

ning Thunder at last caught sight of Pierre Lacrosse. Pierre was moving slowly, and turned in a flash at the first sound of pursuit. Running Thunder halted, too—for the stranger held a rifle, uncased, in the hollow of his arm.

"This my country! How you come here?" asked Running Thunder, in such French as he knew.

"Your country?" returned the half-breed. "How much did you pay Mister Laurier for it?"

"I tell you, all this is my trapping-country! You make a joke now; but perhaps you stop joking pretty soon!"

The jeering expression left Pierre's face and a darker, steadier look took its place. "Unless you have the deeds of this land," he said, "I have as much right to take fur in it as you have. I am a Canadian, and this land belongs to the Canadian Government, and the furs in it belong to the man who takes them."

"You talk mighty big," retorted the other, "but if you don't go from here you maybe find that Running Thunder can do more than talk."

"I'll not go!" replied Pierre. "I am settled here for the winter, so here I stay!"

Running Thunder was not an unkind young man at heart, but now the nasty side of his temper was inflamed. He did not like to be defied by a stranger, here in the middle of his own stamping-ground. He would teach the bold half-breed a lesson.

"You stay till the new moon and Running Thunder kill you!" he said. "You pack out before the new moon and you still live!"

"I'll not move for you, nor for your whole damn tribe!" cried Pierre. "I have as good a right as you to take fur in this country, and I am settled here; so here I stay!"

"Till one night before the new moon," said Running Thunder.

"Till I'm very well ready to move!" retorted Pierre.

They glared at each other in angry silence for several seconds. Then Running Thunder said, "You talk too big! All this my trapping-country! What I care about the Government 'way in here? You get out before the new moon!"

"I can't," began Pierre, but pride and anger got the better of his sudden anxiety, and, without another word, he turned his back to the Indian and continued his interrupted journey.

Running Thunder gazed after the half-breed with something like admiration changing the light in his angry eyes. He was brave, this poacher! Only a brave man (or a downright fool) would thus turn his back on an armed enemy and walk slowly away. So the young man stood motionless and stared after Pierre's retreating form until the leafless branches of the maples hid it from his view. Then he turned and went back along the double trail.

Pierre Lacrosse arrived at his shack above the snow-shrouded rapids within an hour of leaving his new-found enemy. He had travelled the four miles as in an evil dream, his heart aching dully, his mind bitterly occupied with this new and unexpected trouble. As he had said, it was impossible for him to move out of this country—he could not afford either the time or expense required for the building of another shack, and he dared not expose Little Peter to the cold and fatigue of a mid-winter journey; but he realised now the danger of defying Running Thunder. He should have thrown himself upon the young man's mercy and not talked so hotly about his rights. He could not afford to move, but, on the other hand, could he now afford to stay? He cursed the anger and mad pride that had inspired him to make an enemy of the young trapper. If he stayed he must either shed human blood or let his own life be taken! And if he were killed, what was to