

The Fatal Tree.

Poetic legends say the aspen was the tree on which Jesus of Nazareth was crucified, and that it has ever since shuddered with the inherited memory of the anguish it upbore. The legend says of the crucifiers:

"They plunged into the forest lone,
Which felt the coming agony,
And through the depths sent up the groan,
'Oh, which shall be the accursed tree?'"

"The great oak quivered to its heart,
And shot its sap-root deeper down,
And quailed as though the lightning's dart
Had rent in twain its kingly crown.

"The sweet mimosa closed each leaf
At the approach of those dark bands,
Shrinking, with tender pain and grief,
From touch of those stern, murderous hands.

"And low the willow's limbs were trailed,
Down prone in abject misery,
As through each vibrant leaf it wailed,
'Oh, choose not me—oh, choose not me!'"

"Then first the strong pine breathed its moan,
Which its descendants still prolong—
A weird, remittless monotone
Like to sad Rachel's wailing song.

"Still through the trembling wood they trod,
And paused beside the aspen-tree,
It pleaded: 'Must I bear my God—
Oh, must I feel his agony?'"

"Then quivered every leaf with shame—
An agonizing, ceaseless thrill—
Ages have fled, yet 'tis the same—
The awe-struck leaves are trembling still."

"Calf-Shirt."

THE SNAKE-CHARMER.

BY THE REV. J. M'LEAN, PH. D.

ONE of the first men to welcome me when I began my work amongst the Blood Indians was Calf-Shirt, a shrewd and intelligent man. Sitting in his lodge I have listened to his glowing recitals of brave deeds upon the battle-field, and I have seen the strong man bowed down with grief at the loss of his friends. Oftentimes I visited his lodge for the purpose of learning the Blackfoot language, and upon one occasion, the idea seemed to take possession of him, that he was acting the part of a teacher or interpreter, and therefore ought to be paid. After he had explained to me some words, he said, "You owe me one dollar for that." "All right," I said "wait until I am done." When I had finished he said "You now owe me three dollars." I said nothing to him about the money but began to tell him about the sea, the home of our Queen, the great ocean steamships, the British navy, and other matters of interest. When I had half finished my narration, I said "You owe me two dollars." He smiled, and I continued. So soon as I was done I said, "Now you owe me five dollars. You can give me one dollar and we shall then be on equal terms!" He laughed, and shook his head, but I was determined to teach him a lesson, so I was inexorable and demanded my money. Having explained to him how long it took me to learn to read, and the amount of money I had to spend in order to obtain all this information he became serious. I did not get any money, nor would I have taken it, but I was never afterward troubled with demands for pay by the Indians for every petty thing which they did for me.

Calf-Shirt became a famous "Snake-charmer" and this increased his influence amongst the Indians, insomuch that this added to his natural ability secured for him the chieftainship, after the death of "Button Chief." I have often been in his lodge and have seen a large rattlesnake in a cavity made in the floor near his bed. He always

kept his tobacco-board placed over the cavity, that the dangerous inhabitant of the lodge might not escape. By some peculiar method he was able to go alone upon the prairie and secure very large rattlesnakes, one of which he would carry inside of his blanket coat, where it would lie composedly until taken out by its master. He does not extract the fangs, but possesses some mysterious influence which subdues the venomous reptile. Many times have I seen him take a large rattlesnake, place it in an erect position upon the ground where it remained guarded very carefully by its master. He would hold it in his hand and show it to visitors at his lodge or to the curious inhabitants of the towns or villages, by means of which he was enabled to make some money.

The Indians are afraid of snakes and the power possessed by Calf-Shirt increased their regard for him. They were not alone in this, for we all respect the man who can do one or more things that are beyond our ken.

I took with me one day a young friend to the chief's lodge and asked him to show us the snake. He took a very large rattlesnake from inside his coat and placed it about three feet from where I was sitting, and as the reptile coiled itself on the ground then raised itself up and threw out its tongue and shook its rattles. I did not feel that I was in a very safe position. It remained there, however, the chief watching it closely and never for a second taking his eyes off it. The Indians in the lodge seemed to be in great dread lest it might attack some of us. Sometimes he would place the head of the snake in his mouth, and in his hands it seemed to be powerless to do any harm. When one snake dies he goes off alone to the prairie and in a day or two returns with another.

