The Red Man's Revenge
Vol.I

By
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The Red Man's Revenge

Chapter One.
A Tale of the Red River Flood.
Opens the Ball.

If ever there was a man who possessed a gem in the form of a daughter of nineteen, that man was Samuel Ravenshaw; and if ever there was a girl who owned a bluff, jovial, fiery, hot-tempered, irascible old father, that girl was Elsie Ravenshaw.

Although a gem, Elsie was exceedingly imperfect. Had she been the reverse she would not have been worth writing about.

Old Ravenshaw, as his familiars styled him, was a settler, if we may use such a term in reference to one who was, perhaps, among the most unsettled of men. He had settled with his family on the banks of the Red River. The colony on that river is now one of the frontier towns of Canada. At the time we write of, it was a mere oasis in the desert, not even an offshoot of civilisation, for it owed its existence chiefly to the fact that retiring servants of the Hudson’s Bay Fur Company congregated there to spend the evening of life, far beyond the Canadian boundary, in the heart of that great wilderness where they had spent their working days, and on the borders of that grand prairie where the red man and the buffalo roamed at will, and the conventionalities of civilised life troubled them not.

To this haven of rest Samuel Ravenshaw had retired, after spending an active life in the service of the fur-traders, somewhat stiffened in the joints by age

and a rough career, and a good deal soured in disposition because of promotion having, as he thought, been too long deferred.

Besides Elsie, old Ravenshaw possessed some other gems of inferior lustre. His wife Maggie, a stout, well-favoured lady, with an insufficient intellect and unbounded good humour, was of considerable intrinsic value, but highly unpolished. His second daughter, Cora, was a thin slip of sixteen years, like her mother in some respectspretty, attractive, and disposed to take life easily. His eldest son, Victor, a well-grown lad of fourteen, was a rough diamond, if a diamond at all, with a soul centred on sport. His second son, Anthony, between five and six, was large and robust, like his father. Not having been polished at that time, it is hard to say what sort of gem Tony was. When engaged in mischiefhis besetting foiblehis eyes shone like carbuncles with unholy light. He was the plague of the family. Of course, therefore, he was the beloved of his parents.

Such were the chief inmates of Willow Creek, as old Ravenshaw styled his house and property.

It was midwinter. The owner of Willow Creek stood at his parlour window, smoking and gazing. There was not much to look at, for snow had overwhelmed and buried the landscape, fringed every twig of the willows, and obliterated the frozen river.

Elsie was seated by the stove, embroidering a pair of moccasins.

“Victor is bringing down some of the lads to shoot to-day, father,” she said, casting a furtive glance at her sire.

“Humph! that boy does nothing but shoot,” growled the old man, who was a giant in body if not in spirit. “Who all is he bringing?”

“There’s John Flett, and David Mowat, and Sam Hayes, and Herr Winklemann, and Ian Macdonald, and Louis Lambertall the best shots, I suppose,” said Elsie, bending over her work.

“The best shots!” cried Mr Ravenshaw, turning from the window with a sarcastic laugh. “Louis Lambert, indeed, and Winklemann are crack shots, and John Flett is not bad, but the others are poor hands. Mowat can only shoot straight with a crooked gun, and as for that half-cracked schoolmaster, Jan Macdonald, he would miss a barn door at fifty paces unless he were to shut his eyes and fire at random, in which case he’d have some chance”

“Here they is; the shooters is comin’. Hooray!” shouted Master Anthony Ravenshaw, as he burst into the room with a scalping-knife in one hand and a

wooden gun in the other. “An’ I’s goin’ to shoot too, daddy!”

“So you are, Tony, my boy!” cried the old trader, catching up the pride of his heart in his strong arms and tossing him towards the ceiling. “You shall shoot before long with a real gun.”

Tony knocked the pipe out of his father’s mouth, and was proceeding to operate on his half-bald head with the scalping-knife, when Cora, who entered the room at the moment, sprang forward and wrenched the weapon from his grasp.

“We’ll give them dinner after the shooting is over, shan’t we, father?” asked Cora.

“Of course, my dear, of course,” replied the hospitable old gentleman, giving the pride of his heart a sounding kiss as he put him down. “Set your mother to work on a pie, and get Miss Trim to help you with a lot of those cakes you make so famously.”

As he spoke there was a sudden clattering in the porch. The young men were taking off their snow-shoes and stamping the snow from off their leggings and moccasined feet.

“Here we are, father!” cried a bright, sturdy youth, as he ushered in his followers. “Of course Elsie has prepared you for our sudden invasion. The fact is that we got up the match on the spur of the moment, because I found that Ian had a holiday.”

“No explanation required, Victor. Glad to see you all, boys. Sit down,” said Mr Ravenshaw, shaking hands all round.

The youths who were thus heartily welcomed presented a fine manly appearance. They were clad in the capotes, leggings, fur caps, moccasins, and fingerless mittens usually worn by the men of the settlement in winter.

That tall handsome fellow, with the curly black hair and flashing eyes, who bears himself so confidently as he greets the sisters, is Louis Lambert. The thickset youth behind him, with the shock of flaxen hair and imperceptible moustache, is Herr Winklemann, a German farmer’s son, and a famed buffalo-hunter. The ungainly man, of twenty-four apparentlyor thereaboutswith the plain but kindly face, and the frame nearly as strong as that of the host himself, is Ian Macdonald. In appearance he is a rugged backwoodsman. In reality he is the schoolmaster of that part of the widely-scattered colony.

The invitation to sit down was not accepted. Daylight was short-lived in those

regions at that season of the year. They sallied forth to the work in hand.

“You’ve had the target put up, Cora?” asked Victor, as he went out.

“Yes, in the old place.”

“Where is Tony?”

“I don’t know,” said Cora, looking round. “He was here just now, trying to scalp father.”

“You’ll find him at the target before you, no doubt,” said Elsie, putting away her moccasins as she rose to aid in the household preparations.

The target was placed against the bank of the river, so that the bullets might find a safe retreat. The competitors stood at about a hundred yards’ distance in front of it. The weapons used were single-barrelled smooth-bores, with flint locks. Percussion locks had not at that time come into fashion, and long ranges had not yet been dreamed of.

“Come, open the ball, Lambert,” said Victor.

The handsome youth at once stepped forward, and old Mr Ravenshaw watched him with an approving smile as he took aim. Puff! went the powder in the pan, but no sound followed save the peal of laughter with which the miss-fire was greeted. The touch-hole was pricked, and next time the ball sped to its mark. It hit the target two inches above the bull’s-eye.

The “well done” with which the shot was hailed was cut short by an appalling yell, and little Tony was seen to tumble from behind the target. Rolling head over heels, he curled himself round in agony, sprang up with a spasmodic bound, dropped upon his haunches, turned over a complete somersault, fell on his back with a fearful shriek, and lay dead upon the snow!

The whole party rushed in consternation towards the boy, but before they had reached him he leaped up and burst into a fit of gleeful laughter, which ended in a cheer and a savage war-whoop as he scampered up the track which led to the house, and disappeared over the brow of the river’s bank.

“The imp was joking!” exclaimed Mr Ravenshaw, as he stopped and wiped the cold perspiration from his brow.

At that moment a Red Indian appeared on the scene, in his blanket robe, paint, and feathers. Attracted by the shot, he had come to look on. Now, the old fur-trader’s nerves had received a tremendous shock, and the practical jest which the pride of his heart had perpetrated had roused the irascibility of his nature,

so that an explosion became unavoidable. In these circumstances the arrival of the Indian seemed opportune, for the old gentleman knew that this particular savage was a chief, and had visited the colony for the purpose of making inquiries into the new religion reported to be taught by certain white men in black garments; and Mr Ravenshaw, besides having very little regard for missionaries, had a very strong contempt for those Indians who became their disciples. He therefore relieved himself on the red man.

“What do you want here, Petawanaquat?” he demanded sternly, in the language of the Indian.

“The Little Wolf,” replied the Indian, referring to himself, for such was the interpretation of his name, “wishes to see how his white brothers shoot.”

“Let the Little Wolf put his tail between his legs and be gone,” cried the angry old man. “He is not wanted here. Come, be off!”

The chief looked straight in the eyes of the trader with a dark scowl, then, turning slowly on his heel, stalked solemnly away.

There was an irrepressible laugh at this episode as the group of marksmen returned to their former position. Mr Ravenshaw, however, soon left them and returned home. Here he found Miss Trim in a state of considerable agitation; she had just encountered the redskin! Miss Trim was a poor relation of Mrs Ravenshaw. She had been invited by her brother-in-law to leave England and come to Red River to act as governess to Tony and assistant-companion in the family. She had arrived that autumn in company with a piano, on which she was expected to exercise Elsie and Cora. Petawanaquat, being the first “really wild and painted savage” she had seen, made a deep impression on her.

“Oh, Mr Ravenshaw, I have seen such an object in the garden!” she exclaimed, in a gushing torrentshe always spoke in a torrent“and it was all I could do to stagger into the house without fainting. Such eyes! with black cheeks and a red noseat least, it looked red, but I was in such a state that I couldn’t make sure whether it was the nose or the chin, and my shoe came off as I ran away, having broken the tie in the morning. And such a yell as it gave!the creature, not the shoe-tiebut I escaped, and peeped out of the upper windowthe one in the gable, you know, with the green blind, where you can see the garden from end to end, and I found it had disappeared, though I can’t understand”

“Tut, tut, Miss Trim; how you do gallop! Was it a beast?” asked the old trader.

“A beast? No; a mana savage.”

“Oh! I understand; it was that scoundrel Petawanaquat,” said Sam Ravenshaw,

with a laugh; “he’s Little Wolf by name, and a big thief by practice, no doubt. You needn’t fear him, however, he’s not so dangerous as he looks, and I gave him a rebuff just now that will make him shy of Willow Creek.Ha, Tony, you rascal! Come here, sir.”

Tony came at once, with such a gleeful visage that his father’s intended chastisement for the recent practical joke ended in a parental caress.

Bitterly did Ian Macdonald repent of his agreeing to join the shooting party that day. Owing to some defect in his vision or nervous system, he was a remarkably bad shot, though in everything else he was an expert and stalwart backwoodsman, as well as a good scholar. But when his friend Victor invited him he could not refuse, because it offered him an opportunity of spending some time in the society of Elsie Ravenshaw, and that to him was heaven upon earth! Little of her society, however, did the unfortunate teacher enjoy that day, for handsome Louis Lambert engrossed not only Elsie, but the mother and father as well. He had beaten all his competitors at the target, but, to do him justice, did not boast of that; neither did he make any reference to the fact that Ian had twice missed the target, though he did not spare the bad shooting of some of the other youths; this, no doubt, because he and Ian had been fast friends for many years. Jealousyat least on the part of Iannow seemed about to interfere with the old friendship. Moreover, Lambert had brought to Mrs Ravenshaw a gift of a collar made of the claws of a grizzly bear, shot by himself in the Rocky Mountains. Elsie admired the collar with genuine interest, and said she would give anything to possess one like it. Cora, with the coquettishness of sixteen, said, with a laugh and a blush, that she would not accept such a ridiculous thing if it were offered to her. Ian Macdonald groaned in spirit, for, with his incapacity to shoot, he knew that Elsie’s wish could never be gratified by him.

Seeing that Lambert was bent on keeping Elsie as much as possible to himself, Ian devoted himself to Cora, but Cora was cross. Feeling it up-hill work, he soon rose to say good-bye, and left Willow Creek before the others.

“Don’t look so crestfallen, man,” said old Mr Ravenshaw heartily, as he shook hands; “it’s nobler work to teach the young idea how to shoot than to be able to hit a bull’s-eye.”

“True, but he who cannot hit a bull’s-eye,” returned Ian, with a smile, “can scarcely be expected to touch a maiden’sI mean a grizzly’s heart.”

A shout of laughter from Lambert greeted him as he left the house. His way home lay over the frozen bed of the river. Victor accompanied him part of the way.

“That was a strange slip for an unromantic fellow like you to make about a maiden’s heart, Ian,” said Victor, looking up at the rugged countenance of his friend.

“‘Unromantic,’ eh? Well, I suppose I am.”

“Of course you are,” said Victor, with the overweening assurance of youth. “Come, let’s sit down here for a few minutes and discuss the point.”

He sat down on a snowdrift; Ian kicked off his snowshoes and leaned against the bank.

“You’re the most grave, sensible, good-natured, matter-of-fact, unsentimental, unselfish fellow I ever met with,” resumed Victor. “If you were a romantic goose I wouldn’t like you half as much as I do.”

“Men are sometimes romantic without being geese,” returned Ian; “but I have not time to discuss that point just now. Tell me, for I am anxious about it, have you spoken to your father about selling the field with the knoll to my father?”

“Yes, and he flatly refused to sell it. I’m really sorry, Ian, but you know how determined my father is. Once he says a thing he sticks to it, even though it should be to his own disadvantage.”

“That’s bad, Victor, very bad. It will raise ill-blood between them, and estrange our families. You think there’s no chance?”

“None whatever.”

“One more word before we part. Do you know much about that redskin whom your father called Petawanaquat?”

“Not much, except that he has come from a considerable distance to make inquiries, he says, about the Christian religion. He has been prowling about our place for a few days, and father, who has no great love to missionaries, and has strong suspicions of converted Indians, has twice treated him rather roughly.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, Victor. These fellows are sometimes very revengeful. If you’ll be advised by me you’ll keep a sharp eye upon Petawanaquat. There, I’ll say no more. You know I’m not an alarmist. Good-bye.”

“Good-bye, old boy.”

“I say.”

“Well?”

“It was an awfully bad shot, that last of mine.”

“It was,” admitted Victor, with a laugh, “to miss a thing as big as a door at a hundred yards is only so-so.”

“No chance of improvement, I fear,” said Ian, with a sigh.

“Oh, don’t say that,” replied Victor. “Practice, perseverance, and patience, you know, overcome every”

“Yes, yes. I know that well. Good-bye.” They shook hands again, and were soon striding over the snow to their respective homes.

Chapter Two.
Conflicting Elements and a Catastrophe.

Hoary winter passed away, and genial spring returned to rejoice the land.

In a particularly amiable frame of mind, old Ravenshaw went out one morning to smoke.

Everything had gone well that morning. Breakfast had been punctual; appetite good; rheumatics in abeyance; the girls lively; and Miss Trim less of a torrent than was her wont. Mrs Ravenshaw’s intellect had more than once almost risen to the ordinary human average, and Master Tony had been betterperhaps it were more correct to say less wickedthan usual.

Old Ravenshaw was what his friends styled a heavy smoker, so was his kitchen chimney; but then the chimney had the excuse of being compelled to smoke, whereas its owner’s insane act was voluntary.

Be not afraid, reader. We have no intention of entering into an argument with smokers. They are a pigheaded generation. We address those who have not yet become monomaniacs as regards tobacco.

In order to the full enjoyment of his pipe, the old gentleman had built on a knoll what Elsie styled a summer-house. Regardless of seasons, howeveras he was of most thingsher father used this temple at all seasons of the year, and preferred to call it a smoking box. Now, as this smoking-box, with its surroundings, had much to do with the issues of our story, we bring it under particular notice. It resembled a large sentry-box, and the willow-clad knoll on which it stood was close to the river. Being elevated slightly above the rest of the country, a somewhat extended view of river and plain was obtainable therefrom. Samuel Ravenshaw loved to contemplate this view through the

medium of smoke. Thus seen it was hazy and in accord with his own idea of most things. The sun shone warmly into the smoking-box. It sparkled on the myriad dew-drops that hung on the willows, and swept in golden glory over the rolling plains. The old gentleman sat down, puffed, and was happy. The narcotic influence operated, and the irascible demon in his breast fell sound asleep.

How often do bright sunshine and profound calm precede a storm? Is not that a truismif not a newism. The old gentleman had barely reduced himself to quiescence, and the demon had only just begun to snore, when a cloud, no bigger than a man's body, arose on the horizon. Gradually it drew near, partially obscured the sky, and overshadowed the smoking-box in the form of Angus Macdonald, the father of Ian. (The demon ceased snoring!)

"Coot tay to you, sir," said Angus. "You will pe enchoyin' your pipe this fine mornin'."

"Yes, Angus, I am," replied Ravenshaw, with as much urbanity as he could assumeand it wasn't much, for he suspected the cause of his neighbour's visit"you'd better sit down and light your own."

Angus accepted the invitation, and proceeded to load with much deliberation.

Now it must be known that the Highlander loved the view from that knoll as much as did his neighbour. It reminded him of the old country where he had been born and bred on a hill-top. He coveted that willow knoll intensely, desiring to build a house on it, and, being prosperous, was willing to give for it more than its value, for his present dwelling lay somewhat awkwardly in the creek, a little higher up the river, so that the willows on the knoll interfered vexatiously with his view.

"It's a peautiful spote this!" observed Angus, after a few preliminary puffs.

"It is," answered the old trader curtly, (and the demon awoke).

Angus made no rejoinder for a few minutes, but continued to puff great clouds with considerable emphasis from his compressed lips. Mr Ravenshaw returned the fire with interest.

"It'll no pe for sellin' the knowl, ye are?" said Angus.

The demon was fairly roused now.

"No, Angus Macdonald," said the trader sternly, "I'll not sell it. I've told you already more than once, and it is worse than ill-judged, it is impertinent of you to come bothering me to part with my land."

“Ho! inteed!” exclaimed Angus, rising in wrath, and cramming his pipe into his vest pocket; “it is herself that will pe pothering you no more spout your dirty land, Samyool Ruvnshaw.”

He strode from the spot with a look of ineffable scorn, and the air of an offended chieftain.

Old Ravenshaw tried to resume his tranquillity, but the demon was self-willed, and tobacco had lost its power. There were more clouds, however, in store for him that morning.

It so fell out that Ian Macdonald, unable to bear the suspense of uncertainty any longer, and all ignorant of his father’s visit to the old trader, had made up his mind to bring things to a point that very morning by formally asking permission to pay his addresses to Elsie Ravenshaw. Knowing the old man’s habits, he went straight to the smoking-box. If he had set out half an hour sooner he would have met his own father and saved himself trouble. As it was, they missed each other.

Mr Ravenshaw had only begun to feel slightly calmed when Ian presented himself, with a humble, propitiatory air. The old man hated humility in every form, even its name. He regarded it as a synonym for hypocrisy. The demon actually leaped within him, but the old man had a powerful will. He seized his spiritual enemy, throttled, and held him down.

