

CHAPTER III.

NEROITE CAUCUS.

It was a dreary winter night, what year no matter. The wind in violent gusts swept through the streets and alleys of the Beaver's capital, making sweet music among the trees, and howling in tones of melancholy despair amid the house tops. Assembled in a room of a mansion of this celestial city were all the faithful representatives of the Neroite clan. Deep anxiety was depicted upon their features, and ghastly forebodings seemed to hold entranced the minds of all.

"All silent as the sheeted dead" sat this vast assemblage. Like Macbeth before the enactment of that terrible tragedy, that Shakspeare so vividly depicts, their eyes were fastened upon the mystic dagger; with which they were to carve out their own fortunes and the degradation of the millions of people who form this vast Dominion.

Amid this body of wily plotters could be seen the forms of the Lesser Furies, Langlan, Billy Dougdan, (Wandering Willie), Ben Wongster, (Big Warrior who pulls hair), Canineville, (Patent dog buyer), and other party ornaments; while paramount amid the throng was the form of Sir Nero.

Suddenly the clock tolled the solemn hour of midnight. Every man raised his head and gazed around as if just awakened from some ghastly dream. Then Sir Judas for the first broke the silence by exclaiming:—

"Thrice the brindled cat hath mewed."

Sir Stuart:— "Thrice, and once, the hedge-pig whined."

Langlan:— Harper cries: 'tis time, 'tis time."

Sir Nero (rising):— "Ye noble sons of Nero, ye worshippers of the good Chimera, we know our times: