

Brothers of the Wild

him there was a grim significance behind Mackintosh's loquacity; for if the factor was famed for anything more than for his keen trading instincts, and his sure-shottedness, and his strength of endurance on the trail, it was for his taciturnity. For days on end Mackintosh would not open his mouth, even to young Newlands, between whom and he himself there were strong ties of affection—the affection of a growing youth for a man whom he looked upon as his ideal, and of a man for a youth who promised to become an expert backwoodsman; and that, as far as Red Mackintosh was concerned, was all that counted in life.

“I'd bet the first silver fox we find,” said Red, “that it's a man hunt, and some pair divil's in a tight corner. We—— 'Lo, there they are agen, Hal!”

The crack of the muskets sounded once again, and served to urge on the two men in the direction from which the sounds had come. The winter sun, glistening in the snow-crystals, cut off lengthy vision, so that, despite the brightness, it was impossible for them to see very far. It was, therefore, not to be wondered at that they could see nothing of what was happening at a distance which, in any other atmospheric conditions, would have been plain to them—as plain as it was when, a little later, by which time they had made good progress, and the men they sought had also drawn nearer, they saw, still indefinitely, black dots scattered about the snow waste—black dots that moved forward at