

A NIGHT IN THE WOODS.

The events which form the subject of the following sketch occurred during a sojourn of three months with a surveying-party in one of the wildest districts of Canada. We were occupied in tracing the course of a hitherto unexplored river, which unfolded to us a succession of scenic effects, such as would have delighted an artist and poet, and which they only could describe.

It would be difficult to convey to the reader who has not bivouacked out in the woods, the luxury of those evenings around the camp-fire.

After a deal of story-telling, we all turned in for the night—that is, we rolled ourselves in our blankets, and fell asleep with our feet towards the fire.

The stories told upon the evening I have in my mind, had all been about wolves, some of which rapacious creatures were said to be then in our neighbourhood. Owing, perhaps, to my imagination having been excited by these tales, I had a terrible nightmare. I dreamed that wolves were pursuing me; I knew they were gaining on me; I could hear their howls growing more and more distinct. There is a point of agony at which all dreams must have an end—I awoke with a terrible start, and found myself bathed in a cold sweat, and a prey to a sense of terror for which I could not account. Instead of the cheerful blaze which I had seen ere I fell asleep, all was now cold and dark. The fire had sunk to a heap of red embers. I could not distinguish one of my sleeping companions. Good Heaven! can I be still slumbering? There, again, is the long low wailing howl which I heard so distinctly in my dream.

I sit up erect, and listen. What is that sound? a rustling among the brushwood—some of the party stirring? No. All are silent as the grave. I am the only one awake in the camp. Once again! Surely I am mistaken. I thought the fire was nearer to me, just in front; and so it is. What, then, can be those two glimmering lights a few yards off? Now they are moving! I awake the nearest sleeper—an American named Silas Wood. The man starts to his feet, rubs his eyes. "What is it?" "Look there, Silas." He looks, and as quick as lightning seizes a burning fagot, and hurls it with all his force and an unerring aim. The glimmering lights disappear with a rustle of the brushwood—a sharp short bark close at hand, and then in a minute or two, the long low wail in the distance is heard.

Silas then stirred and raked the burning embers, and throwing on an immense heap of dry brush, in a second the Egyptian darkness is dispelled by a bright flame which leaps up six feet into the air, and brings the sleeping figures and the nearest trees into full relief.

"Silas, what does it all mean?" I asked.

"It means, squire," replied the American, speaking with his usual deliberate drawl—"wolves!"

"Wolves!" I re-echoed. "Then these two glimmering lights that I took for glowworms were—"

"A wolf's eyes, squire; and I guess his friends warden't fur off, awaitin' kinder anxious to hear tell of their scout. Hark! if the darned things ain't a groanin' and lamentin' over their disappointment, as sure as my name's Silas Wood."

Once more the long low growl, inexpressibly sad and fearful, was heard at a greater distance. Now that I knew what it implied, it made the blood curdle in my veins.

"I shall never forget a wolf's howl!" I exclaimed; "I heard that accursed sound in my dream as plainly as I hear it now. But are we not in danger?" and I began mechanically to pile up more wood on the blazing fire.

"No fears now, squire," replied the Yankee coolly; "the cowardly critters dar'n't come anigh a fire like that. Besides, I reckon the feller I scared so with that 'ere burning chip has told 'em it's no go by this time. They're as cunning as humans, is them critters. Ay, be off, and a good riddance to ye, ye howling varmint!" he added, as the low wail was once more heard dying away in the distance.

Notwithstanding the assurance that the wolves were retreating, I took great pleasure in seeing the fire blazing up brightly, for I knew that in that consisted our protection. "I suppose we have had a narrow escape?" I said to my companion, who, besides myself, was the only one awake in the camp.

"I reckon I've seen a narrower, then," replied he. "Why that 'ere skulkin' scout dar'n't have give warning to the rest of the pack as long as a single red ember remained. The critters is dreadful afraid of fire."

"Well," I rejoined, "I am not at all sorry I awoke when I did. But as we're the only two awake, suppose you tell me this narrow escape you allude to—that is, if you don't feel sleepy."

