

BRAVES WHITE AND RED

ARGYLL
SAYBY



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Paul 1953

London: Jock, 1907

vii, 216 pp.

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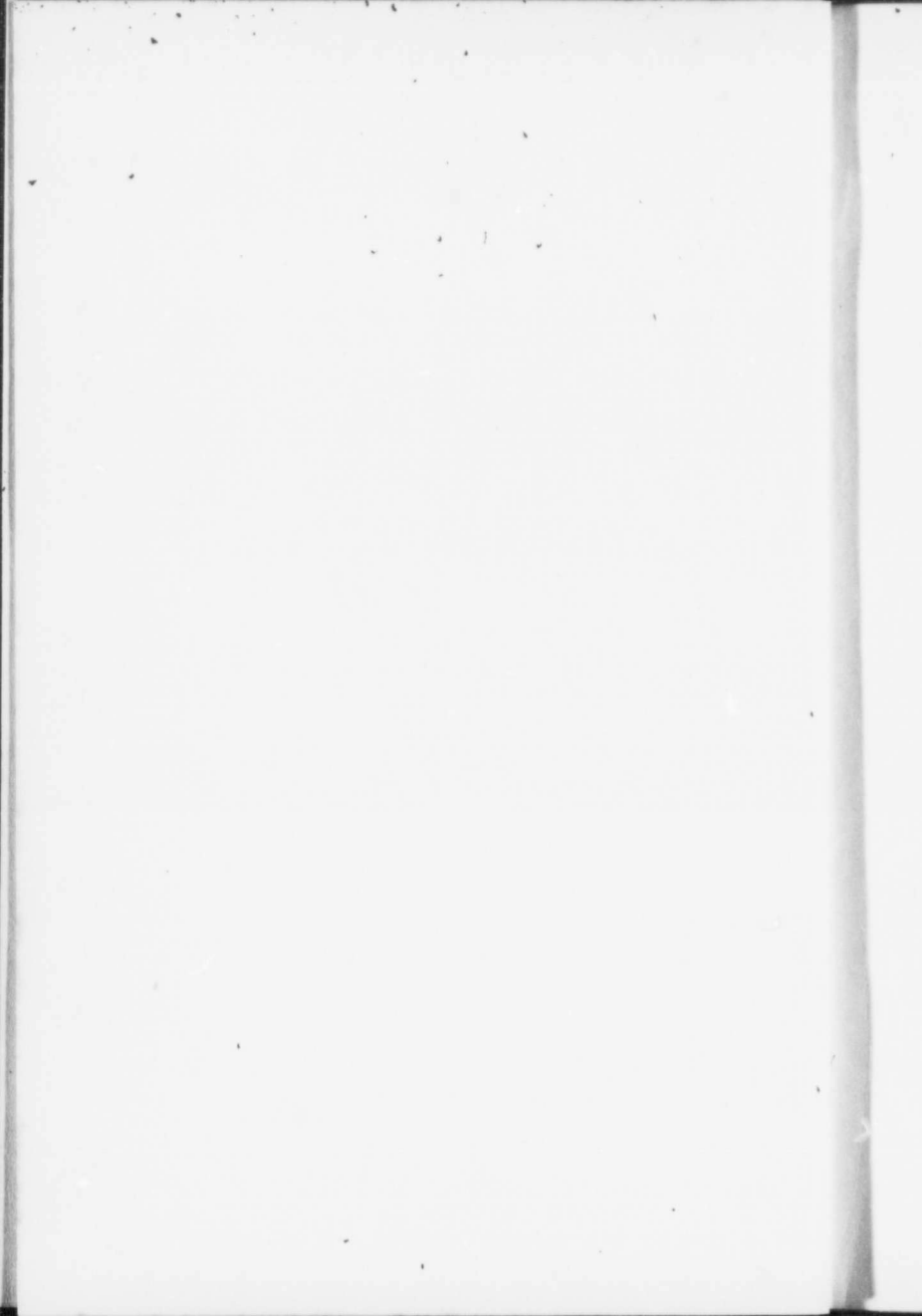
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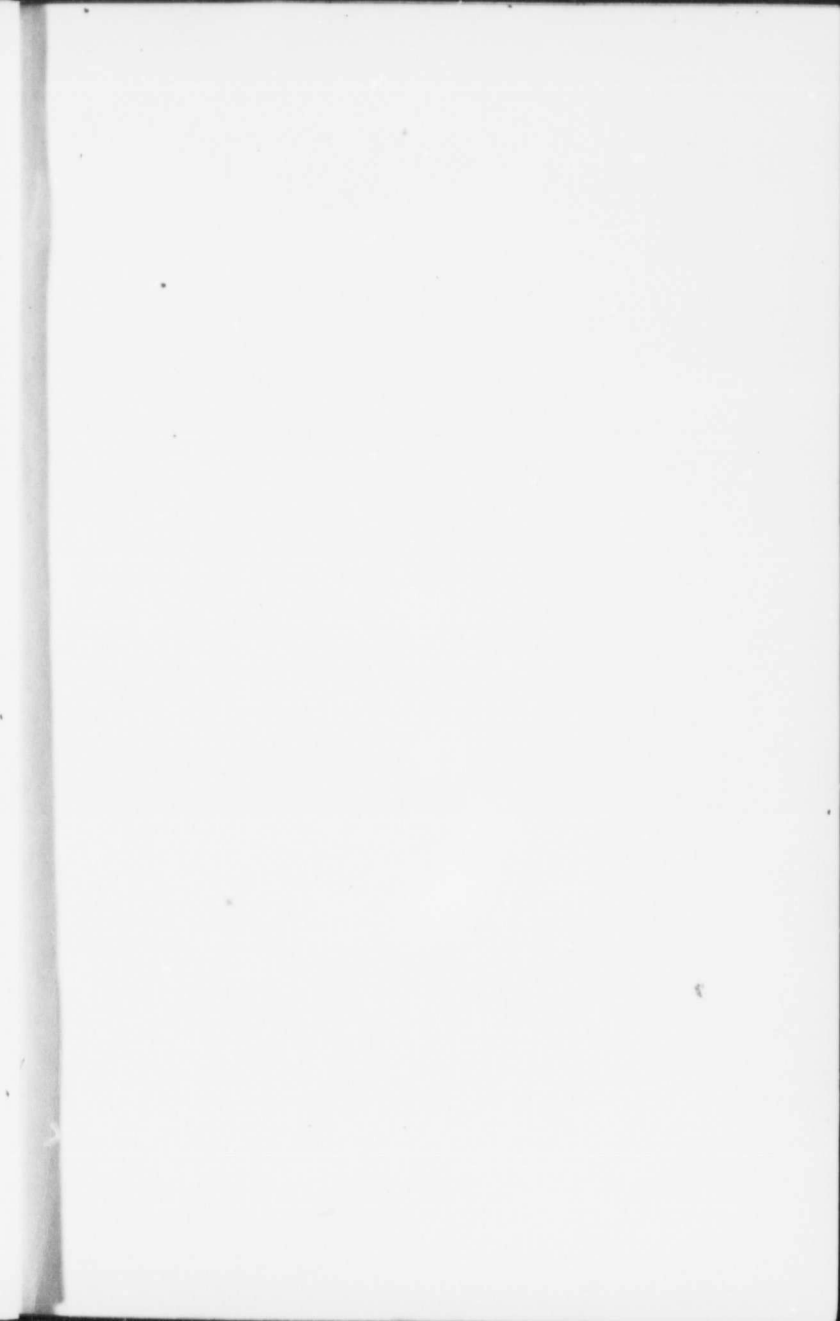
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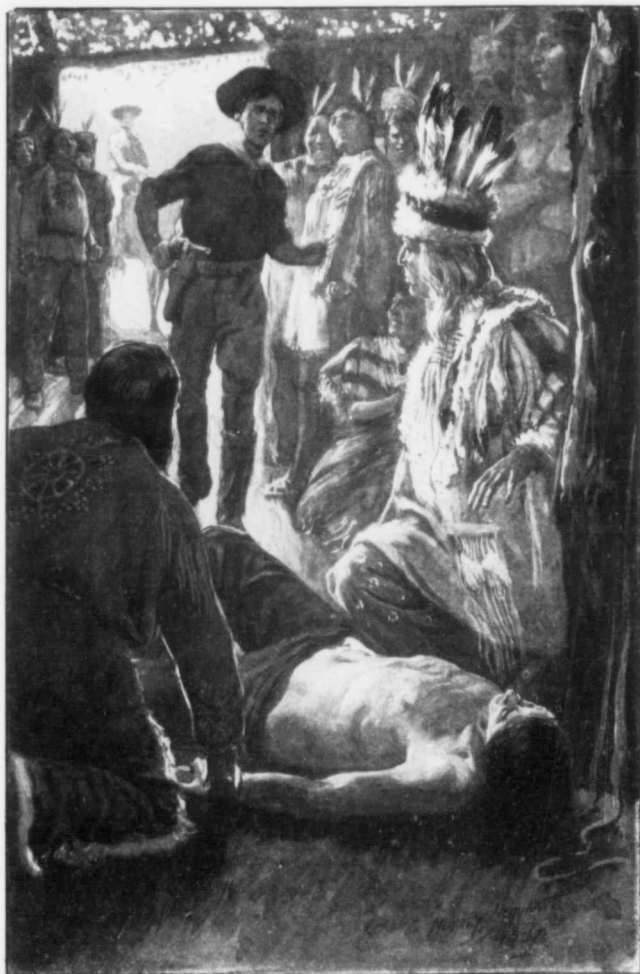
UK author



BRAVES, WHITE AND RED







He stepped into the heart of the savage throng (page 20).

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BRAVES WHITE AND RED

A Tale of Adventures in the
North-West

BY ARGYLL SAXBY

AUTHOR OF 'THE TAMING OF THE RANCHER,' 'CHUMS AGAIN'
'BRAVE TOVIAK,' ETC.

SIX ILLUSTRATIONS BY
MURRAY URQUHART

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, LTD.
LONDON, EDINBURGH, NEW YORK
TORONTO, AND PARIS

PR6037

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1920

Juv.

DEDICATED
TO
NOEL T. TRUSCOTT
AS A
BIRTHDAY GREETING
AND
ACKNOWLEDGMENT
OF
VALUED HELP
A. S.

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BRAVES, WHITE AND RED

CHAPTER I

'MAKING TRACKS'

ON the tenth day of April 18— two disconcerting events took place in the life-history of Bertie Caryll, medical student.

In the morning he received a letter announcing the death of his uncle-guardian, and in the evening he learned the not altogether unexpected news that he had been 'spun in the final,' to use the student slang.

By itself that 'plucking' would not greatly have disturbed him. Bertie had no special love for the medical profession, and, if the truth were known, had foolishly idled away the greater part of that session.

He had undertaken the study in order to accede to the desires of his uncle, but he had never been able to apply himself to the study

necessary for such a profession, being more fond of out-of-door life and active employment.

Mrs. Caryll had died when her son was quite an infant, and her husband, an army officer, had followed his wife when the boy was only three years old, leaving him totally dependent upon an uncle, who had liberally supported him ever since. But Bertie had seldom seen his uncle, who resided abroad; therefore the reader must not be surprised to learn that the personal attachment between the two was of a very slight description.

Of course the young fellow was naturally grieved on learning of the death of one who had ever shown him much kindness, but what troubled Bertie most on this occasion was the thought of an unfinished 'course' and, possibly, no income. So for the first time in his life he gave himself up to serious consideration, which ended in a self-examination, as may be indicated by one of his mental remarks.

'What have I been living for?' he asked himself. And I am afraid the answer made by his conscience was not a very consoling one.

But 'noble discontent' with oneself is the beginning of higher effort, and after some time

spent in mentally examining the past, Bertie remarked to himself:

'Since I can't afford to have another try for the degree, well, I'll get off to a colony. I know my surgery well enough to make it of some use to me, and I think I know how to ride a horse and shoot straight. Yes, I'll set to work somehow. Poor old uncle! He was very kind to me—gave me a good education—and if I had only worked when I had the chance, I might now be able to face the world with a diploma in my hands to back me up. However, I must just make the best of things as they are. My hands are able enough, and I dare say they can put bread into my mouth as effectually, and certainly more agreeably, than by mixing physic.'

Then a knock was heard at the door, and his landlady ushered into the room a pale, thin lad of about seventeen years of age, clad in garments much too large for him, and carrying a furtive, timid expression in his eyes.

'Hullo, Jim!' exclaimed Bertie, when he had turned to see his visitor. 'On my word, man, you look as if you ought still to be in the infirmary instead of wandering about the streets on a wet night like this. Come, sit down by the

fire, and tell me what you have been doing with yourself since I last saw you.'

'I've been looking for work, sir, without finding any,' answered the shivering lad, as he crouched by the warm glow; and indeed it needed no words of his to confirm what the sunken eyes and hollow cheeks expressed so unmistakably.

'Poor chap! One scarcely needs to be told that,' replied Bertie sympathetically. 'See, I'll draw the table near to the fire, and you can have tea with me without moving from your chair. I am just going to have mine, so we'll grub together.'

Caryll's tea-things were already on the table, and he soon had the satisfaction of seeing the half-famished boy ravenously devouring the food which was placed before him. Meanwhile desultory conversation went on between the two.

'Can you not get work to do anywhere?'

'No, sir. You see I'm a gaol-bird, and decent folk won't have anything to do with the likes of me.'

'Tuts, man. Your offence was not so bad as all that; besides, the fact of your recent illness was penance enough, coming as it did immediately after you were released. You ought to

get a chance to do honest work, indeed you ought.'

'Every one isna so kind as you are, Mr. Caryl, echoed Jim sadly. 'When I left the infirmary a week ago, I made up my mind that I would tell nae lies about the gaol business, intendin' to begin ower again fair and square, as I promised you. But when I tell't them the truth, well——' he paused, and Bertie murmured a comment which encouraged the speaker to frankly add:

'Some said that they were very sorry for me, and that I should start an' live oot my sin; but they didna offer to help me, and what can a laddie like me do alane?'

He paused for a moment ere he resumed his story.

'You see, sir, in the first place I went to Cameron's iron foundry, because I kent they often took on extra boys there. But when the foreman discovered that I had been seven days in gaol afore I was doon wi' the fever, he said he had no use for my kind in the shops, and that I had better clear.'

'Brute!' was Bertie's comment at this juncture.

'It was the same everywhere I went. They would have given me work if it hadna been for that one fault; but when I tell't them about it

they seemed to get suddenly feard o' me, and hurried me frae their offices. O sir, they dinna ken what it is to go without anything to eat when they are hungry, or they'd no' be so hard on me for stealing after I had been starving for days!'

'It wasn't your fault that you were thrown friendless and homeless on the streets,' exclaimed Caryll, and the lad went on quickly:

'Do you ken, sir, when I think of it all I sometimes feel glad that mither was ta'en away and spared all the trouble that would have come to her had she lived. She was an ailin' creature at best, but it was all right when faither was living, for then he had a nice house, and she could hae the kind o' things she needed. But when he died, we had to sell everything and leave the old home for a small garret with hardly a stick in it. Aye, I am glad noo that she went away afore she knew what hunger was. It's ten years ago now, but I mind her quite plainly.'

'Poor fellow!' sighed Bertie, half to his companion, half to himself. Then he added brightly:

'Never mind, old chap, all that is past now. I have a capital plan in my mind that will suit

both of us right down to the ground. Just before you came in I was making up my mind to cut the whole business here, and set out for the backwoods of Canada as soon as possible. And I tell you what, we've both been off the track a bit, and things are against us here; but we'd have a fine chance in a new country, so you'll come out West with me, and we'll start anew together. What do you say to it? I've just got enough cash to take us out and leave a little to meet our wants until work turns up; so if we make up our minds to rough it and stick together through everything, we may make a future for ourselves, and have a good time too.'

Jim looked up in surprise when he heard the proposal that might mean so much to him, and I don't think that Bertie ever felt more happy than he did at that moment, when he realised that he had some one to care for—some one whose welfare depended on his efforts—an object of interest for the future, taking his thoughts away from the hitherto one engrossing subject of his mind—self.

But poor Jim, who had hardly known the blessing of a kind word since childhood, and who was more accustomed to receive blows than

caresses, was unable for a moment to realise the full meaning of Bertie's words, and he exclaimed in a half-dazed manner :

'What! go with you? I—I don't understand, Mr. Caryll!'

Bertie laughed when he saw the surprise that his sudden proposal had caused.

'Do you remember,' he said, 'one day when you were lying in the ward, telling me all about your past life, how I advised you to get out of the country as soon as you were well enough, and could find a way to do so? Well, since then I have had reason to take that advice to myself. Just this morning I learned of the death of my uncle who has always supported me, and as I shall have little or no money left now he is gone, I must set to work at once and make the best of what I have, before it is all spent and I am left without any. So, you see, I have made up my mind for once to practise what I preach, and clear out of the country, making tracks for the West. Now, what do you say? Will you come with me?'

The conversation was here interrupted by the reappearance of the landlady, bearing a large, official-looking envelope in her hand.

Bertie took it from her, and, cutting open the

cover with his penknife, leisurely proceeded to read the contents.

But scarcely had Mrs. Gray closed the door behind her, than Bertie suddenly jumped from his seat and waved the letter above his head, greatly to the surprise of his guest.

'Hurrah! We're all right now, Jim! Good old uncle Philip! Listen here, man! This is a letter from uncle's solicitors in California, and we're not to be left penniless after all. See, this is what they say:

"DEAR SIR,— We have much pleasure in informing you that your late uncle, Colonel Philip Caryll, has left instructions in his will whereby you are to receive during your lifetime an annual income to be derived from the interest on certain bonds in which he recently invested for this purpose, and which bonds are to be sold at your decease for the benefit of your nearest heir. The income will amount to about one thousand dollars per annum, and as the interest for the past year happens to fall due at this time of writing, we take much pleasure in enclosing a draft for the amount, which kindly acknowledge at your convenience.— We have the honour to be, Yours obediently,

"W. RENSHAW & CO."

'But Mr. Caryll, you'll no' be for going to Canada now, will you?' inquired Jim, to whom one thousand dollars seemed a princely income. There was a slight touch of disappointment in the boy's voice. 'It's a deal o' money for one person to live on.'

But the lad was quickly reassured as Bertie exclaimed:

'Not go! Why, of course I can go all the more easily with this "lining" to smooth the way. And you're going with me, too. Come now, Jim, you must agree to my plans. You have no one to consider but yourself; I have no one to consider but you. We can help one another. We will "chum it," and fight life's battle together.'

'Aye, aye, sir,' answered the boy, anxious to show his gratitude. Then catching the infection of Bertie's enthusiasm, he added: "I'll go wi' you to the end of the world; I'll dae anything to show how thankful I am to you for helping me to lift up my head! It'll be fine for me, sir—it'll be new life itsel';—but I'll serve you with my heart's blood, if need be!'

Then the two (friends from that moment) drew their chairs nearer the fire, and sat together for the rest of the evening making plans for the proposed journey.

CHAPTER II

BRAVES, WHITE AND RED

It was the 'Indian summer' in the Qu'appelle Valley. The woodlands and prairie were clothed in that brilliant mantle of many colours and sweet scents which Canada puts on in the autumn.

From east and west, as far as Hudson's Bay and the Rocky Mountains, the scattered members of two famous Indian tribes had gathered to celebrate the sun-dance, an annual festival for which active preparations had been carried on by the members of the Qu'appelle camps for some days.

In the centre of a large 'clearing,' and near the banks of the Lone Lake, which winds through alternate pasture and scrub in the hollows of the valley, a large shelter had been erected.

It was composed of a circular framework of rough poles cut from the neighbouring bush, roofed with thick layers of leafy poplar boughs, and walled with a thick drapery of untanned

skins. When viewed from a little distance the whole structure appeared not unlike a leviathan tent of a travelling circus or menagerie.

When the preparations were approaching completion, the contingents from afar began to arrive, and long lines of horsemen, as well as little two-wheeled Red River carts (colloquially known as 'prairie yachts'), might be seen wending their way in picturesque Indian file down the hillside trails leading from the prairie to the valley below.

Some of the newcomers were chieftains. They came arrayed in gorgeous robes of ermine richly decked with feathered embroidery, and heavily fringed with many hundred black-tipped ermine tails. Their legs were encased in deerskin fringed with ermine, and lavishly embroidered with beads and feathers woven in fantastic designs.

Each chief wore a headcovering, usually made from the entire skin of a minx or silver-fox, arranged like a turban, and having the bushy tail behind nodding with each movement of the wearer's head. This becoming headgear was usually ornamented with one or more eagle feathers stuck here and there on the fur, and often depending from the tail itself. The Indian

is very proud of those feathers, and cherishes them with reverent care, for each one is emblematic of some great achievement in warfare or chase.

The chieftains were mounted on native ponies ('Shag-a-nappies' as they are called in the West), and each carried a gun of some description resting across his arm. The Indian of Canada West nowadays fully recognises the advantages of powder and shot over the ancestral bow and arrow, and there are few of them who do not possess the modern weapon, though they rarely know how to use it as deftly as the White-man does.

In this manner, therefore, the various tribes reached the rendezvous, followed by their wives and families; and when the sun rose on the morning of the great festival, upwards of seven hundred warriors had gathered to participate in the ceremonies which have been the custom of their race as far back as the legends of the Red-man go. The principal feature of the sun-dance is the ceremony of making 'braves,' a rite as revolting to the civilised mind as it is admirable to the savage, and one which had to be undergone by every young Indian who desired to be considered fit to associate with warriors. A

prudent, and otherwise indulgent Government, has sternly prohibited this barbarous custom for some time past, but at the period of which I speak it was the ambition of every young Indian youth to 'graduate' in this fashion, for the 'making of a brave' was in their estimation the stamp of manhood.

When the programme of ceremonials reached the stage when this rite was to be performed, the first candidate was brought forward to where an old chief, master of ceremonies, was standing by the centre pole of the structure above described.

This old warrior held a sharp knife in his hand, and deftly and rapidly made an incision in the loose flesh at each side of the youth's breast. Through the cuts thus made he thrust the ends of a strong ash stick about two feet long, which had been previously pointed and prepared for the purpose. The stick was then tied in the middle to one of the many raw-hide cords which were depending in a circle from the centre-pole that supported the roof.

At a signal from the chief, the young men, who had borne the first stage of the ordeal with proud endurance, immediately began to dance to the rhythm of the tom-toms, and the weird

chanting of the squaws who were seated in a circle round the arena.

This is the 'sun-dance' so often described, therefore I need not give further details here. Enough to say that the young men continue dancing until liberated by the breaking of the stout ash stick, the tearing asunder of the flesh, or the failure of nature to endure more, when he is removed fainting—all he must bear without murmur, and, if possible, without exhibiting one sign of pain.

On the morning to which I allude there were not many candidates, Christian teaching and white dominion having thinned the ranks of those who aspired to be braves.

Those present, however, were fine, manly fellows, and in a very short time all—save one—had passed through the first stage of their initiation and were going round in circles from east to west (as the planet of their worship goes) in the mad whirl of the Sun-dance.

The one lad whose turn had come was evidently of gentler nature than his comrades.

It was not difficult to see that he shrank from the ordeal as the others had not done.

He had watched with horror as one by one the young men stepped forward and went

through the revolting ceremonies. In spite of their heroic silence he saw spasms of pain convulse the features of more than one, and through the shouting of the crowd his quick ears had caught the stifled moan which told that a young brave was not winning his spurs without agony.

Two had 'dropped in the traces' and been dragged away by the women.

Blood was flowing freely, whilst the expression on the faces of those who danced was demoniacal.

Little wonder if the youth, reared since a young child in one of the Government industrial schools, and endowed by nature with quick sympathies and sensitive nerves, felt sick at heart while this was going on; and when at last his turn came, he shivered and hung back, vainly striving to gather courage.

Shame and terror were vividly portrayed in his attitude and expression, and a murmur arose from those who stood near him.

'This comes of giving our children to the teaching of the White-man,' muttered one chief, scowling at the lad.

'They kill the spirit of the Red-man in their schools,' said another.

'The making of a Christian is the unmaking of a brave,' added a third.

'Is the son of Eagle-feather afraid?' asked the old chief, who was quick to interpret the cause of delay in the looks and murmurs of the warriors who stood aside and left the youth in the presence of the tribal autocrat.

'Is Sequa a plume for Eagle-feather's crest, or is he merely the down which is plucked from the breast of the brooding mother-bird to line her nest? Ah! Sequa should dwell with the women in the wigwams — a coward cannot mingle with men.'

Then the women began to laugh and jeer, crying 'Papoose! Papoose!'¹ and the youth trembled still more, for the words of the old chief had cut him to the quick.

His father, furious at such a shameful exhibition—for physical courage is the highest virtue, in an Indian's opinion—stepped forward and reproached Sequa in the bitterest terms, commanding him to face the ordeal as the others had done. But the son made no reply, only shrank back and looked imploringly in Eagle-feather's face.

'Let the chiefs lay their hands on the papoose,'

¹ Papoose = baby.

cried an impatient voice. 'He must be made a brave, or die!'

Instantly a dozen warriors jumped from their places, and, grasping his arms, dragged the terrified youth to the place of torture, heedless of his pitiful appeals for mercy.

'The soul of Sequa is not a coward!' he cried in heartrending tones. 'It is written in the White-man's book that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. My father, have pity on Sequa!'

The appeal to a savage parent was useless. The pagan ferocity of the Red-man was aroused; and the cries of Sequa were lost amid the angry uproar of men who knew no nobler religion than the exhibition of stoical and personal bravery.

Sequa was strong in muscle, if not equally powerful in savage ideas of bravery, and for a few moments he struggled bravely to free himself. But the simultaneous rush of twenty men made an end of his despairing revolt, and though he was not overpowered before more than one warrior had gone down before his blows, ere many minutes Sequa lay on his back with men kneeling on arms and legs—his chest heaving, his eyes wide open, half mad with terror and despair.

Then the old chief approached, and, grasping in his hand the blood-stained weapon which flashed before the helpless victim's eyes, spoke the few words of preparation, and, kneeling, grasped Sequa's flesh in his hand.

'My father, have pity on Sequa!' the lad wailed; and the last word was scarcely uttered, the uplifted hand had not fallen, when a commanding voice rang out with the one word—

'Hold!'

All turned, to see two figures in cowboy costume ride up to the door and cover the people with revolvers.

As the wild beast of the forest is often cowed by the unflinching gaze of the hunter, so is the savage often overawed by the imperious voice and deadly little weapon of the White-man.

The Indians paused.

All stood silent as the elder of the two strangers jumped from his horse, threw the bridle to his companion, and stepped into the heart of the savage throng with the glittering revolver still ready in his hand.

The natives fell back, and left an open pathway as he fearlessly moved forward until he stood beside the prostrate youth, and to Sequa

that gallant young Briton must have been almost a supernatural answer to his appeal.

The brave eyes flashed on the assembly, and a rapid, commanding movement of the left hand, backed by an expressive demonstration of the right, left Sequa free to stand up in bewildered hope.

