

# THE SASSANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Vol. XIII.]

TORONTO, DECEMBER 9, 1893.

[No. 49.

## A MOUNTAIN HERO.

BY SYDNEY DAYRE.

JAKE was climbing over the snow-covered mountain with a pack on his back. Jake was a stout boy with Indian blood in his veins, as you could easily have seen by his coal-black hair and eyes and his swarthy cheeks. The mountain was a spur of the Rockies. The pack contained coon skins which Jake was carrying to the small railroad town to sell.

Jake did not like the town or the people he met there. Neither did he like the railroad. It disturbed him with its roar and its quickness. Feet to go on were good enough and fast enough for him. He would rather, too, that the people kept away—these white people. They, too, were so quick—quick when there was no hunting or trapping on hand to make it necessary to move in a hurry. There were so many of them, too. They kept coming and coming, bringing with them such strange ways that it made him dizzy to think of them.

He did not object much to the missionaries who had come out among the earliest settlers. They were quieter and their talk was quiet. He did not trouble himself much about what they said either, although he had heard more of it than most boys of his like had heard.

This had happened one night when his mother was dying. She was the daughter of an Indian chief whose wife was one of the earliest white women who had penetrated so far into the wilds. Jake had sat beside his mother in the corner of the hut which the Government had built for them, and heard the missionary in low tones speak words of comfort.

She had listened as one who listens to a message of life, and Jake had always felt grateful to all missionaries, as he recalled the look of peace with which she had closed her weary eyes.

As Jake now entered the village for the first time in weeks it was easy to see that a great change had come over it. A branch road had come in, but he did not know that that was the reason of the new buildings lightly and hastily put up, nor of the number of new-looking people on the streets; women wrapped in furs, with faces even whiter than the white-faced men; children, too, with such golden looks as he had never before seen. Everything was lively and very strange, and Jake felt more and more that he did not like these strangers.

"There's a queer coot."

Two boys of his own age eyed Jake with interest as he passed down the street.

"I suppose we shall see plenty of that sort," said the other.

"Look at his leggings. Look at his snow-shoes." Jake was by this time carrying the latter through the well-tracked streets.

"And see that bundle of skins. I wonder if he got them himself."

"Like as not. I'd like to ask him."

"Oh, I wouldn't. He's such a scowly looking chap. Looks as if he'd as soon shoot you or me down as any other game."

Jake was indeed scowling. He had taken in but few of the words, but he knew they were speaking of him, and he resented the curious glances and the smiles. He hated them. Why could they not have stayed where they belonged, in the far-away country he had heard of, in which all the people were white like them?

that poor chap for his skins?—fine ones, too, they are. Don't you let him fleece you that way," to Jake.

Jake turned sharply as the new voice struck clearly into the conversation. It was that of one of the two boys he had passed.

"Mind what I say," went on the boy,

The man scowled ominously as Jake followed the boys.

"Where did you get them?" asked Arthur Lee, gazing with increased interest at the bundle of skins.

"Up—over there;" the boy made a sweep of his arm towards the surrounding hills.

"Did you shoot them all yourself?"

"Not shoot—trap."

"He trapped them. Say, Dick," turning to his companion, "wouldn't it be jolly to see some of that kind of work?"

"You come with me—I show," said the dark boy, greatly pleased with their interest in his pursuits.

"Do you trap anything else?"

"Trap or shoot, wolf, otter, deer, sometimes bear."

"Let's try it, Art!" exclaimed Dick, with great enthusiasm. "It's the first chance you and I have had at such sports. What's the good of coming to an out-of-all-creation country like this, if you don't find some fun? Yes, we'll come," to the boy. "Show us where to meet you. We've got snow-shoes. Look, Art, at these shoes of his. I suppose they are samples of high art in such lines."

As the afternoon waned Jake turned his face for his tramp over the mountains, with the slow beatings of his heart quickened by many a new thought. It was not so bad, after all, this hum of busy life in which such as he could find fair dealing. He liked the business-like way with which the fur dealer paid him twice as much for his skins as he had ever before received. And his whole nature warmed towards the white-faced, fair-haired strangers who had stood up for him when he was about to be wronged. He had told them where to meet him, and he would give them a lively taste of the wild sport in which he took delight.

"Here! Stop a minute!"

