

398 THE CHEERFUL BLACKGUARD

from the guard-house, attended by the guard, who formed up round one of our transport wagons which stood in waiting. At my request, a pair of steps had been placed as a mounting-block, from which, with the priest, he entered at the tail of the wagon. The teamster was my junior counsel, and in the off man's place sat the fellow chosen as hangman, wearing civilian clothes and a silk mask.

As the team started at a slow walk, the prisoner commenced to sing his death-song after the Indian usage, but the priest, as I learned afterward, asked him to stop, saying that the Blackfeet would understand, but white men would think him afraid. In a dead silence the wagon crossed the parade ground and backed to the scaffold, which was level with its bed. Then the priest lifted the prisoner, supporting him until they came under the gallows. The hangman joined them, carrying the white cap which was to be drawn over the prisoner's head, hiding his face.

I remember steeling myself to see the commonplace details, and to see nothing else, to think of nothing else. A night of preparation had strengthened me to face as best I could the public and shameful death of the one man on earth I loved. Even now I could not bear to look toward that group on the scaffold, but turned about, surveying the hollow