Before the astounded Indians had time to realise what was being done, the daring intruder had led the lad into the open air, mounted him on the horse which his companion held, and had disappeared among the scrub.

So sudden were his movements, and so magnetic the power of his imperious air, that not one of the Indians moved from his place. Only the old chief gazed blankly around, and asked in troubled tones:

'Is this how the White-man teaches the Red-man to be brave?'

CHAPTER III

THE WHITE-MAN'S TEEPEE¹

As the reader will probably have conjectured, the youths who had thus exhibited their mettle in true British style were none other than Bertie Caryll and his protégé Jim; and we must hark back a bit to tell what had occurred between the time when we saw them in Edinburgh, and their dramatic appearance at the sun-dance.

For upwards of three months they had been settled in what they already called 'home'—a wooden shanty erected by themselves in one of the lovely ravines in the Qu'appelle Valley. Their time had been fully occupied with the usual pioneer duties of house and stable building, fencing, and other innumerable jobs which fall to the lot of the newcomer in an unsettled district. They were raw at the work and very awkward, but neighbours were helpful, and Bertie's cash carried its own recommendation in a country where money was not very plentiful.

¹ Teepee = wigwam.

Thus many willing hands soon made Caryll's ranch look ship-shape enough, though Bertie would speak of it as his teepee, for his ideas of a dwelling-house wandered to the handsome stone buildings of Scotland, beside which his really commodious wooden shanty was as insignificant as the smallest Indian tent would be alongside his own home.

Very soon after his arrival, he said, 'I shall not go in for this tiresome wheat raising, but try my hand at cattle and horse ranching; eh, Jim?'

Of course, to whatever Bertie said, Jim never failed to add 'Amen'; but Jim had a fancy for gardening, and a few acres round the house were ploughed and fenced for that purpose under the direction and with the help of Sam, a handy man from the United States, whom Bertie had engaged to do chores,¹ and instruct him in the mysteries of colonial life.

The district where the young men had settled was practically new to immigration at that time, and was therefore but scantily peopled. Their neighbours, though agreeable, were few, and lived too far distant from each other to make personal intercourse of frequent occurrence.

¹ Chores : odd jobs around a farm.

As it was too late that season to raise even a garden crop before the long Canadian winter would close in, and as they did not want to have much stock until they had learned a little how to manage it, the couple found much time hanging on their hands.

'I guess you'd strike something to suit your minds if you went down to the Reserve next week,' said Sam one day. 'There ain't much doing around here, and the Nitchies are going to have a sun-dance, which means that there will be some rattling good— But faugh! I loathe a Redskin. But you chaps from the Old Country don't feel so, and it would amuse you.'

To be sure, Bertie and Jim would attend the sun-dance. They saddled their best horses, and felt distinctly elated when Sam remarked dryly:

'I reckon you'd best have your guns in your pockets in case of a bust. The devil's in a Nitchie when he sees blood, and blood there'll be at their pow-wows.'

Thus it came that the two were witnesses of the scene already described. Their approach had, of course, been noted by the Indians, but they were supposed to be Government officials, and therefore permitted to approach within the circle.

Young Caryll had felt his blood boil as he watched the horrible ritual. But he had not dreamed of interfering until Sequa's despairing cry bade him risk all, and rescue the boy.

They hurried through the bush expecting to be pursued, and determined to make a fight for the right if need be. But the Indians did not follow. They knew that members of the mounted police generally hovered around the Reserve when any particular excitement was on; and, to their cost, the conquered race also knew that they could not murder members of the British race with impunity.

After travelling rapidly for some miles (Bertie holding the stirrup-leather while the Indian rode) they slackened pace a little, and Caryll remarked:

'They do not appear to be coming after us, so we may as well be a little more sparing of our energies. Well, boy, how do you feel? You need not be frightened now. No harm will come to you.'

'What'll you do with him?' asked Jim; and, at his question, the Indian spoke.

'Sequa can never know the tents of his people. They would kill him if he returned.'

'Then you shall not return,' said his rescuer

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energetically. 'Would you like to live with me? I've got a jolly place of my own. You can talk English very well, and you seem to know what's what. Will you come and be my chore-boy?'

'Sequa would die for you. He will be your slave!' was the answer, which caused Bertie to laugh, and Jim to dash his hand across his eyes.

'All right,' said Caryll. 'But I won't ask you to die for me—at least not yet; and we are not allowed to keep slaves under the British flag. But I promise not to be unkind to you, boy.'

'Thank you; Sequa knows that you are good.'

The Indian then slid from the saddle—all expressions of fear gone since he knew himself in the keeping of Caryll; and, taking a position alongside the horse while he grasped the stirrup-leather with his right hand, he dropped into a swinging trot, which showed him accustomed to frequent and rapid foot journey.

'I believe you could run as fast as my horse,' said his friend, looking with admiration at the lithe limbs and easy gait of the boy. 'You'll be worth your salt, Sequa; so you must not think too much of any little thing I do for you. As for those red demons calling you coward! They were more like cowards themselves—a parcel of

men to fall on one boy, and then the whole tribe to let us carry you off as we did!

'Some day Sequa will be a brave—he will!' said the Indian.

'No' a red one, for goodness sake!' cried Jim. 'You must learn to be the kind o' "brave" Mr. Caryll was when he got you oot o' that fix. Oh! it was grand. That's being brave, if you like.'

'Sequa knows the difference,' was the answer.

'I'm wonderin' who'll be the next to come under your wing,' Jim resumed, turning affectionate eyes on Bertie.

'Whoever comes along and needs me, be he red, black, or white,' answered Bertie. 'Good, bad, or indifferent, I hold that we are bound to give a helping hand in a place like this. So you can expect to see queer chums at my teepee, Jim.'

'You can never help a mair helpless than the first, and you'll never find a mair grateful.'

'Oh, nonsense, Jim. Now, do you know I have quite a Robinson Crusoe feel about this boy? He is my man Friday. I say, Sequa, where did you learn to speak such good English and to wear our clothes?'

'At the White-man's school.'

'And if you were trained there and learned to

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be a civilised Christian, why on earth did you go back to the tribe?’

‘Sequa loves his people, and his soul felt in prison when he dwelt within stone walls and closed doors.’

As he spoke, his dark eyes glanced up to the sky and over the wide prairie with an expression that showed that his savage fathers were not all banished from the boy's blood.

‘What will Sam think when he sees Sequa and knows that you're going to keep him?’ said Jim suddenly. ‘He hates Indians, and calls them “venomous reptiles,” you know.’

‘He'll have to put up with it, then,’ answered Bertie. ‘If he can't—well, he'll have to march, that's all, though I would be sorry to lose Sam. He's not a bad sort, and knows everything that we don't know and ought to know.’

‘I wonder why he's so spiteful in his feelings to the Indians. It is no common dislike, but an absolute hatred.’

‘I rather think they have used him badly, somehow. The Indians in the States are not treated so kindly and justly as they are in Canada, and consequently they are more treacherous and revengeful. I dare say, Sam has suffered at their hands some time or other.’

Thus talking, and often addressing kindly words to the Indian boy, they rode on until they drew up at their own door, where Sam was standing, smoking his favourite corn-cob pipe.

'Wal, boss,' he drawled, 'you've come back soon. Didn't stop for the sumptuous banquet of biled white dog, the fairy dance, and the nightingale's song? No, I guess not! And where did you pick up that varmint? Goin' to stick him up as a scarecrow for blackbirds in your first turnip field?'

'He is going to stay here with us, Sam,' said Bertie, dismounting, and handing the bridle of his horse to Sequa.

Then Jim told the story in a few words, and Sam heard it in silence, merely tilting his broad-brimmed hat over his ear and scratching his head.

But when Jim concluded, the honest Yankee said:

'A brave thing to do, boys; but I wish you'd left a bullet or two in their hides, jest to mind them that you had called. That's the way we leave *our* cards when we call on them folks down Texas way. But, boss, you've done no wise deed in bringing a Nitchie into your shak. Don't be surprised if some day you find your

scalp or your watch amissing. Powder an' shot is all that 'll teach a Redskin to give over blood-thirsty ways.'

'Well, I mean to try another method for a change,' was the reply; and Sam lived to own one day, that brute force was not the only way to train a savage people.

Then Bertie turned to the Indian youth, who had evidently felt wounded by the rough cowboy's remarks, and, laying a hand on his shoulder, said:

'Now, let us see how useful you can be, Sequa. Take our horses to the stable there, and give them a feed, if you know how; if you don't, Jim will show you.'

'Sequa knows,' the Indian answered, full of pride and pleasure at being trusted at once; and he led the horses away, his face lit up with pride and pleasure.

When he was out of earshot, Caryll turned to Sam.

'I dare say,' he said quietly, 'you have good reason for your dislike to the Indians. I know very well that they have committed many a horrible deed.' The flush rising on Sam's face told the speaker that he was touching the truth, and he added in softer tones:

'It is hard to forgive, and impossible to forget some things, Sam; and you are such a good-hearted fellow, that I am sure you must have good reason for your prejudice. But I have taken this boy, and passed my word to him that he will find me a true friend. There is plenty of savage in him still, and it can be driven out by nothing but kindness and justice. We must be patient and just to Sequa, and we must let him see that we trust him. I look to you, Sam, to help us to do the right thing by this poor boy, who has been put into our hands as it were.'

'Wal, boss, I'll not go agin you; but I tell you straight, you can't make me freeze to a Redskin. If you knew—and one of these days I'll tell you, lads—my reason for looking on Nitchies as pizenous reptiles, varmints, and demons, you'd say: "I jest reckon that Sam wasn't so far wrong."'

'Very likely,' remarked Caryl. 'Now, let's see if we cannot find some grub anywhere, for we did not take of the "sumptuous banquet," as you know, and I think we are all roaring hungry for supper.'

After they had finished a hearty meal, and the Indian boy had been stowed away in a comfortable loft over the stable, Jim said to Sam:

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'I wish you'd tell us about those "varmint" of yours. You've often hinted at your adventures, and they must be worth listening to.'

'They are, Scottie,' replied Sam; 'and if, when I'm finished, you don't jine with me an' say, "Sam was right; Injuns be a vile, creepin', crawlin' sarpints, worse nor rattlesnakes,"—well, I ain't no judge of White-man's nature.'

CHAPTER IV

THE KID

'Boys,' said Sam, putting down his pipe and crossing his legs, 'when you've bin among all sorts of beasts as long as me, you'll find that their natures is much like our own, an' some of us ain't much better than the four-legged critters.

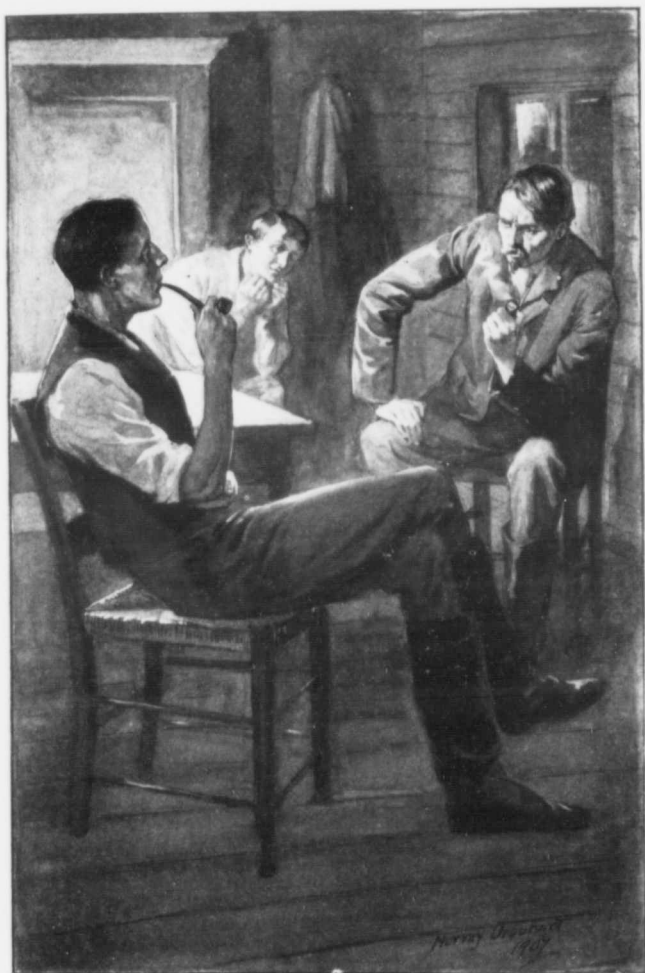
'Now, there's a broncho. He's as fine a sort of animal as goes on legs, be they two or four. If you keep the halter on him, he's as quiet as a chicken; but take his nose out of the ropes, and he's the wild nag of the prairie again.

'That's the Injun nature, as I know it.

'Then if you cheat a broncho, or give him long oats when he don't deserve it, he will never trust you again, and he'll take the first chance of giving you a straight-out kick.

'That's the Amurrican nature, and I'm of the Stars and Stripes—yes, don't you forget it!

'The Redskins cheated and injured me, and I've paid it back to some of their kind.



Sam tells his story (page 32).

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'Wrong, you say? Pr'aps it was, and I don't bid young chaps like you go and do ditto. But we all go pretty much as our nature drives—you're Britishers, I'm Amurrican.'

Here Jim gave a quick look at his friend, and Caryl said:

'Nature isn't always the best guide we've got, Sam. I know what's passing through Jim's mind. He is thinking of how Nature drove him for years, and how he turned round and went on the other tack, and is on it now.'

'Thanks to you,' added Jim, on which Bertie remarked sharply, with evident regret that the topic had been touched: 'We must shut up, and let Sam go on with his story.'

'Wal,' resumed Sam, 'when I was a young fellow about your age, boss, me an' my young brother ran a good-sized horse-ranch down Texas way. The kid, as I called Joe, was three years younger than me, but he was a terrible fine chap, and we were a long sight more to each other than most brothers are.'

'Ever since we were small younkners, Joe and I stuck close, and it got to be such that folks round about spoke of us as the Siamese twins. If a message had to be sent, it was always "Send Sam and Joe." If the cattle strayed into the

grain-fields mother would say, "What's come to Sam and Joe? They ain't watching straight." And if any mischief was done within twenty miles of our homestead it was at once blamed to the couple of us--never one, never the other, always both.

'When we were at school together--' Here Sam paused and looked into the distance as he lit his pipe, and a softer expression, with some tender sadness, flitted across his somewhat rough face.

'Yes,' he resumed, 'I would be about twelve at the time, and Joe nine--a restless little chap with curly hair, small bones, an' a whitish skin like a gal's; such a jolly little kiddie. The master was a surly man, and not square with some of us, and he could lash it into a fellow when he liked, you bet he could!

'Wal, one day I meant to have a bit of fun with him, just to pay him out for some lickings that I hadn't altogether deserved. (You see, that's my nature. I must be even, and maybe a little over, with them that injures me.) The master had a terrible big objection to frogs, and it was so bad that the sight of one would set the old coon jumping and yelling like a coyoté. So I gets a pretty selection of young bullies one

morning, and stows them into his desk, and then, thinking I'd left some books at home, calculates I'd better go and fetch them; for, you see, I knew that, when the row came, the master would raise Cain to know who did it, and if some other boy got let in for the mischief, I'd have to own up.

'I didn't go far to find my books, only up a maple-tree near the school where I could hear the fun; and you bet there was a scrimmage when old Jakes arrived and went to his desk! I heard his yells and jumps, and the screaming laughs of the boys, as the frogs came jumping out of the open windows and doors.

'Then there was a bit of a silence, and I guessed he was questioning the school, for now an' then I heard a voice say, "No, sir," and then I'd hear the master's angry growl saying something.

'But presently—' Here Sam's voice fell and quavered slightly. His pipe too had gone out, and with a knife he began to dig into the bowl with vicious stabs, muttering something which the others did not hear, but which his actions expressed. His hearers did not speak, but waited with silent interest for what he was to say next.

'I was saying, boys—' he resumed slowly, having recovered himself and laid the pipe down

(it was Sam's habit to expend himself on that old corn-cob),—"I was saying, boys, I heard a wack—a mighty hard wack, that brought me out of the tree at the very second as a yell of "shame" came from the schoolroom, followed by another wack, and then one poor little half-stifled scream.

'After that there was a stamping, and shouting, and roaring, like a herd of buffalo bust loose; and next moment out of the door ran the kid, my little Joe, with a deathly white face, and his hand to his head where a little red stream trickled through his fingers.

'Boys, something at the back of my head seemed to give a crick, and I had no control over myself after that. I sprang to Joe and asked, "Did he think it was you, kiddie?"

"He asked one after the other," sobbed Joe; "and then a sneak said it must have been you, for he had seen you catching frogs at the creek last night. He asked me, the master did, and—and—Sam, I knew it would mean a terrible hard hiding for you, so I said I did it."

'Yes, that's what the kid said—his very words, so well I remember, and the blood running down his white face. I reckon there would have been bad blood let out of the schoolmaster that morn-

ing to pay for Joe's hurt, but just at that moment the little chap dropped over into a kind of swoon, and I ran home with him in my arms to mother.

'When I came back to school in an hour with my veins still boiling, I met the boys coming away. Some of the biggest had interfered, and taken Joe out of the master's hands. It seems there had been a big row. It had long been brewing, for the master was hated by all. Yes, the big boys had paid off my little account (for they all loved Joe), and we had a good spell of holidays that summer, and a new teacher in the Fall.

'Wal, that was always the way with Joe. He wanted to share everything with me, and bear the blame for everything for me. Then, when we got a bit older, and dad and mother died, Joe and I took over the farm on our own; gave up grain and stuck to horses, same as you're doing, boss. It always seems the sort of work baching chaps take to best. If a man's got women-folk and younkens he prefers to take a sober gait after the plough; but, when there's only himself to consider, he doesn't mind tearing about and risking his life ten times a day.

'Many a rattling neck-or-nothing adventure

young Joe and I had with the horses—going share and share alike in the work and profits; the scrapes and lucky hits;—always close chums, Joe and I.'

The pipe was lighted up at this juncture, and the tobacco very gently pushed down with a forefinger, as Sam continued the relating of his story.

CHAPTER V

COWBOY ALL OVER

'I SOMEHOW or other got married when I was about twenty-two, but that didn't make the kid and me any the less chummy. The only difference was that I did more of the chores, while he did most of the rough-riding. I was kind of bewitched at that time, and did not notice till long after how it had come about that, whenever there was something risky or disagreeable to be done, it was no longer "Sam and Joe," only "Joe."

'But you'll think, boys, that I am never coming to the Redskins.

'Wal, I just tell you they may be saints in Canada, but they're the sarpint's own brood down in Texas. They come sneaking around the settlers' shaks, with their sly eyes and vile smells. I never could stand it, and always made them get a gait on out of my place pretty slick.

'Once I caught one of the varmints in the stable, sneaking around a horse I set store by.

A Redskin knows a good horse when he sees it, and knows how to play poker with it too. So I just gave him his share of long oats, and sent him off with a few bars in his paint that wasn't in the pattern before.

'I had no more visits from the Indians for a long time.' Here Sam's pipe required to be turned upside-down, and tapped on the toe of his boot, and Caryl took the opportunity to say:

'Perhaps the poor beggar wasn't doing any harm, Sam? I think I'd have been sure of his intentions before I thrashed him. I have been told that the Indians never even thrash their own children, and consider such punishment the very worst degradation that can be.'

'Just so, boss! And I'll allow that I needn't have been so down on the sarpint. Howsomever, he was more than quits with me in the end—left something over for me to consider a lifelong debt.

'Things went all right with us for a spell. I might have been twenty-seven then, and Joe a strapping fellow—none of his delicate looks left but the fair curls and small, well-shaped bones that made everybody admire him. They called him "thoroughbred," but to me he was still "the kid."

'Wal, Joe was out in the scrub one day, looking for a bunch of bronchos that had strayed off. I was busy at home with two or three neighbour lads helping me rig up a new corral for the horses, and my wife was singing in the house, as she got ready our dinner—yes, she was singing all that day—and, boys, I remember it was a pretty song, something hymn-like—about the Golden Gates of the West.

'I had stopped to listen to her, and was thinking what a sweet voice she had, when just then Joe came galloping to the door with his horse in a lather, and himself as white as death.

'Fore I could say a word, he slung himself out of the saddle, and called to me:

“Quick, Sam! Get the boys in, and have our guns ready—not a moment to lose—Redskins are coming!”

“Redskins?” says I. “Why, Joe, there’s no rebellion afoot, and the military are around. What on earth do you mean?”

“I met Pierre the scout, and he told me he had been on the trail of a big war-party for two days, and he heard them say they were coming to this ranch. He was heading for the Bluffs, where he had some soldiers located, waiting until the exact whereabouts of the rascals was certain.

He will bring help as quickly as he can, but the Reds are ahead of him, and will be here sooner. Pierre said that we should barricade and hold out until he comes."

'Boys, that was all Joe told me.

'In less than no time we were all inside, and every door well barred, with three shot-guns and two revolvers to defend us. I didn't feel very uneasy, knowing that Redskins won't come to close quarters, and that Pierre was on the road.

'But Joe was tremendous solemn-like, and the neighbour boys looked a bit skeered.

'I put my wife in the cellar out of harm's way, in case some bullets might be flying around; and scarcely had I got the trapdoor closed on her when Joe called from upstairs, "Here they come!"

'The Indians rode furiously, and were soon in front of the house—twenty or thirty of them, and all carrying rifles.

'We expected a volley at once. But no; they stopped out of reach of our shooters, and then a greasy-looking half-breed stepped out from among the crowd, waving a white rag as he advanced.

'I was on the lower story of the house with

two of our neighbours, an' Joe was above with the others. We had covered the lower windows, leaving only space for the guns to play, and we could not parley without exposing ourselves. But Joe could speak with safety from the little skylight aloft, so he calls out to them :

“What do you want, coming like this? We're a large armed party, and the military will be here soon. If you want to save your red hides you'll take my advice and slide out of this right now!”

“We know all that,” says the half-breed coolly, and in good English, “but *we're* here first, and will have the house burned and the lot of you scalped before they do come—that is, if you don't do as we tell you. Are you the boss?”

“I am the boss,” replied Joe, without hesitation.

“Well, then, boss, the chief has something to tell you. Come out and go along with us, and no harm shall come to your house or your friends.”

‘Joe didn't say a word, and I roared out :

“Ne'er a bit of me is going to trust my scalp in your hands, varmints!”

‘But they did not hear or heed me, and I heard a scrambling overhead that I couldn't quite

understand, so I drew in the gun and squinted through the hole. Joe had scooted down the sloped roof, and given himself into their hands.

'Then the something in my head that had cricked before, cricked again, and I up with the gun and shot that vile half-breed dead.

'Immediately there was a blaze from twenty Indian rifles, and the boys banged back like good ones; but I dropped everything, and, snatching up an axe, tore at the door to get out. But the lads had got pretty skeered by this time, and they hung on me like leeches.

"Hold on!" they cried, "don't act madly—don't risk your life, Sam! You will have us all murdered—remember your wife!"

'By that time the noise outside had given over. There was no more shooting, but we heard a stampede of horses, and one of the chaps overhead shouted down:

"They're off—off like a whirlwind, *and taken Joe!*"

'I was properly mad by that time.

"Stand out o' my way, or I'll cleave your heads!" I told them, and they let me unbar the door.

'A good bit of time had been wasted, and when I got outside the Redskins were far off,

making for the scrub. I ran to the yard and called my horse, but as I was putting on the bridle, Pierre and a dozen of his soldiers came up.

"No harm done, unless that?" inquires he, pointing to the half-breed's carcase.

"They've taken my brother!" I cried out.

"What? Joe? Why, man, it was *you* they were after. They meant to skin you alive in revenge for something you did to one of them. That's why I bade Joe come home and warn you; that's why I brought these men as quick as horseflesh could take them. The main body went to cut off the retreat, and will meet the brutes by the scrub."

Sam stopped, and the old corn-cob dropped to the floor, and he folded his arms and breathed heavily for a few minutes, and his hearers did not speak a word. When he resumed, his voice was hoarse and broken.

'We rode off like mad. After one hour's chase we heard the crack of rifles, and knew that the soldiers were at work. I was looking ahead, when my horse shied, and Pierre cried out—and there—on the trail—there lay Joe—dead—mutilated—scalped.

'Boys, for every curl of his that hung from the chief's belt we took vengeance that day.'

A long pause; then Sam spoke more gently:

'He had given his life for mine; the scout told me all—how he had overheard the Indians say they meant to torture and murder the boss of Ridell's ranch, who had flogged one of their braves. But Joe didn't tell me—and that was why he called out that he was the boss.'

'How horrible!' Caryll exclaimed.

'No wonder you can't bide the Indians!' added Jim.

'And what was your poor wife about all that time?' asked Bertie, thinking to divert Sam's mind into a more agreeable channel; but the shadow darkened on the rough cowboy's face, and he answered briefly:

'The boys had helped her out of the cellar and told her that Joe was took; and after that, when I came home and she knew all about it, she took it desperate to heart. She had got a terrible fright, and she loved Joe as her brother. It kind of cut her to the heart that he had been killed for me, and so—short after—it might be six months—I buried her aside my Joe—and then I turned my back on old Texas for ever.'

CHAPTER VI

ROUGH ON THE RANCHER

'SAY, boss, don't you think it's about time to turn out?' said Sam one morning, a few weeks after the events took place which I have been narrating. 'It's six o'clock, and Jim has about fried himself to tinder as well as the breakfast with waiting on you.'

'Six o'clock! You don't mean it!' cried Caryll, jumping out of bed into the middle of the room, and beginning to hustle on his clothes.

'Why, we promised old Rodgers to be over at his place by seven at the latest. I wish some of you had roused me out a little earlier.'

'Wal, you see, you had pretty tough work yesterday, and your muscles ain't accustomed to the same strain as ours, so we thought we'd let you have an extra snooze. Not much harm done if Rodgers has to wait an hour.'

'Hi! there!' called Caryll to the others, who were talking in the kitchen below. 'Dump down the breakfast, Jim, and let Sequa get the

bronchos ready! I'll be with you in the twinkling of an eye.'

'Right you are,' answered Jim, and immediately a great clatter of dishes ensued. He had been trying to make as little noise as possible so as not to disturb his friend, for Jim's watchful devotion to Caryll was almost womanly in its tender thoughtfulness.

The individual to whom Caryll had applied the term 'old Rodgers' was not an old man in any sense of the word.

He might have been about forty years of age—a tall, athletic fellow, whose easy motions and refined manners indicated that he had been reared among gentlefolks. Indeed, one could not be long in his company without knowing that he was highly educated in addition to being well-bred.

Like Caryll, he was a rancher, but he had to depend entirely on his own personal ability; therefore, though experienced and able, his efforts to 'run the show' without funds were more limited and less productive than those of our late medical student.

Canadian colonists are generally ready to give each other a lift up the hill, and Rodgers could always depend on assistance from neigh-

hours when he required help at the 'round up' of his stock or in hunting strayed animals. He and Caryll had taken to each other immediately, and the older man, who lived alone in his shanty, found frequent pleasure in riding over to his young friend's ranch, where the laughter and fun of the lads helped him a little to forget his own loneliness which often made him a trifle melancholy.

