

a four-horse team gaily adorned, filled with some fifty men, singing and shouting with all their might, were coming down the hill road at full gallop. Round the corner they swung, dashed at full speed across the bridge and down the street, and pulled up after they had made the circuit of a block, to the great admiration of the on-lookers. Among others Slavin sauntered up good-naturedly, making himself agreeable to Sandy and those who were helping to unhitch his team.

'Oh, you need not take trouble with me or my team, Mike Slavin. Batches and me and the boys can look after them fine,' said Sandy coolly.

This rejecting of hospitality was perfectly understood by Slavin and by all.

'Dat's too bad, heh?' said Baptiste wickedly; 'and, Sandy, he's got good money on his pocket for sure, too.' The boys laughed, and Slavin, joining in, turned away with Keefe and Blaney; but by the look in his eye I knew he was playing 'Br'er Rabbit,' and lying low.

Mr. Craig just then came up, 'Hello, boys! too late for Punch and Judy, but just in time for hot coffee and doughnuts.'

'Bon; dat's fuss rate,' said Baptiste heartily; 'where you keep him?'

'Up in the next tent next the church there. The miners are all in.'

'Ah, dat so? Dat's bad news for the shantymen, heh, Sandy?' said the little Frenchman dolefully.

'There was a clothes-basket full of doughnuts and a boiler of coffee left as I passed just now,' said Craig encouragingly.

'Allons, mes garçons; vite! never say keel!' cried Baptiste excitedly, stripping off the harness.

But Sandy would not leave the horses till they were carefully rubbed down, blanketed, and fed, for he was entered for the four-horse race and it behooved him to do his best to win. Besides, he scorned to hurry himself for anything so unimportant as eating; that he considered hardly worthy even of Baptiste. Mr. Craig managed to get a word with him before he went off, and I saw Sandy solemnly and emphatically shake his head, saying, 'Ah! we'll beat him this day,' and I gathered that he was added to the vigilance committee.

Old man Nelson was busy with his own team. He turned slowly at Mr. Craig's greeting, 'How is it, Nelson?' and it was with a very grave voice he answered, 'I hardly know, sir; but I am not gone yet, though it seems little to hold to.'

'All you want for a grip is what your hand can cover. What would you have? And besides, do you know why you are not gone yet?'

The old man waited, looking at the minister gravely.

'Because He hasn't let go His grip of you.'

'How do you know He's gripped me?'

'Now, look here, Nelson, do you want to quit this thing and give it all up?'

'No, no! For Heaven's sake, no! Why, do you think I have lost it?' said Nelson, almost piteously.

'Well, He's keener about it than you; and I'll bet you haven't thought it worth while to thank Him.'

'To thank Him,' he repeated, almost stupidly, 'for—'

'For keeping you where you are overnight,' said Mr. Craig, almost sternly.

The old man gazed at the minister, a light growing in his eyes.

'You're right. Thank God, you're right.' And then he turned quickly away, and went into the stable behind his team. It

was a minute before he came out. Over his face there was a trembling joy.

'Can I do anything for you to-day?' he asked humbly.

'Indeed you just can,' said the minister, taking his hand and shaking it very warmly; and then he told him Slavin's programme and ours.

'Sandy is all right till after his race. After that is his time of danger,' said the minister.

'I'll stay with him, sir,' said old Nelson, in the tone of a man taking a covenant, and immediately set off for the coffee-tent.

'Here comes another recruit for your corps,' I said, pointing to Leslie Graeme, who was coming down the street at that moment in his light sleigh.

'I am not so sure. Do you think you could get him?'

I laughed. 'You are a good one.'

'Well,' he replied, half defiantly, 'is not this your fight too?'

'You made me think so, though I am bound to say I hardly recognise myself to-day. But here goes,' and before I knew it I was describing our plans to Graeme, growing more and more enthusiastic as he sat in his sleigh, listening with a quizzical smile I didn't quite like.

'He's got you too,' he said; 'I feared so.'

'Well,' I laughed, 'perhaps so. But I want to lick that man Slavin. I've just seen him, and he's just what Craig calls him, "a slick son of the devil." Don't be shocked; he says it is Scripture.'

'Revised version,' said Graeme gravely, while Craig looked a little abashed.

'What is assigned me, Mr. Craig? for I know that this man is simply your agent.'

I repudiated the idea, while Mr. Craig said nothing.

'What's my part?' demanded Graeme.

