

gathered at the alarm. They retreated only after a promise of explanations as soon as possible.

The promise was never kept, for Elsie was stubborn in her refusal to answer her aunt's tender inquiries. When Macdonald came home to dinner, his wife informed him that Elsie had left the house before lunch hour without intimating the time of her return. He offered no remark, ate his dinner in silence, and was not seen by his family again for two days.

CHAPTER VIII.

Jack's sleep was fitful after the excitement of the bear-hunt. In his dreams he again faced the maddened monster, and his friends deserted him in his peril. Vainly he strove to pump a cartridge into the barrel of his rifle. The magazine was empty. He felt the savage brute encircle him with its powerful forelegs and crush him against its blood-stained breast, wherein he had planted the first bullet. He shuddered as he thought of his father and mother and sister hearing of his horrible death, and he vainly tried to call aloud in his agony. And then he awoke, to find his body bathed in perspiration, and his Round, wet and shivering, lying across his breast.

Bounding to his feet to free himself from his terrible delirium, and rolling the dog over the foot of his couch with the rude momentum, he heard the rain beating against his tent and found the mosquito-bar, which had been stretched across the opening, was pushed aside to give entrance to his storm-driven and awkward bed-mate.

He replaced the netted guard, lighted a match and saw by his watch that it yet wanted a few hours to day-break. Taking a pull at his flask, he dragged the comfortless hound under the blankets with him, and ended the night with more refreshing sleep.

"Are you awake yet, Jack?" queried Angus, as he peered through the netting.

"Hello! what's up? Is that you, Angus?" came drowsily from the interior.

"Yes, it's me, and I'm up," Angus replied, laughing. "I have come to invite you to breakfast with me and to tell you we will not leave the valley to-day. It is raining steadily, and I have a good excuse for catching up on my topography."

"Wait a moment and I'll be with you," said Jack, as he tumbled out of the tent, sponge and towel in hand, and ran to the stream.

After a hearty breakfast, Angus set up his drawing-board for a table and busied himself extending the notes he had taken since entering the mountains. Jack smoked in silence for awhile, watching his comrade at work. Then he slipped out and went in quest of his guide, but could not find him or his odd outfit. Then he went to his tent, but there was no one with whom to converse. With a shake of his head he thought of the death of his desire to be alone. Back he wandered to Angus, forced him to make room at one end of the board, and then demanded pen, ink and paper.

Angus laughed at Jack for having the blues and handed him a neat, leather case packed with the necessities for letter-writing.

Jack filled sheet after sheet rapidly, and finally threw down the pen with the remark:

"There; if that does not tickle Grace, I am no judge."

"What have you been scribbling about?" asked Angus, pricking up his ears at the mention of the name so dear to him.

"Telling my sister all about you," replied Jack, with a laugh. "After reading this letter, if she ever sees you she will know you."

"Read it to me," Angus suggested.

"Catch me," said Jack; "you would want to murder me."

"Honestly, Jack, have you written anything about me which is not true?" Angus pleaded with a tremor in his voice.

"Why, Angus, old fellow, what would it matter to you if I have?" returned Jack in surprise.

"Only this, Jack," and Angus' face turned pale as he spoke; "your sister Grace and I are promised to each other in marriage."

"What!" cried Jack, "are you the Angus Macdonald whom my sister met in Ottawa?"

"I am that fortunate and happy man," Angus replied, in a tender tone.

"Oh, Angus!" Jack exclaimed, deeply moved, "why did you not tell me this before?"

"You must not forget, Jack, that I was a stranger to you only yesterday," Angus replied, "and you might have doubted my word."

Jack started up from his seat, stretched his hand across the table, and while he held Angus's hand in a firm clasp, said to him:

"I am proud of Gracie's choice; we shall be more than brothers now."

Angus tried to speak, but his voice was choked with emotion at the friendly words uttered by his companion. Noticing his distress, Jack kindly placed the letter before him, and then flung himself on the bed to indulge in a reverie over the strange news he had heard.