"Me, squire? I ain't sleepy, not a morsel. I couldn't sleep a wink, if I tried. I feel too kinder happy like to have cotched that darned sneakin' scout sich a lick!" and the Yankee laughed, quite tickled at the recollection. "I guess he had it right slick between the eyes. I knowed he felt it by the bark he gave. Well, squire, it'll give me considerable satisfaction to narrate to you my adventure with the tarnal critters. I guess, squire, it be a matter of ten year ago that Deacon Nathan had a raisin' away down to Stockville, in Vermont, where I was reared."

"What is a raisin'?" I asked.

"Well, I guess it's a buildin' bee," rejoined the Yankee.

"And, pray, what's a building bee?" I inquired "for I am as wise as I was before."

"You see, squire, when you wants to get anything done up right away in a hurry all to once like, whether it's flax-beatin', or apple-parin', or corn-huskin', and the neighbours all round come and help work, that's a bee; and a buildin' bee, or a raisin', is when they want to set up the frame of a house or a barn."

"Oh, that's a building bee; now I understand." "Well, I guess it were pretty big barn that Deacon Nathan was agoin' to raise, and so we had a considerable sight of boys and a regular spree; and when it came to draw towards night, the deacon he says to me: "Silas," says he, "I don't kinder feel easy leavin' this here barn unprotected during the dark watches of the night. The heart of man is desperately wicked, and there's some loafers in the village, and there's no end to boards and shingles lying about; and so, Silas, what'll you take to stop here all night?"

"Deacon," says I, "what'll you give?"

"Well, you see the deacon was everlastin' close where money was concerned; so he puts on a long face, and screwed his lips together, and he says very slow: 'Would a dollar, Silas, be about?'"

"Deacon," says I, "ain't worth my while to stop for that; but if you like to make it four, I don't mind if I do."

"Silas Wood," says the deacon, "ain't you unreasonable? How can I rob my family to that extent?"

"You see the deacon was a remarkable pious man, and whenever he sold the men sperrits, or shoes, or flannel, or other notions out of his store, for about three times their vally, and stopped it out of their wages, he always talked about his duty to his family. Well, we chaffered and chaffered for a considerable spell, and at last we concluded to strike a bargain for two dollars and a pint of rum. The boys was a pretty well almost cleared out, when Dave Shunysyer comes to me and says: "Silas," says he, "be it true you're agoin' to stop here all night?"

"I reckon I ain't agoin' to do nothin' else," I says.

"Take a fool's advice," says Dave, "and do nothin' of the sort."

"What for?" says I.

"Cause," says he, "there's several refused; and the deacon knowed you to be a kinder desperate chap, or he wouldn't have axed you."

"Why, man alive," says I, "what's the danger to come from?"

"Why," says Dave, "ain't you aheerd there's been wolves seen in the neighbourhood. Didn't the deacon tell you as how he lost two sheep only the night afore last? You dar'n't make a fire, cause of the shavings; and the barn ain't boarded up."

"Dave," says I, "don't you think to pull the wool over my eyes that fashion, and then have it to say you cirenvented Silas Wood? I reckon I can read you as easy as a book. You'd like to earn them two dollars yourself. Well, now, I'll tell you what I'll do with you. Two's company; if you like to stop with me, and help me to drink the deacon's rum, you're welcome; and I don't care if I share the brass into the bargain."

"Says Dave: "I wouldn't stop a night in this here barn as it is not for a five hundred dollar bill. Remember, Silas, I've warned you as a friend!" and away he went."

"Well, squire, I warden't goin' to let Dave scare me, 'cause I knowed he was sweet on a gal called Rini Parkins, that I were keepin' company with, and would have been considerable rejoiced to have it to tell how I had tunked; and as I hadn't heard tell of no wolves in them parts, I jest thought he said that by way of banter."

"Well, I made myself comfortable in the barn. It was all boarded up on three sides, and partly on the fourth; only there was a gap left for the door, big enough to let in a waggon-load of hay. It wasn't cold, bein' a fine night in the Indian summer. So I kept a strollin' up an down, takin' a look out now and agin, to see if there was anybody lurkin' about with an eye to the boards and the shingles, but there warden't a soul stirrin' but myself. Every now and agin, I'd mix myself a little grog, till the rum was all gone, and then I began to feel most everlastin' sleepy; so I thought I'd jest lie down awhile on a big pile of shavings there was in one corner of the barn. Well, squire, I dropped off, as you may suppose; and I guess it were along of what Dave Shunysyer said, I got to dreamin' about wolves, till at last, blame me if I didn't dream there was one in the barn huntin' about, jest like a dog, sniffin' here and there, till at last he came to the pile of shavings where I was."