“Good-morning, Mr Ravenshaw.”

“Good-morning.”

Nothing more was said by either for a few minutes. Ian was embarrassed. He had got up a set speech and forgotten it. He was shy, but he was also resolute. Drawing himself up suddenly he said, with an earnest, honest look, “Mr Ravenshaw, I love your daughter,” (there was only one daughter in Ian’s estimation!) “and I come to ask leave to woo her. If, by earnest devotion and”

“Ian Macdonald,” interrupted the old gentleman, in a voice of suppressed anger, “you may save yourself and me the trouble of more talk on this subject. Your father has just been here wanting me to sell him this knoll. Now, look here,” (he rose, and stepping out of the smoking-box, pointed to Angus Macdonald’s house, which was full in view), “you see that house, young man. Mark what I say. I will sell this knoll to your father, and give my daughter to you, when you take that house, and with your own unaided hands place it on the top of this knoll!”

This was meant by the old trader as a bitterly facetious way of indicating the absolute hopelessness of the case. Ian accepted it in that light, for he was well aware that Samuel Ravenshaw's firmnessor obstinacywas insurmountable. He did not despair, however; true love never does that; but he felt tremendously cast down. Without a word or look of reproach he turned and walked slowly away.

Once again the old trader sought comfort in his pipe, but found none. Besides feeling extremely indignant; with the Macdonalds, father and son, for what he styled their presumption, he was now conscious of having treated both with undue severity. Dashing his pipe on the ground, he thrust both hands into his coat pockets, and returned towards his dwelling. On the way he unfortunately met Petawanaquat in one of his fields, leaning composedly over a gate. That intelligent redskin had not yet finished his inquiries at the missionary village. He had appeared more than once at Willow Creek, and seemed to hover round the old trader like a moth round a candle. The man was innocent of any evil intent on this occasion, but Ravenshaw would have quarrelled with an angel just then.

"What are you doing here? Be off!" he said sternly.

The Indian either did not or would not understand, and the old man, seizing him by the arm, thrust him violently through the gateway.

All the hot blood of the Petawanaquats, from Adam downwards, seemed to leap through the red man's veins and concentrate in his right hand as he turned fiercely on the trader and drew his scalping-knife. Quick as lightning Ravenshaw hit out with his fist, and knocked the Indian down, then, turning on his heel, walked away.

For a moment Petawanaquat lay stunned. Recovering, he arose, and his dark glittering eyes told of a purpose of deadly revenge. The trader was still in sight. The Indian picked up his gun, glided swiftly behind a tree, and took a long steady aim. Just then little Tony rushed from the house and leaped into his father's arms, where he received an unusually warm embrace, for the trader wanted some sort of relief for his feelings. The Indian's finger was pressing the trigger at the moment. Death was very near Samuel Ravenshaw just then, but the finger relaxed and the gun was lowered. A more terrible form of revenge had flashed into the mind of the savage. Gliding quietly from his position, he entered the willows and disappeared.

Meanwhile Angus Macdonald returned in no very amiable mood to his own house. It was a small house; had been built by its owner, and was, like most of the other houses of the colony at that time, a good solid log structurea sort of

Noah’s ark on a small scale. It stood on a flat piece of mother earth, without any special foundation except a massive oblong wooden frame to which all the superstructure was attached. You might, if strong enough, have grasped it by the ridge-pole and carried it bodily away without tearing up any foundation or deranging the fabric. It was kept in order and managed by an elderly sister of Angus, named Martha, for Angus was a widower. His only son Ian dwelt in the school-house, a mile farther up the river.

Martha’s strong point was fowls. We are too ignorant of that subject to go into particulars. We can only say that she was an adept at fowls. Martha’s chickens were always tender and fat, and their eggs were the largest and freshest in Red River. We introduce these fowls solely because one of them acted a very important part on a very critical occasion. As well might the geese who saved Rome be omitted from history as Martha Macdonald’s Cochin-China hen whichwell, we won’t say what just yet. That hen was frightfully plain. Why Cochin-China hens should have such long legs and wear feather trousers are questions which naturalists must settle among themselves. Being a humorous man, Angus had named her Beauty. She was a very cross hen, and her feather unmentionables fitted badly. Moreover, she was utterly useless, and never laid an egg, which was fortunate, for if she had laid one it would have been an egregious monstrosity. She was obviously tough. If they had slain her for the table they would have had to cut her up with a hand-saw, or grind her into meal to fit her for use. Besides all this, Beauty was a widow. When her husband diedprobably of disgustshe took to crowing on her own account. She received Angus with a crow when he entered the house after his interview with Ravenshaw, and appeared to listen intently as he poured his sorrows into his sister’s ear.

“It’s up at the knowl I’ve peen, Martha, an’ I left Samyool Ruvnshaw there in a fery pad temperfery pad inteed. He’ll come oot of it, whatever.”

“An’ he’ll not be for sellin’ you the knowl?” asked Martha.

“No, he won’t,” replied Angus.

From this point they went off into a very long-winded discussion of the pros and cons of the case, which, however, we will spare the reader, and return to Willow Creek. The bed of the creek, near to the point where it joined the Red River, was a favourite resort of Master Tony. Thither he went that same afternoon to play.

Having observed the child’s habits, Petawanaquat paddled his canoe to the same point and hid it and himself among the overhanging bushes of the creek. In the course of his gambols Tony approached the place. One stroke of the

paddle sent the light birch-bark canoe like an arrow across the stream. The Indian sprang on shore. Tony gave him one scared look and was about to utter an appalling yell, when a red hand covered his mouth and another red hand half throttled him.

Petawanaquat bundled the poor child into the bottom of his canoe, wrapped a leather coat round his head, spread a buffalo robe over him, gave him a smart rap on the head to keep him quiet, and paddled easily out into the stream. Steadily, but not too swiftly, he went down the river, down the rapids, and past the Indian settlement without attracting particular notice. Once the buffalo robe moved; the paddle descended on it with a sounding whack, and it did not move again. Before night closed, the Indian was paddling over the broad bosom of Lake Winnipeg.

Of course, Tony was soon missed; his haunts were well known; Miss Trim traced his footprints to the place where he had been seized, saw evidences of the struggle, the nature of which she correctly guessed, and came shrieking back to the house, where she went off into hysterics, and was unable to tell anything about the matter.

Fortunately, Victor was there; he also traced the footsteps. Instead of returning home he ran straight to the school-house, which he reached out of breath.

“Come, Ian, come!” he gasped. “Tony’s been carried offPetawanaquat! Bring your canoe and gun; all the ammunition you can lay hands on!”

Ian asked for no explanations; he ran into the house, shouldered a small bag of pemmican, gave his gun and ammunition to Victor, told his assistant to keep the school going till his return, and ran with his friend down to the river, where his own birch canoe lay on the bank.

A few minutes sufficed to launch it. Both Ian and Victor were expert canoe-men. Straining their powers to the utmost, they were soon far down the Red River, in hot pursuit of the fugitive.

Chapter Three.
The Pursuit begins.

There is something delightfully exhilarating in a chase, whether it be after man or beast. How the blood careers! How the nerves tingle! But you know all about it, reader. We have said sufficient.

There was enough of righteous indignation in Victor’s bosom to have consumed Petawanaquat, and ground enough to justify the fiercest resolves.

Was not the kidnapper a redskina low, mean, contemptible savage? Was not the kidnapped one his brotherhis “own” brother? And such a brother! One of a thousand, with mischief enough in him, if rightly directed, to make half a dozen ordinary men! The nature of the spirit which animated Victor was obvious on his compressed lips, his frowning brows, his gleaming eyes. The strength of his muscles was indicated by the foam that fled from his paddle.

Ian Macdonald was not less excited, but more under self-control than his friend. There was a fixed look in his plain but pleasant face, and a tremendous sweep in his long arms as he plied the paddle, that told of unfathomed energy. The canoe being a mere egg-shell, leaped forward at each quick stroke “like a thing of life.”

There was no time to lose. They knew that, for the Indian had probably got a good start of them, and, being a powerful man, animated by the certainty of pursuit sooner or later, would not only put his strength but his endurance to the test. If they were to overtake him it must be by superhuman exertion. Lake Winnipeg was twenty miles off. They must catch up the Indian before he reached it, as otherwise it would be impossible to tell in which direction he had gone.

They did not pause to make inquiries of the settlers on the banks by the way, but they hailed several canoes, whose occupants said they had seen the Indian going quietly down stream some hours beforealone in his canoe!

“Never mind, Vic, push on,” said Ian; “of course he would make Tony lie flat down.”

The end of the settlement was passed, and they swept on into the wilderness beyond. Warming to their work, they continued to paddle hour after hoursteadily, persistently, with clockwork regularity of stroke, but never decreasing force. To save time they, as it were, cut off corners at the river-bends, and just shaved the points as they went by.

“Have a care, Ian!” exclaimed Victor, at one of these places, as his paddle touched the bottom. “We don’t draw much water, to be sure, but a big stone mighthah!”

A roar of dismay burst from the youth and his companion as the canoe rasped over a stone.

We have said that the birch canoe was an egg-shell. The word is scarcely figurative. The slightest touch over a stone has a tendency to rip the bark of such a slender craft, or break off the resinous gum with which the seams are pitched. Water began to pour in.

“Too bad!” exclaimed Victor, flinging his paddle ashore, as he stepped over the side into water not much above his ankles, and pulled the canoe slowly to land.

“An illustration of the proverb, ‘The more haste the less speed,’” sighed Ian, as he stepped into the water and assisted in lifting the canoe tenderly to dry ground.

“Oh, it’s all very well for you to take it philosophically, but you know our chance is gone. If it was your brother we were after you wouldn’t be so cool.”

“He is Elsie’s brother,” replied Ian, “and that makes me quite as keen as if he were my own, besides keeping me cool. Come, Vic, don’t be cross, but light the fire and get out the gum.”

While he spoke Ian was actively untying a bundle which contained awls and wattape, a small pliable root, with which to repair the injury. The gum had to be melted, so that Victor found some relief to his feelings in kindling a fire. The break was not a bad one. With nimble fingers Ian sewed a patch of bark over it. While that was being done, Victor struck a light with flint and steel, and soon had a blazing firebrand ready.

“Hand it here, Vic,” said Ian.

He covered the stitches with melted gum, blew the charcoal red-hot, passed it here and there over the old seams where they exhibited signs of leakage, and in little more than half an hour had the canoe as tight as a bottle. Once more they embarked and drove her like an arrow down stream.

But precious time had been lost, and it was dark when they passed from the river and rested on the bosom of the mighty fresh-water sea.

“It’s of no use going on without knowing which shore the redskin has followed,” said Ian, as he suddenly ceased work and rested his paddle on the gunwale.

“It’s of no use to remain where we are,” replied the impatient Victor, looking back at his comrade.

“Yes, it is,” returned Ian, “the moon will rise in an hour or so and enable us to make observations; meanwhile we can rest. Sooner or later we shall be compelled to rest. It will be a wise economy of time to do so now when nothing else can be done.”

Victor was so tired and sleepy by that time that he could scarcely reply. Ian

laughed quietly, and shoved the canoe among some reeds, where it lay on a soft bed. At the same time he advised his companion to go to sleep without delay.

More than half asleep already, he obeyed in silence, waded to the shore, and sat down on a bank to take off his moccasins. In this position and act he fell asleep.

“Hallo!” exclaimed Ian, coming up with the paddles and pemmican bag; “too soon, Vic, too soon, lad,” (he tumbled him over on the bank); “come, one mouthful of grub first, then off with the moccasins, and down we go.”

Victor picked himself up with a yawn. On ordinary occasions a backwoodsman pays some little attention to the comforts of his encampment, but our heroes were in no condition to mind such trifles. They pulled off their wet moccasins, indeed, and put on dry ones, but having done that they merely groped in the dark for the flattest piece of ground in the neighbourhood, then each rolled himself in his blanket and lay, or rather fell, down.

“Hah!” gasped Victor.

“Wa’s wrong?” sighed Ian faintly.

“Put m’ shoulder ’n a puddle, ’at’s all,” lisped Victor.

“T’ke’t out o’ the purl, thenoh!” groaned Ian.

“W’as ’e marrer now, eh?” sighed Victor.

“On’y a big stone i’ m’ ribs.”

“Shove’t out o’ y’r ribs ’en an’ ’old y’r tongue.”

Profound slumber stopped the conversation at this point, and the frogs that croaked and whistled in the swamps had it all to themselves.

Deep tranquillity reigned on the shores of Lake Winnipeg during the midnight hours, for the voices of the frogs served rather to accent than to disturb the calm. Stars twinkled at their reflections in the water, which extended like a black mirror to the horizon. They gave out little light, however, and it was not until the upper edge of the full moon arose that surrounding objects became dimly visible. The pale light edged the canoe, silvered the rocks, tipped the rushes, and at last, touching the point of Ian’s upturned nose, awoke him. (See Frontispiece).

He leaped up with a start instantly, conscious of his situation, and afraid lest he

had slept too long.

“Hi! lève! lève! awake! up!” he exclaimed in a vigorous undertone.

Victor growled, turned on his other side with a deep sigh, wanted to be let alone, became suddenly conscious, and sprang up in alarm.

“We’re too late!”

“No, we’re not, Vic. The moon is just rising, but we must be stirring. Time’s precious.”

Victor required no urging. He was fully alive to the situation. A few minutes sufficed to get the canoe ready and roll up their blankets, during the performance of which operations they each ate several substantial mouthfuls of pemmican.

Looking carefully round before pushing off the canoe to see that nothing was forgotten, Ian observed some chips of wood on the beach close at hand.

“See, Vic!” he said eagerly; “some one has been hereperhaps the Indian.”

They examined the chips, which had been recently cut. “It’s not easy to make out footprints here,” said Ian, going down on his knees the better to observe the ground; “and so many settlers and Indians pass from time to time, having little boys with them too, that. I say, look here, Vic, this little footmark might or might not be Tony’s, but moccasins are so much alike that”

“Out o’ the light, man; if you were made o’ glass the moon might get through you. Why, yes, it is Tony’s moccasin!” cried Victor, in eager excitement. “I know it by the patch, for I saw Elsie putting it on this very morning. Look, speak, man! don’t you see it? A square patch on the ball of the right foot!”

“Yes, yes; I see it,” said Ian, going down on his knees in a spirit of semi-worship, and putting his nose close to the ground.

He would fain have kissed the spot that had been pressed by a patch put on by Elsie, but he was “unromantic,” and refrained.

“Now,” he said, springing up with alacrity, “that settles the question. At least it shows that there is strong probability of their having taken the left shore of the lake.”

“Come along, then, let’s after them,” cried Victor impatiently, pushing off the canoe.

The moment she floatedwhich she did in about four inches of waterthey

stepped swiftly yet gently into her; for bark canoes require tender treatment at all times, even when urgent speed is needful. Gliding into deep water, they once more dipped their paddles, deep and fast, and danced merrily over the moonlit seafor a sea Lake Winnipeg certainly is, being upwards of three hundred miles long, and a gathering together of many waters from all parts of the vast wilderness of Rupert's Land.

After two hours of steady work they paused to rest.

"Now, Ian," said Victor, leaning against the wooden bar at his back, and resting his paddle across the canoe, "Venus tells me that the sun is about to bestir himself, and something within me tells me that empty space is a bad stomachic; so, out with the pemmican bag, and hand over a junk."

Ian drew his hunting-knife, struck it into the mass of meat, and chipped off a piece the size of his fist, which he handed to his comrade.

Probably our readers are aware that pemmican is made of dried buffalo meat pounded to shreds and mixed with melted fat. Being thus half-cooked in the making, it can be used with or without further cookery. Sewed up in its bag, it will keep good for months, or even years, and is magnificent eating, but requires a strong digestion. Ian and Victor were gifted with that requisite. They fed luxuriously. A draught from the crystal lake went down their unsophisticated throats like nectar, and they resumed their paddles like giants refreshed.

Venus mounted like a miniature moon into the glorious blue. Her perfect image went off in the opposite direction, for there was not the ghost of a zephyr to ruffle the deep. Presently the sun followed in her wake, and scattered the battalions of cloudland with artillery of molten gold. Little white gulls, with red legs and beaks, came dipping over the water, solemnly wondering at the intruders. The morning mists rolling along before the resistless monarch of day confused the visible world for a time, so that between refraction and reflection and buoyant spirits Victor Ravenshaw felt that at last he had found the realms of fairyland, and a feeling of certainty that he should soon rescue his brother filled him with exultation.

But the exultation was premature. Noon found them toiling on, and still no trace of the fugitives was to be seen.

"What if we have overshot them?" said Victor.

"Impossible," answered Ian, "the shore is too open for that, and I have been keeping a sharp look-out at every bend and bay."

“That may be true, yet Petawanaquat may have kept a sharper look-out, and concealed himself when he saw us coming. See, here is a creek. He may have gone up that. Let us try. Why! there is a canoe in it. Hup! drive along, Ian!”

The canoe seemed to leap out of the water under the double impulse, and next moment almost ran down another canoe which was half hidden among the reeds. In it sat an old Indian named Peegwish, and a lively young French half-breed named Michel Rollin. They were both well known to our adventurers; old Peegwishwhose chief characteristic was owlishnessbeing a frequent and welcome visitor at the house of Ian’s father.

“You ’pears to be in one grand hurray,” exclaimed Rollin, in his broken English.

Ian at once told the cause of their appearance there, and asked if they had seen anything of Petawanaquat.

“Yes, oui, nodat is to say. Look ’ere!”

Rollin pushed the reeds aside with his paddle, and pointed to a canoe lying bottom up, as if it had been concealed there.

“Ve’s be come ’ere after duck, an’ ve find dat,” said the half-breed.

An immediate investigation showed that Petawanaquat had forsaken his canoe and taken to the woods. Ian looked troubled. Peegwish opened his owlish eyes and looked so solemn that Victor could scarce forbear laughing, despite the circumstances. It was immediately resolved to give chase. Peegwish was left in charge of the canoes. The other three soon found the track of the Red Man and followed it up like blood-hounds. At first they had no difficulty in following the trail, being almost as expert as Indians in woodcraft, but soon they came to swampy ground, and then to stony places, in which they utterly lost it. Again and again did they go back to pick up the lost trail, and follow it only to lose it again.

