

Company. Great preparations were made; the men, dressed in their newest capotes and gaudiest hat-cords and feathers, visited each other, and nothing was thought or heard of but the ball. The evening came, and with it the guests; and soon might be heard within the fort sounds of merriment and revelry as they danced in lively measures to a Scottish reel, played by some native fiddler upon a violin of his own construction. Without the gates, however, a very different scene met the eye. Down in a hollow, where the lofty trees and dense underwood threw a shadow on the ground, a knot of men might be seen muffled in their leathern coats and fur-caps, hurrying to and fro with bundles on their backs and snow-shoes under their arms, packing and tying them firmly on trains of dog-sledges which stood, with the dogs ready harnessed, in the shadow of the bushes. The men whispered eagerly and hurriedly to each other, as they packed their goods, while others held the dogs, and patted them to keep them quiet—evidently shewing that, whatever was their object, expedition and secrecy were necessary. Soon all was in readiness; the bells, which usually tinkled on the dogs' necks, were unhooked and packed in the sledges; an active-looking man sprang forward, and set off at a round trot over the snow; and a single crack of the whip sent four sledges, each with a train of four or five dogs, after him; while two other men brought up the rear. For a time the muffled sound of the sledges was heard as they slid over the snow, while now and then the whine of a dog broke upon the ear as the impatient drivers urged them along. Gradually these sounds died away, and nothing was heard but the faint echoes of music and mirth, which floated on the frosty night-wind, giving token that the revellers still kept up the dance, and were ignorant of the departure of the trains. Late on the following day, the Nor'-west scouts reported the party of Indians, and soon a set of sleighs departed from the fort with loud ringing bells. After a long day's march of forty miles, they reached the encampment, where they found all the Indians dead drunk, and not a skin, not even the remnant of a musquash, left to repay them for their trouble! Then it was that they discovered the *ruse* of the ball, and vowed to have their revenge. Opportunity was not long wanting. Soon after this occurrence, one of the parties met a Hudson's Bay train on its way to trade with the Indians, of whom they also were in search. They exchanged compliments with each other, and as the day was very cold, proposed lighting a fire and taking a dram together. Soon five or six goodly trees yielded to their vigorous blows, and fell crashing to the ground; and in a few minutes one of the party, lighting a sulphur match with his flint and steel, set fire to a huge pile of logs, which crackled and burned furiously, sending up clouds of sparks into the wintry sky, and casting a warm tinge upon the snow and the surrounding trees. The canteen was quickly produced, and they told their stories and adventures, while the liquor mounted to