

calculated his chances well. His plan of campaign had succeeded. For, in the nick of time, there came speeding from the west the forces from Fort Gabriel, under command of Bruce Fordie. The junction had been providentially achieved. The enemy gave way, and were forced to retreat. After the moment of the turn of battle Bruce came face to face with Brian. Venlaw had not counted upon this. He had not foreseen that a collision might occur. In Bruce's veins the fret of anger and battle ran high. He drew a pistol instantly upon Brian.

"You here, you coward! I gave the thing to Venlaw to do. He has failed me. I do my own work now. Fight! Fight! or, by Heaven, I will kill you."

Brian stretched out his hand swiftly. "Don't fire, Bruce; don't fire! Listen to me!"

But at that instant a bullet from Bruce's pistol caught Brian in the shoulder, and he staggered back. Venlaw had seen the two meet and had rushed forward, but somewhat too late, though he caught Brian as he fell. Bruce stood with smoking pistol, the web of battle loosening from about them. He was dazed and uncertain.

"No more of that, Bruce," said the Factor. "You and I have been playing a mad game, for the man is innocent of the worst."

"Innocent! Innocent! You swore him guilty two months ago."

"No matter. I speak truth now. Here, bear a hand. Cut down this coat to see what hurt you've done him."

Brian had fainted. When he became conscious he found Bruce and Benoni beside him. He smiled up into Bruce's face. "Faith, you greet an old comrade rarely, Master Bruce," he said. "The bite of your kiss is a wild one." Then a grave look came into his eyes. "But, maybe, it'll help a little to make even the debt I owe you and yours."

For reply Bruce pressed his old friend's hand: but said (he knew all now), "You did wrong, Brian, but I believe you meant no evil, and I'm sorry I've hurt you."

Brian shook his head. "Bedad, no! I meant no harm, but harm has come, and I'm getting a little of what I deserve. And there's the truth!"

The showman's not unskilful surgery extracted the bullet, and he gave it as his opinion that Brian would suffer no permanent injury, but would, on the contrary, be himself again in a few weeks.

On this side of the Atlantic they had now settled all accounts.

The White Hands were completely routed. Their chief was brought in a prisoner. And so ended the most notable struggle of the Indians of the North against the peaceful conquests of the Hudson's Bay Company; for the pride of the hostile Indians was broken; they were subdued; they sought peace, and kept it, much to the confusion of the rival company. And from Fort Jacques in the far west to Fort Saviour in the east, and straight across the wild wastes of Labrador to the cold wash of the sea, the great Company of Adventurers resumed their strong sovereignty.

CHAPTER XI.—THE TENT CURTAIN OUTWARD SWINGS.

THE return to Fort Saviour was accomplished successfully for Brian, and without new dangers for the expedition. A few score of braves and a handful of half-breeds never returned; but for those who part this world in righteous battle there is honest and righteous slumber, and sods lie lightly on them. There was mourning in the lodges of the Sun Rocks, but there was rejoicing too; for happiest they of all the world who welcome back the warrior from the well-fought field. The wives and maids were dressed in soft garnished buckskin, and moccasins of their most industrious and artistic hours. Among these Summer-Hair was first and last. Red Fire had got himself renown at Long Valley—he had the gift of bravery. But though he strutted through the camp in his comeliness and valour it had no charm for her. Yet Red Fire waited; for he had heard, as had all, that the Chief Factor was going back to the land of the palefaces; and he was a wise fellow among a foolish people. He conceived that the present lover with present gifts achieves most with woman. But Summer-Hair was silent. She was not as other women; there was in her veins some strain of ancient pride and sensitiveness. She knew of that fair woman over seas, yet she had taken Benoni to Venlaw, believing, at the same time, that this was death to her own hopes. She grew grave and graver; almost her only companions were Benoni and the wild deer she had tamed. It is possible that in their ears she had poured out her mind; but then, dumb creatures are like Heaven itself—they take all confidence, they give all sympathy, but they are silent, faithful.

Weeks, months, passed; Brian's wound had healed. He had been released, and had