Thus they spent the remainder of that day until night put a stop to their exertions and crushed their hopes. Then, dispirited and weary, they returned to the canoes and encamped beside them.

Peegwish was engaged in roasting a duck when they arrived.

“What a difference between the evening and the morning,” said Victor, as he flung himself down beside the fire.

“Dat is troo, an’ vat I has obsarve oftin,” said Rollin, looking earnestly into a kettle which rested on the fire.

“Never mind, Vic,” said Ian heartily, “we’ll be at it again to-morrow, bright and early. We’re sure to succeed in the long-run. Petawanaquat can’t travel at night in the woods any more than we can.”

Old Peegwish glared at the fire as though he were pondering these sayings deeply. As he understood little or no English, however, it is more probable that his astute mind was concentrated on the roasting duck.

Chapter Four.
A DiscoveryThe Chase Continued on Foot.

To bound from the depths of despair to the pinnacles of hope is by no means an uncommon experience to vigorous youth. When Victor Ravenshaw awoke next morning after a profound and refreshing sleep, and looked up through the branches at the bright sky, despondency fled, and he felt ready for anything. He was early awake, but Peegwish had evidently been up long before him, for that wrinkled old savage had kindled the fire, and was seated on the other side of it wrapped in his blanket, smoking, and watching the preparation of breakfast. When Victor contemplated his solemn eyes glaring at a roasting duck, which suggested the idea that he had been sitting there and glaring all night, he burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

“Come, I say, Vic,” said Ian, roused by this from a comfortable nap, “if you were a hyena there might be some excuse for you, but being only a manforgive me, a boyyou ought to have more sense than to disturb your friends so.”

“Oui, yes; dat is troo. Vraiment, it is too bad,” growled Rollin, sitting up and stretching himself. “Howsomewhatever, it is time to rise. Oui!”

“I should think it was,” retorted Victor; “the sun is already up, and you may be sure that Petawanaquat has tramped some miles this morning. Come, Peegwish, close your eyes a bit for fear they jump out. What have you got to give us, eh? Robbiboo, ducks, andno, is it tea? Well, we are in luck to have fallen in with you.”

He rested his head on his hand, and lay looking at the savage with a pleased expression, while Rollin rose and went off to cut more firewood.

The robbiboo referred to was a sort of thick soup made of pemmican boiled with flour. Without loss of time the party applied themselves to it. When appetite was partially appeased Ian propounded the question, What was to be done?

“Follow up the trail as fast as we can,” said Victor promptly.

“Dat is bon advise,” observed Rollin. “Hand over de duck, Peegvish, an’ do try for shut your eyes. If you vould only vink it vould seem more comfortabler.”

Peegwish did not smile, but with deepened gravity passed the duck.

“I’m not so sure of the goodness of the advice,” said Ian. “To go scampering into the woods on a chase that may lead us we know not where or how long, with only a small quantity of provisions and ammunition, and but one gun, may seem energetic and daring, but it may not, perhaps, be wise.”

Victor admitted that there was truth in that, and looked perplexed.

“Nevertheless, to give up at this point, and return to the settlement for supplies,” he said, “would be to lose the advantage of our quick start. How are we to get over the difficulty?”

“Moi, I can you git out of de difficulty,” said Rollin, lighting his pipe with a business air. “Dis be de vay. Peegvish et me is out for long hunt vid much pemmican, poodre an’ shote. You make von ’greement vid me et Peegvish. You vill engage me; I vill go vid you. You can take vat you vill of our tings, and send Peegvish back to de settlement for tell fat ye bees do.”

This plan, after brief but earnest consideration, was adopted. The old Indian returned to Willow Creek with pencil notes, written on birch bark, to old Samuel Ravenshaw and Angus Macdonald, and the other three of the party set off at once to renew the chase on foot, with blankets and food strapped to their backs and guns on their shouldersfor Rollin carried his own fowling-piece, and Victor had borrowed that of Peegwish.

As happened the previous day, they failed several times to find the trail of the fugitives, but at last Ian discovered it, and they pushed forward with renewed hope. The faint footmarks at first led them deep into the woods, where it was difficult to force a passage; then the trail disappeared altogether on the banks of a little stream. But the pursuers were too experienced to be thrown off the scent by such a well-known device as walking up stream in the water. They followed the brook until they came to the place where Petawanaquat had once more betaken himself to dry land. It was a well-chosen spot; hard and rocky ground, on which only slight impressions could be left, and the wily savage had taken care to step so as to leave as slight a trail as possible; but the pursuers had sharp and trained eyes. Ian Macdonald, in particular, having spent much of his time as a hunter before setting up his school, had the eyes of a lynx. He could distinguish marks when his companions could see nothing

until they were pointed out, and although frequently at fault, he never failed to recover the trail sooner or later.

Of course they lost much time, and they knew that Petawanaquat must be rapidly increasing the distance between them, but they trusted to his travelling more leisurely when he felt secure from pursuit, and to his being delayed somewhat by Tony, whom it was obvious he had carried for long distances at a stretch.

For several days the pursuers went on with unflagging perseverance and ever-increasing hope, until they at last emerged from the woods, and began to traverse the great prairie. Here the trail diverged for a considerable distance southward, and then turned sharply to the west, in which direction it went in a straight line for many miles, as if Petawanaquat had made up his mind to cross the Rocky Mountains, and throw poor Tony into the Pacific!

The travellers saw plenty of gameducks, geese, plover, prairie-hens, antelopes, etcetera,on the march, but they were too eager in the pursuit of the savage to be turned aside by smaller game. They merely shot a few ducks to save their pemmican. At last they came to a point in the prairie which occasioned them great perplexity of mind and depression of spirit.

It was on the evening of a bright and beautiful dayone of those days in which the air seems fresher and the sky bluer, and the sun more brilliant than usual. They had found, that evening, that the trail led them away to the right towards one of the numerous clumps of woodland which rendered that part of the prairie more like a nobleman’s park than a wild wilderness.

On entering the bushes they perceived that there was a lakelet embosomed like a gem in the surrounding trees. Passing through the belt of woodland they stood on the margin of the little lake.

“How beautiful!” exclaimed Ian, with a flush of pleasure on his sunburnt face. “Just like a bit of Paradise.”

“Did you ever see Paradise, that you know so well what it is like?” asked Victor of his unromantic friend.

“Yes, Vic, I’ve seen it many a timein imagination.”

“Indeed, and what like was it, and what sort of people were there?”

“It was likelet me seethe most glorious scene ever beheld on earth, but more exquisite, and the sun that lighted it was more brilliant by far than ours.”

“Not bad, for an unromantic imagination,” said Victor, with much gravity.

“Were there any ducks and geese there?”

“Yes, ducks; plenty of them, but no geese; and nobler gameeven lions were there, so tame that little children could lead them.”

“Better and better,” said Victor; “and what of the people?”

Ian was on the point of saying that they were allmen, women, and childrenthe exact counterparts of Elsie Ravenshaw, but he checked himself and said that they were all honest, sincere, kind, gentle, upright, and that there was not a single cynical person there, nor a

“Hush! what sort of a bird is that?” interrupted Victor, laying his hand on Ian’s arm and pointing to a small patch of reeds in the lake.

There were so many birds of various kinds gambolling on the surface, that Ian had difficulty in distinguishing the creature referred to. At last he perceived it, a curious fat-bodied little bird with a pair of preposterously long legs, which stood eyeing its companions as if in contemplative pity.

“I know it not,” said Ian; “never saw it before.”

“We’ll bag it now. Stand back,” said Victor, raising his gun.

The above conversation had been carried on in a low tone, for the friends were still concealed by a bush from the various and numerous birds which disported themselves on the lake in fancied security and real felicity.

The crash of Victor’s gun sent them screaming over the tree-topsall save the fat creature with the long legs, which now lay dead on the water.

“Go in for it, Rollin, it’s not deep, I think,” said Victor.

“Troo, but it may be dangeroose for all dat,” replied the half-breed, leaning his gun against a tree. “Howsomewhatever I vill try!”

The place turned out, as he had suspected, to be somewhat treacherous, with a floating bottom. Before he had waded half way to the dead bird the ground began to sink under him. Presently he threw up his arms, went right down, and disappeared.

Both Ian and Victor started forward with the intention of plunging into the water, but they had not reached the edge when Rollin reappeared, blowing like a grampus. They soon saw that he could swim, and allowed him to scramble ashore.

This misadventure did not prevent them from making further attempts to

secure the bird, which Victor, having some sort of naturalistic propensities, was eager to possess. It was on going round the margin of the lake for this purpose that they came upon the cause of the perplexities before mentioned. On the other side of a point covered with thick bush they came upon the remains of a large Indian camp, which had evidently been occupied very recently. Indeed, the ashes of some of the fires, Rollin declared, were still warm; but it was probably Rollin's imagination which warmed them. It was found, too, that the trail of Petawanaquat entered this camp, and was there utterly lost in the confusion of tracks made everywhere by many feet, both large and small.

Here, then, was sufficient ground for anxiety. If the savage had joined this band and gone away with it, the pursuers could of course follow him up, but, in the event of their finding him among friends, there seemed little or no probability of their being able to rescue the stolen child. On the other hand, if Petawanaquat had left the Indians and continued his journey alone, the great difficulty that lay before them was to find his point of departure from a band which would naturally send out hunters right and left as they marched along.

"It's a blue look-out any way you take it," remarked poor Victor, with an expression worthy of Peegwish on his countenance.

"I vish it vas blue. It is black," said Rollin.

Ian replied to both remarks by saying that, whether black or blue, they must make the best of it, and set about doing that at once. To do his desponding comrades justice, they were quite ready for vigorous action in any form, notwithstanding their despair.

Accordingly, they followed the broad trail of the Indians into the prairie a short way, and, separating in different directions round its margins, carefully examined and followed up the tracks that diverged from it for considerable distances, but without discovering the print of the little moccasin with Elsie's patch, or the larger footprint of Tony's captor.

"You see, there are so many footprints, some like and some unlike, and they cross and recross each other to such an extent that it seems to me a hopeless case altogether," said Victor.

"You don't propose to give it up, do you?" asked Ian.

"Give it up!" repeated Victor, almost fiercely. "Give up Tony? NO! not as long as I can walk, or even crawl."

"Ve vill crawl before long, perhaps," said Rollin; "ve may even stop crawling

an’ die at last, but ve must not yet give in.”

In the strength of this resolve they returned to the lakelet when the sun went down, and encamped there. It is needless to say that they supped and slept well notwithstandingor notwithforstanding, as Rollin put it. Rollin was fond of long words, and possessed a few that were his own private property. Victor had a dream that night. He dreamt that he caught sight of an Indian on the plains with Tony on his shoulder; that he gave chase, and almost overtook them, when, to save himself, the Indian dropped his burden; that he, Victor, seized his rescued brother in a tight embrace, and burst into tears of joy; that Tony suddenly turned into Petawanaquat, and that, in the sharp revulsion of feeling, he, Victor, seized the nose of the savage and pulled it out to a length of three yards, twisted it round his neck and choked him, thrust his head down into his chest and tied his arms in a knot over it, and, finally, stuffing him into a mud-puddle, jumped upon him and stamped him down. It was an absurd dream, no doubt, but are not dreams generally absurd?

While engaged in the last mentioned humane operation, Victor was awakened by Ian.

“It’s time to be moving,” said his comrade with a laugh. “I would have roused you before, but you seemed to be so busily engaged with some friend that I hadn’t the heart to part you sooner.”

The whole of that day they spent in a fruitless effort to detect the footprints of Petawanaquat, either among the tracks made by the band of Indians or among those diverging from the main line of march. In so doing they wandered far from the camp at the lakelet, and even lost sight of each other. The only result was that Ian and Rollin returned in the evening dispirited and weary, and Victor lost himself.

The ease with which this is done is scarcely comprehensible by those who have not wandered over an unfamiliar and boundless plain, on which the clumps of trees and shrubs have no very distinctive features.

Victor’s comrades, however, were alive to the danger. Not finding him in camp, they at once went out in different directions, fired shots until they heard his answering reply, and at last brought him safely in.

That night again they spent on the margin of the little lake, and over the camp-fire discussed their future plans. It was finally assumed that Petawanaquat had joined the Indians, and resolved that they should follow up the trail as fast as they could travel.

This they did during many days without, however, overtaking the Indians.

Then the pemmican began to wax low, for in their anxiety to push on they neglected to hunt. At last, one evening, just as it was growing dark, and while they were looking out for a convenient resting-place, they came on the spot where the Indians had encamped, evidently the night before, for the embers of their fires were still smoking.

Here, then, they lay down with the pleasing hope, not unmingled with anxiety, that they should overtake the band on the following day.

Chapter Five.
Tony becomes a Redskin, and the Pursuers change their Game.

When Petawanaquat joined the band of Indians, of whom we left Victor Ravenshaw and his comrades in eager pursuit, he deemed it advisable for various reasons to alter the costume and general appearance of his captive, and for that purpose took him to a sequestered spot in the bushes outside the camp.

Poor Tony had at first shrunk from his captor with inexpressible horror, but when he found that the Indian did not eat him his mind was calmed. As time advanced, and he perceived that Petawanaquat, although stern and very silent, took much pains to assist him on his long marches, and, above all, fed him with a liberal hand, his feelings changed considerably, and at last he began to regard the taciturn red man with something like fondness. Petawanaquat made no positive effort to gain the child's affections; he never fondled him, and seldom spoke, save for the purpose of giving a brief command, which Tony always obeyed with miraculous promptitude. The utmost that can be said is that the savage was gentle and supplied his wants. Could a civilised man have done much more?

It may be well to remark in passing that Tony, having associated a good deal with Indian boys in Red River, could speak their language pretty well. The Indian, of course, spoke his own tongue correctly, while Tony spoke it much as he spoke his ownchildishly. As the reader probably does not understand the Indian language, we will give its equivalent as spoken by both in English.

On reaching the sequestered spot above referred to, Petawanaquat sat down on a fallen tree and made the wondering child stand up before him.

"The white man's boy must become an Indian," he said solemnly.

"How zat poss'ble?" demanded the child with equal solemnity.

"By wearing the red man's clothes and painting his face," returned his captor.

"Zat'll be jolly," said Tony, with a smile of hearty approval.

How he expressed the word “jolly” in the Indian tongue we cannot tell, but he conveyed it somehow, for the Indian’s lips expanded in a grim smile, the first he had indulged in since the day of the abduction.

The process by which Tony was transformed was peculiar. Opening a little bundle, the Indian took therefrom a small coat, or capote, of deer-skin; soft, and of a beautiful yellow, like the skin of the chamois. It was richly ornamented with porcupine-quill-work done in various colours, and had fringes of leather and little locks of hair hanging from it in various places. Causing Tony to strip, he put this coat on him, and fastened it round his waist with a worsted belt of bright scarlet. Next he drew on his little legs a pair of blue cloth leggings, which were ornamented with beads, and clothed his feet in new moccasins, embroidered, like the coat, with quill-work. Tony regarded all this with unconcealed pleasure, but it did not seem to please him so much when the Indian combed his rich curly hair straight down all round, so that his face was quite concealed by it. Taking a pair of large scissors from his bundle, the Indian passed one blade under the hair across the forehead, gave a sharp snip, and the whole mass fell like a curtain to the ground. It was a sublimely simple mode of clearing the way for the countenancemuch in vogue among North American savages, from whom it has recently been introduced among civilised nations. The Indian then lifted the clustering curls at the back, and again opened the scissors. For a few moments his fingers played with the locks as he gazed thoughtfully at them; then, apparently changing his mind, he let them drop, and put the scissors away.

But the toilet was not yet complete. The versatile operator drew from his bundle some bright-red, yellow ochre, and blue paint, with a piece of charcoal, and set to work on Tony’s countenance with all the force of a Van Dyck and the rich colouring of a Rubens. He began with a streak of scarlet from the eyebrows to the end of the nose. Skipping the mouth, he continued the streak from the lower lip down the chin, under which it melted into a tender half-tint made by a smudge of yellow ochre and charcoal. This vigorous touch seemed to rouse the painter’s spirit in Petawanaquat, for he pushed the boy out at arm’s length, drew himself back, frowned, glared, and breathed hard. Three bars of blue from the bridge of the nose over each cheek, with two red circles below, and a black triangle on the forehead, were touched in with consummate skill and breadth. One of the touches was so broad that it covered the whole jaw, and had to be modified. On each closed upper eyelid an intensely black spot was painted, by which simple device Tony, with his azure orbs, was made, as it were, to wink black and gaze blue. The general effect having thus been blocked in, the artist devoted himself to the finishing touches, and at last turned out a piece of work which old Samuel Ravenshaw himself would have

failed to recognise as his son.

It should have been remarked that previous to this, Petawanaquat had modified his own costume. His leggings were fringed with scalp-locks; he had painted his face, and stuck a bunch of feathers in his hair, and a gay firebag and a tomahawk were thrust under his belt behind.

“Ho!” he exclaimed, with a look of satisfaction, “now Tony is Tonyquat, and Petawanaquat is his father!”

“When will zoo take me back to my own fadder?” asked Tony, emboldened by the Indian’s growing familiarity.

No reply was given to this, but the question seemed to throw the red man into a savage reverie, and a dark frown settled on his painted face, as he muttered, “The Little Wolf meant to take the white man’s life, but he was wise: he spared his life and took his heart. His revenge is sweeter. Wah!”

Tony failed to catch the meaning of this, but fearing to rouse the anger of his new father, he held his tongue. Meanwhile the Indian put the child on a stump a few yards off in front of him, filled his pipe, lighted it, placed an elbow on each knee, rested his chin on his doubled fists, and glared at his handiwork. Tony was used to glaring by that time, though he did not like it. He sat still for a long time like one fascinated, and returned the stare with interest.

At last the Indian spoke.

“Is Tonyquat a Christian?”

Somewhat surprised but not perplexed by the question Tony answered, “Ho, yis,” promptly.

The Indian again looked long and earnestly at the child, as if he were considering how far such a juvenile mind might be capable of going into a theological discussion.

“What is a Christian?” asked the Indian abruptly.

“A Kist’n’s a dood boy,” replied Tony; then, dropping his eyes for a moment in an effort to recall past lessons, he suddenly looked up with an intelligent smile, and said, “Oh, yis, I ’memers now. Elsie teach me a Kist’n boy’s one what tries to be like de Lorddood, kind, gentle, fo’givin’, patient, an’ heaps more; zat’s what a Kist’n is.”