As Angus read each succeeding page, filled with eulogies upon himself, and winding up with a description of the party and outfit under his chieftainship, he thought of Grace, as she would seem when reading the letter; and the two men remained buried in their thoughts until the call for dinner rang through the camp. Then Angus hustled his notes into a box, Jack got up and pocketed his letter, and, arm in arm, they sauntered down to the fire to secure their share of the "grub-pile."

The rain ceased falling late in the afternoon. The sun peeped through the breaking clouds, flashing the

rain-drops on the leaves, and dispelling the gloom which enveloped the valley since morning. As if a curtain was being rolled up to the heavens—the mists lifted and disclosed the face of lovely nature smiling through her tear-stains. The bright light gave the gigantic castle a new glory, the turreted walls and lofty domes standing forth clear and clear after the vigorous cleansing they had received. And the noise of the axe and the whistling of the men announced the renewal of activity in the camp.

Angus joined Jack at supper. They discussed their plans for the morrow, and concluded to make an early start to offset the delay occasioned by the bear-hunt and wet weather.

"Can you tell me, Jack?" questioned Angus, as they stretched themselves on the skins before the tent to enjoy a smoke, "why Grace wishes our engagement to remain secret for awhile?"

"Bless her loving heart!" exclaimed Jack in reply, "she fears father and mother will grieve over the idea of losing her from the old homestead."

"Then your father does not dislike me?" Angus queried, his mind evidently relieved of an uncomfortable doubt.

"How could he, Angus," Jack rejoined, "when he has neither seen nor heard of you?"

Angus mused for a few minutes and then remarked, "I have a presentiment, Jack, that you and I will spend next Christmas in your home, and that my sister Elsie will be there also."

Jack laughed long and heartily.

"What, old fellow," he said, teasingly, "are you going to bolt your job and hasten back to your sweetheart? Do not get excited. I will give you her photograph and you can worship her image. You can lend me your compass and instrument and I will take charge of your party and lead them to the walls of China. Come, brace up, and do not look so foolishly happy!"

"I have no intention to bolt my job, as you inelegantly term it," retorted Angus; "but I have the option of returning east in the autumn, and I am going then if I have to make the trip on the hurricane deck of a cayuse."

"Pardon my flippancy, Angus," said Jack, in a sudden fit of tenderness. "I am rejoiced at your resolution, and will guarantee you a royal welcome at my home; and, in my spirit for mischief reviving, 'you shall have Gracie all to yourself heaps of times, or my bump of management will have completely flattened out.'"

"I'll flatten out every bump in your head, in search of a little sense, if you do not cease tormenting me," threatened Angus, the joyous cadence of his tones robbing the pugnacious speech of every vestige of ill humor.

The conversation became languid as the shadows gathered. On the western sky were kaleidoscoped the warm, soft, many-hued tints from the sinking sun. Over the ethereal blue were crimsoned splashes of electric fire in fantastic shapes. Slowly the brilliancy died away, and gradually the golden splendor faded into tarnished yellow. Waving a last good-bye with a few flaming darts above the irregular line of the horizon, Old Sol ended his daily task and left but a glow on the trail over which he had rolled in the dazzling majesty of his power as King of Light.

With silent swiftness the heralds of darkness travelled from the east, dragging with them a thick mantle and looping it to the mountain peaks as they spread it over the valley.

A peaceful hush whispered over the ground and sleep wooed thought to rest. Night nestled to earth, sighed her content, and passed into slumberland.

CHAPTER IX.

"Oho! oho!"

The night-herder rode up in response to the call that echoed over the valley, and was agreeably surprised to find Angus marching through the camp, awakening his men to prepare for resumption of the daily journey up the trail.

"What is the time?" he called.

"Four o'clock; and day will break in an hour," came a hurried reply from the chief.

The herder spurred his horse into a gallop back through the imperfect light to the herd and rounded-up the strays with wild yells and imprecations. With vigorous cracks of his black-snake and lusty whoops, he drove the animals close to camp, caught the bell-mare with a scientific cast of his lariat and tied her to a stake. Tearing off his saddle and bridle, he bore them to his tent, flung them on the ground, routed out his bed-mate, and in a moment was sound asleep between the well-warmed blankets.

