



"They sawed and clashed."

sap; from the bandages of that mummy Winter the joetid Spring stepped forth incarnated, encouraging. And in the heart of this Spring, through long flumes of its young breath, Benoni sent his flotilla of melodies.

He tossed the blood in the veins of the red men with the exhilarating music of battle, spun down the drives of time from barbarous minstrels of the hills; he charged their bodies with the miraculous pulse of his own temperament—a punchinello, a common showman, an artist!

Then he suddenly detached himself from these clarion chords, and, casting his eyes on Venlaw and Brian, played with great softness melodies familiar to them both. They were going out to battle; and, in any case, it was best that they should be steeped in memories and go forth like gentlemen wearing the favours of their ladies on their arms. For such live better and die better, and fight ere they die with more valiant arm.

In the morning they tried to dissuade Benoni from going, for, as they said, he was old, and the march would be severe. But he laughed at them, and said that he had marched many a mile with better men, and fought with as good, by sea and land. That his hair was grey was nothing. The hunger of travel was on him, and he had a lad to meet beyond. Besides, two of his friends were going, and there was an end of it!

Yes, *two* were going, for Brian had said, because they were going back to Scotland together if they returned from this enterprise, and because these Indians were the enemies of all white men, he would fight with and for the Hudson's Bay Company in this case if he were given permission. His duty had only been with Fort Gabriel, not with the intrigues of his masters with the Indians. This Andrew gladly gave.

For many days they travelled without sign of any foe. They reinforced two forts and two posts, and at last came to the Big Sleep Woods, beyond which were Long Valley and the village of the White Hands. A scout had brought them word that the White Hands had had the dance of the Black Knife, —the prelude to war,—and were just ready to march. He said that they had formed themselves into two groups, one evidently intended to march west on Fort Gabriel, and the other east towards Fort Saviour. Venlaw decided to attack at once.

He pushed forward, but suddenly found himself attacked. His men fought splendidly, and drove the Indians slowly back upon their village. Here a sharp struggle took place. It was a straining tangle of battle. Presently the White Hands were reinforced by a band which came hurrying down on the village from the north. It is hard to tell how the battle would have gone had help not come also to Venlaw. He had