

MAHIGAN.

An Incident of the Great Fur Land.

By CONVERSE C. CONVERSE.

"Captain! Sacre demon! Brandy, ah, va-sa-pret!"

Then, crack! crack! went the lash of the moosekin whip, the dogs uttered a final protest and were off over the almost impenetrable trail again. Yreppie fell in line behind the long sledge, Pegowis, his father, dropped back in turn at his heels, and grumbling as usual. Indeed, Pegowis was more in favor of heading at a right angle to the line, the little outfit was being driven, toward a canyon where he knew a little "free trade" store stood, kept by a conscientious French Canadian by the name of Pescal, and there, starting on this last lot of provisions, traps and ammunition for the contents of Pescal's bottles and a few days of utter idleness in the ill-smelling cabin of the free trader.

In such a case, Mr. Mills, who was at the head of the Hudson Bay Company outfit at old Fort Providence, had warned Pegowis that he should not advance another trap nor piece of ammunition, and should not notify the other outfits that nothing should be advanced from them. This would mean knocking about the fort and living from hand to mouth on what little Yreppie his son, might earn there during the long winter when they should be kicked out of Pescal's cabin, with nothing to show for it in the coming summer. Whereas, with only a modestly successful winter's hunt along the swamps of Upper Yellow Knife River, he and Yreppie might return in the spring, square up old accounts on the company's books and still have enough to their credit to lounge idly about the little post for the warm months without doing a stitch of work, and have a standing which would insure the ready advancement of another outfit the next fall, with dogs, better blankets, better guns, better everything than Mr. Mills had seen fit to entrust to them this season.

There is no greater encouragement of thrift than this great fur company which has posts at the most isolated parts of the Dominion of Canada, and whose honest dealings towards its thousands of Indian and other trappers are not inadequately evidenced in the company's motto of "pro pellicutem"—or pelt for pelt.

Pegowis, however, had grown of late to grumbling about what few pelts he took with Pescal before coming to the fort and squaring up, as is the prescribed custom. Yreppie on the other hand, had the making of a first-class trapper in him. He knew that should his father consent to wage a more energetic fight against Kerkwahkooes, or The Evil One as the Indians call the wolverine, there would be no reason why they should not return to the fort with pelts. This was of course allowing that neither should be killed by the charge of a caribou, mangled by a grizzly bear, or frozen to death when on the trapping walk. But, in truth, the young one thought little of these dangers.

Yreppie was most incensed at the behavior of the dogs. They were very yellow variety, whose very nature revolted at the task of dragging the long toboggan-like sledge even over the hard crust which covered the snow upon the bleak rolling wilderness of this cold country as far as the eye could reach. He had to keep within reach of the leader, whose appetite for frozen whitefish seemed only equalled by the desire to feast upon his immediate follower. Neither were these mongrel such good travelers, by far, as the thoroughbred Eskimo dog. They had been able to cover only twenty miles on this second day after leaving Fort Providence, and the afternoon was already well advanced. A slight declivity was reached. The trap laden sledge crowded upon the dog team. This was the third or fourth time this had occurred; a fight had invariably been precipitated.

"Captain! Prenal! gardie!" cried Yreppie loudly, cracking his whip about Captain's ear.

No use! The dog behind had been pushed forward and had come in contact with the leader's quarters, an action which was accepted at once as a challenge, and the two curs were at it, tooth and nail, in an instant in a perfect tangle of legs, tails and moosekin harness, the sledge swinging around at a tangent and coming to a standstill. Pegowis settled down upon the blankets and made no attempt to assist Yreppie in parting the snarling, yelping antagonists. He mentally decided that they could fight it out this time, even if the result were that of the battle of the Klitkeny cats, in which tradition tells there was nothing left of the combatants. In such a case the sledge was still near enough to Pescal's for some of that worthy trader's dogs to be brought out to haul the sledge to his cabin. Yreppie did not intend that these two yellow dogs should ruin all now that he had succeeded in enticing his father off upon this last hunt. For an instant, Yreppie was rather a thrifty young personage. He plied the whip energetically upon the tere cotta ball of fur which represented the vicious Captain and Brandy.

"Brandy! on demon! Captain! Craupad that ye air!"

But the dogs only fought the worse; and Pegowis, looked on, nodded in his hooded cap, very much as some old monk would have done in grave and solemn thought upon a widely different subject.

