

He kicked the door violently, roaring in a voice that out-hoarded the tempest:

"Let me out, yer sows, let me out for the love of glory! Ooh! me shirr's burnin' into holes on me back wid the eyes of her! Stand betwixt us, Caplin dear, and spake her fair. It's yerself has the larnin', an' sure we—there's a corp it's only the Latin they mind. *De profundis* osculum, an' get out wid ye!"

"Leave go of that yowling," roared out Joe Hart, as Mike beat on the door in the energy of despair, and groaned in mortal terror. "Can't ye make use of yer eyes, Mike?"

"Is it an' have the oyo-balls ov me melted clean out? Isn't her eyes scrupin' the flesh ov me this mornin' like red-hot claws. Caplin, Caplin, out wid the Latin, or we're lost entirely."

Mr. Murphy was not altogether the slave of imagination. The squirrel had dropped in an agony of terror from his eyrie on the rafters to Mike's back, and, confused by the turmoil, was rushing up and down the broad expanse of his shoulders, making free use of his sharp claws to the extreme detriment of the linen and epidermis of the latter.

"Mike," cried Archie Frazer, in a voice that rang like a clarion, "look! see who Winona has brought to us. Oh, man, look round!"

There was such a thrill of joy in the young officer's voice that Mike was encouraged to turn his terror-stricken countenance over his shoulder, still, however, clutching the unyielding latch.

The entrance door had closed with a loud crash, and Winona stood in the full blaze of the fire-light, watching Mike with eyes that scintillated in the red glow, the leaping scarlet touching the rich bronze of her lofty face, and finding a dead reflection in the masses of dripping ebony hair that hung dankly to her knees. One rounded arm supported a rifle over her shoulder, the other was clasped closely round the form of Androsia Howard, who, nearly unconscious, leaned against the vigorous form of the Indian girl, the clear outlines of her marble features sharply defined against the dark figure of her companion. The garments of both the girls were rent and torn, and Androsia's delicate feet were bruised and bleeding. Her head was uncovered, and the dusky gold of her hair, clinging to her white throat and shoulders in damp, uncured masses, caught red pencilings of light from the fire. Her garments, sodden with rain, clung to her limbs, and her large eyes were half-closed and glazed like those of a corpse. Instead of being reassured by the appearance of his beloved Miss Drosia, Mike's terror was exactly doubled, but, fortunately, its effects now were simply those of complete paralysis, and his stout legs giving way under him, he slipped to the floor in a sitting posture, propped up against the door, his eyes as round as buttons, and fixed on the little group with an unwinking steadiness that threatened to force them from their sockets.

A wooden bench ran along the wall beside the fire-place, and without a word Archie took Androsia from the Indian girl, and carried her towards it; but Mrs. Hart, recovered from her panic, pushed a low, cushioned rocker before the direct warmth of the fire, and bade him place her in it, as she began to show slight signs of returning animation.

Winona advanced with her usual supple, majestic, noiseless tread to the hearth, and leaning with clasped hands on the rifle, watched Mrs. Hart and Sally, who had recovered almost instantly from her brief swoon, as they busied themselves about Androsia, wringing the water from her hair and clothes, and issuing shrill directions to honest Joe to pile on more wood and "keep himself out of a body's way."

The honest fellow was so absorbed in staring at Winona that he was found to be quite impervious to linguistic remonstrances, and, to keep him at all "out of the road," as Mrs. Hart expressed it, the good woman was fain to resort to free use of her stout elbows, and Joe was hustled hither and thither, being apparently quite unable to remove his eyes from the Indian girl.

The water was running in little streams from her hair and clothing, and lay in the tiny hollows of the roughly-hewn hearthstone, like pools of blood in the rich red light, and, from the shadow of her falling night of hair, her large eyes burned with a smouldering heat and fire like the reflection of a conflagration on the dark tarns of a wilderness on a moonless midnight. She stood voiceless, her black shadow flickering vast and spectrally across the floor and white-washed wall, a statue of bronze such as it is in the power of the Indian to become, motionless as though sculptured from some firm and dusky cliff. Her steady gaze was fixed on the pallid face of her sister, gaining a faint rose in the warmth of the apartment.

Archie stood leaning on the back of one of the heavy wooden chairs, with all a man's incapacity for assisting in such an emergency, his eyes also fastened on the lovely face shining out from the scarlet flannel cushion fastened to the back of the rocker like some rare cameo traced in lines of perfect, pallid beauty by some master-hand.

The moment had not yet arrived for explanations to be either given or demanded, though it must be confessed his soul burned with impatience for light to evolve from the mystery of the sudden appearance of the two girls.