The cook, unwashed and clad in greasy garments, shuffled down to the fire-place, fanned the coals on the back log into fresh life, piled on some lightwood and started a blaze, bustled down to the stream to fill the kettles, and yelled for some one to come and chop wood. While the flames played about the kettles, he set the reflector before the fire, threw a quantity of baking-powder and salt into a pan of flour, added water again and again, rolled out the dough on the bottom of the pan with the handle of the shovel, cut cakes with the lid of the baking-powder tin, yanked the pan out of the reflector, greased it, filled it with cakes, put it back, and then sat down to watch the biscuit bake and brown and to wait until the water for the coffee boiled.

One by one the tents were struck and spread out, filled with blankets and spare clothing, and then rolled into neat bundles. The camp equipment, excepting the cook's outfit, was piled close to the saddles, in readiness for being loaded. The breakfast was despatched in scalding haste, and then the two packers commenced their interesting operations.

A herder led the bell-mare up to the packs and placed her between the two packers. While one spread a folded blanket on her back, the other selected a saddle, resembling a wooden saw-horse, and planted it on the pad. Two broad, hair cinches, or surcingle, were passed under her belly and fastened to the saddle with a pressure that caused her many grunts. [The second cinche grips around the loins, its necessity being noticeable at the steep descents.] The head packer then fastened the end of a long rope to a ring well-forward at the base of the saddle and left it hanging while he lifted a suitable bundle and held it against the saddle, binding it at one end as he threw the rope over. The assistant, elevating another bundle of equal weight and placing it in a similar position, caught the rope, passed it through a ring at the back corner of the base of the saddle, carried it through a ring at the front corner, and cast it over again, where it was fastened to the back-ring. This was the foundation of the load. Then side walls of easy-fitting bundles were built, the centre was filled with less pliant materials, and over all thick canvas was spread. The rope was again thrown over and back several times, being drawn tightly before each cast, and finally tied securely by the head packer to a strong hook in the top of the cinche. The mare was then given her freedom, and the herder drove in another subject.

When all but one of the pack-horses had been loaded, the cook had his outfit ready to be dumped into the centre of the last pack. And shortly after day-break the entire party were moving across the valley.

Jack had turned his mule over to the care of the packers, loaned his pony to one of the chainmen who was unwell, and walked ahead with the night-herder. He wished to draw some information from the youth, who willingly accepted the invitation to accompany him.

"When I heard you rounding-up the stock this morning," began Jack, "I fancied a demon of despair, all lungs and mouth, had broken loose in the valley and was after my scalp."

The herder looked pleased and amused at the remark, and retorted:

"And when I heard our chief rousing the camp, I thought that he and you had got on a jamboree with the hospital comforts."

"What do you mean by hospital comforts?" Jack enquired.

"Wine or whiskey," replied the herder, with a conscious grin.

Jack assured his companion of his innocence, and vouched for the sobriety of Angus.

"What were your reasons for raising such a horrible row over the herd?" he asked.

"You would have been worse than me, pard," replied the herder, "if you had been in my place. It takes a powerful lot of yelling to scare stock out of a patch of pea-vines. I never yet saw a broncho, pinto, cayuse or mule but would kick like all creation at leaving pea-vines. They would stay, if they had their own way, until they had eaten every vine to the root, and then go in search of more."

"But my pony left the patch when I whistled for her," said Jack.

"Yes, I know that," the herder retorted; "but stock in this country are not fed on sweet cakes, and every man don't carry a whistle."

Jack acknowledged the force of the argument with a laugh, and changed the subject by asking:

"Why did you tie the bell-mare and not the other horses?"

"That is something worth knowing," answered the herder. "I have seen a woman, ugly as a scare-crow, pard, treated like a queen by a hundred men just because she was the only white female in the mining camp. Each man of the lot wanted to be her sole protector, and was ready to follow her anywhere. And I calculate it is for the same reason the horses will not leave the bell-mare when grazing, and are content to follow her on the trail forever. That is why we always have a bell-mare in our pack-train, anyway."