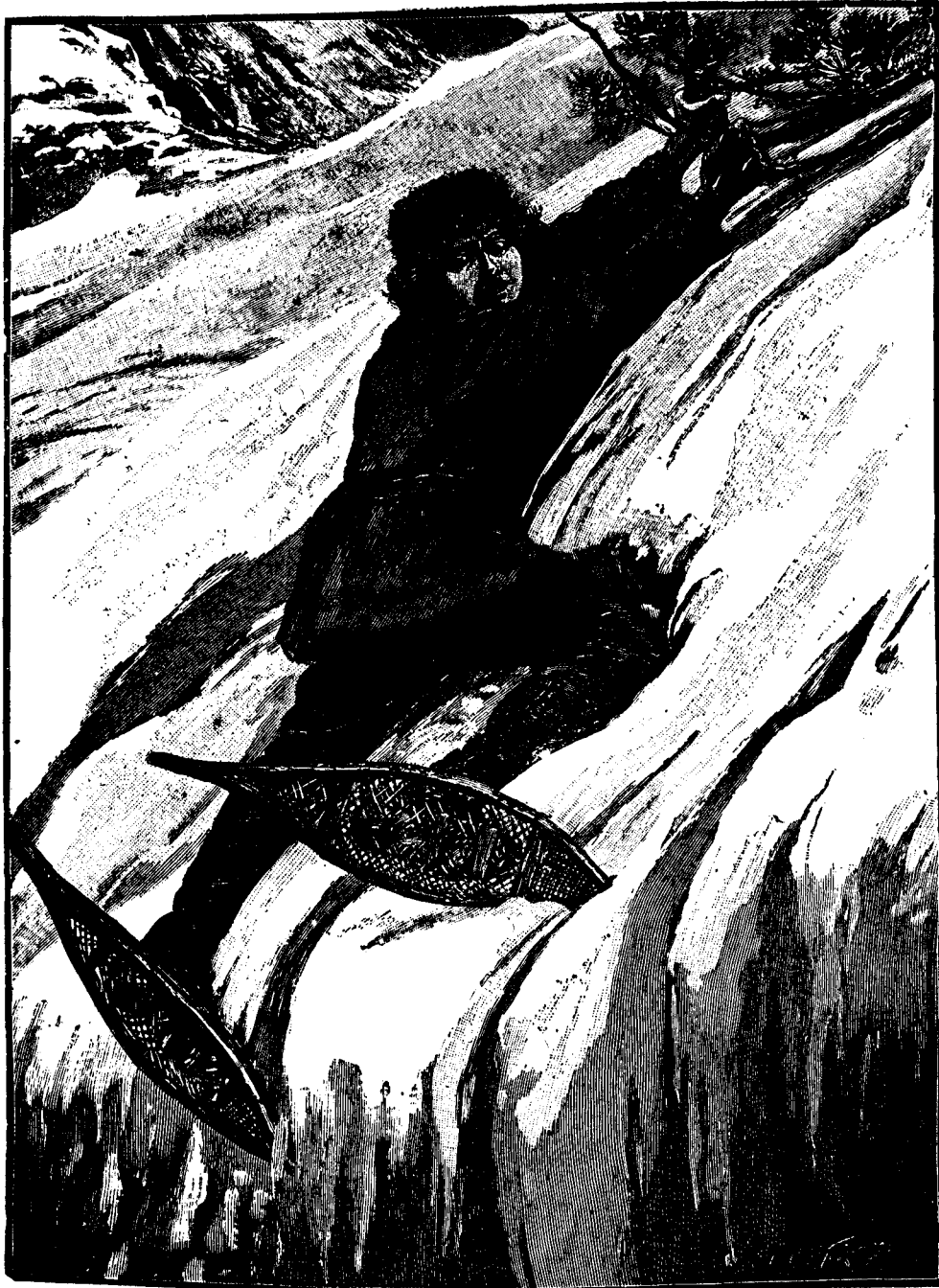
Jake had descended to cross a deep ravine when he heard the voice which well matched the surly face of Burk, the would-be fur dealer. He was one of the worst specimens of the adventurous characters which drift into a new country.

"Come this way. No, I ain't goin' to take it out o' your hide about them skins; though I might—you, a fellow that's had dealin's with me these two or three year back! But it ain't that. Come up to the top, here."

A climb through the snow brought them to an eminence from which could be had an extensive view of the valley below, with the town on the hillside. Directly below them, at the foot of an almost perpendicular cliff, ran the railroad. Two or three men of Burk's sort waited near.

"Look down there," said Burk. "The train that comes in before sunrise the day after to-morrow is to bring in a pile of money. We're goin' to stop that train. Look a' this heap o' stones and gravel, with this big boulder just fixed so a good shove'll send it down. You're to be here just fore it's light, and listen till you hear the train, and then you're to give the shove. Nobody'll ever know but it come down of itself."

Jake stood still with a scowl.



A MOUNTAIN HERO.

A few minutes later he stood with his skins before an ill-looking fellow who gazed out at him from a rudely built stall. A short dispute followed his offering of his wares, Jake appearing very far from pleased with the price offered.

"Too little, too little," he repeated, shaking his head.

"I tell you it's all they're worth and all you'll get."

"Stop, there! Is that all you're offering

with increasing energy. "If he won't pay you a fair price you go with me and I'll see that you get it. And," he continued, with a nod at the man, "my father's coming to town day after to-morrow, and if you don't look out you'll answer for your swindling."

Jake was not much given to smiling, but something very like a smile lit up his eyes as, after his first slow stare of inquiry, he gathered what was meant by the interruption.