He felt a heavy hand laid on his arm, and looked up to find Joe at his side, still eyeing Winona, to whom he directed Archie's attention in a guttural whisper:

"Corra-buck! Cap'n, look at what she's got

slung to her wampum. I'm bet, that's all, Cap'n."

Archie glanced at Winona and back at Joe. "I see she's got a bunch of dirty-looking horse-hair slung to her belt," he said, "but what of that?"

Joe drew his brown fore-finger in a circle round the top of his grizzled head with a slow gesture of great significance.

"I'm dazed, an' blowed, an' busted," he whispered, "of 'tain't a sculp. Whar upon airth hev the young catamount made the raise on it?"

"Eh! What?" cried Archie in very natural dismay, "what are you talking such rubbish for, Joe?"

"You bet I ain't," responded Joe confidently; "it's a sculp, an' fresh raised, or I never seed or teched one whin I war a youngster on the Rocky Mountains."

"Yes," said Winona, speaking suddenly in English and turning her great eyes slowly on the two men; "yes, behold, it is the scalp of the enemy of my sister, the scalp of the lover of my sister. He fell but two suns ago under the hand of Winona. The leaves rustle on the body of Hawk-eye! The crows clamor in the air above him!"

She showed her white teeth in a dazzling smile of triumph; but reading the expression of horror in the countenances of her listeners, she darkened into added gloom, with a touch of lofty scorn in it, as she looked at them.

Androsia turned her brightening eyes on her foster-sister, and held out her arms to her appealingly. The latter understood the significance of the gesture, and, compressing her lips, tore the ghastly relic from her belt, and flung it upon the crimson cavern of the fire.

"It is done!" she said. "Winona kept it but to show that her tongue was not the tongue of a liar."

Androsia's face flushed with joy as the flames licked up the last fibre of the scalp, but the inherited instincts of the Indian girl had been fully aroused, and she stared with sullen regret at the vanishing trophy she had sacrificed to the wishes of Androsia.

Androsia looked round her as one awakening from a dream, and, with a sudden yell of joy, Mr. Murphy bounded from his sitting posture and executed what her Majesty of glorious memory, Elizabeth of England, was wont to describe as "a marrie volte."

"Och, be japers! it's herself it is, an' no specter, at all, at all. Miss Drosia, acushla, it's me heart's broke wid joy to see ye, an' it's mended it'll be sure if yer can only say that it's not the widdy of Hawk-eye ye be. Winona, yer sowl, whin war it ye picked off the honest gentleman so purty? An' how oem it he kep yer so snug, an' so munny out after yer for this two months an' more?"

Winona turned on the excited Mr. Murphy and looked at him.

"An' besides," ejaculated Mike, retiring suddenly, "it's dead I seed ye meself, an' Caplin Frazer here! Oh, begorra, is it come for a decent berrel ye are, after all?"

Mr. Murphy retreated suddenly to the other side of the chair occupied by Androsia, as his superstitious terrors revived, and in expressive pantomime besought of Archie to question the supposed "feuch;" but anxious as Archie was to do so, he could not help agreeing with Mrs. Hart that Androsia should at once be placed in bed, as she appeared utterly exhausted and incapable of uttering a word. Under the good woman's directions, he carried her into an inner room, and, laying her on the clean patchwork covered bed, stole out again, leaving her to the kindly ministrations of Sally and her mother.

He found Winona wringing the heavy masses of her hair, and drying her cheeks in haste at the fire, watched by Joe from the midst of a cloud of blue tobacco smoke, and by Mike, who, apparently, was slowly regaining confidence, from a shadowy recess behind the glittering dresser, from which he peered cautiously at the dusky form and beautiful face of his former pet, and protégé, but who, now wrapped in gloomy musings, seemed unconscious of his presence. She turned abruptly and faced Archie as his light step sounded on the boards, and her dark eyes roved inquisitively over his face and figure, both of which bore traces of his recent severe illness. Mike came cautiously from his lair, and placed himself near Captain Frazer, who, with a cordial grace, pushed the rocker towards Winona.

"Sit down," he said gently, "you seem greatly fatigued. Mike, put down more wood. It grows colder every moment."