The Indian nodded approvingly. This accorded, as far as it went, with what he had learned from the missionaries of Red River, but his mind was evidently

perplexed. He smoked, meditated a considerable time, and glared at Tony in silence; then said suddenly

“Tonyquat, your father is not a Christian.”

“My fadder would knock zoo down if zoo say dat to hims face,” replied the child confidently.

This seemed so palpable a truth that the Indian nodded several times, and grinned fiendishly.

“Do Christians swear, an’ drink, and fight, and get angry till the blood makes the face blue, and strike with the fist?” asked Petawanaquat.

“Oh, nonever,” replied Tony, adopting that shocked tone and look which Elsie was in the habit of using when anything wicked was propounded to her; “dey’s always dood, like Josuf an’ Abel an’ Sam’l, an’ Cain, an’ David, an’ Saul”

Tony stopped short, with an indistinct idea that he was mixing pattern characters.

“Ho!” muttered the savage, with a gleam of triumph in his eyes, “Petawanaquat has got his heart.”

“Eh, zoo got ’im by heart a’ready? Took me long, long time to git ’em by heart,” said Tony, with a look of admiration, which was sadly marred by the paint. “Me’s not got ’em all off yet. But you’s clever, an’an’big.”

The Indian’s smile became a sad one, and his look was again perplexed, as he rose and returned to the camp, followed by his adopted son. It was obvious that no light was to be thrown on his religious difficulties, whatever they were, by Tonyquat.

After leaving the lakelet on the plains, the Indian travelled for several days with his friends; and then parting from them, went towards the west, to rejoin his family. This point of divergence the pursuers had missed, and when they overtook the Indian band, they found, to their intense regret, that the kidnapper had escaped them.

“We will hold on with the redskins,” said Ian Macdonald, while sitting in council with his companions after this discovery. “The chief tells me that buffaloes have been reported in a spot which lies in the direction we must follow to recover the trail. This advantage we now possess, however: we know where Petawanaquat is goingthanks to his so-called friends here, who don’t seem to care much about himand as he believes he has distanced all pursuers, he will now journey slower than before. Besides, we must help to kill a buffalo

or two, our meat being nearly done. What say you, Vic?”

“I say what you say, of course, though I’d rather set off ahead of the band, and push on as fast as we can.”

“Vich means dat youth bees impetoous toujours,” said Rollin.

In pursuance of this plan they journeyed with the Indians for three days, when an event occurred which modified their plans considerably. This was the discovery one afternoon of a broad trail, made by the passage of numerous carts and horsemen over the prairie.

“Buffalo-runners!” exclaimed Rollin, when they came upon the track.

“From Red River!” cried Victor.

“Even so, boys,” said Ian.

The Indian chief, who led the party, held the same opinion, and added that they were evidently journeying in the same direction with themselves. This rendered it necessary that they should make a forced march during the night, it being otherwise impossible for men on foot to overtake a party of horsemen. Towards midnight of the same day they had the satisfaction of seeing their campfires in the distance. Soon afterwards they were within the circle of the camp, where men were still smoking and eating round the fires, and women and children were moving busily about.

“Why, there are John Flett and David Mowat,” exclaimed Victor, as several of the men came forward to meet the party.

“An’ Hayes, an’ Vinklemann,” cried Rollin.

Another minute and they were shaking hands amid a chorus of surprised and hearty questions and replies.

“Is Louis Lambert with you?” asked Victor, after mutual explanations had been given.

“No,” said David Mowat, with a laugh, “he’s got other fish to fry at home.”

Poor Ian winced, for he at once pictured to himself Elsie as the mermaid hinted at.

“Now, boys, I’m going to ask some of you to make a sacrifice,” said Ian. “We had intended to follow up this chase on foot, but of course will be able to accomplish our end sooner on horseback. I want three of you to lend us your horses. You’re sure to be well paid for them by Sam Ravenshaw and my

father. I'll guarantee you that"

"We want no guarantee," interrupted John Flett, "and we have spare horses enough in the camp to mount you without giving up our own; so make your mind easy."

"Zat is troo," said Herr Winklemann; "ve has goot horse to spare; buff'lo-runners every von. Bot you mus' stay vid us von day for run ze buff'lo an' git supply of meat."

Victor and his friends at once agreed to this, all the more readily that the possession of horses would now enable them easily to overtake the fugitives. Accordingly, they sat down to a splendid supper of robbiboo, and continued to eat, chat, and quaff tea far into the following morning, until nature asserted herself by shutting up their eyelids.

The band with which our adventurers were now associated was composed of a motley crew of Red River half-breeds, out for the great spring buffalo hunt. It consisted of nearly 700 hunters, as many women, more than 400 children, and upwards of 1000 carts, with horses and draught oxen, besides about 700 buffalo-runners, or trained hunting-horses, and more than 500 dogs. These latter, although useless in the spring hunt, were, nevertheless, taken with them, fed, and cared for, because of their valuable qualities as draught animals for light sledges in winter.

Some of the hunters were steady-going and respectable enough; others were idle, thriftless fellows, who could not settle to farming in the colony, and even in the chase were lazy, bad hunters. The women were there for the purpose of attending to camp dutiescooking, dressing the buffalo skins, making bags from the animals' green hides, with the hair left on the outside, and filling the same with pemmican.

This substance, as we have elsewhere remarked, is by no means unpalatable; it is very nutritious, and forms the chief food of the hundreds of voyageurs who traverse Rupert's Land in boats and canoes during the open season of the year. It must be understood, however, that the compost is not attractive in appearance. It is made in the open air by women who are not very particular in their habits. Hence, during windy weather, a modicum of dust is introduced into it. Even stray leaves and twigs may get into it at times, and it is always seasoned more or less profusely with buffalo hairs. But these are trifles to strong and hungry men.

Two trips to the plains were made annually by these hunters. The proceeds of the spring hunt were always sold to supply them with needed clothing, ammunition, etcetera, for the year. The "fall or autumn hunt" furnished them

with their winter stock of food, and helped to pay off their debts, most of them being supplied on credit. Sometimes the fall hunt failed, in which case starvation stared the improvident among them in the face, and suffering, more or less severe, was the lot of all.

Little, however, did the reckless, jovial half-breeds care for such considerations on the occasion about which we write. It was the spring hunt. The year was before them. Health rolled in the veins and hope revelled in the breasts of all as they mounted their steeds, and sallied forth to the chase.

Ah! it was a memorable day for Victor, when, at early dawn, he vaulted into the saddle of the horse lent to him, and went off to hunt the buffalo.

The said horse began by standing straight up on its hind legs like a man! Victor held on by the mane. Reversing the process, it pointed its tail to the sky. Victor stood in the stirrups. It swerved to the right, it swerved to the left, but Victor swerved with it accommodatingly. He was a splendid horseman. Finding that out at last, the steed took the bit in its teeth and ran away. Victor let it runnay, he whacked its sides and made it run. Dozens of wild fellows were curvetting and racing around him. It was his first hunt. Mad with excitement, he finally swept away from his comrades with a series of war-whoops that would have done credit to the fiercest redskin on the North American plains.

Chapter Six.
Describes a Great Hunt.

The huge bison, or buffalo, of the North American prairie is gregarious; in other words, it loves society and travels in herds. These herds are sometimes so vast as absolutely to blacken the plains for miles around.

The half-breed buffalo-hunters of Red River were also gregarious. From the moment of their quitting the settlements they kept together for mutual help and protection. Although a free, wild, and lawless set, they found it absolutely necessary for hunting purposes to organise themselves, and thus by voluntary submission to restraint, unwittingly did homage to Law! On a level plain at a place called Pembina, three days out from Red River, the whole camp squatted down; the roll was called, and rules and regulations for the journey were agreed upon and settled. Then ten captains were named, the senior being Baptiste Warder, an English half-breed, a fine bold-looking and discreet man of resolute character, who was thus elected the great war chief of the little army. As commander-in-chief Baptiste had various duties to perform, among others to see that lost property picked up about the camp should be restored to its owner through the medium of a public crier, who went his rounds every

evening. Each captain had ten stout fellows under him to act as soldiers or policemen. Ten guides were also appointed, each of whom led the camp day about and carried its flag or standard. The hoisting of the flag each morning was the signal for raising the camp. Half an hour was the time allowed to get ready, unless, any one being sick or animals having strayed, delay became necessary. All day the flag remained up; its being lowered each evening was the signal for encamping. Then the captains and their men arranged the order of the camp. The carts as they arrived moved to their appointed places, side by side, with the trains outwards, and formed a circle, inside of which, at one end, the tents were pitched in double and triple rows, the horses, etcetera, being tethered at the other end. Thus they were at all times ready to resist attack from Indians.

Among other rules laid down on this occasion at starting were the following:

No hunting to be allowed on the Sabbath day. No party to fork off, lag behind, or go before, without permission. No hunter or party to run buffalo before the general order, and every captain in turn to mount guard with his men and patrol the camp. The punishments for offenders were, like themselves, rather wild and wasteful. For a first offence against the laws, a culprit was to have his saddle and bridle cut up! For the second, his coat to be taken and cut up; and for the third he was to be flogged. A person convicted of theft was to be brought to the middle of the camp, and have his or her name loudly proclaimed three times, with the word “thief” added each time.

It was the third week out from the settlement when the hunters met with Victor Ravenshaw and his friends, yet up to that day they had failed to find the buffalo, and were well-nigh starving. The intelligence, therefore, that scouts had at length discovered game, had filled the camp with joy.

After having taken a little of the mettle out of his steed, as related in the last chapter, Victor caused him to make a wide circuit on the plain, and came up behind the line of hunters just as they topped a prairie undulation, or wave, and sighted the buffalo. It was a grand array, the sight of which thrilled the young sportsman to the heart. Full four hundred huntsmen, mounted on fresh and restive steeds, were slowly advancing, waiting eagerly for the word to start. Baptiste Warder, their chief, was in front with his telescope, surveying the game and the ground. Victor pushed in between Ian and Rollin, who rode near the centre of the impatient line. The wild cattle blackened the plain at the distance of about a mile and a half from them.

“Surely they must have seen us by this time,” said Victor, in a voice of suppressed agitation.

“Have you got your powder-horn and bullets handy?” asked Ian.

“Yes; all right.”

“Put ’im in de mout, de mout,” said Rollin quickly.

The half-breed here referred to a habit of the hunters, who carry several bullets in their mouths to facilitate loading while running at full speed. The method is simple. The hunter merely pours powder into his left palm, transfers it to his gun, drops a bullet from his mouth into the muzzle, hits the butt smartly on his pommel, which at once sends the charge home and forces priming into the pan, and thus is ready for another shot.

Victor, having forgotten all about this, immediately put three bullets into his mouth, his gun being already loaded.

“Don’t swallow them!” said Ian.

“Swallow your own advice,” growled Victor.

“Start!” shouted Captain Warder.

The welcome signal sent an electric thrill along the line. It was promptly obeyed, first at a slow trot, then at a hard gallop. The low rumbling thunder of their tramp was in keeping with the wild eager looks of the half-savage hunters. They had approached to within four or five hundred yards before the buffalo-bulls curved their tails into marks of interrogation and began to paw the ground. Another moment, and the mighty herd took to flight. Then the huntsmen let loose their eager steeds. As squadrons of dragoons charge into the thick of battle, these wild fellows bore down with grand momentum on the buffalo bands. The very earth seemed to tremble when they charged, but when the herd sprang away in the frenzy of terror it was as though a shock of earthquake had riven the plains. Right into the careering mass the horsemen rushed. Shots beganhere, there, and everywhere, until a rattle of musketry filled the air, while smoke, dust, shouts, and bellowing added to the wild confusion. The fattest animals were selected, and in an incredibly short space of time a thousand of their carcasses strewed the plain.

The men who were best mounted of course darted forward in advance and secured the fattest cows. They seldom dropped a mark to identify their property. These hunters possess a power of distinguishing the animals they have slain during a hot and long ride, which amounts almost to an instinceteven though they may have killed from ten to twelve animals. An experienced hunter on a good horse will perform such a feat during one race. He seldom fires till within three or four yards of his prey, and never misses. A well-

trained horse, the moment it hears the shot, springs on one side to avoid stumbling over the buffalo. An awkward or shy horse will not approach nearer than ten or fifteen yards. Badly mounted men think themselves well off if they secure two or three animals during one run.

As the battle continued, the very air was darkened with dust and smoke. Of course such a fight could not rage without casualties. There were, in truth, many hairbreadth and some almost miraculous escapes, for the ground was rocky and full of badger-holes. Twenty-three horses and riders were seen at one moment all sprawling on the ground. One horse was gored by a bull and killed on the spot: two other horses fell over it and were disabled. One rider broke his shoulder-blade, another burst his gun by careless loading, and lost three fingers, while another was struck on the knee by a spent ball. The wonder was, not that so many, but that so few, were hurt, when it is considered that the riders were dashing about in clouds of dust and smoke, crossing and recrossing each other in all directions, with shots firing right and left, before, behindeverywherein quick succession. The explanation must be that, every man being a trained marksman, nearly every bullet found its billet in a buffalo's body.

With his heart in his mouth, as well as his bullets, Victor Ravenshaw entered into the wild mêlée, scarce knowing what he was about. Although inexperienced, he knew well what to do, for many a time had he listened to the stories of buffalo-hunters in times past, and had put all their operations in practice with a wooden gun in mimic chase. But it was not easy to keep cool. He saw a fat animal just ahead of him, pushed close alongside; pointed his gun without raising it to his shoulder, and fired. He almost burnt the animal's hair, so near was he. The buffalo fell and his horse leaped to one side. Victor had forgotten this part of the programme. He was nearly unseated, but held on by the mane and recovered his seat.

Immediately he poured powder into his palmspilling a good deal and nearly dropping his gun from under his left arm in the operationand commenced to reload while at full speed. He spat a ball into the muzzle, just missed knocking out some of his front teeth, forgot to strike the butt on the pommel of the saddle, (which omission would have infallibly resulted in the bursting of the gun had it exploded), pointed at another animal and drew the trigger. It missed fire, of course, for want of priming. He remembered his error; corrected it, pointed again, fired, and dropped another cow.

Elated with success, he was about to reload when a panting bull came up behind him. He seized his bridle, and swerved a little. The bull thundered on, mad with rage; its tail aloft, and pursued by Michel Rollin, who seemed as angry as the bull.

“Hah! I vill stop you!” growled the excited half-breed as he dashed along.

Animals were so numerous and close around them that they seemed in danger, at the moment, of being crushed. Suddenly the bull turned sharp round on its pursuer. To avoid it the horse leaped on one side; the girths gave way and the rider, saddle and all, were thrown on the bull’s horns. With a wild toss of its head, the surprised creature sent the man high into the air. In his fall he alighted on the back of another buffaloit was scarcely possible to avoid this in the crowdand slipped to the ground. Strange to say, Rollin was not hurt, but he was effectually thrown out of the running for that time, and Victor saw him no more till evening. We relate no fanciful or exaggerated tale, good reader. Our description is in strict accordance with the account of a credible eye-witness.

For upwards of an hour and a half the wild chase was kept up; the plain was strewn with the dead and dying, and horsemen as well as buffaloes were scattered far and wide.

Victor suddenly came upon Ian while in pursuit of an animal.

“What luck!” he shouted.

“I’ve killed twoby accident, I think,” said Ian, swerving towards his comrade, but not slackening his pace.

“Capital! I’ve killed three. Who’s that big fellow ahead after the old bull?”

“It’s Winklemann. He seems to prefer tough meat.”

As Ian spoke the bull in question turned suddenly round, just as Rollin’s bull had done, and received Winklemann’s horse on its hairy forehead. The poor man shot from the saddle as if he had been thrown from a catapult, turned a complete somersault over the buffalo, and fell on his back beyond. Thrusting the horse to one side, the buffalo turned and seemed to gore the prostrate German as it dashed onward.

Puffing up at once, both Victor and Ian leaped from their horses and hastened to assist their friend. He rose slowly to a sitting posture as they approached, and began to feel his legs with a troubled look.

“Not much hurt, I hope?” said Ian, kneeling beside him. “No bones broken?”

“No, I think not; mine leks are fery vell, but I fear mine lunks are gone,” answered the German, untying his belt.

It was found, however, on examination, that the lungs were all right, the bull’s

horn having merely grazed the poor man's ribs. In a few minutes his horse was caught, and he was able to remount, but the trio were now far behind the tide of war, which had swept away by that time to the horizon. They therefore determined to rest content with what they had accomplished and return to camp.

"What a glorious chase!" exclaimed Victor as they rode slowly back; "I almost wish that white men might have the redskin's heaven and hunt the buffalo for ever."

"You'd soon grow tired of your heaven," said Ian, laughing. "I suspect that the soul requires occupation of a higher kind than the pursuing and slaying of wild animals."

"No doubt you are right, you learned philosopher; but you can't deny that this has been a most enjoyable burst."

"I don't deny anything. I merely controvert your idea that it would be pleasant to go on with this sort of thing for ever."

"Hah! de more so, ven your back is almost broke and your lunks are goréd."

"But your 'lunks' are not 'goréd,'" said Victor. "Come, Winklemann, be thankful that you are alive.By the way, Ian, where are the animals you killed?"

"We are just coming to one. Here it is. I threw my cap down to mark it, and there is another one, a quarter of a mile behind it. We have plenty of meat, you see, and shall be able to quit the camp to-morrow."

While the friends were thus jogging onwards, the hunt came to an end, and the hunters, throwing off their coats and turning up their sleeves, drew their scalping-knives, and began the work of skinning and cutting up the animals. While thus engaged their guns and bridles lay handy beside them, for at such times their Indian enemies are apt to pounce on and scalp some of them, should they chance to be in the neighbourhood. At the same time the carts advanced and began to load with meat and marrow-bones. The utmost expedition was used, for all the meat that they should be obliged to leave on the field when night closed in would be lost to them and become the property of the wolves. We know not what the loss amounted to on this occasion. But the gain was eminently satisfactory, no fewer than 1375 tongues, (as tit-bits and trophies), being brought into camp.

