horses than the steep pull up the hill they had come down in approaching the lake.

As they started down the lake, Joe pointed across to the other side, where a spot of white was seen, with two or three small moving objects about it, and looking with the glasses, Jack saw three men engaged in the work of putting up a tent. Before they passed over a low hill which cut off the view across the lake the boys saw several horsemen ride up to the distant tent. The glasses showed that these horsemen were Indians.

The drive down the lake was slow, for they crossed many ravines and little streams, and in some places the road was very muddy. At length, however, they came out on the flat near where the river leaves the lake, and looking across the stream saw a camp of thirty or forty lodges.

"Do you know who these people are, Joe?" inquired Hugh.

"No," replied Joe, "I don't; I don't think they are our people. Maybe they're Bloods; often they come down to this side after they've got their payment from the Government up North. They like to buy things on this side of the line."

"Well," said Hugh, "we'll know pretty quick, for there's a lot of them starting across the river, or I miss my guess."

Sure enough, twenty-five or thirty men came out of the lodges and, jumping on their horses, galloped down to the fording place.

The road up the Duck Lake Hill starts not far above where the ford comes out of the river, so that Hugh and his party had to keep on down the stream until they had almost reached the ford, and by that time the hurrying crowd of Indians had ridden up on the bank and presently surrounded them and stopped the team.

Most of the men were young, but among them were a few of middle age, and none were old men or very young boys.

They were quite noisy, some of them yelping in pure fun and high spirits, others shouting aloud in tones that seemed to show anger.

When they got about the wagon, Hugh pulled up his team and sat there looking and listening, trying to make out what they wanted.

Jack could understand a few words of what was being said, but in the confusion could not catch its drift, and looked inquiringly at Joe, who he thought wore a very solemn face.

During the colloquy that followed, he was in the dark as to what the trouble was, but it was afterwards explained to him.

After the noise made by the Indians had somewhat subsided, one of the men pushed his horse to the front, and coming close to Hugh, said to him, "Where is the whiskey?"

Hugh replied, "What whiskey?"

"You know," said the Indian; "the whiskey you took from those men up the lake. We know all about it; that you drove them from their camp and kept the whiskey, and now you are taking it away with you, but you shall not do that. That whiskey was brought here for us and we are going to have it; so give it to us now, or we will take it from you."

"Look here, my friend," said Hugh, "you talk like a child. I took no whiskey from those men and I have none with me, and I shall give you none. It is true that we had trouble with these men yesterday and that I sent them away from our camp, but I took no whiskey from them, and if I had done so, I should not give it to you.

"You know me, for you have often seen me in the Piegan camp, and I know you, Wolf Collar, for more than once I have seen you in the Blood camp.

"Why do you come over here to make trouble with people on this side of the line? Do you think that you can do over here what you dare not do over there? You know very well that if you were to act like this to any white man on your side of the line, the Red Coats would soon take you and put you in the jail, perhaps with irons on your feet. You have lived years enough to know better than to act so as to get your young men into trouble.

"Listen to me, my friends," he said in a louder voice, addressing all the Indians, although most of them were near enough to have heard his conversation with Wolf Collar, "I have just told your leader that I have no liquor with me, and that if I had I should not give it to you; but I have with me here a boy of your own race, a Piegan, who knows what took place last night, and he can tell you, if you do not believe me. Speak to them, Joe," he said, "and tell them what happened last night."

Joe began to tell the story of the trouble of the evening before, but before he had said many words, the party was joined by a late comer, who rode up from the river and close to the wagon, crowding his horse through those of the young men, and occasionally, if a horse did not make way for him, striking it fiercely with the quirt, but all the Indians who saw him got out of his way at once.

He was a giant in stature, with a heavy and particularly ferocious face, and rode a beautiful black horse, which seemed too small to bear his immense frame. He rode up to the wagon, roughly pushing Wolf Collar out of the way, and then stretching out his hand to Hugh shook hands with him and said, "My friend, you seem to be traveling. Why do you stop here?"

"Why, hello, Calf Robe," said Hugh. "I didn't stop here willingly, but your young men got in my way, and crowded about me, and asked me for whiskey, which I have not got, and which, if I had, I would not give to them. They get too much whiskey now."

"Why do they ask you for whiskey since all who know you know that you do not drink whiskey, any more than you try to make others drink it?"

"I don't know," said Hugh, "but I reckon some of them have seen this morning some whiskey traders up the lake, and they have told the Indians that I took their whiskey."

"Truly," said Calf Robe, "these Indians are fools, and will believe any lies that the white men choose to tell them."

His evil face worked a little, and then, turning an angry glance on Wolf Collar, he said to him, "Go now, go all of you to the camp quickly. After this know better than to trouble this man with your crazy talk. Go, I say," he repeated fiercely, and striking his horse with his quirt it carried him with a bound close to Wolf Collar, whom he lashed savagely over the head and shoulders.

Wolf Collar darted away and Calf Robe turned toward another man, but in a moment the whole body of Indians were galloping down into the ford, many of them whooping, yelling and laughing; while others, humiliated by the way in which they had been driven off, followed silently.

"Now, my friend, go your way," said Calf Robe. "No one will trouble you."

"No," said Hugh, "I think not—when Calf Robe is about," and chirping to his horses, they began to climb the hill.

During the whole ascent Jack was eagerly cross-questioning Joe as to what the matter had been, what had happened and what had been said. Joe explained everything at great length and wound up his talk by saying, "Calf Robe is a great man. All his people fear him."

