

one is unfamiliar with his short, bandy legs, his narrow, sloping little shoulders, his contracted chest, his queer pink and white face, with its bashful smile, his high bald head. Everybody knows his fear of women. Everybody knows, too, that he never had an opinion of his own on any subject. His speciality was making the best of other people's, no matter how bad they were; and competent judges say he could accomplish a more gloriously perfect best out of some tenderfoot's fool notion than another man with the advice of experts. Some people even maintain that Alfred was the best scout the plains ever produced, only he was so bashful that it took an expert to appreciate the fact.

When Lafond approached the camp of these men and threw himself from his pony, he found only Jim Buckley, sitting in the shade of one of his wagons, smoking his pipe.

"One says that you will tak' train through thees summer," began the half-breed abruptly. "Ah lak' to go also."

Buckley looked his interlocutor over keenly.

"Yes," said he slowly, between puffs. "That's right. We aims to pull through, but we don't aim to take no lumber with us. You married?"

Lafond shook his head. "No! No! No!" he cried vehemently.

"That's all right. Got any cattle?"

"Four horses."

"That one of them?"

"Yes."

The scout arose, still with the same appearance of deliberation, and inspected the pony thoroughly, with the eye and movements of an expert.

"Others as good?" he inquired.

"Bettaire," assured Lafond.

"Wagon?" pursued the laconic Buckley.

"Bobtail," responded Lafond with equal brevity. Though young, he already possessed some shrewdness in the reading of character.

Buckley sat down in the shade and relit his pipe.

"Where are you from?" he asked bluntly.

"Ontario."

"Woods?"

"Yes."