

## VI.—EXPLANATIONS.

Matonaza, Mark Dalton, and the Roaming Panther had continued on their way without stopping, until they reached the scene of the already narrated Esquimaux massacre. No one had approached its precincts since the departure of the Athapascows, and tents and dead bodies all lay in horrid confusion. The corpses were eagerly examined, but the White Swallow was not among them. At all events, then, she had not been killed in the fray. This was a source of prodigious relief to the whole party. Their search in the neighborhood brought them to the seven huts of the second Esquimaux village. The Roaming Panther fortunately knew enough of the Esquimaux tongue to make himself understood. By friendly signs they calmed the fright of the poor creatures who remained in the settlement after the Athapascow foray, and finally the Little Snake drew them into talk about the fight, winding up with a question about the girl the Indians had with them. One of them pointed to an old, half-deaf, half-blind woman, crouching in the corner of the hut. Matonaza looked puzzled, but waited, till the hag began to mumble something, and finally brought out from her dress Thee-kis-ho's trinket. Matonaza leaped up in delight. He was on the track of his bride! Furnished with new shoes and food, and refreshed with sleep, they started on their return. The trail was clear enough at first, though the Little Snake wondered how she had come by so strange a friend as a large dog. All parties, however, were soon at fault. The river was reached where Thee-kis-ho had hidden her trail, and it now became requisite to be, according to the words of the chief, "all eye." The Roaming Panther followed one bank of the stream, while Mark and Matonaza followed the other, for a long time in vain. The bank was hard and rocky or pebbly, and not a trace of the Indian girl was to be found.

"Ugh!" said the young chief suddenly.

They were standing near a stunted bush, and there, on the ground, were some faint traces of a camp, with some fish-bones abandoned by the dog. The party halted, and after a few words of congratulation, supped on a couple of wild rabbits and a partridge, all the results of the day's chase, cooked by means of the stunted branches and trunk of the bush. It began now to be very cold; and when the trio in their turn commenced ascending the gully by which Thee-kis-ho crossed the Rocky Mountains, the blast blew chill and keen. Here, too, in these stony hills they lost all trace of the girl.

From that hour, indeed, the trail was wholly lost to them. So much time was consumed in hunting for it, in looking for provisions, and in roaming hither and thither, that the snow overtook them before they had passed the lake where the young girl had killed the deer. It became almost useless to proceed, and yet the chief resolved on continuing the search. A hut was erected, a fire made, and then the three men parted in search of game—one re-