Under the spell of congenial company Rodgers would draw upon his immense fund of accomplishments, and entertain the others with songs or the story of one of his adventures in the many parts of the West where he had travelled. He was the best of good company, and was always a welcome guest at Caryll ranch.

Rodgers had called on Bertie the day before, telling the chums of a serious loss which he had just experienced in the straying of twenty-five of his best horses from the home herd, and Caryll had immediately offered his services to assist in tracking the runaways. He had not been out before on an expedition of the sort, and was rather pleased at the opportunity Rodgers's horses would give him for a rough ride in which there might be some fresh experiences.

As they hurried through breakfast, Sam said, as he glanced through the open door where Sequa was standing with the horses: 'Guess you'd better take the Nitchie with you, boys.'

'And leave you alone with all the hay to haul in from the stack to the stable-yard!' said Caryll; while Jim remarked:

'I thought you had quite taken to Sequa, Sam, and now it seems you are anxious to rid yourself of his company.'

'The coon ain't so bad as most of his kind,' answered Sam, 'though I'll allow we haven't froze to each other yet. But I was thinking that he might be of use in the hunt. Them bronchos have a way of splitting up, if anything frightens or attracts some of them, and you might have to divide your party. You two are tender at this sort of work, but an Indian's born to know horseflesh and its ways. That boy will scent a horse better than the oldest white rancher in the universe. Tell Rodgers that, if he'll take my advice, he'll go with Jim in one direction, and send you with the var—the red coon in the other, and you can meet at stages. That's the best way to go to work in a pleasure-trip of this sort.'

'All right, Sam. Sequa, bring another horse

for yourself,' Bertie called out. 'Say, Jim' (as he buckled a pair of silver-plated spurs to the heels of his top-boots), 'you might see if Sequa has got everything shipshape. We'll need a blanket tied on behind each saddle, and picket-ropes—don't forget them on any account. Rodgers said that he could give us everything but ropes and blankets.'

'What more will you need than that same?' quoth Sam, with a twinkle in his eye, as he stood in the doorway and critically surveyed the horses which Jim hitched to the fence rail, while he overhauled their riding-gear in following Bertie's instructions. 'I guess if you've got blankets and ropes you've got about all you want, going on the trail of bronchos in a peaceable country. Pr'aps you would like to have a feather-bed or two, or even a few easy chairs and a piano?'

'I suppose Rodgers meant grub when he said "everything else,"' replied Caryll. 'We can't pick up bread and cheese on the prairie.'

'Heaps of prairie chicken,' said Sam briefly.

'Ah, that reminds me. I'll take a shot-gun; it might come in handy'; and Caryll took down the weapon from its rack, and buckled on his cartridge-belt as he left the house.

'Good luck!' called Sam, as the three rode down the trail. They were all in that exuberance of spirits which the fresh prairie breeze and sunny skies awoke.

'Isn't this a long chalk better than city life at home, Jim?' asked Bertie, looking with utmost satisfaction at his chum, who had changed wonderfully in a few months.

'I wonder any person can be unhappy here,' was Jim's reply; and Caryll said: 'It's a fine country for happiness—plenty of elbow-room to keep folks from rubbing against their neighbours. Just think, if I were in Edinburgh instead of Canada, I would probably be only thinking of getting out of bed, instead of enjoying the fresh air like this.'

It was also noticeable that even Jim's manner of speech had altered with the new life. He had readily adopted the colonial ideas of equality, and while he never failed in respect, he had (at Caryll's own wish) given up the 'sir' of servility. By association with Bertie his tongue had also begun to lose many of the expressions peculiar to lower-class life in Scottish cities, and though now and then a homely word or phrase would slip out, there was seldom anything to betray his past unhappy life.

'Yes,' rejoined Jim; 'and if the change of life is different to you, how much greater must be the difference to me? Sometimes I can scarcely believe that it is all true, and I get half afraid to shut my eyes, for fear I shall fall asleep, only to wake up and find it a dream.'

'I only wish all dreams were half as real, and a quarter as jolly,' laughed Bertie; 'then we could have rattling times, and no mistake. But I think, on the whole, we do have a pretty fair time of it, eh, Jim? We are our own bosses; we do our own cooking; and we eat what we like, without having any landladies priggish our jam and blaming the long-suffering cat for the theft. If we want a holiday, we take one. If we choose to work, nobody laughs at us for doing too much, or scolds us for doing too little. At the same time, I don't suppose it would do for every fellow to be on his own hook as we are. But I think we are quite capable of looking after ourselves—what say you, Jim?'

'Pretty near!' was the reply, short, expressive, and equally egotistical. 'But there's some out here with whom the plan doesn't seem to work over well, and, do you know, I sometimes think that Rodgers is one of that sort. Has it ever struck you that way?'

'Yes, I have thought so more than once. Poor chap, I think he has gone through the mill in his time.'

'But he leads a straight enough life now,' Jim murmured; 'and surely a man is never too old to start again. Perhaps it is a bit harder to do so when one is not so young, and hasn't a friend at hand to back him, as—as I had——'

'Hist!' Sequa suddenly exclaimed, at the same time sliding from his horse in the swift, silent manner so peculiar to the Indians, while, with the bridle over his arm, he walked around, peering at a number of confused marks in the turf.

'What is it?' Caryll asked.

'Horses; many horses here—and Red-men.'

'I suppose some Indians have been camping in this part,' said Jim.

'No camp—hunt!' was the quick rejoinder. 'Red-man creep near horses—throw lasso—lead some—drive some—away fast.'

'Sounds like horse-stealing,' remarked Bertie, and Sequa's glittering eyes, full of intelligence, confirmed the supposition.

'If that's the case, Rodgers may whistle for his herds,' Jim said; but his friend, quickening speed, replied: 'Not at all. We'll have them back sure enough; so let's get ahead, boys.'

Off they went at a brisk canter, but though they rode fast, they had already learned to guide their horses skilfully, so as to avoid the dangerous badger-holes which are half-hidden by the long grass, and are sometimes death-traps to both rider and steed.

After some hard riding they reached the ranch known in western vernacular as 'Rodgers's shak,' and they found the proprietor seated comfortably on the top of an upturned water-barrel by the door and waiting for his visitors. He was beguiling the time by trolling out a light ranch song:

'There is only one I prize,
She has sweet and honest eyes;
We're a happy and a care-for-nothing pair.
Oh, her coat is soft and glossy,
And her name is simply "Flossy";
She's my sweetheart is my little broncho mare!'

'You take things easy!' exclaimed Caryll, as the three rode up to the shanty.

'And so do you, my boy! I guess the sun don't get up as spry at your place as it does down here,' was the chaffing reply; but Bertie retorted chaffingly: 'Oh yes it does. But you see we have work to do before we can afford to be idle.'

'Don't you believe him,' Jim joined in. 'He is just about an hour out of bed, and would have been there yet if Sam had not roused him.'

'Oh well, it doesn't make much difference, anyhow. I am glad you thought to bring the Indian boy, though. It was well considered, for Indians are nuts on this sort of job.'

'That was Sam's idea,' explained Bertie; and then they told Rodgers what they had seen and conjectured on the way.

'I half suspected as much,' Rodgers remarked. 'I've seen a few Indians sneaking about of late. I hope your boy is to be trusted?'

'I am sure he is,' said Bertie emphatically.

Rodgers was dressed in the typical rancher's costume of leather riding-breeches, navy blue flannel shirt, and broad-brimmed brown felt hat. His skin (uncovered at the throat) was beautifully bronzed; his beard and moustache neatly trimmed. His face had lost none of its intellectual refinement, while his voice was cultured and pleasing, though he had adopted many of the catching idioms of the country.

In a short time the party was ready for the journey. Rodgers drove in a buck-board containing a small tent and other necessaries for

a camp-out, and his saddle-horse trotted independently alongside.

'Will she go loose like that?' Caryll asked in surprise, when he observed that the animal was in no way attached to the buck-board; and Rodgers, smiling, sang in reply:

'There ain't no gal like my gal,
An' that's a fact, you bet!'

'I say,' Bertie interrupted, 'suppose the Indians really went off with your horses, what do you propose doing?'

'Getting on their trail, and recovering my lost property,' was the concise reply.

'But—won't they be—won't they make a noise?'

'Possibly, and so will we! Now that I think of it, they've done a pretty cute thing. They only carried off the beasts I bought lately, and hadn't time to mark.'

'But you can identify your property?'

'After a fashion,' said Rodgers. 'Not perhaps so as to satisfy an English judge and jury, but in a way quite convincing enough to make an Indian conclude that the property belongs to me'; and the speaker further explained his meaning by significantly patting his hip-pocket,

where could be seen the bulky outline of a Colt's revolver.

'I hope it won't be that way,' Caryll said in a subdued tone, and Rodgers added: 'Probably not. A threat will likely be enough. I do not expect to have much trouble once we get on the right track. Should we overtake the thieves—and I now strongly believe that the horses did not leave the rest of the band of their own accord—they will probably say that they found the animals strayed, and were keeping them till they were claimed. I have had dealings with their kind, and heard the old excuses many a time.'

CHAPTER VII

TRACKING BRONCHOS

WHEN the little party had travelled in a northerly direction for some twenty miles, they reached a 'bluff' thickly set with trees and underwood. There Rodgers proposed to rest.

'You fellows must be feeling rather peckish after your ride and early breakfast. Suppose we pull up here?'

No one was averse to the proposal, you may be sure, and all were soon dismounted. Rodgers turned his attention to preparing a rough-and-ready meal, while Bertie and Jim looked after the horses. They had long since learned the first rule of ranch life which bids the cowboy feed his steed before himself.

While these preparations were going on, Sequa busied himself with carefully examining the locality for tracks of the lost animals.

There had been no doubt about the direction first taken by the horses and Indians from the spot in the valley where he had found and

translated the hoof-prints and impressions of moccasined feet. They had headed north-east for the Blue Hills, and now the important point was to find in what part of this broken, wooded region they were located.

If the track were not clearly struck now, the searchers might be within an exceedingly short distance of the runaways, and yet fail to discover them; such is the result of the unequal state of that rolling prairie country—broken knolls and hollows, studded with clumps of poplar, willow, and other trees.

But Sequa's investigations were very brief, as a call from Rodgers brought the youths quickly into camp.

A large pan of bacon was frizzling on the fire, a pot of coffee was diffusing a delicious odour through the air, and the brown faces of many large potatoes might be seen peeping from among the ashes, their skins splitting with the most inviting smiles. Cheese and home-baked bread, with a can of cream, lay among the cabbage-leaves on the top of a small water-keg.

It was not a sumptuous repast to please an epicure, and Rodgers, smiling hospitably, said:

'Your Edinburgh landlady, Caryll, would lift her hands in dismay, I suppose, if she saw you

sitting down to such a dinner—without cruets or silver, serviettes or finger-bowls. But I dare say you, like myself, have learned to enjoy your cowboy feed as well as ever you enjoyed the luxuries of a civilised table.'

'You bet!' answered Bertie, attacking the tin plateful set on the grass before him; while Jim, receiving a like bountiful helping, remarked:

'This is the dinner of a prince to what I used to have in a "civilised" country.'

'If dinners,' quoth Rodgers, 'were levelled down and up like yours and Caryll's are to-day, I fancy civilisation would get quit of a lot of its bothers.'

The lads were too busy to talk, but they nodded approbation as they rapidly worked with their knives and forks.

Sequa, though quite as sharp-set, went to work with a quiet deliberation which might have graced the highest banquet on record, and Bertie good-humouredly remarked after a little:

'Seems to me there are different kinds of civilisation, and that of the savage is often a long way ahead of that which belongs to our sort—eh, Rodgers?'

'Indeed, yes. The way a Red-man will sit calmly when he is starving, and eat his food

with dignified sobriety; the way he will wait, however angry or anxious to speak, until the other has done talking—never interrupting another; the way he respects the helplessness of childhood and never strikes a little one;—these are examples to our so-called civilisation.'

'Ah, but a sun-dance!' said Jim, shrugging his shoulders.

'And a prize-fight, or wrestling-match!' laughed Rodgers.

With such talk the travellers finished their meal, and then the cooking-utensils, etc., were packed away again. Horses were once more saddled and harnessed and the party proceeded on its way, keeping a good look-out all the while for tracks which might indicate that the trail they were on was the right one.

When they had travelled over thirty-five miles in all, and evening was drawing near, Sequa, who was frequently dropping behind, or darting off to inspect some marks too trifling to attract the White-man's attention, eagerly begged them to halt, and narrowly inspect some signs of recent hoof-prints which skirted the edge of a deep pine-forest and trended towards the north-east through the woods.

Rodgers got out of his 'rig' and carefully

examined the marks, which certainly showed that a number of horses had passed that way, while Sequa declared that some were led by men on other horses, and some were straggling after the others, being probably driven up now and again by mounted Indians.

They rode on a short distance more, and then the marks became very faintly defined and widely scattered, so that the trackers began to feel at fault.

Again Rodgers halted, telling the others to dismount also, which they did, and tied their horses to neighbouring trees—two at least of the number wondering what was to be the object of this sudden stop.

Then Rodgers drew his sheath-knife, and cutting a few pine-branches, handed them to Caryll and Jim, with directions to stand about three yards apart ready to beat out the fire if it spread too far, as he was about to light the grass.

Striking a match when he had his assistants in position, he then set fire to the long dry grass which grew thickly in that place. Allowing it to burn until a space of about twelve feet in diameter was cleared of vegetation, the three energetically set to work to beat out the flames.

which was easily accomplished by means of the heavy pine-branches.

'What on earth can be the use of raising a fire just to put it out again?' asked Jim; and then unloosing his tongue in his excitement he added (much to the amusement of Caryll and the rancher): 'Fegs! but it seems perfect gowk's work.'

'Look, and you'll see,' answered Rodgers, smiling and pointing to the burned spot. And there, sure enough, were plainly visible the marks of horses' hoofs traced upon the ground—marks which had been completely hidden by the long grass.

'You see, boys, the weather has been kind of dampish lately, and I thought that, though the grass has risen to its usual stiffness, the hoof-prints would have dried into the soft soil as if in a plaster cast. I was right, you see, for the tracks are quite clear, and heading, as Sequa said, in one direction—north-east. Yes, it's plain now: whether carried off or not, they were making for the Blue Hills at the other side of this belt of wood. Some of the best pasture in the country is there, and the place is infested with Indians and half-breeds.'

'But how are you sure that the tracks belong

to our horses, and not to some one else's?' Jim ventured to inquire.

Rodgers smiled a little contemptuously, but answered with perfect courtesy :

'I ought to have shown you sooner how it is that I am sure that these horses are none other than mine. Look ; do you see that hoof-mark—the one with the left side cut off square, I mean? Well, that's my Jerry's track—my old herd-horse that I put with the new bunch, thinking that he would keep them near home. He lost a piece of his hoof once by stepping into a spring trap, and it never grew right again. By that sign I shall know and claim my animals, even though they have not got my registered brand upon them.'

'Well, we've learned something to-day,' said Jim to Bertie, to both of whom the work was full of interest. 'What a fine dodge it is to burn the grass to look for what's below!'

'Borrowed, like so many of our ranching tricks, from the Indians,' Rodgers replied. 'It takes time and patience to learn tracking, but it is an art easily acquired if common-sense guides your observation. Some fellows know it by instinct.'

'It reminds one of detective work,' remarked Caryll. 'You get the clue in the shape of a

small hoof-mark, and you follow up the case, putting two and two together like a lawyer, until finally you know exactly where to lay your hands on the object of your search.'

'That's about it; but sometimes you're balked when others as 'cute as you are at work to circumvent you.'

By that time the evening was beginning to merge into night's darkness.

'It seems to me,' said Rodgers reflectively, 'that the horse-thieves cannot have got far ahead of us, and are careless about the trail they leave. So I propose that we pitch our camp for the night in that little dell there. It reminds one of an old-country grove, and seems perfectly shut in, so that we need not fear that our fire will betray us. We are on the lee side of our destination, so the smell will not carry. As far as I can gather, we shall have no difficulty in following up the trail to-morrow.'

So once more the party dismounted, and, picketing their horses, lit a fire and refreshed themselves with another repast, somewhat similar to their midday meal.

They sipped their coffee, while the fire crackled merrily, lighting up the surrounding trees, and making the outer darkness appear even more

intense than it would have been if the flames had not flung their brilliant searchlight upon its gloom.

'This is the time for a story,' said Jim; and for an hour Rodgers kept them intensely amused with his 'yarns,' which culminated in a tale so gruesome that Jim shuddered, and Sequa glanced around him with solemnity into the forest depths.

'Oh, come!' Caryl cried, 'this is getting rather weird with such surroundings. Let's have a song for a variety.'

In a few minutes the rich cultured voice of 'Old Rodgers' rose on the still night air with wonderful effect as he sang (by special request) the half-humorous song whose chorus he had been singing at intervals during the day:

'You boys have all got sweethearts,
At least, so I've been told;
And some there are who take you in,
While some themselves are sold.
But if you ask me plainly,
I beg you'll not forget
That there ain't no gal like my gal,
An' that's a fact, you bet!

CHORUS

'There is only one I prize,
She has sweet and honest eyes;

BRAVES, WHITE AND RED

We're a happy and a care-for-nothing pair.
 Oh, her coat is soft and glossy,
 And her name is simply "Flossy";
 She's my sweetheart, is my little broncho mare.

'Now when each summer ev'ning
 We two go out a-walking,
 Floss ain't for ever sulking
 If she can't get all the talking.
 An' she don't begin to grumble
 If I light a cigarette;
 Well—there ain't no gal like my gal,
 An' that's a fact, you bet!

CHORUS

'There is only one, etc.
 'You never have to ask her twice,
 She does whate'er you say;
 She never paints her cheeks or lips
 To hide old age away;
 For silks an' satin she don't care,
 For money she don't fret—
 There ain't no other Flossy,
 An' that's a fact, you bet!

CHORUS

'There is only one,' etc.

'What a jolly ranch song!' said Caryll enthusiastically, when Rodgers had finished. 'I never heard it before. Where did you get it?'

'Here,' answered his friend, tapping his forehead with his finger.

'The words?'

'Words and music both.'

'What a clever fellow you are! I wonder——' and there Caryll paused suddenly. But Rodgers seemed to know intuitively what would have been Bertie's speech, and took up the sentence.

'You wonder how I, with my education, came to be landed out here all alone? If you had gone the pace in the whirl of society's maddest freaks, and all of a sudden found the whole thing burst up, and the show itself nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit, you would probably have done as I did—fled into the wilderness.' Then, after a brief pause (during which each was occupied with thoughts of his own), Rodgers once more lent his voice to music. This time the strains were low and tender—almost like a hymn—and the boys sat entranced.

'Far across the fallow prairie
Sinks the sun-god from our sight,
Clothing all this pleasant valley
In a robe of rosy light;
And he shines upon the river
Winding through the tangled wold,
Till its waters dance and shimmer
Like a stream of living gold.

'Not a sound disturbs the quiet,
Nature's silence reigns supreme,
All her children wrapt in slumber—
Pure as child's unconscious dream,
Oh! we love to gaze enraptured
On this scene divinely blessed.
Wondrous picture, thou dost give us
Visions of Eternal Rest.'

By the time the young rancher had finished the night was far advanced, so the campers sought the little tent set under the drooping branches of a large maple; and, wrapping themselves in their blankets, they were soon lost in dreamless slumber.

CHAPTER VIII

EAGLE-FEATHER

RODGERS got up early next morning, intending to have the fire lighted and breakfast under way before rousing his young friends, but when he crawled out of the tent, he found a pile of dry sticks neatly arranged and only requiring a match to be set to them. The tin kettle stood near with a pitcher of fresh water.

The nearest spring was some way from the camp, where thick bush prevented the tents being pitched nearer the water. Some one must have been up and busy early that morning, and Rodgers guessed at once that this some one must be the Indian boy, who had not gone into the tent with the others, but coiled himself up on a blanket upon a bed of dry grass beside the smouldering fire.

'He is rapidly taking on the varnish of the right sort of civilisation,' said Rodgers to himself, as he lit the fire and set the kettle over it. Then he called to the others:

'Come along, boys; time's up! Get a hump on!'

Caryll and Jim were soon beside him, and as they bathed their faces in the welcome supply of clear, fresh water, their companion told them of Sequa's thoughtful attention.

'Where is he now?' asked Bertie.

'Seeing after the horses, most likely,' suggested Jim.

But at that moment Sequa himself appeared, coming quickly from the scrub; and before any one could call out a friendly greeting, which he deserved, all saw that he was profoundly agitated.

'Well?' said Rodgers quickly.

'Sequa seen horses,' replied the boy, casting furtive glances around, and betraying in every look and gesture a distress which it was pitiful to see.

'Tell us everything; don't be afraid,' said Bertie kindly, and Sequa, going near to him, replied:

'Sequa found horses—Indians with them—one, two, three,' holding up three fingers. 'Braves—ten'—lifting both hands—'gone away,' pointing east. 'Took no horses—all horses in clearing—near teepee.'

'I understand,' said Rodgers. 'Three Indians,

who have a tent and probably squaws with them, are camped some distance off with my horses. The main body of Reds have cleared out in another direction. Like their cunning! They know that if a number of them are found with the horses they will be accused of stealing them, but if only one or two are there, and they are taking things cool, they can, if discovered, say they found the animals strayed.'

Sequa turned round with a graceful, dignified movement, seeming to forget his trouble for the moment, and said quietly:

'Chief no steal.'

'Ah! It is a chief then, is it?'

'Yes.'

'One of your own tribe, I guess?'

'Yes.'

'That explains his vexation—remember the sun-dance,' remarked Rodgers, aside to Caryll. Then he turned again to Sequa:

'Did they see you, lad?'

'No, no! Sequa dare not go near his tribe!'

'Not with us—three to three?' asked Bertie, surprised and a little annoyed at the boy's apparent want of courage.

The Indian lifted his hand impressively and answered:

'Sequa not 'fraid when good White-man near; you White-man more than twenty braves. But Sequa cannot go before the Chief yonder. Chief spit on Sequa. Sequa outcast from his people.'

No words can express the melancholy in the tones or the shame in his aspect as he spoke. And the others fully appreciated his feelings.

'Describe to us where the Chief is located, and we'll leave you here to look after the camp while the three of us fetch the horses,' said Rodgers.

The place was briefly but clearly pointed out, and was about three miles from the camp through the forest.

By that time Jim had watered and brought in the horses, and as the kettle was boiling, breakfast was hastily dispatched, while Rodgers gave directions as to the journey.

'See that your trappings are all right, boys, and sling the gun at your saddle, Caryll; not that I expect we'll need it, but it does no harm to show that we can back our claims with lead if forced to it. Once, when I was new to this life, I let my horse stray from me in a stupid manner. I was prospecting round by myself, got tired, dismounted by the edge of this very wood to have some grub, and dropped to sleep without first taking care that my nag was

properly tied. Consequence—when I woke up I saw him a mile off and some half-breeds after him—five or six of them. I had no gun, nor anything in the shape of a weapon. It was getting quite dark, and I knew that I would be in a desperate plight if left to myself there without a horse; so I cut a stick about the length and as near the shape of a gun as I could find, stuck it inside my coat and started after the half-breeds. They had caught my horse by this time and were stumping along at a good rate, making for the cover where I guessed they had their camp. I dodged after them, and when they stopped among some trees and it was quite dark, I walked boldly up, letting the nearest end of my pretended gun protrude from my coat.

“That’s my horse you’ve picked up,” said I; “much obliged to you for securing him!” And up I jumped, gave the horse a lick, and we were off. Not a man among them moved.’

While Rodgers was relating this anecdote, he was adjusting the saddle on his mare and fixing his revolver and cartridge-belt around his waist; and when all was ready he gave his final directions to Sequa.

‘You stick here till we come back; have the kettle boiling at midday, for we’ll all be at

camp again in time for dinner.' And in another minute the three had disappeared among the trees, riding as rapidly as the broken trail through the scrub would allow.

When they were out of sight, Sequa sat down and drew from his breast a long eagle's feather, at which he looked with intense emotion for a considerable time. He had picked it up on the previous evening near the spot where they had found the trail. With the self-contained reserve of his people, he had said nothing, but pondered in his own mind, and reached a conclusion.

It was to satisfy his own conjectures that he had risen early and stolen away while the others slept. He had soon come upon a fresh track which led him to a green dell in the heart of the scrub, and there he had found the lost horses picketed beside an Indian wigwam.

It did not need the emblems on the tent to tell Sequa that this was the teepee of his father, Eagle-feather. He had known it must be so, as soon as he found the plume which he knew so well, and which, as a child, he had often ventured to touch with reverent curiosity.

How it had been lost he could not conjecture, and did not trouble himself to consider.

Indians, whom he recognised as two of the

young men who had been admitted braves when he had shrunk from the torture, lay wrapt in slumber near the Chief's tent. Without doubt, Eagle-feather was within, and for a moment, while he gazed on the scene, Sequa felt inclined to go and fling himself at his father's feet and bid the Chief do as he would with his son, but not cast him away. Only a moment did he hesitate; for a vivid picture of the torture, the insult, the horrible fate he would meet, rose before his mind, and sick at heart the boy crept away again, his whole being torn with conflicting feelings.

Sequa loved his father passionately. He loved the free wandering life of his people. He knew them to be brave, honest men as a rule, upright in all their dealings, though ruthless, unforgiving, and bloodthirsty.

But he also loved the generous Caryll, and he had learned to admire the virtues of mercy, unselfishness, and forgiving kindness.

'Some day, perhaps, Sequa can show himself to his people no coward, but like his white friend—gentle and brave,' he murmured, as he sped back to his protectors and, as we have seen, gave the necessary information, but said no word about Eagle-feather.

We must now leave the Indian boy sadly musing to himself, and follow the others.

Half an hour's ride brought them to the clearing which Sequa had so minutely described, and they rode straight into the open camp without hesitation or fear of the smallest kind.

The Indians had just finished a meal, and the squaws were filling some water-pails at a small spring which bubbled up beneath the shelter of a willow shrub.

The Chief, a grave, handsome man, was standing by the teepee holding his headgear in his hand, and apparently in no good temper. He had discovered the loss of one of his plumes, and the superstition of his race led him to augur some early misfortune from the loss.

He scarcely looked up when the White-men approached, and his indifference (of course assumed) annoyed the masterful Briton.

'You have given me a long ride to recover my horses,' said Rodgers brusquely.

'Take your horses,' answered Eagle-feather haughtily, and turned away.

Rodgers rode up to one of the braves who stood near, saying as he did so:

'I have half a mind to drive you into the town with the bronchos, and give you a taste of the

gaol. That would teach you not to hang around a White-man's ranch and steal.'

At these words Eagle-feather stalked up, his eyes glittering with fury.

'Eagle-feather and his braves no steal! White-man steal land, tree, buffalo, beaver, everything—everything!' he cried, and waved his arm expressively. 'Chief take nothing but his own. Moneas¹ take all from every one!'