So certain had been of Winona's death that it seemed a curious dream, her dark presence in that homely room; and his voice sounded unfamiliar to himself as he uttered these commonplace words to one, the mystery of whose appearance amongst the living was yet unexplained. Up to this moment he had had no leisure to feel anything but the pleasure of the restoration of Androsia, but now there was a pause, and other emotions filled his heart. He did not now wonder so much at Mike's display of terror, for despite education and a tolerable share of common sense, he was conscious of a kind of mental shiver as he looked at the weird beauty of the dusky countenance brooding over the flame. There was profound silence in the room, during which she seemed to read his inner soul with her stern eyes. Her face relaxed as she looked at him, and with a smile she sank wearily into the low chair. Did any doubt as to her earthly condition remain in Mike's mind, her first words dispelled them at once and for ever.

"Food," she said. "Winona is hungry. Winona is like the wolf when the sheep lies woofly in the woods."

Joe's pipe smashed as it fell to the ground, and in less time than it takes to roight he had placed before the half-rushed girl cold meat and bread in abundance, with "the lagoon," but hearty exclamation, "Pish sh."

With every mouthful the girl devoured, in the manner of one who had nearly died of lack of food, Mike drew a pace nearer, eyeing her proceedings with exquisite pleasure, and when, at length, she concluded her repast, he rushed up and took her long, slender hand in his brown, hairy paw.

"Shure it's the wholesome, comfortable appetite ye have, noshin, the heavens be praised for that same! an' it were better than bell, book or candle to see the cowl'd pork goin' into that purty mouth of yer own, me darlint! Shure it's yer own ghost I war after takin' ye for, me colleen d'ha. The devil a wan ov me bid it!"

Winona smiled gravely, and seemed pleased at Mike's evident joy at her restoration; but suddenly she started and looked searchingly at him.

"Did Hawk-eye utter the words of truth? He shrieked it in the ear of Winona that the father of her white sister had journeyed to the hunting-grounds of the spirits of his people."

"The truth it war, honey," responded Mike, much affected. "Thim hands," and he extended his brawny paws, "nalled him down in as comfortable an' tidy a coffin as ye'd care to see, and laid the daisy quill over him, his sowl to glory an' his name to grace! But how in the name of wonder did ye come across Miss Drosia an' that owdacious laythen wiggler, Hawk-eye?"

A terrible light leaped like a flaming sword from the dusky eyes, and inspired by the memory of her dangers, Winona rose, tall and divinely terrible, as some dark avenging power. Her form seemed actually to dilate and become shadowy in its outline.

"Inwardly brightening
With sudden heat
As a storm-cloud lurid with lightning."

Her explanations we must leave for another chapter.

(To be continued.)

THE QUIDBURY MYSTERY.

BY JUDGE CLARK.

Quidbury was a dull place before it had two newspapers in it. But when the *Cudgel of Progress* shied its castor into the ring, and the *Weekly Prodder* squared off responsively next door, things took a more lively turn.

Swasher of the *Cudgel* was a bluff, portly, bulldog-like looking man, whose grizzled wig bore evidence of the frosts of some fifty winters. He had a good head, Phrenology said, but Phrenology doesn't always know the difference between brains and rickets. Whether he wore green goggles for weak eyes, or to hide swab-mus, was nobody's business but his own.

Prickle of the *Prodder*, in person, was his rival's opposite. He was lean, lank, and wiry; had light sorrel hair, worn close cropped, and looked a trifle younger than the other.

Both came to Quidbury strangers, and about the same time. Prickle bought the *Village Ozoker*, whose proprietor, after a year's experience trying to please everybody, taking his pay in approved country produce, was ready to sell out cheap. Swasher brought his materials with him.

How two papers could thrive where one had starved was a problem cautious people shook their heads over. But such had not closely studied the great law of competition, the force which makes the world move. It was not until the *Cudgel* and the *Prodder* had espoused opposite sides of every question, moral, social, and political, discussing them with an acrimonious fierceness unexampled in journalistic warfare, and people had begun to take and read the papers, much as they would have stopped to look on at a fight, that the fogies of Quidbury began to see how two newspapers might do better than one.

There is not much neutrality in human nature. There are few matters on which we are really indifferent, or on which we can witness a heated controversy without taking sides. I have known a couple of men punch each other's heads over a theory in metaphysics, and another couple come to blows over a canine combat when neither owned either of the curs.

Human nature, in Quidbury, was the average article. It only needed stirring up, and that it got. The two editors were very evenly matched. What they lacked in argument they made up by bespattering each other. They even went the length of kicking up one another's ancestral dust: Swasher averring that Prickle's great-grandfather's second cousin by marriage had been received into another if not a better world on the personal introduction of J. Ketch, Esq., and Prickle retorting that Swasher's half-aunt's uncle had been cropped as a horse-thief. The natural result followed. Quidbury was divided into two parties. A full course of the adult population might have been made from the rival subscription lists. Both publishers put money in their pockets. And more than one case of assault and battery occurred between

those who had been fast friends before becoming the enemies of the *Cudgel* and the *Prodder*.