While Cree father and son were wrapped up in this anything but delicate incident, a third actor made his appearance upon the scene. He was nothing less than a high, gaunt and shaggy wolf such as, when in packs, forms one of the trapper's most terrible foes. The sledge had driven him to follow up the sledges for some hours, though he had done so at a distance. He might even have kept out of sight during the rest of the day and not have given trouble to the two trappers and their dogs which might not have occurred. It is said that the wolf can sense fresh blood for miles in this clarified air and is attracted by it. Perhaps this wolf breathed too temptingly a whiff of the floor's blood of one of Yreppie's dogs to longer refrain from attacking them. At any rate, he bounded forward when the fight was at its height and mingled his darker body in the general yellowish mass of biting, yelping dog.

"You, Captain!" Yreppie was beginning, but he stopped short, nearly falling over backward, despite his long legs. He was rather glad than afraid of the dog. The friendly squabble in which Captain and Brandy had been indulging had been nothing to the battle now being fought as they turned on the snarling biting animal and lay breathing heavily on the snow. A tremor passed over his scared and sorry frame, and it grew still. At this disastrous occurrence Yreppie, with himself upon the two struggling animals, with a flashing eye and grimly set copper face. Though the wolf was clearly nearly finished, he was still more than a match for little Brandy, a smaller dog than Captain. He saw the wolf's shaggy head dive for Brandy's throat. The hair on the wolf's neck stood up in a stiff ridge, as is its custom when that animal is excitedly aroused. Knowing that if the fight were not terminated quickly Brandy would be killed, Yreppie took the chance of killing her with his own butt, and struck a blow as the wolf leaped with all the strength of his muscular brown arms.

Fortune favored his aim. The wolf dropped in its tracks as if shot and Yreppie dragged the bleeding Brandy away from the limp body when she had given it a last avenging pinch. The young Cree regarded the scene coolly. Captain and Brandy though he were only a yellow dog—with poor Brandy licking her many and deep wounds between low whines of pain, were not encouraging sights for the young trapper, for even with all his thriftiness, his strange pride was such that he would hardly have entertained a thought of dragging the sledge himself.

Pegowis had begun to unstrap the pemmican preparatory to unloading some of it with the ammunition on a hand sledge and starting for Pescal's cabin. Yreppie half determined to offer no resistance to such a proceeding. The young trapper was only dissuaded by a slight movement on the part of the wolf, which suggested a possible way out of difficulty.

He sprang forward quickly and fashion a rude muzzle of moose hide for the insensible beast, his action astonishing old Pegowis so greatly that he paused in his proceedings to watch his son. Yreppie next looked at the wolf in such a way that the beast could not escape after recovering from the blow of the whip, and then the young Indian dressed the wounds of both Brandy and her late antagonist. A blow or two more when the wolf revived seemed to render him quite tractable. Then Yreppie proceeded to harness the wolf and Brandy before the long sledge.

"Pat! No it ni gay!" (He will fight) the old Indian exclaimed. He lashed the body of the now cold leader on the sledge that it might furnish food for the new one. Among the stories he had heard in one of the dug-outs of the trappers had been that of a French Canadian, named Baptiste, doing what he was about to attempt, and he had reason to believe that the story had been no mere hunter's yarn. Brandy, poor dog, had had enough fighting to cause her to keep well aloft from her strange lazarous mate. The wolf, though his eyes shone wickedly, was a cowed and conquered animal.

"Ni minik wanan" (We had best go and get a drink), old Pegowis still protested weakly.

"Pay no!" (Wait) answered Yreppie, in suppressed excitement. He grasped his long moose skin whips lightly, swung it about his head and sent his lash crackling, so that the wolf's ears that the covering blanket could feel the air from it.

"Hoo-ee! Hoo-aw!" he cried shrilly. "Kee-ee-pee, Mahigan! (Ke-quick, Wolf! Prenal! gardie, Brandy! Mahigan! Ah salan-pret! Craupad that ye air! Hoo-ee! Hoo-aw!"

Just what the wolf thought of the strange proceedings would be a theme for speculation. He may have imagined that he was being given an opening for a dash for liberty, as Yreppie's long whip was sent crackling about his sharp ears. Again, there is the slight possibility that he or his distant ancestor might have had some blood relationship with Esquimaux sledge dogs. At any rate, he shot off with the loaded sledge at a pace which was almost too much for the weakened Brandy and which tested Yreppie's speed. The direction taken was that the exact one in which the young fur hunter wished to proceed, but after a determined heading off of the leader, Yreppie soon had the satisfaction—and Pegowis the dissatisfaction—of seeing the little outfit advancing in a direct line for the prearranged winter camp.

Nor were there any more interruptions such as the deceased Captain had caused during the remainder of the journey, the moose skin muzzle placing Mahigan at too great a disadvantage to make him wish to renew his attack upon weak and puerile Brandy. He was rather glad than afraid of the dog. The friendly squabble in which Captain and Brandy had been indulging had been nothing to the battle now being fought as they turned on the snarling biting animal and lay breathing heavily on the snow.