'Pshaw! I have heard all that nonsense before,' retorted Rodgers. 'If the Chief didn't annex what was not his, how came he to have my horses here? I can read hoof-marks and moccasin tracks as well as you, and my horses did not stampede of their own free will this time.' And the Englishman laughed scornfully.

'The White-man's tongue is forked like a rattlesnake's. He spits poison—he lies!'

'Really, Rodgers,' Caryll now interrupted (he had noted the brief scene, and felt impressed by the Chief's bearing)—'really, I believe he speaks the truth. Tell us, Chief, how came you by the horses?'

Eagle-feather had turned sharply when Caryll spoke, and he glanced from him to Jim, and then

¹ Moneas = White-man.

back to the speaker. He recognised in both the daring pair who had broken in upon the sundance on one eventful day, and his passion broke all restraints.

'Dogs!' he cried, plucking a long knife from his belt and flourishing it within striking distance of Caryll's breast. But for the self-possession of Rodgers the blade would then have found a mortal sheath; but the rancher leaned from his horse, seized the Chief's wrist in a powerful grasp, and wrenched the knife away, throwing it to a distance as he backed his mare and levelled his revolver.

He was quite cool, and spoke calmly:

'Six bullets here, Chief, and I shoot straight. Boys, drive up the horses. I'll keep cover of old Fireworks while you do so.'

He was master of the situation.

The Indians stood passive while Caryll and Jim gathered the scattered animals in a bunch and drove them into the trail, which was a narrow defile between banks of scrub.

Turning round in the saddle, Rodgers kept his eyes and his weapon in the direction of the Indians while bidding his mare follow in the track of the leaders; and in this manner the adventurers proceeded till they were well



'Dogs!' he cried, plucking a long knife from his belt (page 80).

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on the return way to the camp, where they soon arrived without further incident.

With kindly consideration for Sequa, they did not in his presence discuss what had happened, and they saw that the anxious expression had left his face as they returned with the horses, and chatted carelessly on indifferent subjects.

CHAPTER IX

A TRAIL TO A SHAK

It was late in the evening before the party returned to Rodgers's ranch, and as they proceeded to the stable to rest their horses, the host proposed that the others should spend the night with him, instead of going direct home as had been their intention.

'I would like fine to stay,' replied Jim, when he heard the invitation, 'but you see there is a pile of chores waiting to be done at home, and it hardly seems fair to leave all the work to Sam. I heard him say the other day that he expected to have a taste of rough weather soon, and we'd need to have things redded up beforehand.'

'Send the Nitchie home to lend a hand for the night,' suggested Rodgers. 'I'll come over with you in the morning and help you to overtake the backward chores which seem to trouble your mind.'

It did not take much pleading to induce the two chums to remain where they knew they

were welcome; so Sequa was dispatched with a message to Sam, and after assisting to drive the restored herd within an enclosure, Bertie and Jim followed their host into his 'shak,' as he called the neat two-roomed house which he had fitted up for himself.

In this lonely place Frank Rodgers had dwelt for upwards of three years, with no companions but a faithful collie and his broncho 'Bess.'

He was by no means a man of recluse habits or averse to society; and he often said to such persons as chance cast in his way, and to whom instinct bade him speak freely, that the loneliness of his position was sometimes almost more than he could bear.

It was the knowledge of this which made Caryll the more ready to halt at the 'shak,' and as they sat at supper he remarked:

'Say, Rodgers, suppose you set to work tomorrow, while we are here, and get your brand on these horses. It would be a good chance, for we could lend a hand, you know. No fear of their being stolen when "F.R." is burned on their hides.'

'A good thought,' answered Rodgers; then with one of his pleasant, careless laughs he added: 'I am rather a fool where my own

interests are concerned—always have been. I don't take precautions in proper time. I let life go too easily, that's a fact, and it ends'—here he looked grave—'in making life a great deal more serious than it need be.'

Supper was over then, and, rising from his seat, the host went into his bedroom, to return in a minute carrying a violin in his hands.

'Hullo!' exclaimed Bertie. 'How is it we did not know before that you kept a familiar spirit of that sort in your "shak"? Tune up, there's a good fellow. I haven't heard a decent tune since I left Scotland.'

'You are fond of music, then?' asked Rodgers, as he began to tighten the strings, handling his instrument as only those do who love and use it as a dear friend.

'She has helped to banish melancholy from many a winter's night,' said Rodgers softly, and at his words a picture rose up before the minds of his companions of a man gifted to shine in society, fond of his kind, sitting alone in his prairie shanty with the dreary snow spread around for miles, no voice within reach, no kind eyes to shed sympathy into his, waking melody and memory on the plaintive strings of his violin. It was a pathetic picture, and Bertie

thought: 'What strange, sad circumstances must have occurred to lead him from society to solitude, from the city to the "shak"!'

But society always acted on Rodgers like a charm, chasing all sadness from his expression, and softening the stern lines of his handsome face.

'What sort of music do you like?' he asked.

'Oh, anything, anything,' Caryll answered eagerly, a passion dormant for months having suddenly come to active life again at sight of the instrument. 'I had not known how much I missed that sort of thing till this moment.'

'Do you play Scottish airs?' Jim ventured to ask.

'Not very many. Scotch melodies take a native to play or sing properly. I'll try something more familiar first.' And in a moment the bow was sweeping across the strings, while the rancher's muscular brown fingers moved with the delicate yet decisive motion of a trained musician as they coaxed the sweetest sounds from the queen of lyres.

After enchanting his listeners with selections from more than one classic composer, he suddenly broke into a touching rendition of the familiar,

but ever-welcome 'Annie Laurie,' and as the beautiful notes dropped like pearls of sound upon the stillness of the room, both lads felt their hearts thrill with the deepest feeling.

The sudden revival of that song brought memories to all three which made speech impossible for some time after the music ceased.

At last Bertie spoke:

'How can I thank you enough, Rodgers? I never heard the dear old song played better, and I've listened to many a virtuoso.'

'It was mother's favourite song,' said Jim. 'I mind how she would sing it at nights when I couldn't sleep; and when she was at work sewing I'd hear her humming it over and over. Then, when she was ill, fading day by day, she'd still sing "Annie Laurie" to make me think she was quite well. It's the song I love best.'

Rodgers turned a look of kindest feeling on the lad, as he answered with a slight tremor in his voice: 'Your favourite, Jim? I was just thinking how it was my mother's favourite song too—a good kind of song, boys, to have as a reminder of our mothers who were once girls with "brows like snow-wreaths," and for whom a man might still gladly "lie down and die." Ah, boys, it is wonderful what power a little

thing has—the memory of a song touching the chord in some careless man's soul——'

He stopped short. Jim turned aside to wipe the not unmanly tears from his eyes, and it was Caryl who again broke the silence:

'Your music could witch the soul out of one, I think.'

The elder man looked silently at his young companions, remembering all his own wasted youth, and a strong desire to warn them off the rocks whereon he had crashed in years gone by took hold of him.

'Do you know, boys,' he said, 'that same song saved me once from going headlong to destruction—was, in fact, the means of turning me out of a course that must have led to absolute ruin? I am in the vein to-night; shall I tell you a bit of my history?'

'Yes! Do!' the others said.

'Well, I'll tell you a little of how I began life, because what followed was the result of the beginning.

'Up to the time I was seventeen I lived with my parents in London—that is, I was at school all day, and saw my father, a busy man, for an hour or so of an evening when we met in the drawing-room. My father had his friends and

his business interests; I had my chums, studies, and amusements. We were not interested in each other's pursuits, consequently had little or no influence over one another.

'Mother was the tie between us, but even her loving personality could not bring two opposite natures into sympathy.

'I was a weak-willed fellow—am so still in many ways—and I was easily led into mischief. Scrapes seemed to come in my way whether I wished them or not, and often when I really meant to go straight, I'd tumble into a mess; nothing very bad—I mean sinful—but black as sin in my father's sight.

'He did not understand me, and was rigid and stern in dealing with youthful errors.

'I got into trouble more serious than usual—ran up a bill for some tomfoolery; sold a gold watch he had given me, to pay the damage, and he found it out. He there and then made up his mind what he would do with me, and stuck to his point in spite of my mother's prayers and tears. He was as determined as I was weak, and he shipped me off to Canada before I fully realised what it meant to be leaving home and all its safeguards.

'It's a pity, boys, that people will persist in

sending their contrary sons to the colonies. More often than not it is because fathers have not patience enough, and do not like that the youngsters' escapades should be carried on before notice of respectable friends. They forget that change of country does not mean change of habits, and often when a thoughtless youth is thrown among strangers with none of the restraints of home life upon him, he carries into crime what would otherwise have ended in mere frolicsome foolishness.

'Well, I landed at Montreal, a weak-willed, headstrong lad, not really bad, but—— I didn't go West as I ought, but remained in the city, meaning to go on later. But I fell in with companions not of the right sort, and in their company soon spent all the money I had got to pay my way out West and fix me there. I was too proud to write home—even if I had had enough money left to buy a stamp, which I hadn't.

'I then started for the first time to look round for work, and chanced to meet a man who was hunting for hands to go into the bush logging, and he immediately engaged me for six months. In a few days I, with the other newly engaged men, started for the backwoods, and a dreary, monotonous life I found it to be.

'All day long we were employed in sawing down enormous trees, stripping them of their branches, and hauling them with oxen to the river, where they were floated by the current as log-rafts to the saw-mills.

'For three years I stuck to that business, and I wish some old-country boys burning with romantic ideas of the backwoods could try the life I led there. It would cool their ardour, you bet, and save their morals as well.'

'Are the lumbermen really as "tough" as most people make them out to be?' Bertie asked, as Rodgers came to a pause in his narrative.

'I can't say that they are as bad as some stories you hear, and if I had been properly balanced I might not have got much harm. But I was the kind of chap that cannot play with fire and not scorch my fingers. I learned at that time habits that it has taken me all my time since to keep in check.

'I had no communication from home during those years. I did not write, and they did not know where to find me.

'Conscience pricked me at times, and I often meant to write and tell mother that I was alive, but I let the time slip by. I was drinking off and

on, and that kills most things in a man that he ought to keep alive.

'This went on for some time, and then a forest-fire did for me—clothes, savings, and all but life.'

'A bush-fire must be awful,' Caryll remarked.

'Awful! Some more terrible word must be invented for a conflagration of that sort,' was the reply. 'I had a near shave, but I'll tell you about that some other time. Just now I'll go on to the song you know; it has almost gone out of sight in my story, but it's coming shortly now.'

'Well, after the fire I worked my way back to Montreal, and I fear that the loss I had sustained, together with the horrible experience I went through at the time, had not improved my mode of life as they were probably meant to do.'

'Then, for over a year, I lived the life of a drinking, reckless fool, earning a little fitfully, and spending it as fast as it came into my hands.'

'One day when I had been drinking, I was knocked down by a van in the street. They carried me, a crushed unconscious sot, to the hospital, where my broken bones were set; but the life I had been leading now told against me, making recovery a long and critical process.'

'For days I was delirious, but one morning I imagined I was at home in London again.

'I could see the rooms just as I left them six years before, and I thought I saw my mother sitting by the fire in her wonted place, sewing and singing softly as of old:

“Like dew on the gowan lying,
Is the fa' o' her fairy feet;
And like winds in summer sighing,
Her voice is low and sweet—
Her voice is low and sweet,
And she's a' the world to me;
And for bonnie Annie Laurie
I'd lay me doon and dee.”

'I listened, and possibly my soul *was* at home just then; but presently I opened my eyes, to see a nurse sitting in the ward and gently humming the old air.

“Nurse, did you sing?” I questioned.

“Yes, did I disturb you?” she asked, coming quickly to me. “I hope not.”

'I told her then I was weak and homesick, that I thought it was my mother's voice, and that I had seen my old home. One is all the better to speak like that sometimes. I spoke a good deal to the nurse, and she helped me with words of cheer and hope.

'All through the weeks of convalescence in the hospital that song kept ringing in my ears and bringing before me so many memories, digging into the rubbish of years under which had lain buried, but not dead, every good desire which had been mine as a boy.

'It did its work—"Annie Laurie" did!

'It made me determine to change my whole mode of life, and decide that when I was able I would return once more to the old home.

'Months went past while I kept to my purpose and saved, until I had enough to enable me to take a passage to England.

'And then—well, boys, when I walked into the old drawing-room at last, there sat my mother, a little sadder and a little older perhaps, but my mother still, with her sewing in her hands, and the old song falling softly from her lips.

'My father had been dead for three years, leaving an annuity for my mother. She died a few months after my return, glad to have seen me, blessing me, and bidding me not to mind poverty, but to go on retrieving, and while so doing getting my feet firm on a safe road.

'My father had cut me out of his will with a shilling, as no doubt I deserved at his hands.

'Then I turned my back on the Old Country,

and I've gone on as my mother told me, until, well, here I am in the old "shak"; and I hope neither of you will ever reach one as solitary by the same rough trail that brought me here.'

CHAPTER X

A HOWLING BLIZZARD

ON the following morning our young friends were awakened early by the sound of wind moaning in the stove-pipes and whistling round the eaves of the house.

Their host had been up some time, and was busy preparing breakfast in the same room; the lads having insisted that he should keep his own bed and let them share a shakedown in the kitchen-parlour.

When Rodgers looked round from the stove, Bertie was sitting up among hay and blankets, with a look of inquiry plain to read.

'Good-morning,' said Rodgers. 'You need not be in a hurry to get up to-day—nor to-morrow, for the matter of that!' he added with a laugh, as he stirred the porridge on the stove.

'Oh, come now,' Caryll retorted, 'a gale of wind isn't going to keep us in the shak all the time.'

'Wait till you see, my boy. Just get into your

clothes and take a peep from the door, and if after that you think you can travel a hundred yards from the house without losing yourself, you'll be the first who ever did.'

Then the lads looked to the windows for the first time and saw that they were completely covered with snow.

'Snow!' Jim exclaimed. 'And this is a blizzard? I've often heard of blizzards, but I never quite believed in them. It looks as if this is going to show us a thing or two.'

'Until you have personally experienced one of our hideous tempests—like this—you can have but a faint conception of what the term really signifies,' said Rodgers, setting a warm meal on the table. 'Imagine half a dozen whirlwinds thrown into one vast tornado of many miles in diameter, lifting the snow from the ground and mingling it with the falling flakes, until the atmosphere is filled with a whirling, stinging, blinding mass of whiteness, through which it is impossible to distinguish objects within two yards of you. Imagine this restless floating matter drifting and accumulating round you, impeding your footsteps, penetrating your clothing, searching up your sleeves and down your neck, gathering

in icicles around your cap and moustache if you have one, and turning your breath into frost as it leaves your lips, while the thermometer registers 40 degrees below zero—then you will have a faint idea of a regular howling blizzard. Take a look outside before you sit down.'

Caryll opened the door, but only for a moment, for the blinding snow came whirling into the room on the wings of a shrieking hurricane, and it was with difficulty he got the door closed again.

'Well, to be sure!' he cried. 'What a morning! Is this how your winter is ushered in?'

'Yes; but generally it comes later—first week or so in November. When the blizzard gives, we'll have fine weather, for the frost will have set in steadily, to stay till March.'

'Five months of this sort of thing must be wearisome,' said Jim, a little regretfully; but Rodgers smiled.

'Not so bad as this all the time; at the most, three or four blizzards during the season, and most days we have clear sunshine with intense frost. You will soon get accustomed to seeing everything covered with white, and you will enjoy the sleighing and toboganing. Then this is the best season to hunt antelope. You'd like that.'

'Yes,' said Caryll. 'I have heard you have jolly winters, in spite of the intense cold, and I mean to enjoy this one.'

'We'll make up a party and go for a few days' sport, eh?' suggested Rodgers.

'That would be prime. There is not much to do round the ranch in the winter time, Sam says. He could easily manage at our place, and I could send Sequa to look after yours.'

'Ah, by the way, that reminds me,' said Rodgers. 'I wanted to speak to you about that boy. Do you not think that you are trusting him a little too much? The Indian nature is hard to change, you know.'

'Sequa is as true to me as—as Jim; I can't say more,' answered Bertie, smiling at his chum, whose face was radiant, knowing well how much Bertie meant by his saying.

'I would keep my eyes open if I were you,' remarked their host. 'I would never trust one of a conquered race who are kept quiet by fear, and who have been treated unjustly. He has every reason to be faithful, certainly; yet, as I said, keep your eyes open.'

They had finished breakfast, and were still chatting in their places, when Rodgers suddenly stopped in the middle of a sentence and lifted his

hand in a manner to make the others keep silence.

After a pause he said: 'I thought I heard some one call, but the whistling of the wind outside confuses one a bit.'

'What a strange, eerie uproar it is!' said Jim. 'It sounds like the sea dashing against a ship.'

'You mean the noise on the walls? Be thankful we have good strong boards between us and the storm; but I can tell you—hark! That is some one calling!' And Rodgers started to his feet, as did the others.

For a few seconds they stood listening, and then they distinctly heard a cry coming from the vicinity of the house:

'Help! Help!'

'Some one got lost in the storm. I must go and find him!' exclaimed Rodgers, catching a fur coat from a peg on the wall, and flinging it on. Then putting on his beaver cap, he called to his dog: 'Come along, Chum; I'll need you!'

'Let us go with you,' said Bertie.

But Rodgers would not allow that. 'No, no! It would be madness. You must not attempt to leave the house. You know nothing of such storms, and would lose yourself before you had gone a hundred yards; and I need no one with me

better than Chum. God grant I find the poor wretch before he is frozen to death! But he may be within a stone's-throw of me, and I miss him. However, I'll do my best. Keep some hot coffee ready for our return.' And with that he and his dog went out into the blizzard.

'Hullo!' he cried, as soon as he got a few yards from the house. 'Hullo! hullo!' But no answer was heard.

He went a little farther and called again; still no reply. Then Rodgers bent to the dog and shouted at the pitch of his voice to make his words heard above the screaming of the hurricane:

'Chum, good dog, find him; find him!'

The dog, who had been following closely at his master's heels, gave a little bark and ran a few yards ahead. Then Rodgers heard louder barking, which plainly told that the faithful Chum had done his errand, and turning in the direction of the sound, he strove to reach his trusty pioneer.

But the snow was deep and his progress slow, and if the dog had not continued barking and thus guided his master, it would have been almost impossible for Rodgers to have found the spot.

He got there eventually, and found Chum standing with his forepaws resting on what appeared like a mound of snow.

But Rodgers quickly cleared away the white covering, knowing well by the shape that a human form lay beneath, in so brief a time had the snow accumulated to that extent.

Very soon, however, the snow was removed, exposing the inanimate form of a man scantily clothed and evidently overcome by exhaustion.

Rodgers chafed the stiff hands and white face with snow, knowing by past experience that that was the best way to bring back the current of warm blood to the frozen flesh, and soon he was rewarded by seeing the poor man open his eyes. Hastily pulling off his warm fur coat, Rodgers then wrapped the man in it, and lifting him in his strong arms, once more called to the dog:

'Home, Chum! Take us home!'

The dog knew well the meaning of the words, and gave a bound forward; but when his master shouted 'Easy, boy, go easy!' the dog stopped, evidently comprehending what was wanted of him, and afterwards kept only a few paces ahead, frequently looking back with a little bark of encouragement.

It is, as we have seen, no easy undertaking to travel in the face of a blizzard when you are unhampered, but when you have the burden of an unconscious man lying a dead weight in your arms, the difficulties of progression are multiplied, and this Frank Rodgers soon found out.

Every few yards he was forced to pause in order to regain breath, and when at last the shanty was reached, he was too exhausted to do more than call out : ' Caryll, for mercy's sake, open the door, quick !'

Fortunately the lads were anxiously waiting a sign of their friend's return, and when they heard his voice, they immediately hastened to open the door, and found the brave man lying at the threshold beside the one whom he had so heroically rescued.

They at once dragged in the more helpless adventurer, and then assisted their friend to his feet again. His weakness was only of momentary duration, however, and he had soon recovered sufficiently to bring his experience to bear in assisting Caryll to restore the stranger.

' Your doctoring comes in handy,' said Jim, as he watched Caryll's deft movements.

' Where did you find him ?' asked Bertie, when

they had undressed their patient and put him to bed.

'I can hardly say,' replied Rodgers. 'But it wasn't far from the house, judging by the time I was out.'

'What a blessing it was you got to him in time! I suppose one soon gets frozen to death in such a plight?'

'It doesn't take long to do that,' was the answer.

'Do you know who he is?' Caryll questioned.

'No, I don't think I have seen him before. Probably he is some new settler in the district; folk don't bring letters of introduction when they come to squat on the prairies. What surprises me is how he came to be out in the blizzard, and with no clothes on him to speak of. He must be mad!'

Here the man drowsily opened his eyes, gazed vacantly around, and then turned his face to the wall and fell asleep.

The sleep was heavy and apparently quite natural, and Caryll advised that the patient should be left to rest in that manner. 'It's better than meat,' he said. So they merely put a little warm milk to his lips, which he drank in a half-unconscious manner, and then dropped

into slumber again as soon as he was laid back on the pillows.

The others returned to the kitchen and beguiled the time with talk of a desultory kind, until Jim said, in a half-coaxing voice:

'By the way, this blizzard reminds me of the bush-fire you told us about.'

'Reminds you?' laughed Rodgers. 'How?'

'Well, somehow this man half-dead and lost made me think of what had happened to you that you promised to tell us about some time.'

'Yes, Rodgers,' added Caryl. 'Keep that promise now. We dare not sing or play for fear of waking up our patient, and the blizzard means to keep humming along for a good spell as you predicted. So spin your yarn, like a good fellow.'

'All right,' said the rancher good-humouredly. 'It will be a warming tale for a cold day, and not so melancholy as I fear my last story was.'

CHAPTER XI

THE RUSHING FURNACE

'FROM cold to heat is a long jump, began Rodgers, 'but somehow the hissing of a blizzard always reminds me of the hissing of a bush-fire. So I think I'll just tell you a little yarn of a fiery nature to warm you up a bit in a mental sort of way.

'My last experience of large bush-fires took place in Ontario. I had been engaged with several other men in the lumber trade, and for some months I had lived in the centre of a dense pine-forest, employed at the usual work of cutting down trees, building them into immense rafts in the river, after which one of us would take a trip to the saw-mills as raft-captain when the structure was big enough.

'One evening when we were all dead-beat after a hard day's work, and had recently turped into our tents with the hope of a good long doss, my chum and I were suddenly roused out with the cry of "Fire! Fire!"

'That word is enough to scare sleep or fatigue out of any lumberman.

'In a twinkling Ross and I had on our coats and top-boots, and were out in the camp clearing; and there, sure enough, we could see the distant blaze through the straight pine stems shining like flames behind the bars of a furnace. It was late in autumn, when all the wood and undergrowth was dry as tinder—when an extra hot sunbeam was almost enough to start a blaze; so you may imagine how the flames were licking up the timber, and how we felt when we saw an impenetrable bank of smoke settle between us and our only refuge—the river?

'A fresh wind was blowing, and the fire was leaping along with terrific speed—with a roaring sound like Niagara, accompanied by the tearing, crackling, yelling of giant trees as they split and fell.

'At such a time it is a case of each man for himself. There is no time to wait to pick up your brushes and combs. Your skin is the only property you exert yourself to save, and if you manage to do that without damage—well, you have better luck than many.

'On this occasion Ross and I were lucky

enough to reach a dry well about twenty or thirty feet deep at about one hundred yards from camp. The windlass and rope had been left in their places ever since the well had been in use in Spring, and we quickly lowered ourselves into the pit. We were not a minute too soon. Scarcely had we touched the bottom than we saw a sheet of flame sweep across the opening overhead. It passed over the mouth of the shaft like a wave of glowing metal and with a roar like the sea in a storm, while a small shower of burning charcoal came rattling down upon us.

'We covered our heads with our jackets as best we could, stamping out the burning fragments as they fell.

'Suddenly Ross cried out:

"Rodgers! the windlass is on fire; we're done for!"

'I looked up. To my horror I saw that Ross's fears were only too true. The dry framework of the windlass had been caught by the flames. In a short time our only hope of life would be lost, for if we were not burned to death when the spars fell in this confined shaft, where there was hardly room to move as it was, we would assuredly starve in a trap from which there was no possible exit.

'A moment served to force these facts vividly before my mind, and, acting solely upon impulse, I leaped for the rope by which we had descended, and commenced wildly to scramble up hand over hand.

'It was tough work, and when I was half way I twisted the rope round my leg and paused for breath.

'Just then I felt the rope sway a little; I looked above me. Horror! the fire had commenced to eat at the main supports, and in less than no time the windlass would be giving way.

'All feeling then left me—it seemed for an hour, though it could not have been for more than a few seconds—until I regained my self-control and resumed the desperate struggle, thinking that it would be better to die fighting the flames, than to perish slowly at the bottom of that pit.

'Only a few more yards and I would be at the summit; but with every movement of my body the flaming windlass swayed and cracked ominously. But at last I reached the solid ground, and as I set my knees on the hot, charred earth, the windlass fell behind me with a crash, and I lost all consciousness.

'I must have been at the mouth of the shaft for some hours, for when I awoke it was day-

light, though a heavy rain-storm was falling. It took me a considerable time to collect my wits, but soon I recalled all the terrible events of the past night, and the fear arose that Ross must inevitably have been killed by the burning wood. Strange enough, I had never let go my hold of the rope that saved me, and a piece of half-burned wood hung at one end where it had parted from the windlass.

'My first thought was for my companion, who, though not exactly the man I could make a great friend, had nevertheless been my chum in the share of our tent, et cetera, and was true to the last degree.

'I bent over the edge of the wall, and peered into the gloom.

"Ross, old man, are you safe? Are you hurt?" I called; when to my joy came the answer—weak, though clear enough: "Badly burned, but still able to help myself if you can find a way to get me out of this hole."

"Thank God, I have still got the rope," I answered. "If you can fasten it under your arms and climb against the wall, I'll manage to help you up. There's a bit of a stake left that I can take a loop round."

'Well, after a good long time I got him

to the surface. He was not dangerously hurt, though his face and hands were badly burned. But when we looked round at the black ghosts of the trees, and realised the horrible fate that must have certainly terminated the lives of the rest of the camp, I guess we were mighty thankful to come out of the business as well as we did.'

Here Rodgers paused a moment to light his pipe, after doing which he turned to his hearers with an amused smile:

'And what do you think was Ross's first remark when he found himself safe on solid ground?'

'Thanked you for saving his life,' suggested Caryl.

'Wrong,' said Rodgers. 'This is what he said: "Say, Rodgers, it was a mighty close shave for me that your fifteen stone didn't come lumbering down with the windlass."'

Scarcely had the words left the rancher's lips than a voice behind echoed the burden with a wild, harsh tone:

'A close shave, Rodgers! Yes, a mighty close shave!'