"Well, squire, I can't call to mind how I woke exactly, but the first thing I remember I was sittin' right up on the pile of shavings, tryin' to make out as well as I could in the dark if there was anything in the barn or not. It was about a minute before I could see clearly; but at last I heard a slight rustle, and thought I saw somethin' move. Thinks I, that's Dave Shunysyer, or some of the boys, come back to frighten me. They shant have it to crow over me. So I sings out: "Is that you, Dave?" There was no answer, but I heard a rustlin' and a patter jest like a dog's paws, and I could see the critter, whatever it was, crawlin' towards the gap in the boards. Then it stopped, and kinder turned its head, and I cotched sight of two twinklin' lights, and, thinks I, it's a stray dog; when the critter give a spring out of the barn, and sot up a howl. Squire, I shouldn't have been scared with one wolf, at the howl was answerd from the woods, nigh be a quarter of a mile off, by another, which I knowed could only have come from a pack of not less than fifty hungry devils. Well, squire, I was awful scared, and that's a fact; but I guess if I'd a lost my presence of mind, it would ha' been all up with me in about five minutes. I knowed I hadn't a moment to lose, 'cause I heard the howl comin' nearer and nearer; and the yelp yelp of the sentinel-wolf outside callin' them to their prey! My first idea was to set fire to the shavings. I out with my flint and steel; but the spark wouldn't light, and not one of the shavings would catch. The howls kept comin' nigher and nigher. Then I began to think I was gone. There was an axe in the barn, but what could I do agin fifty wolves? and in the dark, where they couldn't see my eyes to daunt them."

"I clenched it, however, and determined to sell my life dearly, when all to once, jest when I'd given up all hope, I feel something touch agin my head—it was a rope as had been made fast to one of the rafters. I guess, squire, if that 'ere rope had been a foot shorter, I'd not a ben here now tellin' this story! The way I went up that rope, hand over hand, was a caution. And I'd barely swung myself on to the rafter, and begun lashin' myself to the beam with the rope, when—squire, it makes my blood run cold only to tell of it, the barn was alive with wolves, yelpin', leapin', and fallin' over each other. I could hear them routin' among the shavings; and in a minute they had all spread over the barn-floor. Then they began to nuzzle in the earth and scratch up the mould with their paws."

"At last one of 'em scented me, and told the others with a yelp. Then of all the yells I ever heard!—squire, I mo-t swooned away; and it I hadn't lashed myself to the rafter, I'd ha' fell right down among 'em. Oh, such a yell I never heard afore, and hope I'll never hear agin! Though I knowed they couldn't get at me, it was dreadful to be there alone in the dead of the night, with a pack of hungry wolves lickin' their slaverin' jaws, and thirstin' for my blood. They ran round and round the barn, and leaped on to each other's backs, and sprang in to the air; but it was no use; and at last I began to get kinder easy, and I looked down on the howlin' varmint, and bantered them. Squire, you'd ha' thought they understood a feller. Every time I hollered and shook my fist at them, they yelled and jumped, louder than ever. For all this, I warden't sorry when it begun to grow a little lighter; and about an hour before dawn they begin to see it was no use; so they give me one long, loud farewell howl afore they

went. But, aquire, the most curious part of the story has got to come. Some time afore they went, it had growed so light, I could see 'em quite plain; and an ugly set of devils they was, and no mistake. Well, I noticed one wolf separate himself from the pack, and trying to blink away. He had his tail between his legs, jest like a dog when he's beaten, and had a cowed look, as if he were ashamed and afeared like. All at once, he made a spring out of the barn, but the rest of the pack was after him like lightnin'."

"Squire," concluded the Yankee, laying his hand impressively on my sleeve, "you may believe it or not, jest as you please; but beyond some hide and bones, they didn't leave a piece of that 'ere wolf as big as my hand. He was the scout as give the signal to the others, and they devoured him out of hunger and revenge, 'cause they couldn't get me!"

MACHIAVELLI ON THE WAR.