Is it to be wondered at that there were sounds of rejoicing that night round the blazing camp-fires? Need we remark that the hissing of juicy steaks sounded like a sweet lullaby far on into the night; that the contents of marrow-bones

oiled the fingers, to say nothing of the mouths, cheeks, and noses, of man, woman, and child? Is it surprising that people who had been on short allowance for a considerable time past took advantage of the occasion and ate till they could hardly stand?

Truly they made a night of it. Their Indian visitors, who constituted themselves camp-followers, gorged themselves to perfect satisfaction, and even the dogs, who had a full allowance, licked their lips that night with inexpressible felicity.

Chapter Seven.
Some of the Shadows of a Buffalo-Hunter's Life.

In order to give the women time to prepare some pemmican for them, Victor Ravenshaw and his companions agreed to spend another day with the hunters, and again, as a matter of course, followed them to the chase.

The same wild pursuit, accompanied by accidents, serious and serio-comic, took place, and success again attended the hunt, but the day did not end so happily, owing to an event which filled the camp with great anxiety. It happened at the close of the day.

The men were dropping into camp by twos and threes, wearied with hard work, more or less covered with dust and blood, and laden with buffalo tongues. Carts, also, were constantly coming in, filled with meat. The women were busy cutting up and drying the meat in the sun, or over a slow fire, melting down fat, pounding the dried meat with stones, and manufacturing bags out of the raw hides. Chatting and merry laughter resounded on all sides, for pemmican and bales of dried meat meant money, and they were coining it fast.

Towards sunset a band of several hunters appeared on the ridge in front of the camp, and came careering gaily towards it. Baptiste Warder, the mighty captain, led. Victor, Ian, Rollin, Winklemann, Flett, Mowat, and others followed. They dashed into camp like a whirlwind, and sprang from their steeds, evidently well pleased with the success of the day.

"Had splendid sport," said Victor, with glittering eyes, to one of the subordinate captains, who addressed him. "I killed ten animals myself, and Ian Macdonald missed fifteen; Winklemann dropped six, besides dropping himself"

"Vat is dat you zay?" demanded the big German, who was divesting himself of

some of the accoutrements of the chase.

“I say that you tumbled over six buffaloes and then tumbled over yourself,” said Victor, laughing.

“Zat is not troo. It vas mine horse vat tombled. Of course I could not go on riding upon noting after mine horse vas down.”

At supper Herr Winklemann was quieter than usual, and rather cross. His propensity to tumble seemed to be a sore subject with him, both as to body and mind. He made more than one cutting remark to Victor during the meal. After supper pipes were of course lighted, and conversation flowed freely. The only two who did not smoke were Ian Macdonald and, strange to say, Winklemann. That worthy German was a brilliant exception to his countrymen in the matter of tobacco. Victor, under the influence of example, was attempting in a quiet way to acquire the art, but with little success. He took to the pipe awkwardly.

“Vat vor you smok?” asked Winklemann, in a tone of contempt to Victor. “It is clear zat you do not loike it.”

“How d’you know that I don’t like it?” asked Victor, with a blush and a laugh.

“Becowse your face do show it. Ve does not make faces at vat ve loikes.”

“That may be,” retorted Victor, somewhat sharply. “Nevertheless, I have earned a hunter’s right to enjoy my pipe as well as the rest of you.”

“Bon, bon, c’est vraitrue,” cried Rollin, letting a huge cloud escape from his lips.

“Bah! doos killing buffalo give you right to do voolishness? Do not try for deceive yourself. You loike it not, bot you tink it makes you look loike a man. Zat is vat you tink. Nevair vas you more mistouken. I have seen von leetle poy put on a pair of big boots and tink he look very grand, very loike him fadder; bot de boots only makes him look smaller dan before, an’ more foolish. So it is vid de pipe in de mout of de beardless poy.”

Having thrown this apple of discord into the midst of the party, Winklemann shut his mouth firmly, as if waiting for a belligerent reply. As for Victor, he flushed again, partly from indignation at this attack on his liberty to do as he pleased, and partly from shame at having the real motive of his heart so ruthlessly exposed. Victor was too honest and manly to deny the fact that he had not yet acquired a liking for tobacco, and admitted to himself that, in very truth, his object in smoking was to appear, as he imagined, more like a man, forgetful or ignorant of the fact that men, (even smokers), regard beardless

consumers of tobacco as poor imitative monkeys. He soon came to see the habit in its true light, and gave it up, luckily, before he became its slave. He would have been more than mortal, however, had he given in at once. Continuing, therefore, to puff with obstinate vigour, he returned to the charge.

“Smoking is no worse than drinking, Winklemann, and you know that you’re fond of beer.”

“Bon!” said Rollin, nodding approval.

“Vat then?” cried the German, who never declined a challenge of any kind, and who was fond of wordy war; “doos my sin joostify yours? Bot you is wrong. If smoking be not worse dan trinking, it is less excusable, for to trink is natural. I may apuse mine power an’ trink vat is pad for me, but den I may likewise trink vat is coot for me. Vit smoking, no; you cannot smok vat is coot; it is all pad togeder. Von chile is porn; vell, it do trink at vonce, vidout learning. Bot did any von ever hear of a chile vat cry for a pipe ven it was porn?”

The laugh with which this question was greeted was suddenly arrested by the sound of a galloping steed. Every one sprang up and instinctively seized a weapon, for the clatter of hoofs had that unmistakable character which indicates desperate urgency. It was low and dull at first, but became suddenly and sharply distinct as a rider rose over the ridge to the left and bore madly down on the camp, lashing his horse with furious persistency.

“It’s young Vallé,” exclaimed Captain Baptiste, hastening to meet him.

Vallé, who was a mere youth, had gone out with his father, Louison Vallé, and the rest of the hunters in the morning. With glaring eyes, and scarce able to speak, he now reined in his trembling steed, and told the terrible news that his father had been killed by Sioux Indians. A party of half-breeds instantly mounted and dashed away over the plains, led by the poor boy on a fresh horse. On the way he told the tale more fully.

We have already said that when skinning the buffalo late in the evening, or at a distance from camp, the hunters ran considerable risk from savages, and were more or less wary in consequence. It was drawing towards sunset when Louison Vallé perceived that night would descend before he could secure the whole of the animals he had shot, and made up his mind to the sacrifice. While busily engaged on a buffalo, he sent his son, on his own horse, to a neighbouring eminence, to watch and guard against surprise. Even while the father was giving directions to the son, a party of Sioux, armed with bows and arrows, were creeping towards him, snake-like, through the long grass. These suddenly rushed upon him, and he had barely time to shout to his son, “Make

for the camp!” when he fell, pierced by a shower of arrows. Of course, the savages made off at once, well knowing that pursuit was certain. The murderers were twelve in number. They made for the bush country. Meanwhile, the avengers reached the murdered man. The body was on its back, just as it had fallen. Death must have relieved the unfortunate hunter before the scalp had been torn from his skull.

It was the first time that Victor Ravenshaw had looked upon a slain man. Many a time and oft had he read, with a thrill of interest, glowing descriptions of fights in which isolated acts of courage, or heroism, or magnanimity on the battle-field, coupled with but slight reference to the killed and wounded, had blinded his perceptions as to the true nature of the game of war. Now his eyes beheld the contorted form of one with whose manly aspect he had been familiar in the settlement, scarcely recognisable in its ghastliness, with blue lips, protruding eyeballs, and a horrid mass of coagulated blood where the once curling hair had been. Victor’s ears were still ringing with the deadly shriek that had burst from Vallé’s wife when she heard the dreadful newsjust as he and his party galloped out of the camp. He knew also that the dead hunter left several young children to be pinched by dire poverty in future years for want of their natural bread-winner. These and many similar thoughts crowded on his throbbing brain as he gazed at the new and terrible sight, and his eyes began for the first time to open to truths which ever after influenced his opinions while reading of the so-called triumphs of war.

“Vengeance!” was now the cry, as the hunters left the place in hot pursuit.

They knew that the savages could not be far off, and that they were unmounted, but they also knew that if they succeeded in gaining the larger portions of thick bush with which some parts of that region were covered it would be impossible to follow them up. Moreover, it was growing dark, and there was no time to lose.

In a few minutes Ian and Victor were left alone with two men who had agreed to look after the body of the murdered man.

Sadly and silently they assisted in laying the corpse in a cavity of the rocks, and covering it over with large stones to protect it from wolves, and then prepared to leave the spot.

“Will they succeed, think you, in overtaking the murderers?” asked Victor of one of the men.

“Succeed? Ay, no fear of that!” replied the hunter, with a vindictive scowl. “It’s not the first time some of them have been out after the Sioux.”

“We will ride back to camp, Vic,” said Ian, rousing himself from a reverie; “it is no part of our duty to assist in executing vengeance. If the camp were assailed we should indeed be bound to help defend it, but there are more than enough men out to hunt down these murderers. If a cart is not already on its way for the corpse we will send one. Come.”

That night the avengers returned; they had overtaken and shot down eight of the Sioux,the remaining four gained the bushes and escaped. None of themselves were hurt, but one had a narrow escape, an arrow having passed between his shirt and skin.

Next day Victor and his friends prepared to leave the hunters and resume the chase of Petawanaquat, but they were arrested by one of those terrific thunderstorms which occasionally visit the prairies. They were already mounted and on the point of taking leave, when the air darkened suddenly, the sky became overcast, lightning began to flash in vivid gleams, and a crash of thunder seemed to rend the earth and heavens.

Presently Herr Winklemann, who meant to ride with the parting guests a short way, and was also mounted, uttered a shout, and immediately horse and man rolled upon the plain. The man rose slowly, but the horse lay stillkilled by lightning! By the same flash, apparently, another horse was struck dead.

“Vell, you has tomble very often vid me,” said the German, contemplating the fallen steed, “bot you vill tomble again no mor.”

“Oui, he is mort,” sighed Rollin, looking down.

After this first burst there was a considerable lull, but appearances were so gloomy that departure was delayed.

Soon after, the storm burst with a degree of violence that the oldest hunter said he had never before witnessed. Lightning, wind, rain, thunder, seemed to have selected the spot for a battle-ground. Although the camp was pitched on comparatively high and rocky ground, the deluge was so great that in the course of ten minutes nearly everything was afloat. (See Note 1.) The camp was literally swimming, and some of the smaller children were with difficulty saved from drowning. So furious was the wind that the tents were either thrown down or blown to ribbons. During the storm three of the Indian tents, or lodges, were struck by lightning. In one of these a Canadian was killed; in another all the inmatesan Indian, his wife, two children, and two dogswere killed, and a gun beside them was melted in several parts as though it had been lead.

Then there fell a shower of hail, the stones of which were solid angular pieces

of ice larger than a hen's egg, by which some of the people were severely wounded before they found shelter under the carts and overturned tents.

It was a terrible display of the power of God, and yet, strange to say, so far is such a scene incapable of influencing man's fallen nature for good, that occasions such as these, when the camp is in disorder, are often taken advantage of by Indians to approach and steal the horses.

Being well aware of this propensity of the red man, Baptiste Warder and his captains kept a sharp look-out. It was well they did so, for, after the storm, a formidable band of Sioux was discovered within a short distance of the camp.

Their wily chief was, however, equal to the occasion. He assumed the rôle of an injured man. He had come to remonstrate with the half-breeds, and charge them with cruelty.

"My warriors," said he, "killed only one of your people, and for that one you murdered eight of my braves."

The half-breeds spoke the chief fairly, however, and entertained him and his followers hospitably, so that the affair was amicably settled, and they went away in peace. But dark eyes had met in deadly hatred during the conference.

The party of Indians who had joined the hunters with Victor and his comrades were Saulteaux, (Pronounced Sotoes), and the bitter enemies of the Sioux. Some time after the Sioux had taken their departure, a band of about fifty of these Saulteaux left the camp stealthily, and pursued a detached party of their foes for about ten miles. They overtook them at a small stream. The unsuspecting Sioux prepared to swim over to them, mistaking them at first for friends, but a volley which killed three undeceived them. The fire was instantly returned and a smoke raised to alarm the country. The Saulteaux retreated, while the Sioux, gathering force, pursued, and it is probable that the whole of the assailants would have been scalped if night had not favoured them. In this raid seven Sioux were killed and three wounded. Of the Saulteaux three were killed and four wounded.

Again the camp was visited by enraged and armed Sioux to the number of 300, who challenged the Saulteaux to come forth man to man, and fight it out. The latter declined, and the half-breeds, many of whom were related by marriage to the Saulteaux, managed to patch up a hollow peace between them.

At last Victor, Ian, and Rollin got away, glad to have done both with buffalo and savages. They now possessed three good horses, a supply of fresh provisions, and plenty of ammunition. Thus provided they galloped off with light hearts over the boundless plains, and soon left the camp of the hunters far

behind them.

Note 1. This is no picture of the fancy, but true in all its details.

Chapter Eight.
The Chase Continued, and Brought to a Fiery Termination.

With the unerring certainty of blood-hounds, the three friends now settled down to the pursuit of Petawanaquat. From the Saulteaux Indians they had received an exact description of the spot where the fugitive had parted from them; they had, therefore, little difficulty in finding it. Still less difficulty had they in following up the trail, for the grass was by that time very long, and a horse leaves a track in such grass which, if not very obvious to unaccustomed eyes, is as plain as a highway to the vision of a backwoods hunter or a redskin.

Over the prairie waves they sped, with growing excitement as their hopes of success increased; now thundering down into the hollows, anon mounting the gentle slopes at full swing, or rounding the clumps of trees that here and there dotted the prairie like islets in an interminable sea of green; and ever, as they rounded an islet or topped a prairie wave, they strained their eyes in earnest expectation of seeing the objects of their pursuit on the horizon, but for several days they raced, and gazed, and hoped in vain. Still they did not lose confidence, but pressed persistently on.

“Our horses are fresh and good,” said Victor as they reined in to a gentle trot on the brow of a knoll to rest for a few minutes, “and Petawanaquat’s horse, whether good or bad, is double-weightedalthough, to be sure, Tony is not heavy.”

“Besides,” said Ian, “the redskin does not dream now of pursuit; so that, pressing on as we do, we must overtake him ere long.”

“Voilà, de buffalo!” said Rollin, pointing to a group of these huge creatures, in the midst of which two bulls were waging furious war, while the cows stood by and looked on. “Shall ve go an’ chase dem?”

“No, Rollin; we have more important game to chase,” said Victor, whose conscience, now that he was free from the exciting influences of the camp, had twinged him more than once for his delayeven although it was partly justifiablewhile the image of poor Tony, with outstretched, appealing hands on a flying horse behind a savage, was ever before him. “Come on come on!”

He switched his horse, and went skimming down the slope, followed by his comrades.

Soon they came to a place where the ground was more broken and rocky.

“Voilà! a bar! a bar!” shouted the excitable half-breed; “com, kill him!”

They looked, and there, sure enough, was an object which Rollin declared was a large grizzly bear. It was a long way off, however, and the ground between them seemed very broken and difficult to traverse on horseback. Ian Macdonald thought of the bear’s claws, and a collar, and Elsie, and tightened his reins. Then he thought of the risk of breaking a horse’s leg if the bear should lead them a long chase over such ground, and of the certain loss of time, and of Petawanaquat pushing on ahead. It was a tempting opportunity, but his power of self-denial triumphed.

“No, Rollin, we have no time to hunt.”

“Behold!” exclaimed Rollin again; “more buffalo!”

They had swept past the stony ground and rounded a clump of trees, behind which a small herd of animals stood for a few seconds, staring at them in mute amazement. These snorted, set up their tails, and tore wildly away to the right. This was too much. With a gleeful yell, Rollin turned to pursue, but Victor called to him angrily to let the buffalo be. The half-breed turned back with a sigh.

“Ah, vell! ve must forbear.”

“I say, Vic,” remarked Ian, with a significant smile, “why won’t you go after the buffalo?”

Victor looked at his friend in surprise.

“Surely,” he said, “it is more important as well as more interesting to rescue one’s brother than to chase wild animals!”

“True, but how does that sentiment accord with your wish that you might spend eternity in hunting buffalo?”

“Oh, you know,” returned Victor, with a laugh, “when I said that I wasn’t thinking ofof”

He switched his horse into a wilder gallop, and said no more. He had said quite enough. He was not the only youth in North America and elsewhere who has uttered a good deal of nonsense without “thinking.” But then that was long ago. Youths are wiser now!

On the evening of that day, when the sun went down, and when it became too

dark to follow the trail, and, therefore, unsafe to travel for fear of stumbling into badger-holes, the three friends pulled up beside a clump of wood on the margin of a little stream, and prepared their encampment.

Little did they imagine, while busy with the fire and kettle, how nearly they had gained their end, yet how disastrously they had missed it. Well for man, sometimes, that he is ignorant of what takes place around him. Had the three pursuers known who was encamped in a clump of trees not half a mile beyond them, they would not have feasted that night so heartily, nor would they have gone to sleep with such calm placidity.

In the clump of trees referred to, Petawanaquat himself sat smoking over the dying embers of the fire that had cooked his recently devoured supper, and Tony, full to repletion, lay on his back gazing at him in quiet satisfaction, mingled slightly with wonder; for Tony was a philosopher in a small way, and familiarity with his father’s pipe had failed to set at rest a question which perplexed his mind, namely, why men should draw smoke into their mouths merely to puff it out again!

When the pipe and the camp-fire had burnt low, Tony observed, with much interest, that the Indian’s eyes became suddenly fixed, that his nostrils dilated, his lips ceased to move, the cloud that had just escaped from them curled round the superincumbent nose and disappeared without being followed by another cloud, and the entire man became rigid like a brown statue. At that point Tony ceased to think, because tired nature asserted her claims, and he fell sound asleep.

The practised ear of the Indian had detected the sound of horses’ feet on the prairie. To any ordinary man no sound at all would have been perceptible save the sighing of the night wind. Petawanaquat, however, not only heard the tramp, but could distinguish it from that of buffalo. He rose softly, ascertained that Tony was asleep, turned aside the bushes, and melted into darkness among the trees. Presently he emerged on the plain at the other side of the clump, and there stood still. Patience is one of the red man’s characteristics. He did not move hand or foot for half an hour, during which time, despite the distance of the neighbouring clump, he could easily make out the sound of an axe chopping wood, and even heard human voices in conversation. Then a gleam of light flickered among the trees, and the kindling camp-fire of our three friends became visible.