Instantly the three friends started from their seats, to find that the sick man from the next

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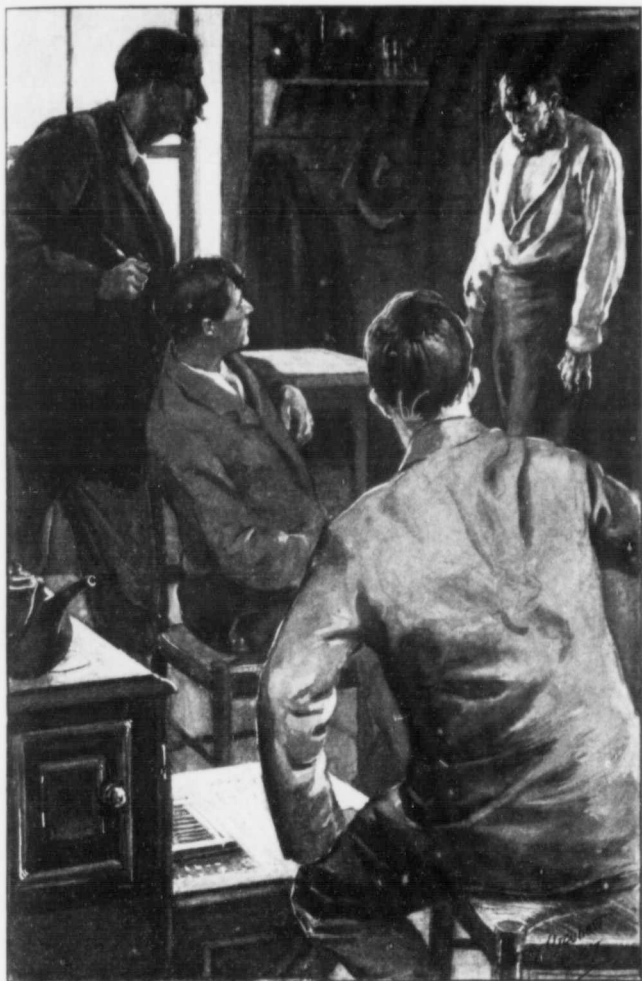
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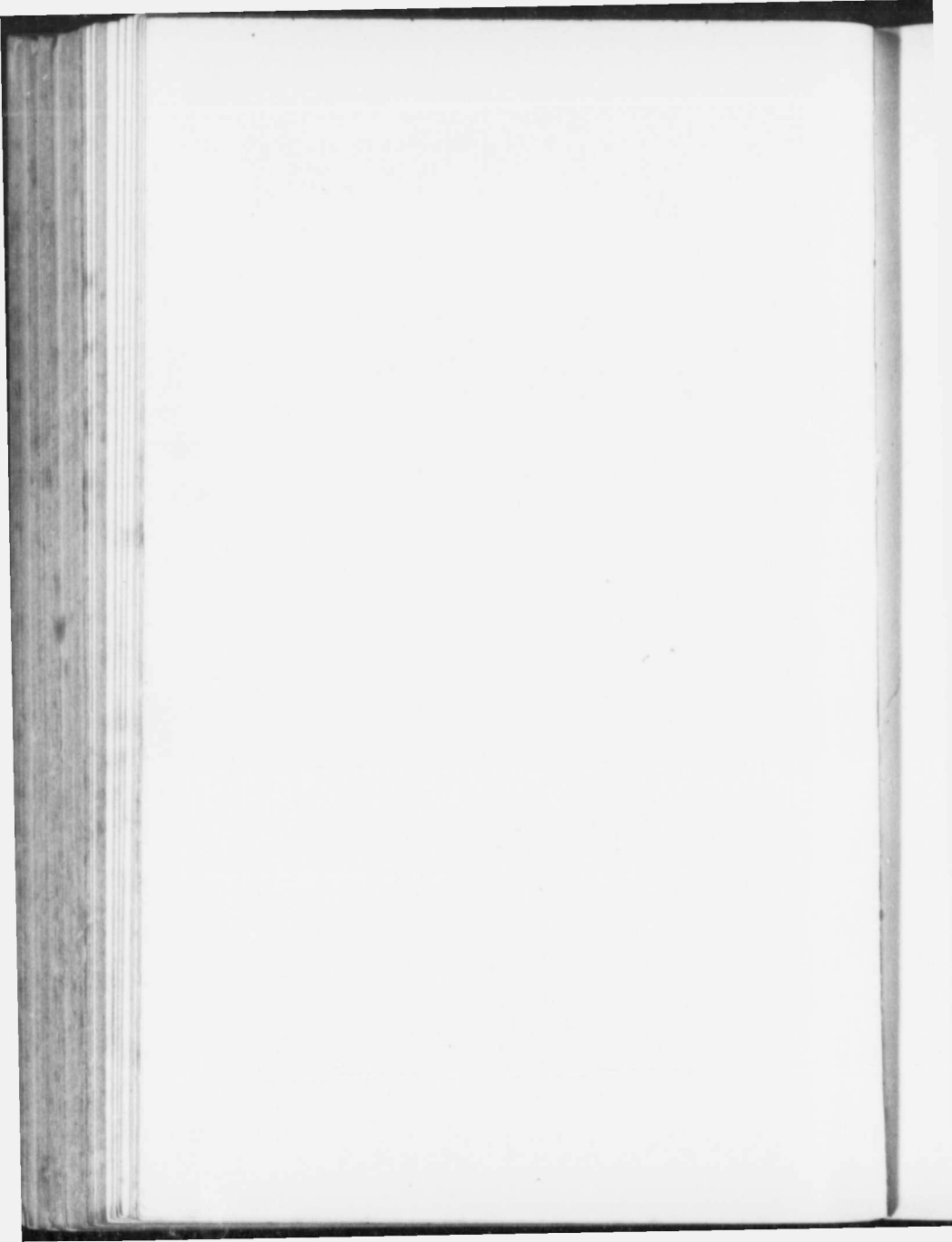
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'A close shave, Rodgers! Yes, a mighty close shave!' (page 110).



room was standing half-dressed in the doorway, his eyes glaring and bloodshot with delirium.

'Ross, as I'm alive!' exclaimed Rodgers, recognising the voice more than the face that was hidden behind matted hair. 'Why, man, what on earth made you get out of bed, and you so ill?'

But the man took no notice of the question as he came forward, evidently oblivious to the presence of Rodgers and his two young friends.

'A close shave—a mighty close shave. But where's the rope? Can you not help me out of this burning pit? Rodgers! Rodgers!'—and he raised his voice in a cry of terror as he shrank to a corner and clutched his garments—'for any sake take me out of this! I am burning; my shanty is in flames. O Rodgers, for pity's sake don't let them send me out into the blizzard—for pity's sake!'

The last cry faded away into an exhausted wail, and the poor man offered no resistance as Rodgers picked him up and carried him bodily into the next room.

'You are all right here, old man,' he said soothingly. 'No harm can come to you in this house; so you must go to bed, and take the warm drink that I will bring you.'

With the obedience of weakness, Ross allowed himself to be put to bed, and after taking some stimulant was soon in a refreshing sleep.

Later in the day he recovered sufficiently to give a fair account of himself.

'You remember my old weakness, Rodgers?' he began slowly.

'You mean——'

'Drink,' completed Ross. 'Well, I thought lately I would try a cure by getting out of the way of temptation. A cousin of mine—"Webber" is his name; perhaps you know him?—wrote to me to say that he was giving up his farm about two miles from here, and asked me if I would like to take it on. I was glad of the chance, and three weeks ago I came West.

'Well, to be short, the curse was still as strong when I lived in the West as when I was among friends in the East. I kept in my old way as bad as ever; and last night—I don't know how it happened, but the shanty got in a blaze, and I had only time to get on a few clothes before I had to escape into the blizzard for my life. And now—I have nothing in the world—no place to turn to. I suppose I will sink, sink, sink, till I can fall no further.'

The speaker's voice faltered with the last

words, and there were tears of pity in Rodgers's eyes.

'Ross, old man, you've gone the wrong way to work. Instead of running away from the curse, you should have stopped and fought it.' There was something more than mere theory giving strength to the rancher's voice. 'Yes—it is always best to fight an enemy, and so—well, I won't be patronising, but if you will make your home with me, Ross, we will try with God's help to conquer the foe that so nearly had your life—and mine—once.' There was a pause in the conversation, until Rodgers suddenly got up energetically.

'Now that that little matter of business is settled, it's time for me to see about the horses in the stable—that is, if the weather will permit'; and so saying, he put on his furs, and left the two lads to attend to the patient until his return.

CHAPTER XII

A COYOTE

'WAL, boss, you've had a taste of a North-West blizzard,' said Sam, as Caryll and Jim rode up to their own door, where their Yankee stood ready to welcome them.

It was a beautiful sunny morning, and though the atmosphere was cold, it was clear and bracing. The ride from Rodgers's ranch had been most exhilarating, and the lads were in uproarious spirits as they dismounted from their horses, which Sequa took in charge.

'Jolly old blizzard!' laughed Bertie. 'When you've got four walls and a stout roof between you and him, a howling fiend of that sort don't count much. We've had a first-rate time, Sam.'

'Horses all right?' asked the cowboy.

'Yes,' responded the other; 'and we would have been home yesterday, only we waited to give Rodgers a hand to brand. Every one of his stock has got his mark on it now, so they can't well be lost after that.'

'Leave a Nitchie alone for knowing how to wipe out any man's autograph, though it's burned into living hide. If them varmints have set their eyes on Rodgers's horses, they'll have the beasts sooner or later, brand or no brand.'

'I don't believe it was a theft,' said Caryll; and thereupon he told Sam the whole story of their recent adventure with Eagle-feather.

'You're as easy imposed on as a gal, boss. Of course the bronchos was stolen; but them Indians were 'fraid of you all, so the Chief comes over you with his high-falutin'. But Rodgers, he knows their tricks, so that's all square.'

'We're going off on a hunting expedition shortly,' remarked Caryll, wishing to change the subject. 'Rodgers will have snugged up at his place by the end of the week, and then he is coming over to us, and we are all going to the Blue Hills after sport.'

Sequa's face lit up, for hunting game is the Red-man's ruling passion; and Caryll, noting this, said: 'You will go with us, Sequa. Perhaps you can tell us where are the best places to find antelope and the like.'

'Sequa knows. Sequa will go gladly.'

'Rodgers sets big store on his "Bess mare,"' said Sam sarcastically. 'Is she to keep house

and feed the stock while the boss is setting rat-traps on the Blue Hills?’

Caryll told him about Ross, saying it was arranged that he should look after the ranch in the absence of its owner.

‘Guess Rodgers knows his own business best,’ quoth the cautious American. ‘Guess it may be all right, but I think I’d sooner trust the old broncho than a waster like that. Anyway, I’m glad you’ve settled to take the Nitchie younker with you, and leave me to my own respectable company.’

‘I’m just longing for the time to come!’ Jim exclaimed. ‘I don’t know much about shooting, but Rodgers says that it’s grand fun—the camping-out and the like.’

‘Pretty cold fun in some ways, lad. But if you’re impatient for sport, I guess you can have some nearer home.’

‘What do you mean, Sam?’

‘Just exactly what I says! There’s been an old mother-wolf skulking about the shanty ever since the blizzard came on. Now I don’t object to a coyote or two, if they confine their attentions to the scavenger work and pick up any rubbish or carrion lying around. But I set store on my young roosters pretty considerable, and I do

kick when they are hooked for Mother Coyote's nursery table. So, Jim, if you can get up early enough, or like to hide round after dark, you may be able to draw a sight on the old dame. But she's desperate 'cute, I can tell you. Still, now is your chance for distinguishing yourself in the hunt, lad.'

'No shoot,' said Sequa quietly. 'Sequa set trap—no cheat coyote.'

'Have you been after her, then?' Sam asked rather angrily. 'That's how you've been fooling time when you ought to have got through the chores.'

'He has only been doing what you were advising Jim to do, Sam,' said Bertie mildly. 'But tell us, Sequa, how did you try to catch her?'

'Sequa put flesh in trap—cover him over. Coyote come—dark night—smell badger meat—take it from iron teeth, so gently trap never know, and stay open, still hungry for wolf. Next time coyote drop big wood on iron jaws—they snap close on wood—coyote pull away flesh—trap have angry smile when Sequa come'; and the boy laughed in a low musical tone that was very contagious.

'Is it possible,' Jim asked, 'that the beast could be sensible enough to do such a thing?'

'Wal, yes, they're as 'cute as anything that goes on four legs. What a prairie wolf don't know ain't worth knowing. You can't cheat them. I've known them to do the most human deceivery as cleverly thought out as if they had been joint-stock companies or stockbrokers, you bet.

'I guess this is how Mother Coyote went to work. She comes sneaking up to the trap, cocking her ears to catch any sound, and licking her lips as she thinks of the dainty morsel near at hand. She trots down, stops, and sniffs. "What's that I smell? Good flesh!" She comes nearer, stops again, looks at the ground, knows the meat's thar, says to herself, "Them humans are always up to some nasty dodge," sits down beside the covered trap, and has a long think while she sweeps the snow into a couple of mounds behind her as the bushy tail assists in the consultation of brains. After a little she goes nearer and has another smell, then she removes the straw off the trap softly, as a woman might brush the flies from the face of a sleeping infant, and she looks, but she does not touch.

'Suddenly she darts off to the ravine, and in a minute returns, carrying a large block of wood.

This she pops into what Sequa calls the "hungry jaws" of the trap. Snap they go, and I guess Mother Coyote smiles sarcastically to herself as she appropriates the flesh, and says to the angry, grinning teeth, "No you don't this time!" I just think that's what happened, boys.'

Sequa nodded, as if to confirm Sam's statement, and Jim said, 'I must see if I cannot be as clever as the coyote.'

'This quest be thine,' laughed Bertie.

Early next morning Jim got up and dressed so as not to disturb any one.

Stealing to the window, he looked out in the direction in which the trap had been placed, and saw in the dawning light, a skulking, grey-coated creature standing surveying the trap, just as Sam had so graphically described.

Downstairs slipped Jim, trembling with excitement, and, loading his gun, stole out. But before he could get within shooting range, the creature had disappeared into a ravine close by.

He ran after it, but could not find any trace of where the animal had gone.

'But,' he said, on reporting his nonsuccess to the others at breakfast, 'I think she must have been hurt in the trap or somehow, for she was whining just like a dog. And—I'm not sure

—but I think she had a young one running after her. I'd like to have a young coyote for a pet.'

'To match the boss's young Nitchie?' asked Sam. 'You'll tame the one as easy as the other, and that means—not at all.'

In the evening Sam came to the lads, and said quickly:

'Now's your chance, Jim. Mother Coyote is in the ravine, and the kid you saw this morning is at her tail. She's going slow—for the kid's sake likely—so you may catch her this time. Be sure you don't hurt the pup! It will make a bully sort of pet.'

In a minute Jim was off, and Sam, chuckling, turned to Caryll with a mysterious wink.

'Come and see the sport, boss.'

They followed, and stood on a little rising to watch Jim stalk his game, which could be seen moving slowly over the snow at some distance.

It was dusk by this time, and objects could not be discerned very clearly if not near at hand.

'Seems a funny kind of pup that,' remarked Caryll, after they had watched the creature's movements for a minute or two. 'It bobs and bumps along, and appears to have no legs to speak of, nor tail, nor head!'

Sam chuckled loudly.

'Look at Jim on the trail,' he said. 'Ain't the boy hot on the chase, to be sure?'

Yes, Jim *was* hot on the chase. He was rushing headlong up one side of the ravine and down the other, 'barking his shins' on old stumps of trees, and diving into drifts of powdery snow; but he was up again in a moment, dusting the dry whiteness from his coat, and off in pursuit again, heedless of such small calamities.

His 'game' seemed very little concerned about him, and trotted leisurely along the hillside, followed in a peculiar manner by the smaller object. But when a shot from Jim's gun came unpleasantly near, the creature increased its pace and crept cautiously under shelter of bushes, so that the shot could not be repeated with any hope of success.

'Isn't it extraordinary how slow she moves?' said Bertie. 'She must be hurt.'

'Wait a bit; you'll see the fun,' answered Sam.

And it was astonishing fun they saw. The 'coyote,' leaving Jim on the far side of the ravine, crossed over to that which was nearest the house, and, as if tired out, suddenly lay down on the snow, with her small follower motionless behind her.

Sam broke into a loud laugh, and then Sequa appeared beside them, being irresistibly drawn from domestic duties to witness the chase. His quick vision could go farther than that of Caryll. He gazed a moment at the animal, then ran forward and called to Jim, 'No shoot! No shoot!' Next moment the Indian boy, bounding over the snow, stopped beside the 'coyote,' which did not move at his approach, but lifted its head and wagged its tail, and as the tail wagged the 'pup' bumped!

Jim raced across also to the spot, and then stood disgusted and not a little ashamed to see that his coyote mother and pup were only a native dog with a tin can tied to its tail!

'Sequa's dog!' cried the Indian, stooping and fondling the animal.

It was even so. The faithful creature had been with Eagle-feather's party, and roaming from their camp had come on the scent of Sequa himself. It had followed to Rodgers's ranch, and had hung around there for several days, having of course lost the scent when the blizzard came on. Ross had caught the animal one day in the stable, and had sent it off with a tin can tied to its tail, and followed by a few cowardly thrown stones as well.

All laughed heartily at the joke played on Jim by Sam, and the lad said good-naturedly, 'Never mind, Sam; I'll get a real coyote yet, and I'll be even with you some day for this.'

'Catch a weasel asleep, lad. You'll catch me when you catch Mother Coyote!'

CHAPTER XIII

THE HUNTING CAMP

BEYOND a doubt, the winter had set in of a surety, and everything was snuggled for the season at the ranches of Caryl and Rodgers when the two 'bosses,' as Sam called them, set out for the Blue Hills accompanied by Jim and Sequa, who rode in a bob-sleigh with a team of horses, while the others were mounted on their favourite horses.

Elaborate preparations had been made for the camp-out, all fur coats, caps, and mitts, as well as buck-skin moccasins over double stockings. Extra blankets and skin robes were stowed in the sleigh with a plentiful supply of food for man and beast, as well as guns, ammunition, etc. Rodgers had arranged the commissariat, and it was perfect.

'Couldn't want another thing,' Jim declared, as one by one they packed the stores away. 'The team are as fresh as need be, and will easily keep up with Dandy and Bess.'

'Mind you bring home a coyote pup!' Sam called to Jim as the party started off merrily, followed by Rodgers's 'Chum' and Sequa's Indian dog, each barking and careering around the horses, as full of pleasure as their masters.

No halt was made until they had covered some twenty miles towards that locality where Rodgers had previously recovered his lost horses. He knew the place well, therefore needed no guide; but he agreed with Bertie that Sequa ought to be of use in leading to such spots known to the Indians as being the favourite winter feeding-ground of the antelope deer.

The rancher had not penetrated far into these wooded hills, not caring for solitary sport, and he had never hitherto found congenial company to make a hunting party.

By this time Sequa had quite adapted himself to his new surroundings, and felt more at ease with white men. He wore the ordinary dress of the cowboy, and his hair was cut, so that nothing of the savage could be detected in other than features. At rare times a flash of his eyes, or a stealthy movement of his hands, would betray his origin. That was all. In spite of Sam's prejudice and Frank Rodgers's warnings, Caryll believed entirely in the loyalty of his

Indian protégé, and when Sequa told simply how the dog must have tracked him, he accepted the statement without hesitation, and allowed him to keep his canine friend.

It was in vain that Sam growled, and said:

'I guess we'll have two-legged varmints as well as this four-legged prowling after the younker. Don't you believe, boss, that you're going to ride into a sun-party and carry off a kid without putting a rod in pickle for yourself. And don't suppose neither that the Redskins will let you see the rod when it strikes! I tell you what it is—that rod will come by snaky tracks, and find you when you least expect it. That's so!'

Caryll, however, turned a deaf ear to all predictions.

'I do what I feel to be right, Sam. I'll work on British principles, and believe Sequa true until I prove him false.'

In his secret heart Sam rather admired the young man's courage, and tried to curb his prejudice when speaking of Sequa, so that all now went smoother than it did before, and the boy grew less afraid of Sam.

'I say,' called Jim, when the party reached the old camping-ground, 'suppose we stop here for

grub? Sequa says he'll go and prospect for game while we get the fire going.'

The suggestion was well received, and a halt of two hours was made while the horses were baited, a fire lit, and snow melted in the kettle for coffee-making; and while these preparations were going on Sequa wandered about, and soon returned to report antelope not far away—which news set every one on the *qui vive* to be after the game.

'Do the tracks point anywhere towards the clearing where I got my horses?' Rodgers asked.

'Antelope go there—shelter from wind—good feed.'

'Then, boys,' said the rancher, 'we'll best be off soon and make our camp in the old spot by the side of the forest. It is a well-sheltered and handy position. Let's eat our dinner now, and then hitch-up at once.'

'I suppose,' said Bertie, as he proceeded on the trail later in the day, 'I suppose the Indians are all on their reserves at this season? I shouldn't think that they would care to stroll about the prairies in the cold, eh?'

'Indeed, yes,' replied Rodgers. 'They go out hunting in all weathers, and I should not be surprised if we met some of them. Poor beggars!

they never seem to feel their position as a vanquished race so much as when they meet their conquerors in the hunting-fields.'

The camping-place at the edge of the forest was reached without incident, and there the tent was pitched and everything arranged for a camp-out of some days.

By the time all was shipshape the day had advanced too far for any further exploits, therefore Rodgers advised his young companions to potter round and pick up a prairie-chicken or the like for supper. 'We'll let the big game alone for this day, boys. It is quite too late to go after them now.'

Off they went in various directions, and presently the sound of guns blazing away told Rodgers that they were acting on his advice; and before dark they returned, Caryl carrying two fine chickens, Sequa bearing a large jack-rabbit, and Jim triumphantly trailing a coyote by the hind legs.

'So you've bagged your wolf, Jim?' Rodgers remarked. 'That's one good job done, for the presence of that animal prowling around would be enough to scare all the antelope into the hills again. Besides, I dare say you are better pleased to shut up Sam than to feast on venison to-night.

Give me those birds, Caryll, and I will make you such a feast, *à la* Red-man! Ah, thank you, Sequa—that's it,' turning to the boy, who had quickly melted some snow and was mixing it with ashes into a thick paste. In this Rodgers enveloped the birds till they looked like large mud-pies; then, raking out a hole in the fire, he buried the chickens among hot embers, pulling brands around and above until he had a large fire glowing over the heap.

The others were not idle while this was going on. One made tea, while the other broke the frozen cream into handy-sized lumps, and a third arranged the tin dishes for a meal inside the tent.

When all was ready Rodgers exhumed his birds, which now resembled large cinders, but a few knocks with a knife broke the crust of baked earth, which fell off, carrying with it both skin and feathers and exposing the plump flesh cooked to a nicety. The legs, breast, and wings were deftly detached from the rest, and our lads declared they had never tasted more dainty meat than the choice morsels which Rodgers had dressed after the Indian method.

Night had closed round the little camp, and distant cries of nocturnal creatures came ever

and anon on the silent, frosty air, bringing a certain sense of loneliness and awe to the lads, whose experience was so limited. But Rodgers exerted himself to entertain them with tales of adventure, until they forgot everything but his personality, and hung on his words with a sort of fascination.

So the evening wore away, until at last the rancher said, looking at his watch as he did so: 'Time to turn in, boys. Ten o'clock, and we must be up good and early.'

'Just one song more,' pleaded Jim, and Rodgers, ever anxious to please, willingly complied with the request, and sang:

'Oh, come away to the prairie home,
And grace the old shak with your dainty face!
I've "bached" it alone till I'm tired, so come
And give a tone to the dismal place!
'Tain't much of a home to ask you to
When I think of your dad's—but then, who cares?
You love me, so home will be just as good
Without grand pianos or fancy chairs.

'I have everything that a heart could wish
To make a most beautiful prairie nest—
A dandy buggy, all fresh and neat,
And the kind of cutter¹ you like best;

¹ A variety of light sleigh.

A slick young broncho, just four years old,
With a raven coat and a silky mane:
She's so fond of me that I call her "Nell,"
For I know no sweeter or dearer name.

'I have chickens in plenty, and cattle too,
And hogs—why, I've bacon the whole year round!
And as for potatoes—the neighbours say
That "larger and heavier can't be found."
Then as to the house—well, I dare suppose
You'd consider a "twelve by six"¹ won't do;
But when times look up, and the horses sell,
We'll rectify that with a room or two.

'Then, by the way, there's a brand new well,
Just right by the side of a running creek;
It tastes a bit salt, but you'll like that, Nell,
Before you have been in the shak a week.
So come away to my prairie home,
And grace the old hut with your dainty face!
I've "bached" it alone till I'm tired, so come
And give a tone to the dismal place!'

'That's your own, of course,' said Caryll,
applauding with his hands as the song ended.
'It is really capital.'

'Suppose, boys,' the singer remarked, 'you join
me, by way of good-night, in singing the old
"Evensong" which we all know?' And he at
once began the beautiful hymn, while the two

¹ 12 ft. by 6 ft.—the common size of an emigrant's first 'shak.'

lads joined in most heartily, Sequa sitting spell-bound, and listening quietly until the end.

No more talk that night!

The logs were silently piled high on the fire, each lay down within the tent, rolled in his blankets and fur robes, and ere many minutes sleep held the little camp in thrall.

All were astir next morning with daybreak. Jim's soul was supremely contented with his coyote, therefore he willingly agreed to be the one to remain in camp that afternoon, and the others rode off, with Sequa as guide driving in the sleigh.

Hunting adventures have been told so often, and as this one differed very little from other such incidents, I need not record more of the Rodgers-Caryll expedition than one episode, which bears upon what happened later to our young friends and their medley of chums.

Sequa had not been at fault in his reading of the signs of the prairie, and after a short journey through the woods a fine antelope was brought down by Rodgers, and laid in the sleigh to be conveyed back to camp.

As Sequa looked at the beautiful creature—dead in one moment with scarcely a pang or struggle—he said softly:

'It is not difficult to die. Death is not cruel. Sequa would die bravely, though he could not bear the torture.'

'Ah,' said Rodgers, overhearing the words, 'it is indeed easy to die well; the difficulty is to live well, Sequa, my boy.' At a later day he had cause to remember this.

The spirit of the hunt had taken complete possession of Caryll by that time, therefore we may judge of his disappointment when Rodgers, pointing to a curious phenomenon in the sky, said:

'There is a warning for us to make tracks for the camp, and probably the ranch, again. Sorry if we are forced to cut short our fun, but a storm is brewing, and we dare not treat the "sun-dog" warning lightly.'

'At least let's have a try in that clearing. I saw a splendid buck go down that way.'

'The clearing is not much out of our way—very well.' Then to Sequa: 'Drive back to camp, lad, and warn Jim of the coming storm; also tell him to have a venison steak ready for our return. We'll be after you in a short time.'

Sequa was soon away by the straight path leading to the camp, and the two friends rode rapidly down on an old buffalo trail which approached a dell near by.

As they slackened pace, intending to dismount and tie their horses to a tree while stalking the deer, a shot was heard close at hand.

