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specially made to shelter the family in case of a raid of this sort. Into this pit she lowered the three smaller children, giving them blankets, then knowing that they were safe, for the time being at any rate, she took three new Winchester rifles from the cupboard and stood in readiness.

Thus as Ralph and Shem arrived at the doorway loaded rifles were thrust into their hands, and next moment the heavy wooden barge was shot across the panels.

All round the trading post walls were small firing ports, from which the occupants could shoot while lying on the floor, and at these, so that they could watch both the front and the back of the house, the three took up their positions.

In the meantime the Indians had been firing steadily, punctuating each volley with weird and bloodcurdling cries which lent an atmosphere of savagery to the whole proceeding. Dusk was rapidly falling, and since the red men had sense enough not to show themselves, it was only occasionally that an answering discharge came from the shanty, the occupants of which were nursing their none too liberal supply of ammunition.

As darkness fell the Indians became bolder, and shot after shot now broke the silence of the hills. Inside the trading post white wreaths of smoke hung in the atmosphere; the smaller children, fright-

His mind made up Shem groped his way to the trap door, and silently opened it. Under the shanty was an air space of two feet or so, which had been roughly filled in with peat above the walls of the pit so as to keep out the cold. Once inside the pit Shem discarded the rifle, then with both hands pushed the peat wall till it yielded, leaving an open access to the air space under the floor. This done he crept out into the chill night air, which smelt refreshing and fragrant after the smoke-ridden atmosphere of the trading room.

It was the work of a moment to make up the gap, and this done Shem, knife in hand, proceeded to creep on through the pitch blackness under the floor towards the stable. He knew that, at any moment, he might encounter one of the Indians who had crept under the house to fire it, and he knew too that such an encounter would be to the death, and that even if he were victorious it would probably put an end to his plan.

Nothing happened, however, as he crept on with ears tense, till finally he found himself out in the open. Just ahead was the stable, from which came the restless movements of the two frightened horses. It was lucky that the Indians had not finished the animals off, since it had been impossible for those in the house to bring their rifles to bear in that direction.



The Norwegian national sport is popular in Canada

ened by the noise, began to wail dolefully, their cries issuing faintly through the closed trap door. The room was in darkness, and outside little could be seen among the shadows. A moving patch of grey was sufficient to draw the fire of the defending rifles, as with blackened faces and smarting eyes the white settlers peered through the firing ports. Hour after hour seemed to pass by; the Indians fell silent, but in deadly earnest they continued the siege. Inman knew not that Grey Eagle, in the meantime, had visited the land of his people in Dakota, returning on a scalp raid with a fresh band of savages who were now accompanying him. It was clear that there must be a fair number of them, and as the darkness became more intense a fresh danger presented itself.

It was only possible for the three occupants to watch three of the walls of the trading post at a time, and they realised how easy it would be for the Indians to creep up and set fire to the house under cover of the darkness. If this happened they would be caught like rats in a trap—even the underground pit would afford them no shelter.

At length, when it had become so dark that they could hardly see at all, Shem crept up to his father's side and said—"We can't keep this on much longer, Dad. We haven't any too much ammunition, and it don't seem as though they'll quit till they've forced us out."

Ralph Inman grunted agreement. He knew only too well that what his son said was true; yet no alternative but to fight grimly on occurred to his mind. Receiving no answer Shem crept back to his port, but only to think out the scheme he had in mind. That the Indians would end the fight before daylight came if they possibly could he knew, and therefore, if he were to put his plan into practice, every moment was of value.

Shem possessed a small black cayuse of which he was very proud, for it had been given to him by a young Cree brave who was dying of a bullet wound. The boy was a good horseman, and though White Star, as he called his mount on account of the pure white star on its forehead, was not possessed of exceptional speed, she was as sure-footed as a mountain goat and thoroughly at home amidst the rugged slopes of the mountain foothills.

Still on all fours Shem reached the door of the stable, and to his intense relief found it unlatched. Slowly he opened it, and wriggled in through the aperture like a snake. Once inside he rose to his feet, and hastily took the saddle and bridle from the wall. Then groping his way to White Star's head he saddled and bridled her.

"White Star," he whispered. "It's neck or nothing to-night, old girl, and we've got to get through with it somehow." Then quietly he threw the door wide open and leapt into the saddle.

Next moment the Indians were startled by a loud triumphant cry and the pounding of hoofs. Like a rocket White Star and her rider shot from the stable, and next moment the Indians saw the racing cayuse in the very midst of them. They had no time to fire even had they recovered from their surprise sufficiently to do so, and while they hesitated the boy and horse were swallowed up in the darkness behind them.

Shem shouted a farewell to his people, and heard his mother's blessing shouted after him. Next moment he had plunged into the ford, and the dark waters of Tumbledown River were splashing against the girth straps by his feet.

As already stated, it was sixteen miles to Only Ford by the trail, but Shem knew a way which would at least halve the distance, if only it could be accomplished.