The Indian now felt comparatively safe. He knew that, whoever the new arrivals might be, they were unsuspicious of his presence in the vicinity, and had encamped for the night. He also knew that when men are busy with supper they are not very watchful, especially when danger is not expected. He,

therefore, gave them another quarter of an hour to prepare supper, and then moved stealthily over the plain towards them.

On gaining the shelter of the trees, Petawanaquat advanced with cat-like caution, until he could clearly see the travellers. He recognised them instantly, and a dark frown settled on his features. His first thought was to steal their horses, and thus leave them incapable of pursuing further, but Ian Macdonald was too much of a backwoodsman to give a foe the opportunity to do this. The horses were tethered close beside the fire. Then the Indian thought of shooting them, but his gun being a single-barrel, such as was sold to the Indians by the fur-traders, could only dispose of one horse at a time, thus leaving the other two to his incensed enemies, who would probably capture him before he could reload or regain his own camp. With a feeling of baffled rage he suddenly thought of murder. He could easily kill Ian Macdonald, could probably reload before Rollin should overtake him, and as for Victor, he was nothing! Quick as thought the Indian raised his gun, and took a long steady aim at Ian's forehead.

The contemplative schoolmaster was looking at the fire, thinking of Elsie at the time. He smiled as he thought of her. Perhaps it was the smile that checked the savage perhaps it was the words, "Thou shalt not kill," which had been sounded in his ears more than once during the past winter by the missionary. At all events, the fatal trigger was not drawn. Ian's contemplations were not disturbed, the gun was lowered, and the savage melted once more into the deep shade of the thicket.

Returning to his own camp in the same cat-like manner as before, Petawanaquat quietly but quickly packed his provisions, etcetera, on his horse. When all was ready he tried to awaken Tony, but Tony slept the sleep of infancy and comparative innocence. The Indian pushed him, kicked him, even lifted him up and shook him, before he awoke. Then, expressing astonishment at having to resume the journey at so early an hour, the child submitted silently to orders.

In a few minutes the Indian led his horse down to the rivulet close at hand, crossed it with Tony, half asleep, clinging to his back, ascended the opposite bank, and gained the level plain. Here he mounted, with Tony in front to guard against the risk of his falling off in a state of slumber, and galloped away.

Fortunately for him, the moon had risen, for red men are not a whit better than white at seeing in the dark. Indeed, we question the proverbial capacity of cats in that way. True, the orb of night was clouded, and only in her first quarter, but she gave light enough to enable the horseman to avoid dangers and proceed at full speed. Thus, while the pursuers snored, the pursued went scouring over the prairies, farther and farther towards the fair west.

Michel Rollin, being a lively, restless character, used generally to be up before his comrades in the mornings, and gratified an inquisitive propensity by poking about. In his pokings he discovered the trail of the midnight visitor, and thereupon set up a howl of surprise that effectually roused Ian and Victor. These, guns in hand, rushed, as they fancied, to the rescue.

“What a noisy goose you are!” said Victor, on learning the cause of the cry.

“There is reason for haste, however,” said Ian, rising from a close inspection of the trail. “Some one has been here in the night watching us. Why he didn’t join us if a friend, or kill us if an enemy, puzzles me. If there were horse-tracks about I should say it must have been Petawanaquat himself. Come, we must mount and away without breakfast.”

They went off accordingly, and soon traced the Indian’s original track to the place where he had encamped. Petawanaquat had taken the precaution to pour water on his fire, so as to cool the ashes, and thus lead to the supposition that he had been gone a considerable time, but Ian was not to be so easily deceived. The moment he had examined the extinct fire, and made up his mind, he leaped up and followed the trail to the spot where the Indian had mounted.

“Now then, mount, boys!” he cried, vaulting into the saddle, “no time to lose. The redskin seems to have a good horse, and knows we are at his heels. It will be a straight end-on race now. Hup! get along!”

Their course at first lay over a level part of the plain, which rendered full speed possible; then they came to a part where the thick grass grew rank and high, rendering the work severe. As the sun rose high, they came to a small pond, or pool.

“The rascal has halted here, I see!” cried Ian, pulling up, leaping off, and running to the water, which he lifted to his mouth in both hands, while his panting horse stooped and drank. “It was very likely more for Tony’s sake than for his own. But if he could stop, so can we for a few minutes.”

“It vill make de horses go more better,” said Rollin, unstrapping the pemmican bag.

“That’s right,” cried Victor, “give us a junka big onesothanks, we can eat it as we go.”

Up and away they went again, urging their horses now to do their utmost, for they began to hope that the day of success had surely arrived.

Still far ahead of his pursuers, the Indian rode alone without check or halt, to the alarm of Tony, who felt that something unusual had occurred to make his self-appointed father look so fierce.

“What de matter?” he ventured to ask. “Nobody chase us.”

“Let Tonyquat shut his mouth,” was the brief reply. And Tony obeyed. He was learning fast!

Suddenly the air on the horizon ahead became clouded. The eyes of the savage dilated with an expression that almost amounted to alarm. Could it be fire? It wasthe prairie on fire! As the wind blew towards him, the consuming flames and smoke approached him at greater speed than he approached them. They must soon meet. Behind were the pursuers; in front the flames.

There was but one course open. As the fire drew near the Indian stopped, dismounted, and tore up and beat down a portion of the grass around him. Then he struck a light with flint and steel and set fire to the grass to leeward of the cleared space. It burned slowly at first, and he looked anxiously back as the roar of the fiery storm swelled upon his ear. Tony looked on in mute alarm and surprise. The horse raised its head wildly and became restive, but the Indian, having now lighted the long grass thoroughly, restrained it. Presently he sprang on its back and drew Tony up beside him. Flames and smoke were now on both sides of him. When the grass was consumed to leeward he rode on to the blackened spacenot a moment too soon, however. It was barely large enough to serve as a spot of refuge when the storm rolled down and almost suffocated horse and riders with smoke. Then the fire at that spot went out for want of fuel, and thus the way was opened to the coal-black plain over which it had swept. Away flew the Indian then, diverging sharply to the right, so as to skirt the fire, (now on its windward side), and riding frequently into the very fringe of flame, so that his footprints might be burnt up.

When, some hours later, the pursuers met the fire, they went through the same performance in exactly the same manner, excepting that Victor and Rollin acted with much greater excitement than the savage. But when they had escaped the flames, and rode out upon the burnt prairie to continue the chase, every trace of those of whom they were in pursuit had completely vanished away.

Chapter Nine.
Meteorological Changes and Consequences, and a Grand Opportunity Misimproved.

It must not be supposed that the life of a backwoodsman is all pleasure and

excitement. Not wishing to disappoint our readers with it, we have hitherto presented chiefly its bright phases, but truth requires that we should now portray some of the darker aspects of that life. For instance, it was a very sombre aspect indeed of prairie-life when Victor Ravenshaw and his party crossed a stony place where Victor's horse tripped and rolled over, causing the rider to execute a somersault which laid him flat upon the plain, compelling the party to encamp there for three days until he was sufficiently recovered to resume the journey. Perhaps we should say the chase, for, although the trail had been lost, hope was strong, and the pursuers continued to advance steadily in what they believed to be the right direction.

The aspect of things became still more dreary when the fine weather, which was almost uninterrupted as summer advanced, gave way to a period of wind and rain. Still, they pushed on hopefully. Michel Rollin alone was despondent.

"It is a wild goose chase now," he remarked sulkily one day, while the wet fuel refused to kindle.

That same night Victor half awoke and growled. He seldom awoke of his own accord. Nature had so arranged it that parents, or comrades, usually found it necessary to arouse him with much shouting and shakingnot unfrequently with kicks. But there was a more powerful influence than parents, comrades, or kicks at work that night. Being tired and sleepy, the party had carelessly made their beds in a hollow. It was fair when they lay down. Soon afterwards, a small but exceedingly heavy rain descended like dew upon their unprotected heads. It soaked their blankets and passed through. It soaked their garments and passed through. It reached their skins, which it could not so easily pass through, but was stopped and warmed before being absorbed. A few uneasy turns and movements, with an occasional growl, was the resultnothing more. But when the density of the rain increased, and the crevices in the soil turned into active water-courses, and their hollow became a pool, Victor became, as we have said, half-awake. Presently he awoke completely, sat up, and scratched his head. It was the power of a soft and gentle but persistent influence triumphantly asserted.

"W'ass-'e-marrer?" asked Ian, without moving.

"Why," (yawning), "Lake Winnipeg is a trifle to this," said Victor.

"O-gor-o-sleep," returned Ian.

"Niagara have com to de plains!" exclaimed Rollin, rising to a sitting posture in desperation. "It have been rush 'longside of me spine for two hours by de cloke. Oui."

This aroused Ian, who also sat up disconsolate and yawned.

“It’s uncomfortable,” he remarked.

No one replied to so ridiculously obvious a truth, but each man slowly rose and stumbled towards higher ground. To add to their discomfort the night was intensely dark; even if wide awake they could not have seen a yard in front of them.

“Have you found a tree?” asked Victor.

“Ouiyesto be sure,” said Rollin angrily. “Anyhow von branch of a tree have found me, an’ a’most split my head.”

“Where is it?speak, Ian; I can see nothing. Is itah! I’ve found it too.”

“Vid yoos head?” inquired Rollin, chuckling.

Victor condescended not to reply, but lay down under the partial shelter of the tree, rolled himself up in his wet blanket, and went to sleep. His companions followed suit. Yes, reader, we can vouch for the truth of this, having more than once slept damp and soundly in a wet blanket. But they did not like it, and their spirits were down about zero when they mounted at grey dawn and resumed the chase in a dull, dreadful drizzle.

After a time the aspect of the scenery changed. The rolling plain became more irregular and broken than heretofore, and was more studded with patches of woodland, which here and there almost assumed the dignity of forests.

One evening the clouds broke; glimpses of the heavenly blue appeared to gladden our travellers, and ere long the sun beamed forth in all its wonted splendour. Riding out into a wide stretch of open country, they bounded away with that exuberance of feeling which is frequently the result of sunshine after rain.

“It is like heaven upon earth,” cried Victor, pulling up after a long run.

“I wonder what heaven is like,” returned Ian musingly. “It sometimes occurs to me that we think and speak far too little of heaven, which is a strange thing, considering that we all hope to go there in the long-run, and expect to live there for ever.”

“Oh! come now, Mr Wiseman,” said Victor, “I didn’t mean to call forth a sermon.”

“Your remark, Vic, only brings out one of the curious features of the case. If I

had spoken of buffalo-hunting, or riding, or boating, or even of the redskin's happy hunting-groundsanything under the sun or above itall would have been well and in order, but directly I refer to our own heaven I am sermonising!"

"Well, because it's so like the parsons," pleaded Victor.

"What then? Were not the parsons, as you style them, sent to raise our thoughts to God and heaven by preaching Christ? I admit that some of them don't raise our thoughts high, and a few of them help rather to drag our thoughts downward. Still, as a class, they are God's servants; and for myself I feel that I don't consider sufficiently what they have to tell us. I don't wish to sermonise; I merely wish to ventilate my own thoughts and get light if I can. You are willing to chat with me, Vic, on all other subjects; why not on this?"

"Oh! I've no objection, Ian; none whatever, only it'sit'sI say, there seems to me to be some sort of brute moving down in the woods there. Hist! let's keep round by that rocky knoll, and I'll run up to see what it is."

Victor did not mean this as a violent change of subject, although he was not sorry to make the change. His attention had really been attracted by some animal which he said and hoped was a bear. They soon galloped to the foot of the knoll, which was very ruggedcovered with rocks and bushes. Victor ascended on foot, while his comrades remained at the bottom holding his horse.

The sight that met his eyes thrilled him. In the distance, on a wooded eminence, sat a huge grizzly bear. The size of Victor's eyes when he looked back at his comrades was eloquently suggestive, even if he had not drawn back and descended the slope toward them on tiptoe and with preternatural caution.

"A monstrous grizzly!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisperthough the bear was at beast half a mile off on the other side of the knoll.

The eyes of Ian surpassed those of Victor in the matter of dilation.

"Did he see you?"

"No; he was nibbling his paws when I gave him my last look."

"Now, comrades," said Ian, whose usually calm demeanour had given place to intense, yet suppressed excitement, "it may seem selfishthough I hope it is notwhen I ask you to leave that bear entirely to me. You know, Vic, that your sister Elsie once expressed a wish for a grizzly-bear collar, and at the time I inwardly resolved to get her one, of my own procuring, if I could. It is a whim,

you know, but, in the circumstances, I do hope thatthat”

“Ah! it is for une dameune affair of de heart. Bon! You shall go in an’ vin,” said the gallant Rollin.

“I don’t know,” said Victor dubiously; “it seems to me rather hard to give up my chance of the first grizzly I’ve ever seen. However, I’m willing to do so on one conditionthat Rollin and I go as near you as may be without interfering. You knowexcuse me, Ianwhat an awful bad shot you are. If you were to miss, you knowwhich you’re sure to doand we were not thereeh?”

“All right, you shall go with me; but have a care, no helping of me except in case of dire necessity.”

This being agreed to, they made a wide circuit to reach a hollow. In its shelter they galloped swiftly towards the woodland, near the margin of which the bear had been seen. Arrived at a point which they judged to be near the animal, they dismounted, fastened up their horses, and prepared for war.

There were no encumbrances to lay aside, for they travelled in the simplest possible costume, but Ian drew the charge of his gun, wiped the piece carefully out with a bit of rag, made sure that the touch-hole was clear, fixed in a new flint, and loaded carefully with ball. The others acted similarly.

“Empty de pan an’ prime again ven you gits near,” said Rollin.

Ian made some uncalled-for reference to eggs and the education of Rollin’s grandmother, tightened his belt, felt that the hatchet and scalping-knife were handy behind him, and set off on his adventure, followed by his companions at a considerable distance.

On drawing near to the outer edge of the woods he stooped slightly, and trod with the extreme caution of an Indian. Indeed, no red man could have beaten Ian at woodcraftexcept, of course, in the matter of shooting. He felt this defect keenly as he glided along, but never faltered for an instant. Elsie smiled at him as visibly as if she had been there. His mind was made up.

At the edge of the wood he saw the rough spot where the bear had been seen, but no bear was visible. He felt a sinking of the heart. “It must have heard me and run away,” he thought, and hurried forward. The actual spot where it had been seen was reached, but Bruin was not there. Disappointment rendered Ian somewhat impatient. He entered the bushes beyond the knoll hastily. The bear had only changed its position, and was wagging its head and nibbling its paws on the other side of these bushes. It heard a footstep, ceased to nibble and wag, and looked up inquiringly. Suddenly Macdonald burst through the bushes and

stood before him.

It is an open question whether the man or the beast was the more surprised, for the former had given up all hope by that time. But the bear was first to recover self-possession, and advanced to meet the intruder.

It is well known that the king of the western wilds is endowed with more than average ferocity and courage. He may perhaps let you alone if you let him alone, but if you take him by surprise he is not prone to flee. The bear in question was a magnificent specimen, with claws like the fingers of a man. Even in that moment of extreme peril Ian saw these claws strung together and encircling Elsie's neck.

We say that the peril was extreme, for not only was the hunter a bad shot, but the hunted was a creature whose tenacity of life is so great that one shot, even if well placed, is not sufficient to kill it outright.

No one knew all this better than Ian Macdonald, but Elsie smiled approval, and Ian, being a matter-of-fact, unromantic fellow, clenched his teeth with a snap and went down on one knee. The bear quickened his pace and came straight at him. Ian raised his gun. Then there came a gush of feeling of some sort at his heart. What if he should miss? What if the gun should miss fire? Certain death! he well knew that. He took deadly aim when the monster was within a few yards of him and fired at the centre of its chest. The ball took effect on the extreme point of its nose, coursed under the skin over its forehead, and went out at the back of its head.

Never before was a shot taken with a more demonstrative expression of rage. To say that the bear roared would be feeble. A compounded steam-whistle and bassoon might give a suggestive illustration. The pain must have been acute, for the creature fell on its knees, drove its nose into the ground, and produced a miniature earthquake with a snort. Then it sprang up and rushed at its foe. Ian was reloading swiftly for his life. Vain hope. Men used to breech-loaders can scarce understand the slow operations of muzzle-loaders. He had only got the powder in, and was plucking a bullet from his pouch. Another moment and he would have been down, when crack! crack! went shots on either side of him, and the bear fell with a ball from Victor in its heart and another from Rollin in its spine.

Even thus fatally wounded it strove to reach its conquerors, and continued to show signs of ungovernable fury until its huge life went out.

Poor Ian stood resting on his gun, and looking at it, the picture of despair.

"You hit him after all," said Victor, with a look of admiration at his friend, not

on account of the shooting, but of his dauntless courage. “And of course,” he continued, “the grizzly is yours, because you drew first blood.”

Ian did not reply at once, but shook his head gravely.

“If you and Rollin had not been here,” he said, “I should have been dead by this time. No, Vic, no. Do you think I would present Elsie with a collar thus procured? The bear belongs to you and Rollin, for it seems to me that both shots have been equally fatal. You shall divide the claws between you, I will have none of them.”

There was bitterness in poor Ian’s spirit, for grizzly bears were not to be fallen in with every day, and it might be that he would never have another opportunity. Even if he had, what could he do?

“I don’t believe I could hit a house if it were running,” he remarked that night at supper. “My only chance will be to wait till the bear is upon me, shove my gun into his mouth, and pull the trigger when the muzzle is well down his throat.”

“That would be throttling a bear indeed,” said Victor, with a laugh, as he threw a fresh log on the fire. “What say you, Rollin?”

“It vould bu’st de gun,” replied the half-breed, whose mind, just then, was steeped in tobacco smoke. “Bot,” he continued, “it vould be worth vile to try. Possiblement de bu’stin’ of de gun in his troat might do ver vell. It vould give him conconvat you call him? De ting vat leetil chile have?”

“Contrariness,” said Victor.

“Contradictiousness,” suggested Ian; “they’re both good long words, after your own heart.”

“Non, non! Conconvulsions, dat is it. Anyhow it vould injure his digestiveness.”

“Ha! ha! yes, so it would,” cried Victor, tossing off a can of cold water like a very toper. “Well, boys, I’m off to sleep, my digestiveness being uninjured as yet. Good-night.”

“What! without a pipe, Vic?”