'How provoking! Some one after my antelope!' Bertie exclaimed; and they rode quickly forward, to find the Chief Eagle-feather, standing beside a shot deer. They pulled up at a little distance, and Caryll, always ready to be friendly, said cheerfully: 'Good-day, Chief. And so you got the antelope before us?'

The old Indian scowled at the young fellow angrily, and answered:

'This is the Red-man's hunting-ground. White-men wolves steal what Great Spirit gave to feed the Chief's tribe. White-men big thieves.'

'Come away, Caryll,' cried Rodgers impatiently. 'That's a surly old brute if ever there was one! He'll put me in a temper one of these days if we collide often. He makes me almost long to wring his neck.'

They rode away, leaving Eagle-feather muttering angrily by his game, and putting their horses to the canter, arrived at the camp almost as soon as Sequa.

It was just as Rodgers had predicted. A storm of wind and snow broke upon the plains within

an hour, coming so suddenly that there was only time for the hunters to collect their goods under the shelter of the spare canvas brought for the purpose, and then they themselves were forced to retire within the tent.

Fortunately the storm did not last longer than a few hours, and for two or three days after they were able to enjoy good sport. But again alarming signs of a returning storm were noted by the ever-observant Rodgers, and the party deemed it advisable to return home without delay.

'I thought you'd come in,' said Sam, 'if you did as Rodgers bade you. It looks like another blizzard on the way.'

Certainly a heavy fall of snow came on, followed by intense frost. Sleighing, tobogganing, and dancing parties became the order of the day and night. There is not much out-of-door work to be done at that season, and the North-Westerners believe in crowning 'old winter of revels the king.' And so the time passed happily, until suddenly the frosts were gone, the rains came, the earth blossomed, and summer returned to the Qu'appelle Valley.

CHAPTER XIV

PIERRE THE SCOUT

THERE can be no pause in the spring work when the frost breaks up and Nature wakes from her long sleep in Canada north-west. Plants must be hurried into the earth as speedily as possible; so our young friends found themselves too busy at home for some weeks to think of anything but the plough and the harrow.

Jim liked farming, and, with Sam, persuaded Caryll to let them bring a good many acres into cultivation above those necessary to comply with Government regulations. He had completed his eighteenth year, and was by Canadian law entitled to hold a grant of land in his own name.

It was a proud day for the Edinburgh waif when he became master of a quarter-section adjoining that of Caryll, who, 'to make things square,' bought the other two quarters beside his original homestead, so they now owned 640 acres of prairie land.

It was for Jim's sake as much as his own that Bertie did this; and he continued to give his chief attention to horses, so that when spring came Caryll was usually found at the tail of a herd, while Jim was riding a gang-plough up and down long stretches of land.

'Say, boss, you look fagged out,' said Sam one afternoon, as Caryll dismounted after a long fatiguing ride to bring in a bunch of wild horses. 'Sun's amazing hot to-day. Go in and lie down a bit, and I'll make you a cup of tea. Seems to me that we're getting as bad as old squaws—allus ready for our cup. I've just been having one myself.'

In nowise objecting, Caryll went into the little sitting-room where Venetian shutters permitted only a subdued light and soft threads of air to enter. A comfortable couch between two windows looked most inviting, and as he flung himself on it, he said:

'I wish some folks in the Old Country knew how comfortable we can be in the West. It would soon be settled up.'

'A few ready dollars to back up willing hands can do a pile,' answered Sam. 'The mistake is, that so many coons come out West with the crazy notion that dollars can be picked up as

easily as the gravel in yonder river. And them varmints—the emigration agents—don't disabuse the poor fellows' minds neither. It's my opinion, boss, that capital is more needed by the Westerner than by any of your city folks. Why, I've seen worse cases of utter starvation in them there prairies than ever I saw in New York or Chicago. All of them willing workers, but no capital to back them up—that's what done the job, and don't you forget it. But, by the way, I want to tell you that I've seen a Nitchie skulking about the ravine to-day, and that dog of Sequa's went after him and hasn't come back. I guess if the boy hadn't been out with you, he'd have cleared out with his dog in the same direction.'

'Oh, nonsense, Sam,' said Bertie. 'Why should you imagine that? Sequa is too frightened of his tribe not to give them a wide berth.'

'That may be, but they're not afraid of him, and I guess they want him for more reasons than one.'

'I cannot adopt your views,' Bertie answered carelessly.

'Well, but,' the other persisted, 'why on earth was that Indian dodging among the scrub? If he had any honest business on your ranch, why

didn't he come to the house? Why did he duck his head and crawl out of sight when he saw me a mile off?'

'It's their way,' laughed Bertie. 'Do, like a good fellow, leave the Indians to their ways, and get me that cup of tea you promised.'

That evening a stranger appeared at the ranch, and as he rode up he gave a shrill whistle which brought Caryll and Jim to the door.

Without dismounting, the man called out:

'Is that Mr. Caryll?'

'Yes,' answered Bertie promptly.

'Ah, then I've struck the ranch I was after, right enough; thought I couldn't mistake. I've got something to say to Mr. Caryll that's urgent.'

'Come along!' was the concise but hospitably meant rejoinder, whereupon the stranger threw himself from the saddle, and patting his steed, remarked: 'She's dead-beat, poor old 'ass.'

'I'll take her to the stable,' said Jim. 'Sam's there just now, and will give her a feed and a rub down.'

The gleaming of a lantern, for it was quite dark, and the whistling of 'Yankee Doodle' not far off, indicated Sam coming along, so Jim led

away the stranger's horse, while Bertie ushered his guest into the house.

The stranger was a tall, muscular man, dressed in ordinary cowboy garb, but in addition he wore military riding-boots and gloves, and he carried the regulation carbine, which he had detached from his saddle after dismounting. At his belt were two revolver-cases and a thoroughly business-looking sheathed knife.

His features were not those of the White-man, for there was plainly discernible that sharp outline peculiar to the Indian, and his small eyes sparkled from beneath shaggy eyebrows when he was taking observations, in the furtive, soul-searching manner very characteristic of the aborigines.

Such was Pierre, the French half-breed, scout on special service to the North-West Mounted Police, and the most renowned man-tracker of the prairie.

No sleuth-hound could have followed with more sagacity or more tireless persistence, and it was Pierre's proud boast that he never 'lost the scent,' or failed to 'bag the game.'

Police work is a thankless task at any time, and Pierre was not a favourite beyond official circles, though he had a few warm friends

among the settlers who could value aright the immense service he was to the country in upholding the law in every unsettled district. Pierre, single-handed, was more feared than half a dozen armed police.

Caryll was sure that his guest must be some remarkable man, but before he could say more than hospitably bid the stranger 'slacken his trappings' and rest, Sam came in, and immediately remarked in his unmoved but hearty fashion :

'Guessed it was you, Pierre. Knew the nag right away.'

'She's not easily mistaken. Once seen, never forgotten,' answered the scout, who was fond and proud of his mare.

'After some sneaking coon as usual?' Sam asked, and Pierre nodded; while Bertie said :

'And so you are the famous "scout" that people talk so much about? I've heard tales of you that beat Fenimore Cooper and M'Govan, the Scotch detective, all to fits.'

Pierre did not smile. He was too much accustomed to such compliments, and smiling was not his strong point, but he replied :

'I guess the boys lay it on pretty thick sometimes; but I'm Pierre, and I'm here on a very important errand. I want you, Mr. Caryll, and

one of your friends, to go with me on Government service to-morrow, as soon as it's light—no time to lose.'

'Very well,' answered Caryll, but he spoke with less than his usual cordiality. He did not care to turn amateur policeman, and had old-country prejudices about such work. But he also possessed strong feelings regarding the upholding of law and obeying its behests.

The scout was quick to note the slight reserve in Bertie's tone, and replied:

'You'll go willingly when you know what for, Mr. Caryll. None of you have been in the direction of Rodgers's ranch these last three days, I reckon?'

'No, we have not had time to leave home.'

'Just so; of course. You wouldn't be so cool as you are if you knew what's happened there. Let me tell you that Rodgers rode into the police station three days ago (a good deal hurt) and told us that his house has been burned to the earth, and the man who lived with him has been murdered. That's stirring news for you, I reckon, and I'm on the track of the man who caused the trouble.'

'An Indian, I'll be sworn!' exclaimed Sam. But Bertie could only say: 'Poor Rodgers! I am sorry!'

'Yes, 'twas an Indian, Sam,' Pierre resumed, 'and an Indian I can easily identify.'

'How did Rodgers escape? How did it happen?' Bertie asked.

'He chanced to have been away for the day from his ranch, and on his way back he met the Indian—a chief, no less, in his feathers and finery!' Here Sam looked alert, and flashed a glance full of meaning into Pierre's eyes, but the scout took no notice of the look, and continued his story:

'The two had some words—there had been bad blood between them before. Rodgers had no weapon, and he got some severe cuts from the ugly knife that is never far from the Indian's fist. If his dog, that's as good as any man, hadn't struck his fangs into the fellow's shoulder, Rodgers might have been worsted, for this Indian is a giant. But the dog came to his master's help, and then I suppose the murderer made off. As he went, he bade Rodgers go and look at his ruined shak, and behold—says he, in the high and mighty style of their kind—"how the wrongs of the Red-men are avenged!"

'Rodgers was bleeding pretty freely, but he managed to get on his horse—fine mare that, almost as good as my own—and rode home to

find what I've told you. Then he came off to the station, where I chanced to be. He was pretty well used up by then, and could not go a step farther, and there were only two men on duty; so he told me to take your ranch on my way after Eagle-feather, if I found it advisable to take assistance with me. You were his friends, he said, and would help.'

'That we certainly will,' exclaimed Caryl; and Sam added: 'Of course we'll go with you.'

'Ah,' said Pierre, 'what do you know about the Chief, Sam? I saw something in your visage a while ago that ought to be explained.'

'Describe this Eagle-feather,' answered Sam briefly; and the scout did so in few words, but Caryl immediately recognised from the description, the Indian whom he and Rodgers had twice encountered in a disagreeable manner.

'That's him,' said Sam. 'He's been skulking in the ravine to-day. You are on the right track.'

At that moment Jim and Sequa came in from the stable, and as soon as the scout's keen eyes fell on the Indian boy he stopped talking, and with a significant glance at Sam, warned him to say no more.

'Been seeing to the horses, boys?' he remarked, addressing Jim.

'What a lovely coat she has!' was the answer. 'Her mane and tail as silky as a lady's curls!'

'I'm the maid that dresses her,' replied the scout, well pleased at such praise of his dearly loved animal. 'And,' he went on, 'she knows about as much as the average man, and much more than many of them. Talk of tracking! "Lassie" can scent an Indian five miles off. I'll just go and bid her good-night—not that I'm thinking you haven't done everything well by her, my boy, but she'd expect a handful of oats from me, and might be vexed if I didn't come. Will you show the way to the stable, Sam?'

The two went out together, and a few words exchanged between them put Pierre in possession of all the facts known to Sam, as well as the Texan's suspicions and fears.

The mare whinnied with pleasure as they entered the stable, and Pierre untying a small bag which still hung on the pommel of his Mexican saddle, set carefully above the feeding-box by Jim, gave Lassie a handful of oats, saying as he stroked her fondly: 'That's all she wants. Deceitful Lassie! Just like the rest

of her sex—pretends it's me she likes, when all the time it's the feed and dressing she's after.'

'Jim hasn't put her in the best stall,' said Sam, and with one of his odd chuckles added: 'That boy allus thinks that the boss and his Dandy must come first, though Mr. Caryll likes his guests to have foremost place.'

As he talked Sam undid the ropes and put Lassie in Dandy's stall, saying to the latter as he removed him: 'Must be civil, old chap, and give sunniest corner to the newcomer.'

'Well, she'll need all the comfort she can get for a few hours. She's had a hard day's work, and she'll have more before she's run that Redskin to earth. We're bound to nab him of course, Lassie, but he's a cute hand is Eagle-feather. I would risk even the mare's life and go after him to-night; but no good trying that in the dark, so we will have a nap and start at daybreak.'

'Guess it won't be uneasy to find the varmint, since he's hereabouts,' said Sam.

Meanwhile Caryll, not having seen the scout's warning look, repeated to Jim the misfortune which had befallen their friend Rodgers. But it was only when he spoke of the Chief and

used the name the scout had given him that Sequa displayed an outward interest in the story.

'Eagle-feather!' he exclaimed. 'What has Eagle-feather done?'

'He has killed the man Ross and ruined our friend,' Caryll answered; and then, as Sequa shrank back into the corner as if he had been struck, and covered his face, Bertie saw how indiscreet he had been in telling the story.

'He'll hang for it,' said Jim.

'He has to be caught first,' echoed Bertie, who, in spite of his better judgment, felt his sympathies go out for the hunted Chief in whose truth he had believed.

'Did Pierre ever fail to bring in his game?' asked Jim. 'Don't you remember how we wondered over the way he captured the Montana horse-thief only a month ago? A French detective couldn't have done it more 'cutely—and he has French blood in him.'

'Scout Indian blood too!' exclaimed Sequa fiercely, and rising up as the voices of Pierre and Sam betokened their return, he retired to his little chamber above the stable.

As they entered the house both instinctively looked towards the spot where Sequa had been,

and noting his absence, Sam asked: 'Whar's the Nitchie off to?'

'To bed, I suppose,' Caryll answered.

Sam went to the door and called Sequa, who came obediently.

'Why have you gone off to bed without supper?' the Yankee asked sharply.

'Sequa no hungry,' said the boy in a somewhat sullen tone, and Bertie, indignant that the men should jump to conclusions on one-sided evidence, and deal harshly or unfairly by his protégé, stopped Sam's questioning by saying:

'Sequa may please himself about his supper without question in my house.'

'All right, boss. The Nitchie may retire to his illigant budoir when he so desires, since it is his lordship's will'; and Sequa, casting a grateful glance at his friend, retired at once.

While this brief conversation had been going on Jim had been setting food upon the table, and Pierre, taking his place, remarked: 'A bite don't come amiss to me after my long ride.'

CHAPTER XV

ON THE SCENT

SEQUA did not immediately return to his little chamber, sarcastically named by Sam 'my lady's budoir.' He lingered near the house for a time, and finally leaned against the kitchen window in motionless silence. So still was he that to all appearances he might have been a log of wood. The window was a little open as usual, and he therefore heard with ease all the party said as they sat at supper.

After some general talk about the unfortunate Rodgers, Pierre turned to Caryl:

'You see, friend,' he said, with the customary Western familiarity, 'you see, I did not want to have any words about Eagle-feather and his business before that boy, but I must warn you of what you don't know. You took that boy out of the hands of his tribe—and, mind you, I have nothing to say against that. It was a plucky thing to do, and the right thing; I admire you for it. All the prairie knows of that job. But

he is the son of Eagle-feather, the man I'm after!'

'Oh, that explains fully a heap,' exclaimed Bertie, whose generous feelings instantly went out to the boy. 'Think how he must feel, knowing his father a murderer, and you hunting him too!'

'He must not know.'

'But he does know, for I saw no reason for holding my tongue, and I told both Jim and Sequa what had happened.'

'That was a blunder. However, we must keep an eye on him to-night.'

'Why should you suppose he would betray you anyhow?' said Jim a little hotly. 'He put us on the track of the lost horses, and he must have known then that it was Eagle-feather who had them. He is devoted to Mr. Caryll besides, and frightened to death of his own folk.'

'Frightened he may be, but the Indians are staunch to each other, and there's a lot of affection in them, too. Besides, he might think this a good chance to get into their good graces again, if he could warn the Chief that I am not far off,' said Pierre.

'He'd do it for mere love of circumventing you,' said Sam decisively.

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'Perhaps any of us would be inclined to give Eagle-feather a helping hand too, if he were our father,' Bertie rejoined. 'I am going to help you to secure this murderer, Pierre; but all the same I have some sympathy with him. Rodgers was hasty, I believe, and unjust, and you know an Indian can't change his nature. What can the poor wretches do but seek secret revenge for open, high-handed injustice? If you were in Sequa's place would you not help your father to escape from the degrading death which awaits Eagle-feather?'

'Just so, boss,' said Sam, nodding.

'All the same,' added Pierre, 'we are not in the boy's shoes, and we don't mean to let him give the old buck a hint. So, Sam, if there's a way of locking that boudoir door without making a fuss, you'd better do it. I appreciate Mr. Caryll's sentiments; they do for the Old Country. But I have some old scores, as well as this new job, to settle with Eagle-feather. There's trouble brewing among the Redskins at present, I happen to know, and we've got to nip it in the bud and show them plainly that we'll stand no nonsense. I shall take Eagle-feather this time, living or dead.'

'Might save trouble,' remarked Sam, with the

careless contempt which Americans show in dealings with coloured people, 'might save trouble to send a bullet after him if he inclines to use his legs more than you consider necessary.'

'He's got to die somehow—hanging or shooting—not much to choose between.'

'He has to be tried and found guilty first,' Caryll exclaimed.

'And he has to be caught,' added Jim.

'All true for you, friends,' agreed Pierre indifferently. 'Sam, you might go and see to that boudoir.'

The motionless figure by the window moved stealthily away, and when Sam reached the stable Sequa was lying on his bed apparently asleep.

'Just come to see if all's snug,' said Sam, swinging the lantern in front of the boy, who opened his eyes and flashed an angry look at the intruder.

The Yankee's conscience was not a tender one, and his sense of truth did not object to a mild equivocation when he thought such a thing necessary.

'I don't tell lies on principle,' he would say, 'but I don't mind leading a body off the scent if necessity calls for a twisting of words that

mayn't be exactly square, but fit the occasion.'

The present was such an occasion in Sam's mind, so he added:

'You lads are careless with matches, and I wants no conflagrations among the hay and hosses.' So talking, he blundered down the ladder again, but stumbling at the lower step over a moving obstruction, he fell to the ground, extinguishing the lantern in his fall, and evoking from the obstruction which caused it a loud yelp.

'It's you, you varmint of a varmint!' cried Sam, picking himself up, and giving the Indian dog a kick which sent it howling out into the night, startling the horses, who began to stamp and jerk at their halters with fright.

'Woa, Dandy! Easy, good horses! 'Nough to scare any decent beast, I'll allow,' the Yankee went on, as he stepped from stall to stall and made sure none of the creatures had broken loose. It was dark, but Sam knew his way about the stable, and did not think it worth while to relight the lantern. When his back was to the ladder and the door, a figure, that might have been a shadow, so noiseless and vague it was, glided down the steps and passed

out of the stable, and Sam, quite unconscious of such an apparition, picked up his lantern and locked the door, leaving the key in the lock.

'He's safe till daylight anyway,' he muttered. 'I defy even an Indian to squeeze himself out of the peep-hole above.'

'Nothing like taking precautions,' said Pierre, when Sam returned to report the stable door locked, and the window of Sequa's loft, a square of glass not more than a foot across, hermetically sealed with putty to the roof.

'What was all the noise?' asked Jim.

'Nitchie dog came back, sneaking to find his master. I dropped on him rather more suddenly than pleasant—gets in my way—brutes do.'

'Well, Mr. Caryll,' said Pierre, 'perhaps you'll let me turn in now, and may I call you at day-break?'

'I'll call you,' replied his host, smiling.

'Guess I'll call the pair of you,' said Sam, as he led the way to his own room, which the scout was to share.

Caryll sat quite silent for a little time after they left, but at last he turned to Jim and remarked in a whisper:

'Jim, boy, I don't like this kind of thing at all; I wish we had never got mixed up in it. It is

hateful work to hunt a man under any circumstances; but when one feels—as I do about this Chief—that he has been hardly used in some ways, it becomes a very distasteful task indeed.'

'I don't believe the scout will catch him,' replied Jim, whose hopeful youth and inexperience vaulted over whatever they pleased. 'Long before morning Eagle-feather will be hid away in the Blue Hills or beyond Silver Lake. Think how fast an Indian goes, and he will have twelve hours' start, for you may be sure he wouldn't stay long in the ravine after Sam had spotted him.'

'I shall have to talk seriously to Sam about the boy one of these days,' Caryll resumed. 'I am perfectly sure Sequa is to be trusted, and the way I treat him is evidently bringing him round to our ideas; but every now and then down comes Sam with some suspicious twaddle, and the half-smothered savage leaps to Sequa's eyes again. I'll just tell Sam, plain and flat, that he must drop it, or clear out.'

'He doesn't mean half he says; it's a way he's got, and he'll drop it if you make him see you don't like it.'

'I am not so sure of that; Sam's a bit stiff, and I am afraid it will take more than a lecture

from me to break down his prejudice against those poor Redskins.'

After a little more whispered talk the two went to their room, and in a few minutes all were asleep, and the house as quiet as only such lonely dwellings can be.

When Sequa stole from the stable, leaving Sam to believe that he was safely locked inside, he ran with noiseless speed to a shed where vehicles, harness, and tools were kept, and creeping behind some of these he lay down to think. His dog had followed stealthily to find a place beside him, and Sequa was glad of the companionship.

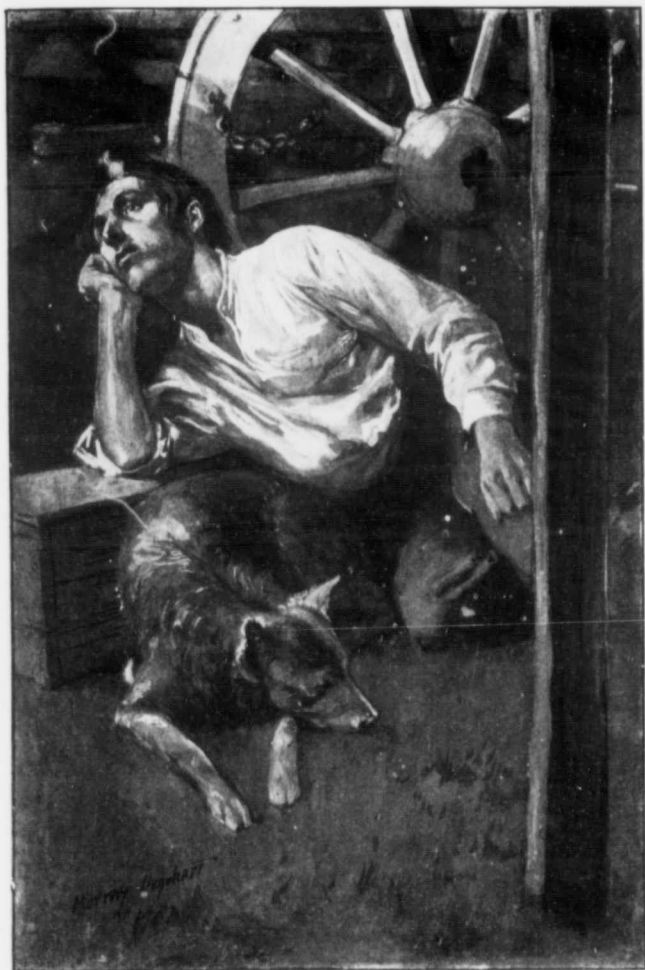
Dropping his head on the dog, he said to himself:

'What can Sequa do? Him Eagle-feather papoose. Eagle-feather no steal, but Eagle-feather kill if made angry. Can Sequa help Eagle-feather?'

Then, clenching his hand fiercely, he muttered:

'Sam have forked tongue; Sam lie and shut door, but no shut in Sequa. Pierre bad man, forget him mother, take White-man's money, go hunt mother's people. Pierre follow hard on Eagle-feather, kill him. Ah no! Great Spirit loves White-men and Red-men. He no let

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'Can Sequa help Eagle-feather?' (page 156).

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Sequa's father die shameful death. All is dark to Sequa; he have only one friend, brave White-man who loves Sequa, say *he* help Eagle-feather if he be Sequa. Brave White-man never say wrong. Sequa will help his father, and the Good Spirit who loves Sequa will not be angry.'

Poor Sequa's religion was as yet a very imperfect one, and when he had determined to prevent the long arm of justice from reaching his father, he did not stop to think whether the means he meant to use were right or wrong. He was actuated by the unselfish motive of saving his parent at all risks to himself.

When we elect to bear the burden of another's sins we may be acting from very noble motives, but, more often than not, in warding off from the sinner a just punishment, we are hindering the means of his soul's salvation.

What Sequa had learned of the higher truths of Divine wisdom had been received through the headmaster of an industrial school, who did not properly understand the workings of an Indian mind; therefore the boy had received the Light 'through a glass darkly.'

It was from Bertie Caryll that his best instruction had come, and he had grasped firmly and plainly the fact that self-sacrifice is the root

of all noble impulse, and returning good for evil is the fruit.

'Sequa may lose his one friend if he hinder Pierre; the braves will spit on Sequa if he come into their camp. But Sequa must save Eagle-feather from the dishonour of a dog's death.'

He revolved every circumstance in his mind, always keeping foremost the thought: 'Sequa must save his father'; and lying there patiently waiting till the lights in the house were out and silence told him that all were asleep, the boy fortified his intention with a queer mixture of Indian and Christian codes of honour and morality.

When all was still he crept from his hiding-place to a neighbouring thicket, but unfortunately his foot stepped on a branch of dead wood which broke under his weight with a crack that warned one of the ranch dogs, which immediately began to bark and growl angrily.

Sequa's heart throbbed wildly, and his limbs shook, for it seemed as though his discovery was certain.

He looked eagerly through the trees, and saw a light appear at Sam's window. The sash was thrown open, and he could hear Pierre say: 'Something's amiss, surely.'

'I guess Carlo has nosed that Indian's dog,' said Sam. 'He is as wise as a Christian man, and likes the dog about as well as I like its master, and that's saying very little. Sh! Thought I heard a bush stir over there. Maybe it's a coyote.'

Sequa had moved very slightly, and the keen senses of Sam, long trained to listen and mark every strange sound, had instantly detected the unnatural rustle of the leaves.

But fortunately for the Indian youth, his dog came towards him pushing through the bushes, and a small log of wood came hurtling through the bush with a random shot that caused the dog to leap into the air with a yelp.

'Bah!' exclaimed Pierre. 'It is that Indian dog.'

'The varmint! I'll give him a quieter one of these days,' added the cowboy.

Then the window was shut with a bang, and once more Sequa breathed freely.

CHAPTER XVI

AN INDIAN STRATAGEM

WHEN all was quiet Sequa crept through the scrub very carefully, so as to avoid any repetition of what had so very nearly proved fatal to his undertaking.

When an Indian is on the alert he can crawl across the open prairie without being seen at twenty-five yards' distance, and he can glide through the forest with the silent movement of the sun on a dial—so silently and so imperceptibly that even the little chipmunk hears him not, and sleeps peacefully as he slips softly past.

It was in such a manner that Sequa now passed through the bushes, and in this, being obliged to use the caution and patience of his kind, the Indian nature reasserted itself. The dark night, the solitary position, the errand he was on, all helped to overthrow later influences. The restraints of a gentler mode of living fell apart. For that night the boy was, of a truth, the son of Eagle-feather.

After a while he reached a small spring welling up in a pure pool of clear water, and there he bent down and drank eagerly, for excitement had turned his blood to fire and parched his lips as if he had been out under the midday sun for hours. Thus refreshing himself he rose to his feet, and commenced reaching with his fingers among the weeds that fringed the edge of the little spring.