"Of what use is the bell?" Jack asked, understanding the not inapt if crude application.

"It saves a heap of trouble to the herder," was the reply. "On a dark night he can follow the stock by the sound of the bell, and in daylight he can rely as much on his ears as his eyes and get out of his saddle oftener."

"But why do you leave the bell on the mare when on the trail?" Jack asked, eager to know every detail.

"It's an easy way to carry it," answered the herder; "and in case of a stampede in a storm we can keep right after the clang of the bell and know the train is not scattered."

As soon as Angus saw the pack-train on the move, and had made an examination of the camp-ground to feel assured that no article would be found missing when the next camp was pitched, he put an axe over his shoulder and hastened to join Jack. As he came up, the herder dropped back to the train.

Only stopping at every high-lying log across the trail to mark a large cross with red chalk, thus ensuring the removal of the obstruction by the axemen who preceded the horses, Angus and Jack pushed forward until they reached a wide and apparently deep torrent, and one of the largest feeders of the Bow River. The current ran very swiftly, almost precluding the idea of making a ford. The thunder of the rushing waters raised a deafening din as they stood on the low bank, and they were obliged to retreat a few yards to hear themselves speak in an ordinary tone.

Jack gazed on the foaming flood, and thought of the glittering snow, high up at the mountain peaks, which fed the trickling streamlets that formed the beautiful cascades ere they swelled into the turbulent river barring his way.

Angus also regarded the stream in silence of deep

thought, but his mind was full of responsibility and necessity for "What causes you to loiter out of his poetical admitted brow of his companion?" "I am wondering by what that torrent," replied Angus. "Why, Angus," laughed yourself no novice at borrowing pony comes along and see over."

"Here it comes, now!" will soon test the truth of your

Half-a-dozen members among whom was the sick meet them, and assisted the untied the lariat from the yards of it, fastened the end pony to the bank. His hound its tail as though conscious to play in the drama. Taking waded into the water, followed had not gone two yards from was turned up the stream, tenaciously to the rough bottom way towards the opposite deep water, and in another another foothold by retaining. Three times it worked up to breast the current. Then crawled out on the bank, the uneven struggle.

Jack kneeled down and p it into fresh courage and st

"Boys," said Jack, a hound lacks courage because its sister and my mule. It But I shall go first and teach instigated me to send i dare."

Angus tried to dissuade found him inexorable.

On the shore lay a lot branches and bark, its big loose gravel. Obeying h rolled the tree into an eddy on the root. Telling three the top of the tree, he all root into the current.

Like the angry sweep bridged the stream for a q flying down on the rapid and agile navigator to wave opposite shore.

Angus and his men ch The hound snapped up the horse into the water and, cautious movements, plun and horse reached the o yards below where Jack broken down, and Angus crossing of his party.

That night, during the indulged before retiring, possessed you to perform and exceedingly dangerous

"The cowardice of t replied, "I had at first across, but the night of memory of one of my exp was again ready to take feeling of fear."

"Tell me about your manded, setting himself f

"There is not much dawning on his countena back to his earlier life.

about the same age, so formed a fishing party for and walked a couple of flowed past my home.

And a hungry one, too had emptied our school our mothers the previous we felt an aching in our howl. Across the river whom I had met frequ

knew we would be welcom milk could we get over the acquaintance at the stripped to the skin an pressed bundles. I cont

trousers and tying them the water shallow enou the other bank, and the deep channel and swift

floating twig which we unequal lengths. The l realized that I had to r

the bank before us. I tention, I rolled a str sprang on the roots and over high and try."

"How did you get b ically."

"I did not go back," and went home the w dinner at the farm hou

"Jack," said Angus wonderful occurrence o became the owner of th

"About five years Tom's Cabin troupe be could not pay father's

me the ages, and fat hatched him sufficient

The poor animal's wei