“Come, now, don’t chaff. To tell you the truth, Ian, I’ve been acting your part lately. I’ve been preaching a sermon to myself, the text of which was given to me by Herr Winklemann the night before we left the buffalo-runners, and I’ve been considerably impressed by my own preaching. Anyhow, I mean to take

my own advicegood-night, again.”

Ian returned “good-night” with a smile, and, lying down beside him, gazed long and thoughtfully through the trees overhead at the twinkling, tranquil stars. Michel Rollin continued to smoke and meditate for another hour. Then he shook the ashes out of his pipe, heaped fresh logs on the declining fire, and followed his comrades to the land of Nod.

Chapter Ten.
Fate of the Buffalo-Hunters.

In vain did the pursuers search after the lost Tony. Finding it impossible to rediscover the trail, they made for the nearest post of the fur-traders, from whom they heard of an Indian who had passed that way in the direction of the Rocky Mountains, but the traders had taken no special notice of the boy, and could tell nothing about him. They willingly, however, supplied the pursuers with provisions on credit, for they knew Victor’s father well by repute, and allowed them to join a party who were about to ascend the Saskatchewan river.

On being further questioned, one of the traders did remember that the hair of the boy seemed to him unusually brown and curly for that of a redskin, but his reminiscences were somewhat vague. Still, on the strength of them, Victor and Ian resolved to continue the chase, and Rollin agreed to follow. Thus the summer and autumn passed away.

Meanwhile a terrible disaster had befallen the buffalo-hunters of the Red River.

We have said that after disposing of the proceeds of the spring hunt in the settlement, and thus securing additional supplies, it is the custom of the hunters to return to the plains for the fall or autumn hunt, which is usually expected to furnish the means of subsistence during the long and severe winter. But this hunt is not always a success, and when it is a partial failure the gay, improvident, harum-scarum half-breeds have a sad time of it. Occasionally there is a total failure of the hunt, and then starvation stares them in the face. Such was the case at the time of which we write, and the improvident habits of those people in times of superabundance began to tell.

Many a time in spring had the slaughter of animals been so great that thousands of their carcasses were left where they fell, nothing but the tongues having been carried away by the hunters. It was calculated that nearly two-thirds of the entire spring hunt had been thus left to the wolves. Nevertheless, the result of that hunt was so great that the quantity of fresh provisionsfat, pemmican, and dried meatbrought into Red River, amounted to considerably

over one million pounds weight, or about two hundred pounds weight for each individual, old and young, in the settlement. A large proportion of this was purchased by the Hudson's Bay Company, at the rate of twopence per pound, for the supply of their numerous outposts, and the half-breed hunters pocketed among them a sum of nearly 1200 pounds. This, however, was their only market, the sales to settlers being comparatively insignificant. In the same year the agriculturists did not make nearly so large a sumbut then the agriculturists were steady, and their gains were saved, while the jovial half-breed hunters were volatile, and their gains underwent the process of evaporation. Indeed, it took the most of their gains to pay their debts. Thus, with renewed supplies on credit, they took the field for the fall campaign in little more than a month after their return from the previous hunt.

It is not our purpose to follow the band step by step. It is sufficient to say that the season was a bad one; that the hunters broke up into small bands when winter set in, and some of these followed the fortunes of the Indians, who of course followed the buffalo as their only means of subsistence.

In one of these scattered groups were Herr Winklemann and Baptiste Warderthe latter no longer a captain, his commission having lapsed with the breaking up of the spring hunt. The plains were covered with the first snows. The party were encamped on a small eminence whence a wide range of country could be seen.

"There is a small herd on the horizon," said Baptiste, descending from the highest part of the hillock towards the fire where the German was seated eating a scrap of dried meat.

"Zat is vell. I vill go after dem."

He raised his bulky frame with a sigh, for he was somewhat weak and dispiritedthe band with which he hunted having been at the starving-point for some days. Winklemann clothed himself in a wolf-skin, to which the ears and part of the head adhered. A small sledge, which may be described as a long thin plank with one end curled up, was brought to him by a hungry-looking squaw. Four dogs were attached to it with miniature harness made to fit them. When all was ready the hunter flung himself flat on his face at full length on the sledge, cracked his whip, and away went the dogs at full speed. Herr Winklemann was armed only with bow and arrows, such weapons being most suitable for the work in hand.

Directing his course to a small clump of trees near to which the buffalo were scraping away the yet shallow snow to reach their food, he soon gained the shelter of the bushes, fastened up the dogs, and advanced through the clump to

the other side.

It was a fine sight to a hungry man. About a dozen animals were browsing there not far out of gunshot. Winklemann at once went down on all-fours, and arranged the large wolf-skin so that the legs hung down over his own legs and arms, while the head was pulled over his eyes like a hood. Thus disguised, he crept into the midst of the unsuspicious band.

The buffalo is not afraid of wolves. He treats them with contempt. It is only when he is wounded, or enfeebled by sickness or old age, that his sneaking enemy comes and sits down before him, licking his chops in the hope of a meal.

A fat young cow cast a questioning glance at Winklemann as he approached her. He stopped. She turned aside and resumed her feeding. Then she leaped suddenly into the air and fell quivering on the snow, with an arrow up to the feathers in her side. The hunter did not rise. The animals near to the cow looked at her a moment, as if in surprise at her eccentric behaviour, and then went on feeding. Again the hunter bent his bow, and another animal lay dying on the plain. The guardian bull observed this, lifted his shaggy head, and moved that subtle index of temper, his tail. An ill-directed arrow immediately quivered in his flank. With a roar of rage he bounded into the air, tossed up his heels, and seeing no enemy on whom to wreak his vengeancefor the wolf was crouching humbly on the snowhe dashed wildly away, followed by the rest of the astonished herd.

The whole camp had turned out by that time to resume their journey, and advanced joyfully to meet the returning hunter. As they passed one of the numerous clumps of wood with which the plains were studded, another herd of buffalo started suddenly into view. Among other objects of interest in the band of hunters, there happened to be a small child, which was strapped with some luggage on a little sled and drawn by two dogs. These dogs were lively. They went after the buffalo full swing, to the consternation of the parents of the child. It was their only child. If it had only been a fragment of their only child, the two dogs could not have whisked it off more swiftly. Pursuit was useless, yet the whole band ran yelling after it. Soon the dogs reached the heels of the herd, and all were mixed pell-mell together,the dogs barking, the sled swinging to and fro, and the buffalo kicking. At length a bull gored one of the dogs; his head got entangled in the harness, and he went off at a gallop, carrying the dog on his horns, the other suspended by the traces, and the sled and child whirling behind him. The enraged creature ran thus for full half a mile before ridding himself of the encumbrance, and many shots were fired at him without effect. Both dogs were killed, but, strange to say, the child was unhurt.

The supply of meat procured at this time, although very acceptable, did not last long, and the group with which Winklemann was connected was soon again reduced to sore straits. It was much the same with the scattered parties elsewhere, though they succeeded by hard work in securing enough of meat to keep themselves alive.

In these winter wanderings after the buffalo, the half-breeds and their families had travelled from 150 to 200 miles from the colony, but in the midst of their privations they kept up heart, always hoping that the sudden discovery of larger herds would ere long convert the present scarcity into the more usual superabundance. But it was otherwise ordained. On the 20th of December there was a fearful snowstorm, such as had not been witnessed for years. It lasted several days, drove the buffalo hopelessly beyond the reach of the hunters, and killed most of their horses. What greatly aggravated the evil was the suddenness of the disaster. According to the account of one who was in Red River at the time, and an eye-witness, the animals disappeared almost instantaneously, and no one was prepared for the inevitable famine that followed. The hunters were at the same time so scattered that they could render each other no assistance. Indeed, the various groups did not know whereabouts the others were. Some were never found. Here and there whole families, despairing of life, weakened by want, and perishing with cold, huddled themselves together for warmth. At first the heat of their bodies melted the snow and soaked their garments. These soon froze and completed the work of destruction. They died where they lay. Some groups were afterwards discovered thus frozen together in a mass of solid ice.

While the very young and the feeble succumbed at once, the more robust made a brave struggle for life, and, as always happens in cases of extreme suffering, the good or evil qualities of men and women came out prominently to view. The selfish, caring only for themselves, forsook their suffering comrades, seized what they could or dared, and thus prolonged awhile their wretched lives. The unselfish and noble-hearted cared for others, sacrificed themselves, and in many cases were the means of saving life.

Among these last were Baptiste Warder and Winklemann.

“I vill valk to de settlement,” said the latter, one morning towards the middle of January, as he rose from his lair and began to prepare breakfast.

“I’ll go with you,” said Warder. “It’s madness to stop here. Death will be at our elbow anyhow, but he’ll be sure to strike us all if we remain where we are. The meat we were lucky enough to get yesterday will keep our party on short allowance for some time, and the men will surely find something or other to

eke it out while we push on and bring relief."

"Goot," returned the German; "ve vill start after breakfast. My lecks are yet pretty strong."

Accordingly, putting on their snow-shoes, the two friends set out on a journey such as few men would venture to undertake, and fewer could accomplish, in the circumstances.

On the way they had terrible demonstration of the extent of suffering that prevailed among their friends.

They had not walked twenty miles when they came on tracks which led them to a groupa father, mother, and two sonswho were sitting on the snow frozen to death. In solemn silence the hunters stood for a few minutes and looked at the sad sight, then turned and passed on. The case was too urgent to permit of delay. Many lives hung on their speedy conveyance of news to the settlement. They bent forward, and with long swinging strides sped over the dreary plains until darknessnot exhaustioncompelled them to halt. They carried with them a small amount of pemmican, about half rations, trusting to meet with something to shoot on the way. Before daylight the moon rose. They rose with it and pushed on. Suddenly they were arrested by an appalling yell. Next moment a man rushed from a clump of trees brandishing a gun. He stopped when within fifty yards, uttered another demoniacal yell, and took aim at Warder.

Quick as thought the ex-captain brought his own piece to his shoulder. He would have been too late if the gun of his opponent had not missed fire.

"Stop! 'tis Pierre Vincent!" cried Winklemann, just in time to arrest Warder's hand.

Vincent was a well-known comrade, but his face was so disfigured by dirt and blood that they barely recognised him. He flung away his gun when it snapped, and ran wildly towards them.

"Come! come! I have food, food! ha! ha! much food yonder in the bush! My wife and child eat it! they are eating eating now! ha! ha!"

With another fierce yell the poor maniacfor such he had becometurned off at a tangent, and ran far away over the plains.

They made no attempt to follow him; it would have been useless. In the bush they found his wife and child stone-dead. Frequently during that terrible walk they came on single tracks, which invariably showed that the traveller had

fallen several times, and at length taken to creeping. Then they looked ahead, for they knew that the corpse of a man or woman was not far in advance of them.

One such track led them to a woman with an infant on her back. She was still pretty strong, and trudged bravely over the snow on her snow-shoes, while the little one on her back appeared to be quite content with its lot, although pinched-looking in the face.

The men could not afford to help her on. It would have delayed themselves. The words “life and death” seemed to be ringing constantly in their ears. But they spoke kindly to the poor woman, and gave her nearly all their remaining stock of provisions, reserving just enough for two days.

“I’ve travelled before now on short allowance,” said Warder, with a pitiful smile. “We’re sure to come across something before long. If not, we can travel empty for a bit.”

“Goot; it vill make us lighter,” said Winklemann, with a grave nod.

They parted from the woman, and soon left her out of sight behind. She never reached the settlement. She and the child were afterwards found dead within a quarter of a mile of Pembina. From the report of the party she had left, this poor creature must have travelled upwards of a hundred miles in three days and nights before sinking in that terrible struggle for life.

Warder and his companion did not require to diverge in order to follow these tracks. They all ran one way, straight for Red Riverfor home! But there were many, very many, who never saw that home again.

One exception they overtook on their fourth day. She was a middle-aged woman, but her visage was so wrinkled by wigwam smoke, and she had such a stoop, that she seemed very old indeed.

“Why, I know that figure,” exclaimed Warder, on sighting her; “it’s old Liz, Michel Rollin’s Scotch mother!”

So it turned out. She was an eccentric creature, full of life, fire, and fun, excessively short and plain, but remarkably strong. She had been forsaken by her nephew, she said. Michel, dear Michel, would not have left her in the lurch if he had been there. But she would be at home to receive Michel on his return. That she would! And she was right. She reached the settlement alive, though terribly exhausted.

Warder and Winklemann did not “come across” anything except one raven,

but they shot that and devoured it, bones and all. Then they travelled a day without food and without halt. Next day they might reach the settlement if strength did not fail, but when they lay down that night Warder said he felt like going to die, and Winklemann said that his “lecks” were now useless, and his “lunks” were entirely gone!

Chapter Eleven.
To the Rescue.

Elsie and Cora Ravenshaw were seated at a table in Willow Creek, with their mother and Miss Trim, repairing garments, one night in that same inclement January of which we have been writing.

Mr Ravenshaw was enjoying his pipe by the stove, and Louis Lambert was making himself agreeable. The old man was a little careworn. No news had yet been received of Tony or of Victor. In regard to the latter he felt easy; Victor could take care of himself, and was in good company, but his heart sank when he thought of his beloved Tony. What would he not have given to have had him smashing his pipe or operating on his scalp at that moment.

“It is an awful winter,” observed Elsie, as a gust of wind seemed to nearly blow in the windows.

“I pity the hunters in the plains,” said Cora. “They say a rumour has come that they are starving.”

“I heard of that, but hope it is not true,” observed Lambert.

“Oh! they always talk of starving,” said old Ravenshaw. “No fear of ’em.”

At that moment there was a sound of shuffling in the porch, the door was thrown open, and a gaunt, haggard man, with torn, snow-sprinkled garments, pale face, and bloodshot eyes, stood pictured on the background of the dark porch.

“Baptiste Warder!” exclaimed Lambert, starting up.

“Ay, what’s left o’ me; and here’s the remains o’ Winklemann,” said Warder, pointing to the cadaverous face of the starving German, who followed him.

Need we say that the hunters received a kindly welcome by the Ravenshaw family, as they sank exhausted into chairs. The story of starvation, suffering, and death was soon toldat least in outline.

“You are hungry. When did you eat last?” asked Mr Ravenshaw, interrupting

them.

“Two days ago,” replied Warder, with a weary smile.

“It seems like two veeks,” observed the German, with a sigh.

“Hallo! Elsie, Cora, victuals!” cried the sympathetic old man, turning quickly round.

But Elsie, whose perceptions were quick, had already placed bread and beer on the table.

“Here, have a drink of beer first,” said the host, pouring out a foaming glass.

Warder shook his head. Winklemann remarked that, “beer vas goot, ver goot, but they had been used to vatter of late.”

“Ah!” he added, after devouring half a slice of bread while waiting for Cora to prepare another; “blessed brod an’ booter! Nobody can know vat it is till he have starve for two veekaI mean two days; all de same ting in my feel”

The entrance of a huge bite put a sudden and full stop to the sentence.

“Why did you not stop at some of the houses higher up the river to feed?” asked Lambert.

Warder explained that they meant to have done so, but they had missed their way. They had grown stupid, he thought, from weakness. When they lost the way they made straight for the river, guided by the pole-star, and the first house they came in sight of was that of Willow Creek.

“How can the pole-star guide one?” asked Cora, in some surprise.

“Don’t you know?” said Lambert, going round to where Cora sat, and sitting down beside her. “I will explain.”

“If I did know I wouldn’t ask,” replied Cora coquettishly; “besides, I did not put the question to you.”

“Nay, but you don’t object to my answering it, do you?”

“Not if you are quite sure you can do so correctly.”

“I think I can, but the doubts which you and your sister so often throw on my understanding make me almost doubt myself,” retorted Lambert, with a laughing glance at Elsie. “You must know, then, that there is a constellation named the Great Bear. It bears about as much resemblance to a bear as it does

to a rattlesnake, but that's what astronomers have called it. Part of it is much more in the shape of a plough, and one of the stars in that plough is the pole-star. You can easily distinguish it when once you know how, because two of the other stars are nearly in line with it, and so are called 'pointers.' When you stand looking at the pole-star you are facing the north, and of course, when you know where the north is, you can tell all the other points of the compass."

It must not be supposed that the rest of the party listened to this astronomical lecture. The gallant Louis had sought to interest Elsie as well as Cora, but Elsie was too much engrossed with the way-worn hunters and their sad tale to think of anything else. When they had eaten enough to check the fierce cravings of hunger they related more particulars.

"And now," said Warder, sitting erect and stretching his long arms in the air as if the more to enjoy the delightful sensation of returning strength, "we have pushed on at the risk of our lives to save time. This news must be carried at once to the Governor. The Company can help us best in a fix like this."

"Of course, of course; I shall send word to him at once," said his host.

"All right, Baptiste," said Lambert, coming forward, "I expected you'd want a messenger. Here I am. Black Dick's in the stable. He'll be in the cariole in ten minutes. What shall I say to the Governor?"

"I'll go with you," answered Warder.

"So vill I," said Winklemann.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," retorted Ravenshaw. "You both need rest. A sound sleep will fit you to do your work more actively in the morning. I myself will go to the fort."

"Only one can go, at least in my cariole," remarked Lambert, "for it only holds two, and no one can drive Black Dick but myself."

Baptiste Warder was immoveable; it ended in his going off in the cariole with Lambert to inform the governor of the colony, who was also chief of the Hudson's Bay Company in Red River, and to rouse the settlement. They had to pass the cottage of Angus Macdonald on the way.

"Oh! wow!" cried that excitable old settler when he heard the news. "Can it pe possible? So many tead an' tying. Oh! wow!Here, Martha! Martha! where iss that wuman? It iss always out of the way she iss when she's wantit. Ay, Peegwish, you will do equally well. Go to the staple, man, an' tell the poy to put the mare in the cariole. Make him pe quick; it's slow he iss at the best,

whatever.”

Lambert did not wait to hear the remarks of Angus, but drove off at once. Angus put on his leather coat, fut cap, and mittens, and otherwise prepared himself for a drive over the snow-clad plains to Fort Garry, where the Governor dwelt, intending to hear what was going to be done, and offer his services.