It was too dark for any one but an Indian to see what was wanted, but Sequa, peering closely at a fragment he had plucked, knew that his search had been successful in procuring a curious little plant with a dark green flower—not unlike the common clover in form, but hardly so large.

He carefully pulled up as much of the tuberous roots as possible, and washed them in the pool, in order to remove all earth from the fibres. After so doing, he placed the treasure in his pocket, and rapidly retraced his steps with the same stealth he had exercised in coming.

As he neared the house he often paused to listen. But all was silent, and he reached the stable without further incident.

Cautiously unlocking the door he went in, and quickly made his way to the stall where he

and Jim had put Pierre's Lassie, and where he believed the mare still stood.

A wooden water-pail hung on a nail at the side of the stall, and possessing himself of this bucket, Sequa took from his pocket the weeds he had gathered by the pool. Then opening a clasp-knife, he sliced one of the long tubers from end to end, when immediately a peculiar, transparent fluid began to ooze from the pores.

When he had obtained a sufficient quantity of the fluid for his purpose, the Indian rubbed the inside of the bucket all over with the root, until he had completely rubbed the juice into the wood. Then he returned the bucket to the nail, saying:

'Pierre give horse water in pail to-morrow—she take ill—no go far one day. Pierre no go far without own horse. Oh! she smell Red-man miles away, he say! But she no smell drink in pail. She no wise as Pierre say. She stay here, and Eagle-feather go far away—Pierre no find him.'

Then Sequa returned to his loft-room and lay down, but no sleep visited him. Indeed, by this time the night was nearly over, and streaks of red were shooting up in the East, proclaiming that the hour was near when the scout desired to be astir.

Caryll as well as Sequa had spent a wakeful night, and as soon as there was sufficient light by which to dress, he was up. He had been anxiously reviewing all that had taken place, and he decided to speak plainly to Sequa when no one else was by. So he quietly let himself out of the house, and proceeded to the stable a short time before he knew the Indian would be on the alert.

He was too engrossed with his thoughts to notice that the stable door should have been locked when he found it ajar, or, if he thought of it at all, the impression on his mind was that he had unlocked it absently.

It was usually Sam or Jim who paid the first visit to the stables in the morning, as to them fell the duty of milking the cows, feeding the horses, etc., and Sequa, hearing the movement below, lay still and listened.

Dandy whinnied as was his wont, and Bertie, patting the horse, called softly:

'Sequa, boy, are you awake? I want you.'

'Sequa come,' was the answer, as the youth started up, surprised at his friend's visit.

'Take it easy,' said Bertie, standing in the doorway and watching the shafts of light strike among the trees, chasing the gloom from among

them and waking the birds to song. It was a lovely spring morning, full of hope and new life, and Caryll's heart rose in hot rebellion against the task of wrath which lay before him with the shadow of death upon it.

Sequa was soon beside him, and laying a hand on the boy's shoulder, Bertie walked towards the woods, saying kindly as they went:

'You know, Sequa, that I trust you fully, and believe you are true to me with all your heart?'

'That is true. Sequa knows it is true.'

'I am sure you know that I mean to stick to you and help you in every way I can, and you must not resent any foolish words which Sam or any other person may say, Sequa. I am as sorry for you just now as any person can be. You know I am going to-day to help Pierre to find your father, Eagle-feather. I can't somehow believe that he has done a foul deed—an angry one, possibly—but not what they think he has done. However, you know, Sequa, we must not let men take the law into their own hands. We must uphold law. But, my boy, I felt I must tell you how deeply I enter into your feelings, and I want to remind you of what you have heard before: that the Good Spirit

lets some things happen because it is good for some of us to suffer. If Eagle-feather is unjustly charged with this crime, I hope that the Great Spirit will not let him die; but if it turns out otherwise, Sequa must be comforted in looking for the light. And, Sequa, I'll be your friend. I'll try to make up to you for your father. You know that if Eagle-feather has offended the Good Spirit by taking a man's life he must bear the punishment for that.'

'Sequa always remembers every word you say,' said the boy in grateful tones, and then their talk was interrupted by Sam calling out:

'Early birds catch the worms, and you've cotched the Nitchie, I guess, boss! Easy catching a worm that's shut in a box, eh?'

'That man's incorrigible,' muttered Caryll, leading Sequa farther away, while Sam and Jim began to hurry through preparations for breakfast, and Pierre went off to the stable to look after his mare.

'Well, Lassie, how do you find yourself this morning?' he said, as he caressed the beautiful creature, and then he added: 'No time this morning for love-making, old gal.' He took a couple of buckets from where they hung by the stalls, and going to the pump by the stable door,

filled the pails with water, and set these before Dandy and Lassie.

Just then Sam appeared. 'Making yourself useful?' he said. 'I'll lend a hand, for the boss has gone off sermonising the boy, I guess, and Jim's hurrying up breakfast.'

Now Caryll had a fad that beside each stall should hang a bucket for the use of each horse, and Sam, noting that Dandy was not drinking from his own pail, remarked: 'Guess the boss don't approve your having some other man's cup and saucer, Dandy; if you hadn't drained it you should swop with the mare.'

'We'll have to hurry this fine morning—haven't time for fads,' said the scout impatiently, and setting to work with a will, he soon had the four horses in the stable busy with their oats. By the time that was done, Jim was calling 'Grub, boys!' and all hastened to the house and got through the meal with the utmost dispatch.

Pierre took it for granted that Caryll and Sam would accompany him, leaving the lads to look after the ranch, so said to them:

'Boys, you have loads of time to eat your breakfast at leisure later. You might fetch round the horses now, so that no time be lost.'

Off went Jim and Sequa, the latter looking

depressed and anxious ; but he assisted to saddle the horses as usual, and led Dandy round to the house, while Jim followed with Lassie and Sam's piebald broncho.

Pierre was fastening his belt as they came up, and in a moment he was in the saddle calling to Bertie, 'Get a gait on, boss!'

But no sooner did Caryll mount than Dandy staggered, and then, as if from sheer want of strength to support the weight on his back, sank to the ground in a motionless heap.

'Hullo! What's up with Dandy?' exclaimed Sam, running to the horse's head as Bertie got to his feet. 'Quick, take off saddle and bridle—let him have what freedom he can; and, boys, lend a hand to get him on his feet!'

'No use,' remarked Pierre quietly, and leaving his saddle. 'That horse has eaten a poisonous weed that will keep him like that for six or eight hours at least. If you were to get him up you'd have to hold him there, or he'd drop in a moment again. I know how it takes them; I've seen it often. The creature has no more power in its bones than if it were dead.'

'Oh,' exclaimed Caryll, 'will it kill my poor horse?'

'No, no,' answered the scout. 'It will merely

suspend animation, as they say in the books, for a few hours.'

'Whar on earth has he got such a thing?' said Sam. 'He's been nowheres but roun' the house and in the stable, and he don't feed on rubbish, you bet.'

'Nor would he of his own finding,' said Pierre, sending a keen glance at Sequa, who, struck to the heart by the mischance which had occurred, was standing a little apart, gazing at the prostrate animal with deep dejection.

'If,' said the scout, addressing the Indian in the language of his tribe, 'you had served my horse as you have served your friend's one, you would have been dead Redskin by this time. I have not time at present to look at this, but I'm not done with you about it.'

Then turning to Jim he said: 'Cover the poor beast with a wet blanket—keeps off the sun; and get another horse for Mr. Caryll. We're losing time.'

Bertie had been stooping over his horse, and had not noticed the scout addressing Sequa; but Sam had, and going close to the man, asked him in a low tone:

'Indian trick?'

Pierre nodded, but, anxious that there should

be no further delay, whispered: 'Say no more at present, and come along, or the trick will have served its purpose, and I shall lose my game.'

The horse that Jim generally used was soon ready for Bertie, and as he mounted he said to Sequa: 'Mind you keep an eye on Dandy. Jim will have his hands full to-day, so I trust you to see to the poor horse.'

The boy lifted his mournful eyes and faltered: 'Sequa sorry; Sequa no forget what you told him before. Say you love Sequa again.'

'Yes, yes, of course I do, my boy,' Caryll answered, little dreaming of what was passing through the Indian's mind. 'Don't fret; I'll see that justice is done to Eagle-feather. Good-bye, Jim!' and turning to the path, he cantered off in the wake of Sam and the scout, who had ridden away, and had not heard the short colloquy between Caryll and his protégé.

'Wal, boss,' said Sam, as he joined them, 'I hope that this will convince you that your tame Nitchie is nothing better than a wild beast.'

'What do you mean, Sam?'

'Hear what Pierre can tell you.'

'Your horse was poisoned,' said Pierre. 'No prairie-bred animal would eat that root, but he could easily be tricked into swallowing its taste-

less juice. The secret of the poison is known only to the Indians, and to a few of us fellows who, with living among the Reds, get to know a few of their tricks.'

'Would you have me believe that Sequa poisoned my horse?' exclaimed Bertie, with indignation. But the scout, quite unmoved, replied:

'The poison works speedily. The bey was shut in the stable all night. Sam put my mare into your horse's stall—made them change places after your boy had fixed them up. The Indian would not know that. It was my mare he meant to put out of the running—my Lassie, who scents an Indian miles away.'

Caryll was so shocked by this plain statement that he could say nothing; but Sam remarked:

'An old Book that I used to read when I was a kid says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" and I guess it's about the same with a Nitchie—he can't drop his natur nohow, and his natur is to twist and double and wriggle like a rattlesnake.'

'The old Book you quote, Sam,' answered Bertie gravely, 'also says we must forgive if another offend us, not once, but seventy times seven. We must not provoke our brother to

anger; we must not cause a weak brother to offend. And, above all, the Book says, "Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for a friend." If Sequa did this thing he risked his life for his father, believing it to be the right thing to do. He knows that Pierre will not spare him if the trick is discovered, or Eagle-feather escapes. I wish, Sam, you would look into that old Book again, and find there something to soften your heart towards a poor Indian groping in the dark for light in which we whites have lived for centuries, and have not, on the whole, used in the best possible way.'

'Right you are, boss, as usual,' answered Sam heartily; and Pierre, nodding his head, added grimly:

'You shall set Sam in the chimney-corner with your Book when we've caught Eagle-feather, Mr. Caryll; but let's get ahead meanwhile.'

CHAPTER XVII

THE RED-MAN'S TELEGRAPH

ON reaching the Qu'appelle River the riders found some difficulty in crossing, owing to the unusual depth of water caused by the spring floods.

'I suppose, Pierre,' quoth Sam, rather perplexed that he had not been asked to point out where he saw Eagle-feather on the previous day, 'I suppose you know a thing or two beyond me, but aren't you going to look for the Indian's tracks in the ravine?'

The nearest approach to a smile in which the scout ever indulged flitted over his face as he condescended to explain himself in part to his interrogator.

'I know where he was heading for as well as if I had followed every footstep. It's there I'm going. Now, Lassie, take a morning bath. One, two, three!' and lifting his reins, he rode his mare with a spring from the bank into the river, for to the rough-rider of the plains a little

extra water pouring down the stream gives little consideration. Lassie needed neither word nor spur to make her breast the current. But Caryll had to utilise both in urging his young half-trained steed to follow, and he thought of the absent Dandy with regret.

'Now then, Jake,' said Sam to his broncho, 'you just get a hump on you, and show that 'ere Nitchie-nabber that you've been across running water 'fore this morning. Take no stock in his head, old crock; and show him a thing or two in a fancy side-stroke.' In floundered the piebald; but his idea of 'fancy side-stroke' consisted in churning the water to foam with his fore-feet, while he snorted violently like an asthmatic steam-tug. However, he managed to land the rider on the farther side before Lassie came to shore—a feat which caused Sam to chuckle with delight, and Pierre to remark: 'There's more in that there piebald bag o' bones than appears to the eye, Sam.'

A swift scamper in the sunny air along the flat to the foot of the hills leading to the prairie above, soon had the effect of drying the riders. They slackened pace considerably, however, when the ascent was commenced up the side of the valley; and as they threaded their way across

deep ravines, and up steep banks of sand and gravel, Pierre became more communicative, and revealed some of his plans. He ended by saying:

'All one needs in a job of this kind is caution. Don't let the sight of a gun gleaming through the bushes disconcert you, for the Redskins will not attack us. When they see men afraid, or when they are attacked, they show fight in an unreasoning way; but coolness of action and deliberation are the peculiarities of these Indians, and a White-man would do well to borrow some of that selfsame when dealing with them.'

'You ought to know, and, for the present, I follow your lead,' said Caryll rather shortly; and the scout replied with perfect composure:

'Having Indian blood does help me to understand their ways, but I have some rather prominent characteristics from my father's people, too. And you know what is expected of every man who is born a British subject.'

'To do what duty bids,' answered Caryll, with dignity.

'*England expects that e-ev'ry man this day will do-o-o his duta-ay!*' sung Sam, and then he added, with a laugh: 'And you bet when Britannia wakes up she makes things hum around pretty brisk at that same duta-ay!'

'Well,' said Caryll, smiling at Sam's odd way of expressing himself, 'I cannot say that old Britannia has given me a pleasant duty this morning, or one that makes me feel one morsel frisky. Hunting men is not the profession I'd choose; but this service has to be done, and since it has fallen to me to have a share in the work, I shall do that share as best I can. But I own, honestly, that I almost hope Eagle-feather may not be found—wrong of me, Pierre, I admit; but that's how I feel all the same.'

'Such feelings may do for you and me, boss, but we have no reputation to keep up,' said Sam; and Pierre, knitting his brows, remarked briefly: 'In all the years I have been at this work I never let a man I was after slip through my hands. This every Indian and skulking rascal in North America knows, and if Eagle-feather got off on me this time there would be an end to my power. It would be a come-down I won't face or permit to happen. Living or dead, I take the Chief. I have law and order, as well as my own character, to maintain.'

'Then justice and human life come second in your mind to the sustaining of a record?' Bertie asked rather bitterly. 'That seems to me a low ambition for a man of your intellect and power.'

'I've got some strong instincts, Mr. Caryll. Most men of my sort have a genius for some particular thing which overmasters all other ideas. Mine's tracking and—— Hist! I heard a rustle in the ravine close by.'

'Most like a coyote. Lots of them in the valley just now,' said Sam; but Pierre echoed:

'Coyote! as if I didn't know the way beasts move the bushes and the way a man in hiding inadvertently stirs the twigs! Here, hold Lassie, will you, while I investigate.'

The speaker was out of the saddle by that time, and handed the reins to Sam. Then he took his repeating-rifle in his hands and went boldly into the ravine. He was absent for only a few minutes, when he returned, remarking as he jumped into the saddle again: 'I found the tracks of an Indian moccasin, but it was not Eagle-feather, and I scarcely expected it would be.'

'Then why did you go?' Caryll naturally inquired.

'Because I know that his bucks will be on the alert by this time—sending round warnings, and helping him to get off.'

'Did you see the man anywhere?'

'I did not look for him. I am satisfied he was one of the Chief's tribe watching us. Probably

there are more of the same sort dodging along our track.'

'For what reason, do you suppose? Why should they hang about us, and we so near home too? If they have, as you make sure they have, discovered that you are on the Chief's track, and heading for his retreat by Silver Lake, surely the simple thing they'd do would be to cut away there, and warn him to fly somewhere else?'

'It's easy to see,' replied the scout, 'that you know very little of Indian dodges. Why, the light of a torch or the crack of a shot-gun, the whine of a coyote or the hoot of an owl—any prearranged signal—is passed from Indian to Indian stationed across the prairie as fast as the telegraph.'

'I've known the varmints lie like logs in any dimple Nature may have set on the prairie cheek,' said Sam. 'Yes! And you might ride within a yard of where they lay and never notice them. That they'd be—telegraph-poles laid low instead of standing up—and you'd hear a bull-frog go "yaup! yaup!" as you pass; and ahead of you you'd hear some more bull-frogs, and you'd be thinkin', "Them there cattle is frisky to-day." You'd never remember that bull-frogs don't make it their business to sing at all hours,

especially where there ain't no water for miles, and you'd never have even the shadow of a thought that the red reptiles' telegraph was a-flying round.'

'That's a fact, Mr. Caryll,' added Pierre; 'I've known a warning sent to a red chief over a hundred miles in as many minutes. I do not doubt that the whole tribe is by this time aware of the deed he committed and my errand, and they are on the watch to help Eagle-feather. The camp at Silver Lake is probably well posted in our present movements, though we have only been out a short time. A flash from a sheath-knife held to the sun would do the job as slick as electricity.'

Scarcely had the words passed the scout's lips when the sharp crack of a gun was heard issuing from the head of a deep ravine not far away. This was followed by another and yet another in rapid succession, but each one farther away than its predecessor.

'Pshaw!' Pierre exclaimed. 'I thought as much. We need not expect to surprise Eagle-feather now. He knows—wherever he may be skulking at this moment—that I am after him.'

'And,' added Sam, 'we might as well look for

that wretched needle in the musty old hayrick with a chance of finding it, as prance around after Eagle-feather in that country.'

'I've sometimes not looked for the needle among the hay,' said Pierre, 'but left chance and luck to help me, and the lost needle has just dropped into my hand.'

'What will you do? It seems to be almost a hopeless job now,' said Caryll.

'I had half hoped to surprise my man, but that's no go now. Well, though the Redskins have spoilt that little game, they have done me a service too. They've let me know that my instinct was right, and that Eagle-feather is at Silver Lake, where I must go and fetch him. There is no doubt of the direction of the gun-firing. Hi! there it goes again!'

Once more the guns rang out, and as the last one died away in the distance, a second volley swept from the ravine across the plains in the direct line to Silver Lake.

'That means you two—first was for me. That tells the tribe that there are three of us around with rifles, and they will make their arrangements for receiving us accordingly.'

'Why should we not try to capture the man who is dodging us, and so stop their game?'

'Break the telegraph wires, eh?' laughed Sam. 'I guess they'd soon be mended again, and that without any tools to speak of.'

Then Pierre added, with grim humour:

'Not much use trying to scotch a frightened grass-snake. No sooner was the shot fired than the Indian would be off—goodness knows where. That's not our game, Mr. Caryll. I intend to track and catch one Redskin—Eagle-feather—and, dead or alive, I've got to have him. If others come in my way to stop me, well—I'll shoot them as I would a badger, but I don't want to shed blood in an unnecessary way. I have orders not to provoke the Indians; if I can help it, I'll not. I'll simply do what I came out to do, for I have also orders to do my duty, and let no thing or person prevent me.'

Having so said, the half-breed scout set his lips in a way that plainly told the kind of man he was—a human sleuth-hound. And Caryll asked no more questions.

They rode on a short way in silence, and the scout then remarked:

'We may take it easy now. There is no need to haste, since we can't overtake the Chief. If we reach the shores of the lake by night it will be time enough, and we can camp there until

am. morning, when we will go on the rest of the way
hat and visit the wigwams.'

ied 'You never imagine the old fox will hide in
ian the stately halls of his ancestors?' exclaimed
re. Sam.

to 'Certainly not. But I shall expect the tribe
r— to know where he is hidden, and will compel
If them to show me the spot.'

['ll 'They would surely never betray the Chief?'
n't Bertie asked in surprise at the scout's words.

I 'Oh yes, they will,' Pierre replied coolly.
an 'They know me. This is not the first Indian I
ut have stalked among that same tribe by a long
nd way, nor do I expect it will be the last. There
is will be no blood spilt—don't think it. The
an Indians know too well what it means to inter-
yll fere with a Government officer when he is on
be duty. They will murder a single man if they
ed can get him where no eyes are on them, and
If when he is a friendless stranger—I mean if such
ill a one had treated any of their number unfairly,
il for they deal straight with those who meet them
on the square.

'They know that if a hand were lifted to stop
me the birds of the air would carry the news to
headquarters, and for every finger on my hands
twenty braves would answer with their lives.

I use Sam's figurative language, Mr. Caryll, but I mean that the Indians are too cowed to resist—too wise to interfere with the course of justice.'

'And yet,' Caryll remarked thoughtfully, 'I saw this Chief draw his knife with murderous intent, careless of all consequences.'

'He's an exception, like any White-man who commits murder in a passion. And, by the way, that recollection of yours will be evidence to tighten the rope about his neck when I've got him by the heels in prison.'

Annoyed at being led into a most disagreeable conversation, Caryll touched his horse with the spur and galloped ahead, leaving Sam to remark:

'I guess the boss will need to study the Nitchies at close quarters before he'll learn that they're not worth them fine feelings he's strewing round so lavish and promiscus-like. He's a good sort, though, and, for all his fine feelings, a man every inch of him—one of the best I ever struck.'

Lassie bounded on, not willing to be behind Caryll's horse, and Sam also followed briskly, so at a rattling pace the party rode without slackening until in sight of the trees in the vicinity of Silver Lake, when they dismounted, to rest and refresh the inner man with a hasty meal.

After half an hour's pause they were on horse-back again continuing the journey to the lake, which they reached in the course of a few hours.

By that time the horses were getting tired, and Pierre said: 'We must camp here for the night, for there is no telling how much our nags may want their vigour to-morrow.'

By a little creek leading to the beautiful expanse of water the three unsaddled and fed their horses, before taking supper and lying down to rest. Then, without fear or cause for fear, they rolled themselves in their blankets and went to sleep, their rifles resting on their arms, and couched on a dry and fragrant bed of prairie-grasses.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ROBES OF A CHIEF

WHEN the men rode away from Caryll's ranch Jim returned to the house to finish breakfasting, calling upon Sequa to join him; but the boy remained with Dandy, saying: 'Sequa no eat.' And there he sat for some hours watching over the horse, while Jim went off to his ploughing.

On returning to the house at midday, expecting to find dinner ready, Jim was surprised to discover that Sequa was nowhere to be seen, and that Dandy too had disappeared.

'Well, I never!' he exclaimed. 'That is the most extraordinary thing I ever thought to happen.'

He ran to the stable, thinking that the horse, having recovered, had been led there—but no such thing; and he stood in perplexed amazement.

All Sam's doubts of the Indian boy came crowding into his mind. Then he thought of Eagle-feather having been in the ravine, and he remarked mentally: 'It does look bad, to be

sure. Perhaps the boy dosed the horse, and is now off with Dandy to give his father a lift. If that's it, of course Sequa knows where the Chief is hiding. Perhaps the dog was a go-between? I've heard of the like. If Sequa has played traitor to us, Pierre need not hope to catch Eagle-feather.'

Then a slight tremor assailed Jim. Remembering that he was alone, he began to turn over in his mind the thought that the ruthless Indian who had murdered Ross was skulking near; might not he and Caryll's ranch share a like fate to Rodgers's and his companion? Sam had warned them that revenge for their interference at the sun-dance might come at any time, and the boy grew undoubtedly nervous.

But Jim, like most British-born boys, had also a good reserve-store of nerve and pluck; so he went into the house, put a few cartridges into the Winchester, and laid a supply on the window-shelf, saying: 'I'll keep a sharp look-out, anyway.'

Then Jim sat in the house for some hours, when his fears were ultimately relieved by the sight of a party of horsemen coming up to the house, the foremost of whom he recognised as Rodgers, looking very white and tired. He was

accompanied by three mounted policemen and two Indian 'trackers'; and as soon as they got within speaking distance, Rodgers called to Jim, who had come out to meet the rancher:

'Pierre the scout been here?'

'Yes, and gone with Caryll and Sam after Eagle-feather,' was the reply.

Jim told all that had taken place, also his suspicions regarding Sequa.

After a few words of consultation, two of the police with the Indians went off to search the near ravines in the hope of finding the Chief, his son, or Dandy; but after a fruitless hunt they returned to the house, when it was determined to proceed to the ruins of Rodgers's house in search of evidence to confirm the statement made by the young Indians present.

'Can you come with us?' asked the police sergeant.

'I'd like to, but I think Caryll expects me to look after his place.'

'I can leave one of my men instead of you,' suggested the officer. 'I'd like you to come along and tell Pierre (when we find him) about the Redskin's disappearance. Pierre is as good as a lawyer at cross-questioning, and will get on the right track if words will help him.'

Jim was not unwilling to change places with one of the constables, and rode away with the others.

And Sequa?

I will not attempt to say what were his thoughts when he had been left alone beside the sick horse; but as Dandy gradually revived, the stupor of inaction began to pass from the boy's brain, and the returning thought was how to help his father. With the combined cunning and bravery of his race, he determined to dare everything to save his parent; and by the time Dandy had fully recovered, a scheme had evolved in Sequa's mind—a scheme which he at once proceeded to put into action.

There was a cave by the shore of Silver Lake where the Indians were in the habit of secreting stolen articles or hunted members of their community. Only the tribe knew of it. Sequa was sure that by whichever route he went, there Eagle-feather would hide if made aware that Pierre was following. To warn the Chief, Sequa determined to run all risks; and as soon as Dandy recovered from the effects of the drug, the boy mounted and was soon flying over the prairie on Caryll's noble horse.

The grass was thick and springy, and the

horse's hoofs made no sound on the scented carpet.

As we have seen, no one observed his departure, or marked him as he crossed the plains fleet as a hunted deer. 'Sequa save Eagle-feather,' was all he said to himself, and never once did he rein his steed until he reached the border of the forest.

By that time it was night, and Dandy was breathing hard, so he paused by a spring to let his horse drink. Facing the direction in which the wind blew, Sequa then thrice uttered the weird cry of a lynx; that was a call of his tribe meaning 'Where are you?'

Scarcely had the cry ceased than it was answered by another—the hooting of an owl, also thrice repeated; and by that signal Sequa knew where to look. Speeding onwards, he came suddenly on a small clearing where three men were sleeping, each wrapped in his inevitable blanket, and the Indian immediately recognised who they were.

He quietly tied his horse to a tree at some distance from the clearing, and cautiously returned and approached the unconscious men on foot; and as he stood looking down on them, he felt a thousand old and new sensations war

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within him. By and by he remarked inwardly, as his eye caught the glimpse of the shining barrel of Pierre's rifle, the instincts of his race overmastering the more gentle traits which partial civilisation had implanted: 'If Sequa kill Fleet-foot, no other scout so clever find Red-man—Eagle-feather go free.'

He bent to grasp the weapon, hatred of the scout so well known and so dreaded overmastering him, and he muttered: 'Sequa could kill now!'

But just at that moment when the thought of murder was quickly gaining control of the young Indian's mind, Bertie, who lay nearest to where Sequa stood, turned over on his side, and the moonlight fell full upon his face, the honest, manly, kind face which had so often inspired his savage protégé with strength, consolation, and love. Caryll did not wake, though probably some warning mystic influence told his slumbering mind of Sequa's vicinity, for he murmured: 'I tell you he is brave—as brave as any of your men!'

The Indian stood transfixed, his eyes fastened on the face of Bertie, his arm half-stretched to grasp the rifle.

But it was only for a moment.

The broken words of the sleeper touched a chord that never fails to resound in every Red-man's heart—gratitude. The teaching of the White-man conquered racial hatred, and with a murmured 'Kaawin! Kaawin!' Sequa stood upright for a moment, turned his face to the heavens and moved his lips silently as though imploring Divine help in his weakness, and then he glided back to the scrub as noiselessly as he had approached.

