

one liked, and whom all feared. He was a deep drinker, a great swearer, and a perfect reprobate, who never cultivated his land, but went jobbing about, from farm to farm, trading horses and cattle, and cheating in a pettifogging way. Uncle Joe had employed him to sell M—— a young heifer, and he had brought her for him to look at.

When he came in to be paid, I described the stranger of the morning; and as I knew that he was familiar with every person in the neighborhood, I asked if he knew him.

"No one should know that better than myself," he said. "'Tis old Brian, the hunter, and a near neighbor of yours. A sour, morose, queer chap he is, and as mad as a 'March hare.' He's from Lancashire, in England, and came to this country some twenty years ago, with his wife, Deb, who was a pretty young lass in those days. He had lots of money, too; and he bought four hundred acres of land, just at the corner of the concession line, where it meets the main road—and excellent land it is; and a better farmer, while he stuck to his business, never went into the bush. He was a dashing, handsome fellow too, and did not hoard the money either. He loved his pipe and his pot too well; and, at last, he left off farming, and stuck to them altogether. Many a jolly booze he and I have had, I can tell you. But Brian was an awful passionate man; and when the liquor was in, and the wit was out, as savage and as quarrelsome as a bear. At such times, there was no one but Ned Layton dared go near him. We once had a pitched battle, and I whipped him; and ever after he yielded a sort of sulky obedience to all I said to him. After being on the spree for a week or two, he would take fits of remorse, and return home to his wife—would go down upon his knees, and ask her forgiveness, and cry like a child. At other times, he would hide himself up in the woods, and steal home at night, and get what he wanted out of the pantry, without speaking a word to any one. He went on with these pranks for some years, till he took a fit of the 'blue devils.'

"Come away, Ned, to the Rice Lake, with me," said he. "I'm weary of my life, and I want a change."

"Shall we take the fishing tackle," says I. "The black bass are in prime season; and F—— will lend us the old canoe. He's got some capital rum up from Kingston. We'll fish all day, and have a spree at night."

"It's not to fish I'm going," says he.

"To shoot then? I've bought Reckwood's new rifle."

"'Tis neither to fish nor to shoot, Ned: it's a new game I'm going to try; so, come along."

"Well, to the Rice Lake we went. The day was very hot, and our path lay through the woods, and over those scorching plains, for sixteen miles; and I thought I should have dropped by the way; but all that distance, my comrade never opened his lips. He strode on before me, at a half run, never once turning his hard leather face.

"The man must be the devil," says I, "and accustomed to a warmer place, or he must feel this. Hollo, Brian! stop there: do you mean to kill me?"

"Take it easy," says he; "you'll see another day after this: I've business on hand, and cannot wait."

"Well, on we went, at this awful rate; and it was mid-day when we got to the little tavern on the lake shore, kept by one F——, who had a boat for the convenience of strangers who came to visit the place.

"Here we had our dinner, and a good stiff glass of rum to wash it down: but Brian was moody; and to all my jokes, he only made a sort of grunt; and while I was talking with F——, he slips out, and I saw him crossing the lake in an old canoe.

"What's the matter with Brian?" says F——; "all does not seem right with him, Ned. You had better take the boat, and look after him."

"Phoo!" says I, "he's often so; and grows so glum now-a-days, that I will cut his acquaintance altogether, if he does not improve."

"He drinks awful hard," says F——: "there's no telling what he may be up to at this minute."

"My mind misgave me, too; so I e'en takes the oars, and pushes out right upon Brian's track; and, by the Lord Harry! if I did not find him, upon my landing on the opposite shore, lying, wallowing in his blood, with his throat cut.

"Is that you, Brian?" says I, giving him a kick with my foot. "What upon earth tempted you to play F—— and me this dirty, mean trick; to go and stick yourself like a pig—bring such a discredit on the house—and so far from home, too, and those who should nurse you!"

"I was so wild with him, that, saving your presence, ma'am, I swore awfully, and called him names which would be undacent to repeat here; but he only answered by groans, and a horrid gurgling in his throat.

"Its choaking you are," said I; "but you shan't have your own way, and die so easily either, if I can punish you, by keeping you alive." So I just turned him upon his belly, with his head