"Well," said Jack, "from the way he rode at them and lashed them, he was not afraid of any of them. How he quirted Wolf Collar!"

"He does not know fear. He had a father and a grandfather who were like him; I don't mean to say that they looked like him, but they were big men, and when they told people to do anything, they did it quick," replied Joe.

"I have heard lots about Calf Shirt and about Bull Back Fat. They were great men. Running Rabbit, who lives in our camp, is also one of his relations, and he, too, is a great man. You know he used to be head war chief of the Bloods."

"No, I didn't know that," said Jack. "That little kind man used to be head war chief of the Bloods? I never supposed that he did anything except sit around and tell funny stories and make jokes. It's hard to believe that he was a great warrior."

"Oh, yes," answered Joe, "one of the greatest of warriors."

They camped that night by Duck Lake, and there Hugh told Jack something about the fierce wild life of Calf Shirt and of the way in which he was finally killed by the white men.

From Duck Lake they kept on to the Agency, which was reached without incident four days later.

The morning after their arrival while Jack was dressing preparatory to starting off to the railroad, Joe burst into the room, calling to him to hurry up and get out, for many horses had been stolen during the night.

The flat in front of the Agency was the scene of great excitement and confusion. Old men were haranguing in loud tones and women were singing strong-heart songs to encourage their relatives about to start off in pursuit of the enemy. Men were galloping to and fro, trying to borrow swift horses or arms, with which to make the chase. Every now and then a man would come in from the east, reporting success or failure in the search for the trail of the robbers.

At last one man came who had followed the trail so far that the direction which the thieves would take was pretty well known, and presently a large body of horsemen, armed with rifles, bows and arrows, and lances, started off down the creek, riding with a certain air of dignity until they had gone some distance from the stockade, and then breaking into a faster run.

"Well, Joe," asked Hugh, "are our horses all right?"

"Yes," replied the Indian boy, "they're all right, and it's mighty lucky, too. I would have turned them out last night if there had been any feed close by, but as there wasn't any, I got Joe Bruce to give me some hay and locked them up in his stable. Last night somebody tried to pry off the chain, but the staples are clinched and they couldn't move them."

"Well," said Hugh, "that's mighty good. Now you go and hitch up, and we'll say good-by to the Major and Bruce here, and then we'll roll."

A few days later Jack and Hugh shook hands in the railroad station at Helena and parted, the one going west to reach the ranch, while the other started for his far-away home in New York.

TO-DAY

Up to the time when Jack Danvers, with his two friends, penetrated to the head of the St. Mary's River and Swift Current, nothing was known of the upper courses of either stream. Men who had been longest in the country had never ascended beyond the Upper St. Mary's Lake—from its shape called Bow Lake in early times—nor beyond the large lake on Swift Current, which receives the water from the river's three forks.

What lay beyond these lakes was still unknown. Ancient but long-disused trails ran up the rivers; sometimes so dim, so overgrown with grass and weeds, and so blocked by fallen timber, that it was hard to say whether they were Indian hunting trails, or merely paths worn by the buffalo and the elk, which in bygone days had made their homes among the rocky fastnesses at the heads of these streams. What had made these trails, who had traveled them, was unknown.

There is a wonderful fascination in penetrating a new country, in placing one's foot where perhaps the foot of civilized man never trod before.

A century ago there were many such places in the United States, fifty years ago there were still not a few, twenty-five years ago there were hardly any, and it is no wonder that Hugh and Jack wished to explore these valleys and the mountains that walled them in.

Within a few years after the discoveries made by Hugh and Jack at the heads of these rivers, other parties, hearing of what they had found, followed the same trails. Soon it became not unusual for one or two hunting parties to camp each year among these mountains. The fame of their beauty and grandeur spread from one person to another and many people visited them.

Among these at length came a party of engineers sent out by the Government to consider the question of diverting the waters of the St. Mary's River from their natural course to join the Saskatchewan, into a new channel southward across Milk River Ridge, and by a great irrigation project thus to make fertile a vast area of arid country in Northern Montana.

Meanwhile, the Government had purchased from the Blackfoot Indians these rough mountains in which many miners professed to believe great mineral wealth was hidden. The country was thoroughly prospected for precious metals, for copper, and finally, for oil, but nothing was discovered that promised to pay for the working, and the mines and claims were abandoned.

Finally, in the month of February, 1908, Senator Thomas H. Carter, of Montana, introduced in the United States Senate a bill establishing the Glacier National Park, to include territory visited and seen by Hugh and Jack on both slopes of the Rocky Mountains and to-day lying between the International boundary and the Great Northern Railroad on the north and south, and the Blackfoot reservation and one of the forks of the Flat Head River on the east and west.

If the measure shall become law, this most beautiful country, with its wonderful glaciers, its rushing rivers, its broad forests and its abundant game supply, may remain forever as a pleasure resort and playground for the benefit of the whole people of the United States. Valuable as it will be in this respect, its economic worth to the United States will be not less great. It will be a mighty reservoir, from which for ages an unfailing supply of water may be drawn to give drink to those thirsty plains, which need only moisture to yield a generous return to the farmer.

Typographical errors corrected by the etext transcriber:

oldest man=> oldest men {pg 48}
Read Eagle=> Red Eagle {pg 48}
fire another shot=> fired another shot {pg 190}
supiciously=> suspiciously {pg 214}
beautiful=> beautiful {pg 239}
adressing=> addressing {pg 293}

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