'Sequa's friend save Fleet-foot this time,' he whispered to Dandy, as, mounting, he turned the horse to where he knew his tribe was encamped.

After pushing through a maze of forest-paths which skirt Silver Lake, Sequa caught sight of the camp-fires and ghostly outlines of the conical tents of his people, and then he dismounted, turned his horse loose to make its way back to Caryll's ranch, and very soon was standing before his father's wigwam.

The lad might have entered noiselessly, but he preferred his coming to be heard, and the moment his hand lifted the loose hide which served as a door, Eagle-feather, who was alone within, sprang to his feet and seized the gun which lay near his couch of furs.

'Father,' said Sequa, in a quiet, soft tone, and

the Chief immediately lowered his weapon, exclaiming the monosyllable 'Ha!'

'Eagle-feather must go—now!' said the youth, speaking briefly and to the point, without preamble, as is the habit of his people. Of course his words were couched in the language of his tribe, and we can only translate in part the allegorical mode by which these natural orators express their thoughts.

'Eagle-feather must go; there is darkness on his path.'

'What does the coward Sequa in the tent of Eagle-feather?' asked the Chief scornfully.

But Sequa took no outward notice of the speech, which must have wounded him deeply, and merely continued:

'Through the darkness comes the Fleet-foot of the White-man's vengeance. The gun which speaks often and always finds its mark is behind Eagle-feather.'

'Pierre the Fleet-foot?' exclaimed Eagle-feather.

'Ay—the Fleet-foot and the unerring hand.'

The Chief folded his arms. He forgot his wrath against his son in the threatened danger approaching him so near, and he spoke his thoughts aloud:

'The White-men are many, and their guns which speak many times can reach a brave wherever he hides. If Eagle-feather's young men kill Fleet-foot, soldiers take every brave and shut him in stone walls, and cast lasso about their necks as if they were dogs. The burning arrows follow far and fast. Where can Eagle-feather escape what comes like lightning and thick as snowflakes?'

'My father can escape if he lends an ear to the thought of Sequa,' said the lad, and the Chief being silent he was encouraged to go on.

'Let Eagle-feather cast the robe of a great Chief about his son.' He stopped short, and a strange spasm of pain crossed his mobile features, as, touching the plumes which dropped from his father's scalp-lock, he murmured: 'For once—for once let Sequa stand arrayed in the robe and feathers of his father. Sequa sees no more the light shine on the faces of the braves, their backs are turned to him. Yet, because the White-man's God sees a heart is brave, Sequa thinks that the robe and plumes of Eagle-feather will not be disgraced when worn by his son to-day—only to-day. Then Eagle-feather go to the cave by the lake, and the Fleet-foot will follow on the track of Sequa, who will appear

before him in the dress of a chief. Their eyes are not so keen as the Red-man's eyes. They will think that they follow Eagle-feather if they see these!' and with a light, though reverent touch, he indicated the ermine robe and fringed garments which Eagle-feather wore. 'Sequa will lead Pierre by the lake, and the Chief will escape to the hills afar.'

One of a hunted, harried folk, often resorting to such expedients, Eagle-feather at once grasped the lad's meaning, and began to divest himself of his upper clothing without a word while Sequa spoke.

'The Fleet-foot and his friends rest not far away. They will not rest long; they will soon be here! But Sequa knows all the paths by the lake. He will show himself on a bluff and then hide in a ravine; he will steal through the dusky branches, only letting them catch glimpses of the Chief's robe. Yes, Sequa will be the Chief to-day, a hunted Chief, but a brave Red-man!'

Eagle-feather paused as he was plucking the plumes from his head, and said quickly:

'But the White-men have laws for hunting. They call, and if the Chief scorns to stop till they have bound him as they bind the wild horse to its burden, *they kill*. The Fleet-foot shoots

straight. If he sees the plume of Eagle-feather, and the Chief stop not till he come — Pierre shoot.'

Sequa's large dark eyes looked into his father's face with an expression not often seen in the eyes of an Indian.

Vain were it for the fierce man to tell the meaning of that prolonged gaze of tender, holy feeling, and he added, with a cruel sarcasm in his tone as well as his words :

'The papoose who has no brave's heart in him knows that Pierre will shoot straight.'

'Eagle-feather,' said Sequa, in a low tone, 'the White-man's God gave life for wicked men. Will not Sequa give life for Sequa's father if need be?'

I said it were in vain for Eagle-feather to read the meaning in Sequa's eyes. No more could he imagine what a self-sacrifice the youth was prepared to make.

He had seen his son branded 'coward' before the eyes of his people. He thought of him as 'no brave,' but as a chicken-hearted 'papoose,' disgrace to his father whose only child he was; an outcast of the tribe of which he ought one day to have been chief.

Eagle-feather thought of all this, and he said :

'The burning arrows must have felt the dews of night in Pierre's pouch, or Sequa has stolen gun which shoots so straight and far. It cannot be that the coward who shed tears like a woman when the young men became braves at the sundance will stand before the White-man's lightning arrows. Sequa will skulk among the scrub. He will leave a crooked trail, and the rifle of the Fleet-foot will not find him. Good.'

The Chief, having divested himself of the robes and furs, flung a blanket over his shoulders, and was leaving the tent in stealthy silence when he was arrested by the discordant moan of a night-hawk repeated and repeated, each time shriller than the other.

'Hark!' said Sequa. 'The White-men have waked—they come! Let Eagle-feather find the cave by the lake close by. Give Sequa your hand, father, before you go.'

His voice was sad and pleading.

It reminded the Chief of the boy's mother who left the world so young, so beautiful, and he gave his hand to his son, who pressed it fondly.

The heart of the stern Indian softened for a moment, and he said: 'May the Great Spirit put the soul of a brave into Sequa, that the eyes of

his father and the eyes of his people may see that this is of a truth the son of Eagle-feather!'

'The Great Spirit will make Sequa a brave—the God of the White-man will help Sequa to do well,' was the youth's reply; and then the Chief stole away, while the lad hastily dressed himself in his father's royal garments, after which he stepped boldly out to meet the scout and his companions.

CHAPTER XIX

BURNING ARROWS

THE White-men were early afoot, and on their way to the wigwams when Eagle-feather stole off in the opposite direction.

A swift run of ten minutes brought him to some crags jutting out into the lake, and clambering up one of these, he disappeared behind a sharp ledge on its face, which was the entrance to the cave indicated by Sequa. It was almost impossible that any person who did not know of its existence could find this retreat, and the Chief believed himself to be quite safe in the meantime. He even felt secure enough to peep round the ledge at times, and as the crags were high and overlooked a wide stretch of both land and water, the Chief could observe part of what was going on in the vicinity of the Indian camp.

He saw the three White-men pass from their resting-place and ride to the wigwams, and as they approached, dusky forms seemed to start

out of the earth and follow; so that in a short time all the tribe were hovering round the scout and his companions, watching keenly their every movement, but speaking no word, offering no assistance.

When they reached Eagle-feather's tent, Pierre called:

'Is there any one in this teepee?'

No answer being given, he said to Sam:

'Will you go and look? Not that I expect to find him there.'

Sam was off his horse in a moment and entered the tent, only to quickly reappear, saying:

'Eagle-feather can't be far off. He has been in his teepee all night.'

'How do you know that?' asked Pierre.

'The robes he sleeps on are lying as if lately used. His hunting-knife is there by the pillow, and he had it in his hands yesterday when I saw him in the ravine.'

Pierre turned to the Indians.

'Where is the Chief?' he demanded sternly. 'He skulks and hides like a thieving fox when Pierre comes, for he knows he has broken the law. But you know that hiding from me is useless. Bring me to where Eagle-feather is concealed.'

'We do not know where the Chief has gone,' replied an Indian who stood near by.

'You can find him, and you must,' said Pierre, in the same stern voice in which he had before spoken, at the same time letting his hand drop, as if by accident, on the rifle which lay across the pommel of his saddle.

The Indians exchanged a few words among themselves, and then an old man came forward as spokesman for the others.

'The young men have not forked tongues, and they do not know where Eagle-feather has gone. He rested in his teepee and has vanished with the rising of the sun.'

'Now, hark you,' said Pierre. 'You have a hiding-place somewhere around these parts. I have not taken the trouble to find it, because when any one was hid there whom I wanted you have known it was wisest to give him to me. Send the young men to that place, and I think you will find the Chief there. Bring him to me, or guide me to him, or else—well, you know what will happen.'

An uneasy movement among the Red-men showed that they were hesitating, that Pierre had guessed what was likely the fact, and that they feared his threats.

'In five minutes,' and his voice rang out with implacable resolve, 'in five minutes I must be face to face with Eagle-feather.'

'Hi!' Sam shouted; 'there he is!' And he pointed to a bluff some little distance away, where all saw the figure of the Chief in robe and feathers stand for a moment before plunging into the scrub, which was very thick in those parts.

The White-men were out of their saddles in less time than it takes to relate the action, for they knew it would be impossible to follow through the bushes on horseback, and then they ran towards the bluff, while the Indians stood with their usual apathetic manner and watched what would happen next.

There was another watcher of that scene, and that was Eagle-feather. He said with angry contempt to himself:

'Ha! Sequa knows how to skulk and hide and keep out of harm's way. He leads them over serpent trail, now here, now there, but never too near.'

Sequa did indeed lead them a pretty dance for a time, then the sharp brain of the man-hunter quickly devised a plan for ending the matter.

He led his companions to a certain spot where he had last caught a glimpse of the waving

plumes. Telling them to pursue in that direction, he turned back and, stooping low, ran to another point where it was probable the hunted man would pass when he doubled back. Here Pierre crouched with every sense alert, and in a few minutes a glimpse of the Chief's robe showed that his ruse had been successful.

But the wearer of that robe, though a mere tyro at such deadly games, had as keen a vision as the scout, and he caught sight of the shining rifle-barrel in his enemy's hand.

Turning sharp off, Sequa darted down towards the shore, and remembering that a canoe lay in the creek, and that he could play off his disguise more safely if he were on the water beyond rifle-shot, he dashed on regardless of the call sent after him.

'Stop! I command you to stop, Eagle-feather!'

Caryll heard the shout, and with Sam ran to a little elevation where they could see the chase.

It was only then, when he saw his son fly down the clearing with Pierre after him, that Eagle-feather realised the boy's danger, and he stood up on a crag, straining his sight on the running figures.

'Foolish Sequa, fling off the robe! Run faster!'

(4,198)

muttered the Chief. 'Fling off the robe!' he repeated, as if his son could hear the order.

If Sequa could have heard he would not have obeyed the command. For answer he gathered the fur mantle yet closer about him, so that it muffled the greater part of his face and, of course, impeded his progress.

When he reached the canoe, Pierre was overtaking him rapidly; but now the scout saw what the Indian meant to do.

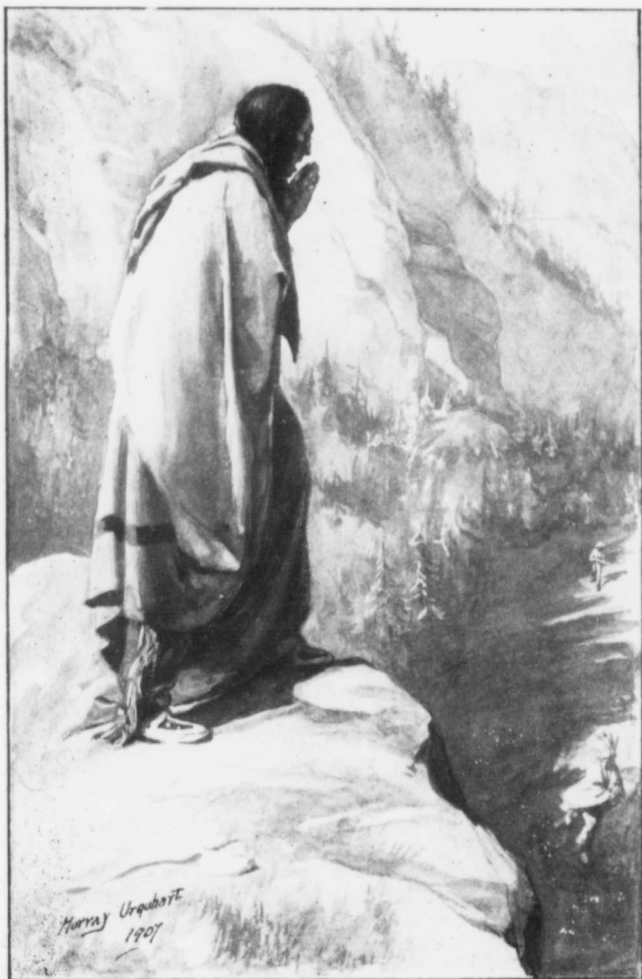
'Stop!' he shouted again. 'Stop, or I fire!'

But Sequa heeded not the order—merely leaned to the canoe and commenced to unfasten the cord which held it to the shore.

Pierre paused one moment, took aim, and the burning arrow which he boasted had never missed its mark when his hand sent it on an errand found that mark in Sequa's body.

A wild shriek of agony burst on the air as the echo to the shot, and the robes of a chief dropped from the youth's shoulders as he fell forward in the water.

The scout had been through many a strange adventure in his dealings with savage and wicked men; he had shed his fellow-mortals' blood many a time in wielding the strong arm of the law; he had seen many a poor sinner gasp forth his life



'Foolish Sequa, fling off the robe! run faster!' (page 202).

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forfeit to outraged society's demands. The scenes of violence he had seen and shared, the rough, brutal men with whom he had come in contact, the very nature of the man, had made him callous in some ways; but I dare say nothing in all his wild and wide experience had ever come so near breaking down his nerve as did the deed which he had just committed.

When the boy fell Pierre sprang forward and saw at a glance that the slight form lying motionless in the water was not that of Eagle-feather; but when he lifted Sequa up and saw the boy's face, the whole tragedy flashed in one vivid picture before his mind, and in bitter remorse he cried out:

'Oh! what have I done? Poor lad—poor noble boy!'

He laid his hand on Sequa's chest, and was unspeakably thankful to feel there was still life here; but it was a mere feeble flutter, and the blood was oozing from the cruel wound in his side.

Laying him gently on the fur mantle which had dropped on the sand, Pierre shouted:

'Caryll! Haste! Come quickly!'

Caryll was not far off. He and Sam had seen all, and though the latter's keen vision had

instantly discovered when the robe fell from the lad that that slender figure did not belong to Eagle-feather, they neither of them guessed anything near the truth. They only felt sure that some woful mischance had taken place, and did not require Pierre's urgent cry to bring them to the spot.

The shot and the wild scream were each heard by the tribe, and they came trooping in the White-men's wake, to find the scout kneeling beside the senseless form they had scoffed and called a coward.

The Indians did not guess the facts as Pierre had done, and they stood wondering and silent as Bertie went near. Recognising his protégé at a glance when within a few feet, Caryll rushed forward and threw himself on his knees beside the outstretched youth, crying out: 'Sequa! My boy Sequa! Oh, how came he here?'

'For mercy's sake, boss,' said Sam hoarsely, for he too saw who it was lying before them, 'don't waste time in questions, but get to work with your doctoring. He's alive, and you must mend that hole in his side!'

The dearly loved voice roused Sequa then, and his dark eyes opened full on the pitying face which bent over his.

Sequa smiled. 'Good white brave loves Sequa,' he murmured; 'Sequa happy. Sequa wore the robes of a chief, and Sequa die for Eagle-feather.'

'Look to his wound, I beseech you!' pleaded the scout. 'See, the blood is pouring out!' And he stood up, turning away his head, sick at heart for what he had done, while Sam and Bertie gently drew off the boy's upper garments, and the latter carefully examined the wound.

Alas! the burning arrow had flown straight. The bullet had lodged in the left lung, tearing its way through vital parts, and Sequa's minutes were numbered.

As Sam removed the coat a long weed dropped from one of the pockets, and as he picked it up the description of the poison plant given by Pierre as they rode along on the previous morning came back to his mind.

Unobserved by the others, he quietly slipped the root into his own pocket, thinking, as he did so, that he could have borne to have every horse on the ranch poisoned, rather than see that boy lying dying there. For to Sam also had come in a moment full knowledge of Sequa's self-sacrifice.

CHAPTER XX

SEQUA, THE BRAVE

'SEQUA, do you feel pain?' Bertie asked; and the boy answered: 'The Good Spirit no torture flesh when He make brave. Sequa feel nothing—only happy that Eagle-feather no——'

'Eagle-feather is here!' said a voice, and the Chief himself came into the circle. 'White-men, stand back and let the father look on his young brave.'

All drew away except Bertie, who still held Sequa in his arms, and as the Chief stooped down to look in his son's face, Caryll said: 'Ay, look at him—he has given his life for you—the most heroic brave of you all—my boy Sequa.'

'Oh,' Sequa said, with a rising fear disturbing the calm approaching death, 'will Pierre accept Sequa's life, and let Eagle-feather go free?'

'Eagle-feather is not deserving of death,' said one of the Indians present at this juncture. 'The Fleet-foot ran too fast; he said the thing that is not. Two young braves were with Eagle-feather on the prairie, and saw from afar the White-

man's teepee burning. The young braves have gone to tell this to the soldiers.'

Pierre groaned aloud, saying: 'God forgive me!' but no one paid heed to him. All interest was centred on the boy, who lay smiling in his friend's face and murmuring: 'Sequa happy. Good Spirit love Sequa, and forgive him if he do wrong.'

Bertie's tears were falling by that time, for he knew that there was no hope of saving his protégé; but he strove to speak cheerful words to him, and then he asked:

'Is there anything I can do for you, Sequa, now or when you have gone to the Good Spirit and His Son, whose noble example you have tried so well to follow and whose love is with you now? Tell me, can I do anything?'

'Comfort Eagle-feather, and — tell Sequa's people—Sequa no coward.'

Bertie could not answer, for before his mind there rose the other scene in this short life, when Sequa lay on the ground and cried to God in his extremity. But Eagle-feather also heard what his son said, and standing to his full height, while his features worked with emotion which he struggled vainly to hide, he said in a loud tone which could be heard by all around him:

'Red-men, behold the son of Eagle-feather, whom you mocked and branded as a coward. His heart is bold; he has the soul of a warrior. Pierre shoot straight and never miss. He go out to hunt a chief as he would a coyote, with gun and evil words. The Fleet-foot go fast, but Sequa go faster and come to his father's wigwam. He tell the Chief hide while Sequa wear the Chief's robe and feathers, and cast a veil over Pierre's eyes. Eagle-feather not think that Pierre will shoot, but Sequa *know* he will, yet say no word to the Chief——' He stopped. He could add no more, but he stooped, and wrapping the robe around the inert form which lay on it, he raised his son to his bosom, and, fronting them all, again cried out:

'Sequa give life for his father. Sequa no coward—*Sequa a Brave!*'

The boy raised his languid head one moment, glanced around on the assembly with a faint, yet tranquil smile, and then he met Bertie's eyes, on which his own rested until his head fell back on the Chief's shoulder.

'The poor lad's gone,' said Sam, in a broken voice, and at these words Eagle-feather turned the still head to look at it, and knew that his son was gone.

All the fierce self-control upon which the

Indians pride themselves bade Eagle-feather restrain every sign of emotion, and, still bearing the lifeless form in his arms, he walked slowly towards his wigwam.

The others followed at a short distance—Bertie quite broken with grief, Sam and the scout hardly less affected. Pierre was filled with remorse, and the Texan with a host of agitating thoughts.

'I guess,' said Sam, 'I've been uncommon hard on those Reds. There was I, talking and thinking all those years of my Joe's death, breathing fire and slaughter at the Indians, and telling how the kid was so noble and brave and gave his life for mine. You know all about that, Pierre. And now, after slanging these poor varmints all the time, paying them out all I could, here comes a poor frightened boy of them and does just what Joe did—just as brave and Christian a lad as Joe—and he only a Redskin.'

'I'd freely give my life this minute to have that cartridge back in my rifle,' said Pierre.

By that time Eagle-feather had gone into his teepee with the body of his son, and all felt that they ought not to follow.

'What shall we do now, boss?' Sam asked. 'Shall I bring up the horses and finish this

unfortunate expedition by riding home again? Wish we'd never come out.'

'I will wait to see my boy laid to rest,' answered Bertie.

At that moment their attention was drawn to a party of horsemen riding rapidly towards the camp, and in a short time Rodgers and Jim, with the police sergeant and the two Indians, joined the group.

'What has happened? Is the Chief killed?' cried Rodgers, seeing by the looks of the assembly that something serious had taken place.

'Eagle-feather is not hurt,' said the scout, 'but I've done worse than kill him.' Then in a few words he told what had happened.

Meanwhile Jim had left his horse and gone to Caryll, sure by his expression that something must have moved him deeply; and when the story of Sequa's death was told, Jim said no word, but put out his hand, which Bertie grasped, whispering as he did so: 'Thank God, I've got you, Jim.'

'You have heard, Pierre, that Eagle-feather had no part in that business at my ranch?' said Rodgers.

'So the Indians tell us,' answered the scout.

'It is true, and I have unmistakable evidence, as Sergeant Colston will tell you.'

'Yes,' said the man to whom Rodgers referred. 'When these young Indians came in to tell us that they and the Chief were together and witnessed the fire from a distance, I did not consider their word enough, so Mr. Rodgers and I agreed we would take them with us and follow you to the Caryll ranch first, where we expected to hear which way you had gone. After that we went to Mr. Rodgers's place to see what evidence we could find of how the fire originated.

'The man Ross was a drinking man, and Mr. Rodgers says he had been to the town and got liquor there, and hid it in his lean-to. There is no doubt that he burned Kearns's shakabout himself, and we thought he might have done the same by his benefactor's house.

'Well, we found the metal stand of a large paraffin-lamp in the grip of a corpse—or, rather, the charred bones—and those remains are lying where his bed was; there is a broken spirit-jar in the same place. The thing is as plain as it can be.'

'It is plain, and I have done a great wrong,' replied the scout.

'There is another matter that has been explained,' Rodgers resumed. 'The young Indians told me that a party of their tribe had fallen in with my horses and annexed them that time

when we went out tracking. Eagle-feather met the party and insisted that they should leave the horses with him to restore to their owner, who would soon be out in search of them. So I had wronged the Chief all along.' Here the speaker paused and drew a long breath.

'Say, boss,' said Sam, 'I guess you'll be called to doctor up Rodgers soon—there he goes!' and Sam sprang forward to assist Rodgers to the ground as he reeled in his saddle.

'I'm done up, and that's a truth,' said the rancher. 'I've lost a lot of blood. Can you get me a drink? and I'll rest a bit.'

He lay down on the grass, and an Indian brought him a draught of cold tea, while Sam, hoping to divert Bertie's thoughts and get him home, said: 'Really, boss, we need a doctor. You must take Rodgers home while he can move; the poor chap has no roof of his own to cover his head, you know.'

Caryll roused himself at these words, and gave attention to his friend.

'Sam is right,' he said. 'You will be in a fever before long if you are not in a comfortable bed with something from my medicine-box before night. Give me one hour more, and after that we will go home—for of course my home must be yours, Rodgers.'

Without waiting for an answer, Caryll then walked to the wigwam and, softly lifting the door curtain, passed in.

Sequa was lying as before—wrapped in his father's robe—his face still wearing its last smile. Eagle-feather sat by the body gazing at it, and did not move his eyes when Bertie entered.

'Chief,' said the young man softly, 'I loved your son, and he loved me. I desire to be present when he is laid to rest. My friend who dealt hardly by you, and was wounded by you, is here needing rest and care for his wounds; I would take him home, but I cannot go while my boy Sequa lies here.'

'I would not say one hard word at such a time as this. I would only say that Sequa learned to love the God of our people, and to return good for evil. He could not bear savage torture, but he could give his life for you. I know, Chief, that you love your son now, and will please his happy spirit by showing that you too can learn a Christian creed. Let me go in a short time with the man who judged you wrongly, that I may ease his pain. I cannot go while Sequa lies there. I must see him buried as we Christians bury our dead. He was a Christian, and would have it so.'

'As you will,' replied the Chief.

'May I tell your young men to dig his grave near the spot where he gave his life for you?'

The father bowed his head in assent, and Caryll went out to give instructions. Then soon returning, the young man laid his hand on the Chief's arm.

'Sequa bade me comfort you, but I have no comforting words to say. May the Good Spirit that he loved and followed comfort you, and lead you to your son. Come now, Chief, let us carry him to his rest.'

They took up the body in the robe, and slowly passed out of the tent. With bowed heads they walked, followed by all the Indians, to the spot where the grave was ready, and there Eagle-feather and Caryll gently laid the boy.

As the father drew a corner of the mantle across Sequa's face to cover it for ever, Bertie solemnly said: 'Into the keeping of God we give our dead in sure and certain hope.'

The brief, solemn duty was ended, and the White-men rode away in silence.

When they had left the Indian camp some miles, the sergeant, with Pierre, went off in a more direct route to the fort, leaving the others to go on to Caryll's ranch. And there, in attending to Rodgers, and receiving the devoted attention of Jim, Bertie was eased in part of his sorrow.

But it was some days before he could bear to talk of all that had happened.

During the days of convalescence, Rodgers—always frank and confidential with Bertie from the first—told him how it was that he was from home when Ross came by his tragic end.

‘The poor rascal could not live without drink, and more than once I found that he had brought some from the town, and hid it in his lean-to. It was smuggled of course, and I threatened to inform on him if it were repeated, but my threats only had the effect of making him more wary in hiding the liquor.

‘Then, Caryll, one night when I was very depressed he came back from town, and seeing how I felt, brought in some whisky and begged me to have a little. I was seized with a sudden awful temptation, and very nearly lost myself. But I fought with the enemy, whistling “Annie Laurie” all the time, and that brought me round. I rushed away from the house, called Bess, and jumped on her back without saddle or bridle. My only ambition was to get away—miles, miles,—and off I went in a mad flight over the prairie. I rode far till I reached a poplar grove. There I got off and lay down on the grass for a time. I felt exhausted, Caryll, but—*I had won*. After a long time I got on my broncho again, and

turned for home—armed and strong in heart, but perplexed how to deal with Ross. It was when returning that I met Eagle-feather. You know the rest.'

'I quite understand how you felt, old man,' said Bertie. 'But I do not wonder you feel depressed and troubled living all alone like that—for Ross, of course, was no company for you. However, that's all done with now. We're going to add another chum to the Caryll ranch, and that chum will be you.'

The generous scheme was afterwards adopted, and the new partner proved a distinct success.

Sam never told any one of the weed he had found in Sequa's pocket. After examining it, and then casting it away, he had remarked to himself:

'I did that poor Redskin a mighty injustice, and I guess the best I can do is to let the boss believe, as he truly does, that Sequa had no hand in Dandy's sickness. If that was the worst the poor coon ever did, I wish I had as little to answer for. Yes, I guess the boss needn't hear any more about that 'ere job—and don't you forget it, neither, Sam.'

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