'Well,' said Mr. Craig hesitatingly, 'of course I would do nothing till I had consulted you; but I want a man to take my place at the sports. I am referee.'

'That's all right,' said Graeme, with an air of relief; 'I expected something hard.'

'And then I thought you would not mind presiding at dinner—I want it to go off well.'

'Did you notice that?' said Graeme to me. 'Not a bad touch, eh?'

'That's nothing to the way he touched me. Wait and learn,' I answered, while Craig looked quite distressed. 'He'll do it, Mr. Craig, never fear,' I said, 'and any other little duty that may occur to you.'

'Now, that's too bad of you. That is all I want, honor bright,' he replied; adding, as he turned away, 'you are just in time for a cup of coffee, Mr. Graeme. Now I must see Mrs. Mavor.'

'Who is Mrs. Mavor?' I demanded of Graeme.

'Mrs. Mavor? The miners' guardian angel.'

We put up the horses and set off for coffee. As we approached the booth Graeme caught sight of the Punch and Judy show, stood still in amazement, and exclaimed, 'Can the dead live?'

'Punch and Judy never die,' I replied solemnly.

'But the old manipulator is dead enough, poor old beggar!'

'But he left his mantle, as you see.'

He looked at me a moment.

'What! do you mean, you—?'

'Yes, that is exactly what I do mean.'

'He is a great man, that Craig fellow—a truly great man.'

And then he leaned up against a tree and laughed till the tears came. 'I say, old boy, don't mind me,' he gasped, 'but do you remember the old "Varsity show?'

'Yes, you villain; and I remember your part in it. I wonder how you can, even at this remote date, laugh at it.' For I had a vivid recollection of how, after a 'chaste and highly artistic performance of this mediaeval play' had been given before a distinguished Toronto audience the trap door by which I had entered my box was fastened and I was left to swelter in my cage and forced to listen to the suffocated laughter from the wings and the stage whispers of 'Hello, Mr. Punch, where's the baby?' And for many a day after I was subjected to anxious inquiries as to the locality and health of 'the baby,' and whether it was able to be out.

'Oh, the dear old days!' he kept saying, over and over, in a tone so full of sadness that my heart grew sore for him and I forgave him, as many a time before.

The sports passed off in typical Western style. In addition to the usual running and leaping contests, there was rifle and pistol shooting, in both of which old man Nelson stood first, with Shaw, foreman of the mines, second.

The great event of the day, however, was to be the four-horse race, for which three teams were entered—one from the mines driven by Nixon, Craig's friend, a citizens' team, and Sandy's. The race was really between the miners' team and that from the woods, for the citizen's team though made up of speedy horses, had not been driven much together, and knew neither their driver nor each other. In the miners' team were four bays, very powerful, a trifle heavy perhaps, but well matched, perfectly trained, and perfectly handled by their driver. Sandy had his long rangy roans, and for leaders a pair of half-broken pinto bronchos. The pintos, caught the summer before upon the Alberta prairies, were fleet as deer, but wicked and uncertain. They were Baptiste's special care and pride. If they would only run straight there was little doubt that they would carry the roans and themselves to glory; but one could not tell the moment they might bolt or kick things to pieces.

Being the only non-partisan in the crowd I was asked to referee. The race was about half a mile and return, the first and last quarters being upon the ice. The course, after leaving the ice, led up from the river by a long easy slope to the level above; and at the further end curved somewhat sharply round the Old Fort. The only condition attaching to the race was that the teams should start from the scratch, make the turn of the Fort, and finish at the scratch. There were no vexing regulations as to fouls. The man making the foul would find it necessary to reckon with the crowd, which was considered sufficient guarantee for a fair and square race. Owing to the hazards of the course, the result would depend upon the skill of the drivers quite as much as upon the speed of the teams. The points of hazard were at the turn round the Old Fort, and at a little ravine which led down to the river, over which the road passed by means of a long log bridge or causeway.

From a point upon the high bank of the river the whole course lay in open view. It was a scene full of life and vividly picturesque. There were miners in dark clothes and peak caps; citizens in ordinary garb; ranchmen in wide cowboy hats and buckskin shirts and leggings, some with cartridge-belts and pistols; a few half-breeds and Indians in half-native, half-civilized dress; and scattering through the crowd the lumbermen with gay scarlet and blue blanket coats, and some with knitted tuques of the same colors. A very good-natured but extremely uncertain crowd it was. At the head of each horse stood a