The wonder was how the promoters of so many broils themselves escaped collision. Threats and defiance enough were exchanged between them. When Swasher hinted, with delicate irony, at a certain natural affinity between his contemporary's cuticle and a horse-whip, promising, ere long, to give a public demonstration of the fact, he of the *Prodder* retorted that the pol-vallant swaggerer next door had better learn to spell ablo first. But next day, when Swasher paraded the streets, armed with a six-foot cart-whip, seeking his adversary high and low, the latter was nowhere to be seen; and the day after that, when Prickle took the war-path, brandishing a bludgeon like a weaver's beam, and variously evoking his foe to the dreadful conflict, the erst heroic Swasher came not, but made default. It was a strange circumstance that two men, so eager to encounter, should so long continue next door neighbors, and not only never meet, but never both be visible at once. Nevertheless timid people predicted anguinary consequences, if the two ever did come together.

Affairs came to a crisis tragic enough at last. On the Eve of a local election a sub-committee-man ran up to Swasher's sanctum to urge the issue of an extra, exposing some newly discovered plot of the enemy.

Bursting into the room without knocking, the sub-committee-man was astonished at finding himself, not in the presence of the portly editor of the *Cudgel*, but in that of the gaunt proprietor of the *Prodder*, in his shirt-sleeves, washing his bloody hands in Swasher's basin, a crimson crimson pool on the floor adding to the horror of the scene!

"Murder!" shouted the sub-committee-man. Non rushed in, wild with excitement. Prickle, overwhelmed, exhibited all the confusion of suddenly detected guilt. He stammered a few incoherent words, but assayed no explanation of the damning circumstances. An officer was called, who hurried him off, barely in time to prevent the infliction of summary vengeance of which ominous matters began to be heard.

A deep mystery enshrouded the affair. Days passed, and no sign of the body could be found. Swasher had last been seen going into his office a few minutes before the sub-committee-man entered it. That he had never gone out alive was only too apparent. But how two hundred and odd pounds of corpse could have been made away with so suddenly, leaving not a trace behind, was a query only darkened by discussion.

I appeared for Prickle at his examination. The case against him was black enough. He was either unable or unwilling to give any explanation of the facts. In our private consultations he gave evasive answers. I did the best I could, making the most of the non-discovery of the body. But the circumstances were overwhelming. Prickle's unexplained presence in the private office of his enemy, the latter's disappearance, the condition of the prisoner's hands, the pool on the floor, a portion of which had been carefully analyzed by a rising young doctor, who pronounced it human blood, and discouraged so flippantly of fibrine and albumen and corpuscles that it was easy to see to know what he was talking about—all combined to dissipate every remaining scruple touching the prisoner's guilt, and those who had hesitated before now felt constrained to join in the general verdict.

The magistrate was about to sign the final commitment, when the prisoner rose under great excitement.

"This is all infernal nonsense," he exclaimed.

"Silence!" admonished His Honor.

"I tell you Swasher's no more dead than I am," persisted the prisoner.

"Prove that, and it will save you a world of trouble," remarked the Squire dryly.

"Send me to his office and I'll do it," said Prickle.

The proposal seemed reasonable. The accused was conducted, under a strong guard, to his late rival's sanctum.

"Allow me to enter alone," he said, "you can watch the door and windows."

With some demurring the request was granted.

Prickle went in and closed the door. In ten minutes it was opened, and the astonished spectators saw before them, not the gaunt form of the suspected murderer, but the substantial figure of his supposed victim, and, strangest of all, it was now Prickle that was invisible!

There was so little of the ghostly in Swasher's plump appearance, that the sight might otherwise have been occasioned by his sudden turning up, gave place to surprise and curiosity.

The account he gave, in answer to a torrent of questions, increased rather than abated the general astonishment. Sitting in his office, he said, Prickle had stolen in upon him, and, by a few menacing passes, had reduced him to a state of unconsciousness, out of which he had but just returned. Where he had been stowed away meanwhile, or what had become of Prickle, he knew no more than others.

Quidbury was nonplussed. The Black Art, many were fond to imagine, might not be entirely a lost one, and strong hints were given out. Swasher circles, of the existence of relations, more intimate than creditable, between the Prickle faction and the Father of Evil.

Swasher sold out the *Cudgel* shortly after for a handsome price, and laid an attachment on the *Prodder* office—one of whose proprietors had