In the new number of the *Contemporary Review* there is a conversation invented by the author of "Friends in Council," Mr. Arthur Helps, on The War and General Culture. The whole conversation is remarkably good. Toward its close Milverton, speaking in praise of Machiavelli, undertakes to produce in a few minutes from that writer a number of passages which have a clear bearing on the present state of the war between the French and the Germans; passages which are "pregnant with wise suggestions for both sides." Accordingly, Milverton fulfils this undertaking by merely reading the headings of some of Machiavelli's chapters—among others these:—

"Whether fortresses, and many other things which princes frequently make, are useful or injurious."

"Riches are not the sinews of war, as according to the common opinion they are supposed to be."

"That the men who are born in the same province, preserve throughout all time nearly the same nature."

"How a prudent general ought to impose every necessity for fighting upon his own soldiers, and to take away necessity for fighting from the soldiers of the enemy. (Which means, according to Milverton, Always have somewhat of the pressure of necessity as an impulse to your troops when you make them fight, and as a reason for your doing so. And, especially, do not give your enemy the advantage which arises from that ultimate form of necessity, despair.)"

"Again, the reason why the French have been, and are now considered in warlike contests to be at first more than men, and afterwards less than women. (In the body of this chapter Machiavelli maintains of the French that, "with ordinary skill, the French ardour in war might be kept up to the end in the same measure as at the beginning.")"

"Prudent princes and commonwealths ought to be satisfied with victory; for most times when victory does not suffice it is lost."

In the last chapter Machiavelli shows, by examples, how unwise it is for the victors to make too much of their victory; for the vanquished to make too little of their defeat. Thus:—

"Hannibal, after he had routed the Romans at Cannæ, commanded his orators at Carthage to announce the victory and to ask for supplies. It was argued this way and that, in the Carthaginian Senate, as to what should be done. Hanno, an old prudent citizen of Carthage, counselled that this victory should be used wisely; namely, to make peace with the Romans, it being possible for the Carthaginians to have peace now, as he said, with honourable conditions, as they had gained a battle; and that they should not wait to have to make peace after another battle, which might be a defeat. For the object, he argued, of the Carthaginians should be to show the Romans that they were able to deal with them; and having gained a victory, they should have a care not to lose the benefit of it merely for the hope of gaining some greater battle."

On the other hand, Machiavelli takes the siege of Tyre as an instance of the folly of refusing terms of peace offered by the prevailing side—

"Princes cannot commit a greater error when they are attacked (and when the assault is made by assailants who are far more puissant than they are) than to refuse all terms of accommodation, especially when these terms are offered by the enemy; because never will such low terms be offered to them which may not be in some respect advantageous for the party which accepts them, who will thus be sharers of the victory gained over themselves."

Milverton's own comment is that "if Count von Bismarck and M. Jules Favre would for one day only forsake all other business, and shut themselves up to the study of this (third) chapter of Machiavelli, it would be the best thing for the world that could happen."

At a meeting of the council of the University of Edinburgh on the 28th ult., on the subject of the medical education of women, Professor Crum Brown proposed that a representation should be made to the University Court, stating the desirableness of so far modifying the present regulations as to afford women the same advantages as the other medical students. Professor Turner moved the previous question, and in the course of a discussion which followed, Professor Christison, referring to a rumour that the movement for the medical education of women in the university was patronized by the highest lady in the realm, stated that a communication had been made to him to the effect that Her Majesty concurred in the adverse views expressed twelve months ago by Dr. Laycock and himself, and that she desired that her sentiments should be made known. On a division, the previous question was carried by 47 to 46 votes.

A novel project is broached in the *North German Correspondent*—a sheet which is supposed to receive its inspiration direct from the Berlin Foreign Office. It is held "in governmental circles," we are told, that the authors of a war, and not merely, as hitherto, their subordinates and tools, should be made responsible for their acts before the world; and it has therefore been suggested that it should be stipulated, as a condition of peace between France and Germany, that "the intellectual originators and instigators of the present war shall not escape with impunity." Among the persons who would be dealt with under this code would be "the entire executive which devised the invasion of Germany; the statesmen who approved of it; the ministers by whom it was recommended; the orators who laboured for, demanded, and welcomed it; the journalists whose constant text was war, and who discounted the triumphs of the coming campaign." The tribunal in the case, it is suggested, might be formed either of citizens of neutral States or of representatives of the two belligerent nations themselves.