When a new teacher had been sent me to help carry on our work amongst the Blood Indians I took the stranger around to introduce him to the Indians. We called on Calf-Shirt, who had just returned from a scouting expedition and was pleased to meet us. He told us that he was glad after so long a time a teacher had been sent. I answered that it was difficult to get properly qualified men for the position, and that we had waited long, that a man possessed of piety, common sense and teaching ability might be secured. The chief, scanning my friend from head to foot said, "He has a good body and a good looking head, and I should judge from his appearance that he has a kind heart, so that he will suit very well."

Shortly after the rebellion a report was spread abroad in the East that the Blood Indians were going to war against the white people. A newspaper reporter came to our country and made enquiries, which resulted in a series of letters to the press. Several Indian chiefs were interviewed, and among their number was Calf-Shirt, who said "Last spring at the sun-dance there was a little trouble, and the Indians moved up (the river), but I stayed back. They brought stolen horses into camp but I took them from the people and gave them to the Mounted Police. Red Crow called the chiefs together and they talked about the Crees. I told Red Crow to have nothing to do with the Crees at all (meaning in a friendly way or otherwise) that the Bloods got along all right and if the Crees were in trouble with the Government to have nothing to do with them. I told Red Crow we had no guns or ammunition and that we had lots of old people and children who could not fight; we only had axes to fight with. The whites treat us good, let the Crees fight if they like, we will not. Our young men wanted to go to war last spring, and I told Red Crow if he saw a young man going to war to take away his gun and hide it, I said we

should help the police and keep war-parties back. I have not been up to Red Crow's camp for three months, but the Indians in the lower camp are all right, and there is no trouble going on at all. But Red Crow may tell you some news I do not know. All the Indians are now pretty quiet, and there is no trouble going on. I'll let the whites know if there is any bad news. I didn't hear any lately. Last summer and spring the chiefs did their best to keep war-parties from going across the line and none have gone since. The whites need not be afraid of any trouble, if the Indians are fed and get their rations as they do now. The Indians are getting along all right. All know Calf-Shirt to be honest and when any trouble comes I will try to stop it and talk to my own people. I have a good heart and when I hear bad news I tell the whites and don't lie. I tell the truth. One Indian named White-Man-Left carries bad news to the police but he tells lies, I don't want whites to listen to him, I tell you all I know."

For years I have held service in Calf-Shirt's lodge, and have learned to respect him. He is one of many who are striving to do what is right amidst temptations and difficulties of various kinds. May his life be blessed and pure and his reward abundant.

A True Hero.

LET me now give you an instance of wonderful heroism, rising to meet the demands of a sudden crisis.

It was not an hour after dawn, yet the great waiting-room of the Central Station was full.

The soft morning air blew freshly through the long line of cars and puffing engines. A faint hum comes from without. A city awakening for the day. A Scotch collie, belonging to one of the emigrant groups, went from one to another wagging his tail and looking up with mild and expressive eyes full of good-natured friendly feeling. Children called to him, some students romped with him, the ladies patted his head, a poor negro in the corner shared his meal with him, and then he seemed to unite all these different groups in a common tie of good feeling. While all this was going on, a woman was washing the windows of some empty cars drawn on to the siding, singing as she rubbed the glass. While her back was turned, her child, a little fellow about three years old, ran to the door of the car and jumped down on the next track. Upon this track the Eastern express was coming. Directly in its path was the babe; a hush of horror fell upon the crowd. Every eye turned in the direction, and then a low sob of anguish went up from the paralyzed people. The dog, with head erect, and fixed eye, saw the danger, and with a bound and a fierce bark darted towards the child. The baby, frightened, started back. The mother went on washing windows and singing, as the huge engine rushed up abreast of her car. There was a crunching noise and a faint little cry of agony. Even strong men grew sick at the sound and turned away.

When they looked again, the babe was toddling across the platform, crowing and laughing, and the crushed dead body of a dog lay on the track. "Passengers for Pittsburg, Chicago and the West. Passengers for Baltimore, Richmond and the South," so the cry went on, and the surging crowd passed out, never to all meet again in this world. But the faces of men and women were pale, and there were tears in the eyes of some. The poor negro and the millionaire, tottering old men and frolicking boys, had been helped onward, upward, by the friendly, cheerful life and heroic death of a dumb dog.