My wife tells me that the belles in the better's town are also palled in their fashion, and that they wear gloves on their hands and shoes on their feet, and, thus bedecked, they do secure the affections of their lords. As the sheep would not allow my wife to approach, or hold any intercourse with the Arab women, using deprecating epithets when she tried to make friendly overtures. Mrs. Bent advanced towards a group of gawling females they fled precipitately, like a flock of sheep before a collie dog. These women wear their dresses high in front, showing their eyes, legs above the knee, and long behind, they are of deep blue cotton, decorated with embroidery and patches of yellow and red sewn on in pattern.

It is the universal female dress in Hadramut, and looks as if the fashion had not changed since the days when Hazaraveth, the patriarch, settled in this valley and gave it his name. (Gen. x. 25) The tall, tapering straw hat, worn by these women when in the fields contributes with the mask to make the Hadrami females as externally repulsive as the most jealous of husbands could desire.

A Cat Feeding a Prisoner.

Many years ago, in the reign of Richard the Third, there lived a poor man, who was served or other, always getting into trouble with the sovereign or the government, and when he offended either they sent him to the tower of London, and he was told he spent not a little of his time there. His name was Sir Henry Wyatt. "On one occasion," says an old historian, "they put him in a cold and narrow tower, where he had neither bed to lie on, nor clothes sufficient to warm him, nor meat for his mouth. He had starved there, had not God, who sent a raven to feed his prisoner, sent to this His and his country's martyr a cat both to feed and warm him. It was his own relation unto them from whom I had it. A cat came one day down into the dungeon unto him and as it were offered her services unto him. He was glad to get her, and laid her in his bosom to warm him, and by making much of her won her love. "After this she would come every day at divers times, and when she could get one, bring him a pigeon. He complained to his keeper of his cold and short fare. The answer was, "He durst not better it." But, said Sir Henry, "if I can provide any, will you permit me to dress it for him?" "I may well enough," said the keeper, "if you are safe for that matter," and being urged again, promised him, and kept his promise and dressed for him, from time to time, such pigeons as the cat provided for him.

He came into the office with a wild excited air. "Sacre!" said he, as soon as he got within hearing distance of the editor, "had you heard about a man's jumping off the top of the water tower up on Spring Hill, and being dashed to pieces on the ground below?"

"No," said the editor. "I hadn't heard anything of the kind."

"Neither had I," said the caller sadly, as he dexterously backed outside the door. "But what a first-rate piece of news such an item as that would be, just now, wouldn't it?"

He knew What Was News.

An International Complication.

"Are you sympathetic with the Chinese?" asked the editor.

A Curious Bracelet.

About fifty years ago there was exhibited in one of the most fashionable jeweler's shops in Paris a very curious and interesting bracelet. Everyone who passed the shop was attracted by it as it hung in the window, and the conversation in many saloons was based upon the brilliancy and perfection of the gems which surrounded it. The most remarkable part of this piece of jewelry was that it was chiefly composed of four rusty, bent and broken pins. These were set in a framework of gold, the gems surrounding the whole.

To explain the origin of this old ornament it is necessary to go back many years before it was exhibited. One day a Monsieur Brasseur was walking the streets of Paris when he came suddenly upon some who were at work mending the pavement. In some way or other Monsieur Brasseur tripped, and in falling was hurt. Without thinking of the consequences he exclaimed against the superintendent of the streets, saying he should instruct his workmen to be more careful. This remark was overheard, and he was immediately arrested and placed in a dungeon for complaining against the public works, where he was kept for many weary weeks without companions or occupation. He felt his body commence to weaken and knew that under such a strain his mind would soon give way. But he was a plucky man and determined to awaken his spirits from the slumber which his long imprisonment would make him insane.

When cast into prison, Monsieur Brasseur was searched by the officers, but in some manner they had neglected to take notice of the four rusty pins which he had to amuse himself and he set his wife to work to devise some game to keep his mind occupied. During six years the poor prisoner occupied himself in throwing the four pins over the wall of the cell and then in searching for them that he might reconnoitre his game. This was all the pleasure he had for those six years, and simple though it seems, it was this which served to keep his body and brain active.

A Revolution set him at liberty one day, and his devoted wife met him at the prison to take him home. He then exhibited his four rusty and bent pins and told his story. His wife considered the pins as the means of his salvation, and to show her gratitude she had them set in gold and surrounded with jewels to the amount of many thousand francs.

The Engineer's Story.

"It was just a year ago," said the old engineer to the reporter of a Western paper, "that I was running my locomotive train on the Kaffir and Jellico, down in North Carolina. Ever been there? Guess you don't know, then, how the tracks snake across the mountains all over the top of the steep straight down, yet you land you in day after to-morrow—so you have to crawl down from the Swannanoa divide, in an' out, in an' out, half a mile, on an old-fashioned, terry, hurly and not the sweetest temper, you can bet. Towards evening I was whizzin' her along, thinkin' about Round Knob and a hot cup of coffee, when, some way ahead, I spied a sheep in the cut. There she lay, right across the track, with two lambs scuddled under her. I whistled the engine to stop. Well, I was in a hurry, and I wouldn't mind the old sheep so much, but then little white lambs somehow put me in mind of my baby, the cutest chap ye ever saw, and it went across the grain to run 'em down. Had to slow up, and it was right at a bend, and I yelled to my fireman to shove 'em off the track. Well, ye never see a half a foot from that man came running back with, 'Stop her, Jim! Stop her short!' he hollered. And if you'll believe it, just around that bend was the biggest sandblow I ever heard of in this country. Took us a good hour and a half to shove it off down the hillside."

Curious Names.

Curious names are sometimes found on the charge-sheet at police courts. A woman with the name Jane Silence, recently appeared in the witness box at Swansea, and the following was the embarrassing result. Magistrate (to witness): "What is your name?" Witness: "Silence." Magistrate: "What do you mean? Answer my question. What is your name?" Witness: "Silence!" Magistrate (angrily): "How dare you, woman! Do you want to be committed for contempt of this court?" Witness: "Silence, jim!" (Laughter and sensation in court.) Constable: "Silence!" Magistrate (glaring at the police-constable): "Really, this is outrageous." General confusion, during which the position is explained.

He Knew What Was News.

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Wolf Hunting in Russia.

Wolf hunting is probably the most dangerous sport there is, says a writer in the San Francisco Chronicle describing his travels in Russia. With a servant and a dog, he was attached to a sleigh, I have gone out and bated the ground for the brutes on numerous occasions. A fat hog led to a tree never failed to collect a pack. The trouble was that it drew too many. The wolves would gather to the number of 200 or 300 and devour the pig. Then we would dash upon the scene and the fun would commence. They are as fleet as a deer. To say that they are as fleet as wolves would be more like it. They can outrun the horse every time, and if they are not picked off as fast as they come up, you might as well give up the light and permit yourself to be devoured.

Imagine yourself making a running fight with a band of 300 hungry, maddened wolves and with the knowledge that if one of the fleet little brutes reaches your horse you are a dead man, and you can possibly imagine what a nerve sport it is. It requires a cool head and good eyes. If you miss your mark, you're gone. Your only chance of safety is in keeping your horse up. It is generally a long fight. You look back and see the carcasses of the animals dotting the snow for a mile or two in your wake, and still they pursue you in great numbers. Slowly the pack thins out. Many have dropped bleeding to the ground. Others stop to devour the carcasses. The more they fall the more timid the rest become. When you finally outdistance the pack you have been through the most arduous and that the most arduous sportsman could wish.

I consider wolf hunting the most dangerous sport there is. Tiger hunting in India is tame beside it. The only unsatisfactory part of the sport which wolves afford is that after you are all through you haven't anything to show for your efforts. But it is a great sport.

A Fact in Modern History.

The British Empire is a political creation unparalleled in the world's history, not only by its extent and population, in both which respects it is slightly surpassed by China, but because, with an area of more than 10,000,000 square miles and with 352,000,000 inhabitants, it is scattered over the whole globe. It embraces all zones from the icy wilderness of Hudson Bay to the tropical jungles of India and the mahogany forests of Honduras; there is scarcely a product which a British province does not bring forth in excellent quantities; and no less various are the degrees of civilization of its inhabitants, from the Kaffirs of the Cape to the highly cultivated citizens of Toronto or Sydney. We find, with Christians, Mohammedans, and other religions, about 70,000,000 Mahomedans, and 8,000,000 Buddhists; and the Bible is printed in 130 languages and dialects represented in the Empire, yet notwithstanding such polyglottous elements, the Government, with rare exceptions, maintains order, and no sign of dissolution is visible.

Professional Impropriety.

One day last March a Belgian lady fell from her carriage in Brussels and received injuries which necessitated the amputation of her leg. The surgeon who performed the operation, considering the amputated member his property, placed it in a case and put it on exhibition in his ante-room, with an explanatory note giving the name, age and address of its former possessor. When the lady's husband heard of this, considering such an exhibition improper, he went to the surgeon to get back the leg. The surgeon refused to give it up, but offered to remove the notice. This was not satisfactory, and the Government has become a cause celebre in the courts of Brussels.

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D. POTTINGER,
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