With similarly benevolent end in view, old Ravenshaw harnessed his horse and made for the same goal, regardless alike of rheumatism, age, and inclement weather. At a certain point, not far from the creek, the old trader’s private track and that which led to the house of Angus Macdonald united, and thereafter joined the main road, which road, by the way, was itself a mere track beaten in the snow, with barely room for two carioles to pass. Now, it so happened that the neighbours came up to the point of junction at the same moment. Both were driving hard, being eager and sympathetic about the sufferings of the plain-hunters. To have continued at the same pace would have been to insure a meeting and a crash. One must give way to the other! Since the affair of the knoll these two men had studiously cut each other. They met every Sabbath day in the same church, and felt this to be incongruous as well as wrong. The son of the one was stolen by savages. The son of the other was doing his utmost to rescue the child. Each regretted having quarrelled with the other, but pride was a powerful influence in both. What was to be done? Time for thought was short, for two fiery steeds were approaching each other at the rate of ten miles an hour. Who was to give in?

“I’ll see both carioles smashed to atoms first!” thought Ravenshaw, grinding his teeth.

“She’ll tie first,” thought Angus, pursing his lips.

The instinct of self-preservation caused both to come to a dead and violent halt when within six yards of the meeting-point. A happy thought burst upon Angus at that instant.

“Efter you, sir,” he said, with a palpable sneer, at the same time backing his horse slightly.

It was an expression of mock humility, and would become an evidence of superior courtesy if Ravenshaw should go insolently on. If, on the other hand, he should take it well, a friendly reference to the roads or the weather would convert the sneer into a mere nasal tone.

“Ah, thanks, thanks,” cried Mr Ravenshaw heartily, as he drove past; “bad news that about the plain-hunters. I suppose you’ve heard it.”

“Ay, it iss pad newsferry pad news inteed, Mister Ruvnshaw. It will pe goin’ to the fort ye are?”

“Yes; the poor people will need all the help we can give them.”

“They wull that; oo ay.”

Discourse being difficult in the circumstances, they drove the remainder of the way in silence, but each knew that the breach between them was healed, and felt relieved. Angus did not, however, imagine that he was any nearer to his desires regarding the knoll. Full well did he understand and appreciate the unalterable nature of Sam Ravenshaw’s resolutions, but he was pleased again to be at peace, for, to say truth, he was not fond of war, though ready to fight on the smallest provocation.

Baptiste Warder was right in expecting that the Company would lend their powerful aid to the rescue.

The moment the Governor heard of the disaster, he took immediate and active steps for sending relief to the plains. Clothing and provisions were packed up as fast as possible, and party after party was sent out with these. But in the nature of things the relief was slow. We have said that some of the hunters and their families had followed the Indians and buffalo to a distance of between 150 and 200 miles. The snow was now so deep that the only means of transport was by dog-sledges. Dogs, being light and short-limbed, can travel where horses cannot, but even dogs require a track, and the only way of making one on the trackless prairie, or in the forest, is by means of a man on snow-shoes, who walks ahead of the dogs and thus “beats the track.” The men employed, however, were splendid and persevering walkers, and their hearts were in the work.

Both Samuel Ravenshaw and Angus Macdonald gave liberally to the cause; and each obtaining a team of dogs, accompanied one of the relief parties in a dog-cariole. If the reader were to harness four dogs to a slipper-bath, he would have a fair idea of a dog-cariole and team. Louis Lambert beat the track for old Ravenshaw. He was a recognised suitor at Willow Creek by that time. The old gentleman was well accustomed to the dog-cariole, but to Angus it was newat least in experience.

“It iss like as if she was goin’ to pathe,” he remarked, with a grim smile, on stepping into the machine and sitting down, or rather reclining luxuriously among the buffalo robes.

The dogs attempted to run away with him, and succeeded for a hundred yards

or so. Then they got off the track, and discovered that Angus was heavy. Then they stopped, put out their tongues, and looked humbly back for the driver to beat the track for them.

A stout young half-breed was the driver. He came up and led the way until they reached the open plains, where a recent gale had swept away the soft snow, and left a long stretch that was hard enough for the dogs to walk on without sinking. The team was fresh and lively.

“She’d petter hold on to the tail,” suggested Angus.

The driver assented. He had already left the front, and allowed the cariole to pass him, in order to lay hold of the tail-line and check the pace, but the dogs were too sharp for him. They bolted again, ran more than a mile, overturned the cariole, and threw its occupant on the snow, after which they were brought up suddenly by a bush.

On the way the travellers passed several others of the wealthy settlers who were going personally to the rescue. Sympathy for the plain-hunters was universal. Every one lent a willing hand. The result was that the lives of hundreds were saved, though many were lost. Their sufferings were so great that some died on their road to the colony, after being relieved at Pembina. Those found alive had devoured their horses, dogs, raw hides, leather, and their very moccasins. Mr Ravenshaw and his neighbour passed many corpses on the way, two of which were scarcely cold. They also passed at various places above forty sufferers in seven or eight parties, who were crawling along with great difficulty. To these they distributed the provisions they had brought with them. At last the hunters were all rescued and conveyed to the settlementone man, with his wife and three children, having been dug out of the snow, where they had been buried for five days and nights. The woman and children recovered, but the man died.

Soon after this sad event the winter began to exhibit unwonted signs of severity. It had begun earlier, and continued later than usual. The snow averaged three feet deep in the plains and four feet in the woods, and the cold was intense, being frequently down to forty-five degrees below zero of Fahrenheit’s scale, while the ice measured between five and six feet in thickness on the rivers.

But the great, significant, and prevailing feature of that winter was snow. Never within the memory of man had there been such heavy, continuous, persistent snow. It blocked up the windows so that men had constantly to clear a passage for daylight. It drifted up the doors so that they were continually

cutting passages for themselves to the world outside. It covered the ground to such an extent that fences began to be obliterated, and landmarks to disappear, and it weighted the roofs down until some of the weaker among them bid fair to sink under the load.

“A severe winter” was old Mr Ravenshaw’s usual morning remark as he went to the windows, pipe in hand, before breakfast. To which his better half invariably replied, “Never saw anything like it before;” and Miss Trim remarked, “It is awful.”

“It snows hardwhatever,” was Angus Macdonald’s usual observation about the same hour. To which his humble and fast friend Peegwishwho assisted in his kitchenwas wont to answer, “Ho!” and glare solemnly, as though to intimate that his thoughts were too deep for utterance.

Thus the winter passed away, and when spring arrived it had to wage an unusually fierce conflict before it gained the final victory over ice and snow.

Chapter Twelve.
Victory!

But before that winter closed, ay, before it began, a great victory was gained, which merits special mention here. Let us retrace our steps a little.

One morning, while Ian Macdonald was superintending the preparation of breakfast in some far-away part of the western wilderness, and Michel Rollin was cutting firewood, Victor Ravenshaw came rushing into camp with the eager announcement that he had seen the footprints of an enormous grizzly bear!

At any time such news would have stirred the blood of Ian, but at that time, when the autumn was nearly over, and hope had almost died in the breast of our scholastic backwoodsman, the news burst upon him with the thrilling force of an electric shock.

“Now, Ian, take your gun and go in and win,” said Victor with enthusiasm, for the youth had been infected with Rollin’s spirit of gallantry.

“You see,” Rollin had said to Victor during a confidential tête-à-tête, “ven a lady is in de case ye must bow de head. Ian do love your sister. Ver goot. Your sister do vish for a bar-claw collar. Ver goot. Vell, de chance turn up at lastvon grizzly bar do appear. Who do shot ’im? Vy, Ian, certaintly. Mais, it is pity he am so ’bominibly bad shot!”

Victor, being an unselfish fellow, at once agreed to this; hence his earnest

advice that Ian should take his gun and go in and win. But Ian shook his head.

“My dear boy,” he said, with a sigh, “it’s of no use my attempting to shoot a bear, or anything else. I don’t know what can be wrong with my vision, I can see as clear and as far as the best of you, and I’m not bad, you’ll allow, at following up a trail over hard ground; but when it comes to squinting along the barrel of a gun I’m worse than useless. It’s my belief that if I took aim at a haystack at thirty yards I’d miss it. No, Vic, I must give up the idea of shooting altogether.”

“What! have you forgotten the saying, ‘Faint heart never won fair lady?’” exclaimed Victor, in surprise.

“Nay, lad, my memory is not so short as that, neither is my heart as faint as you seem to think it. I do intend to go in and win, but I shall do it after a fashion of my own, Vic.”

Rollin, who came up at the moment and flung a bundle of sticks on the fire, demanded to know what “vas the vashion” referred to.

“That I won’t tell you at present, boys,” said Ian; “but, if you have any regard for me, you’ll make me a solemn promise not in any way to interfere with me or my plans unless you see me in actual and imminent danger of losing my life.”

“Jus’ so,” said Rollin, with a nod, “ye vill not step in to de reskoo till you is at de very last gasp.”

Having obtained the requisite promise, Ian set off with his comrades to examine the bear’s track. There could be but one opinion as to the size of the grizzly which had made it. As Victor had said, it was enormous, and showed that the animal had wandered about hither and thither, as if it had been of an undecided temperament. Moreover the track was quite fresh.

Of course there was much eager conversation about it among the friends; carried on in subdued tones and whispers, as if they feared that the bear might be listening in a neighbouring bush. After discussing the subject in every point of view, and examining the tracks in every light, they returned to the camp, at Victor’s suggestion, to talk it over more fully, and make preparations for the hunt. Ian, however, cut short their deliberations by reminding his comrades of their promise, and claiming the strict fulfilment of it.

“If this thing is to be undertaken by me,” he said, “I must have it all my own way and do the thing entirely by myself.”

“Nobody objects to your having it all your own way,” retorted Victor, somewhat testily, “but why should you be so secret about it? Why not give a fellow some sort of idea what your plan is, so that, if we can’t have the pleasure of helping you, we may at least enjoy the comfort of thinking about it?”

“No, Vic, no. I won’t give you a hint, because my plan is entirely new, and you would laugh at it; at least it is new to me, for I never heard of its having been attempted with grizzlies before, though I have heard of it in connection with other bears. Besides, I may fail, in which case the less that is known about my failure the better. Only this much will I say, the idea has been suggested to me by the formation of the land hereabouts. You know there is a gap or pass in the rocks just ahead of us, through which the bear seems to have passed more than once in the course of his rambles. Well, that gap is the spot where I will make my attempt. If you follow me to that gap I will at once return to camp and let you manage the matter yourselves.”

“Well, well, do as you please,” said Victor, with a laugh, “and the sooner you set about it the better. Rollin and I will ride away some miles in the opposite direction and see if we can’t get hold of a wild goose for supper.”

“Ha! perhaps de grizzly vill get hold of anoder and a vilder goose for supper,” said Rollin, with a shake of his head.

When his companions had departed, Ian Macdonald cleaned his gun carefully and loaded with ball; then placing his axe in his belt beside his scalping-knife, he proceeded with long and rapid strides towards the gap or pass above referred to. The bear’s track led through this pass, which was a narrow cut, not more than thirty feet wide, in a steep rocky ridge with which the country at that place was intersected for a considerable distance. The ridge itself, and the pass by which it was divided, were thickly covered with trees and dense undergrowth.

The floor of the pass was level, although rugged, and the rocks on either side rose in a sheer precipice, so that whoever should attempt to penetrate without wings to the region beyond must needs go by that narrow cut.

Arrived at the middle of the pass, where it was narrowest, Ian leant his gun against the precipice on one side, took off his coat, tucked up his sleeves, grasped his axe, and attacked a mighty tree. Like Ulysses of old, he swung the axe with trenchant power and skill. Huge chips flew circling round. Ere long a goodly tree creaked, groaned, and finally fell with a crash upon the ground. It was tough work. Ian heaved a sigh of satisfaction and wiped his streaming brow as he surveyed the fallen monarch. There was another king of the same

size near to the opposite precipice, which he felled in the same way. Both monarchs mingled and severely injured their royal heads in the middle of the pass, which thus became entirely blocked up, for our woodsman had so managed that the trees fell right across it.

Next, Ian attacked the united heads, and with great labour hewed a passage through them, near to a spot where a large boulder lay. Selecting another forest king, Ian cut it so that one end of it fell on the boulder. The result of all this hewing and guiding of the falling monarchs was that the only available track through the pass was a hole about four feet in diameter, with a tree of great weight suspended above it by the boulder.

To chop off the branches and convert this latter tree into a log did not take long. Neither did it take much time or exertion to fashion a sort of support, or trigger, in the shape of a figure 4, immediately under the log, so as to obstruct the hole before mentioned. But to lower the log gently from the boulder on to this trigger without setting it off was a matter of extreme difficulty, requiring great care and much time, for the weight of the log was great, and if it should once slip to the ground, ten Ian Macdonalds could not have raised it up again. It was accomplished at last, however, and several additional heavy logs were leaned upon the main one to increase its weight.

“If he returns this way at all, he will come in the evening,” muttered Ian to himself, as he sat down on a stump and surveyed his handiwork with a smile of satisfaction. “But perhaps he may not come back till morning, in which case I shall have to watch here all night, and those impatient geese in the camp will be sure to disturb us on the plea that they feared I had been killedbah! and perhaps he won’t come at all!”

This last idea was not muttered; it was only thought, but the thought banished the smile of satisfaction from Ian’s face. In a meditative mood he took up his gun, refreshed the priming and slightly chipped the flint, so as to sharpen its edge and make sure of its striking fire.

By that time it was long past noon, and the hunter was meditating the propriety of going to a neighbouring height to view the surrounding country, when a slight noise attracted his attention. He started, cocked his gun, glared round in all directions, and held his breath.

The noise was not repeated. Gradually the frown of his brows melted, the glare of his eyes abated, the tension of his muscles was relaxed, and his highly-wrought feelings escaped in a long-drawn sigh.

“Pshaw ’twas nothing. No bear in its senses would roam about at such an hour, considering the row I have been kicking up with hacking and crashing. Come,

I’ll go to the top of that crag, and have a look round.”

He put on his coat and belt, stuck his axe and knife into the latter, shouldered his gun, and went nimbly up the rocky ascent on his left.

Coming out on a clear spot at the crag which had attracted him, he could see the whole pass beneath him, except the spot where his trap had been laid. That portion was vexatiously hidden by an intervening clump of bushes. Next moment he was petrified, so to speak, by the sight of a grizzly bear sauntering slowly down the pass as if in the enjoyment of an afternoon stroll.

No power on earthexcept, perhaps, a glance from Elsiecould have unpetrified Ian Macdonald at that moment. He stood in the half-crouching attitude of one about to spring over the cliffabsolutely motionlesswith eyes, mouth, and nostrils wide open, as if to afford free egress to his spirit.

Not until the bear had passed slowly out of sight behind the intervening bushes was he disenchanted. Then, indeed, he leaped up like a startled deer, turned sharp round, and bounded back the way he had come, with as much caution and as little noise as was compatible with such vigorous action.

Before he had retraced his steps ten yards, however, he heard a crash! Well did he know what had caused it. His heart got into his threat somehow. Swallowing it with much difficulty, he ran on, but a roar such as was never uttered by human lungs almost stopped his circulation. A few seconds brought Ian within view of his trap, and what a sight presented itself!

A grizzly bear, which seemed to him the hugest, as it certainly was at that moment the fiercest, that ever roamed the Rocky Mountains, was struggling furiously under the weight of the ponderous tree, with its superincumbent load of logs. The monster had been caught by the small of the backif such a back can be said to have possessed a small of any kindand its rage, mingled as it must have been with surprise, was awful to witness.

The whole framework of the ponderous trap trembled and shook under the influence of the animal’s writhings. Heavy though it was, the bear shook it so powerfully at each spasm of rage, that it was plainly too weak to hold him long. In the event of his breaking out, death to the trapper was inevitable.

Ian did not hesitate an instant. His chief fear at the moment was that his comrades at the camp might have heard the roaringdistant though they were from the spotand might arrive in time to spoil, by sharing, his victory.

Victory? Another struggle such as that, and victory would have rested with the bear! Ian resolved to make sure work. He would put missing out of the

question. The tremendous claws that had already worked a small pit in the earth reminded him of the collar and of Elsie. Leaping forward, he thrust the point of his gun into the ear of the infuriated animal and pulled the trigger. He was almost stunned by the report and roar, together with an unwonted shock that sent him reeling backward.

We know not how a good twist-barrelled gun would behave if its muzzle were thus stopped, but the common Indian gun used on this occasion was not meant to be thus treated. It was blown to pieces, and Ian stood gazing in speechless surprise at the fragment of wood remaining in his hand. How far it had injured the bear he could not tell, but the shot had not apparently abated its power one jot, for it still heaved upwards in a paroxysm of rage, and with such force as nearly to overthrow the complex erection that held it down. Evidently there was no time to lose.

Ian drew his axe, grasped it with both hands, raised himself on tiptoe, and brought it down with all his might on the bear's neck.

The grizzly bear is noted for tenacity of life. Ian had not hit the neck-bone. Instead of succumbing to the tremendous blow, it gave the handle of the axe a vicious twist with its paw, which jerked the hunter violently to the ground. Before he could recover himself, the claws which he coveted so much were deep in his right thigh. His presence of mind did not forsake him even then. Drawing his scalping-knife, he wrenched himself round, and twice buried the keen weapon to the haft in the bear's side.

Just then an unwonted swimming sensation came over Ian; his great strength seemed suddenly to dissipate, and the bear, the claw collar, even Elsie, faded utterly from his mind.

The stars were shining brightly in the calm sky, and twinkling with pleasant tranquillity down upon his upturned countenance when consciousness returned to Ian Macdonald.

"Ah, Vic!" he murmured, with a long sad sigh; "I've had such a splendid dream!"

"Killed him!" exclaimed Victor, rising; "I should think you have."

"Killed 'im!" echoed Rollin. "You's killed 'im two or tree time over; vy, you's axed 'im, stabbed 'im, shotted 'im, busted 'im, squashed 'imho!"

"Am I much damaged?" inquired Ian, interrupting, for he felt weak.

"Oh! nonoting whatsocomever. Only few leetil holes in you's legs. Be bedder

in a veek.”

“Look here,” said Victor, kneeling beside the wounded man and presenting to him a piece of wood on which were neatly arranged a row of formidable claws. “I knew you would like to see them.”

“How good of you, Vic! It was thoughtful of you, and kind. Put them down before mea little nearerthere,so.”

Ian gazed in speechless admiration. It was not that he was vain of the achievement; he was too sensible and unselfish for that; but it was such a pleasure to think of being able, after all, and in spite of his bad shooting, to present Elsie with a set of claws that were greatly superior to those given to her mother by Louis Lambertthe finest, in short, that he had ever seen.

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