An Adventurer of the North

by Gilbert Parker

George S. Behrendt
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AN ADVENTURER OF THE NORTH

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BEING A CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORIES OF "PIERRE AND HIS PEOPLE," AND THE LATEST EXISTING RECORDS OF PRETTY PIERRE

BY

GILBERT PARKER

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F—R

TO SIR WILLIAM C. VAN HORNE.

DEAR SIR WILLIAM:

To the public it will seem fitting that these tales should be inscribed to one whose notable career is closely associated with the life and development of the Far North.

But there are other and more personal reasons for this dedication; for some of the stories were begotten in midnight gossip by your fireside: furthermore, it gives my little book a sort of distinction to have on its fore-page the name of so well-known a connoisseur in art and lover of literature.

Believe me, dear Sir William,

Very sincerely yours,

GILBERT PARKER

7 PARK PLACE,
ST. JAMES'S S. W.
THE AUTUMN, 1895.

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An Adventurer of the North

Across the Jumping Sandhills

I

"Here now, Trader; aisy, aisy! Quicksands I 've seen along the sayshore, and up to me halfways I 've been in wan, wid a double-an'-twist in the rope to pull me out; but a suckin' sand in the open plain—aw, Trader, aw! the like o' that niver a bit saw I."

So said Macavoy the giant, when the thing was talked of in his presence.

"Well, I tell you it 's true, and they 're not three miles from Fort O'Glory. The Company's* men do n't talk about it—what 's the use? Travellers are few that way, and you can 't get the Indians within miles of them. Pretty Pierre knows all about them, better than anyone else almost. He 'll stand by me in it—eh, Pierre?"

*The Hudson's Bay Company.

Pierre, the half-breed gambler and adventurer, took no notice, and was silent for a time, intent on his cigarette; and in the pause Mowley the trapper said: "Pierre's gone back on you, Trader. P'r'aps ye have n't paid him for the last lie. I go one better, you stand by me—my treat—that 's the game!"

"Aw, the like o' that," added Macavoy reproachfully. "Aw, yer tongue to the roof o' yer mouth, Mowley. Liars all men may be, but that 's wid wimmin or landlords. But, Pierre—aff another man's bat like that—aw, Mowley, fill yer mouth wid the bowl o' yer pipe!"

Pierre now looked up at the three men, rolling another cigarette as he did so; but he seemed to be thinking of a distant matter. Meeting the three pairs of eyes fixed on him, his own held them for a moment musingly; then he lit his cigarette, and, half-reclining on the bench where he sat, he began to speak, talking into the fire, as it were.

"I was at Guidon Hill, at the Company's post there. It was the fall of the year, when you feel that there is nothing so good as life, and the air drinks like wine. You think that sounds like a woman or a priest? *Mais*, no. The seasons are strange. In the spring I am lazy and sad; in the fall I am gay, I am for the big things to

do. This matter was in the fall. I felt that I must move. Yet, what to do? There was the thing. Cards, of course. But that 's only for times, not for all seasons. So I was like a wild dog on a chain. I had a good horse—Tophet, black as a coal, all raw bones and joint, and a reach like a moose. His legs worked like piston-rods. But, as I said, I did not know where to go or what to do. So we used to sit at the Post loafing: in the daytime watching the empty plains all panting for travellers, like a young bride waiting her husband for the first time."

Macavoy regarded Pierre with delight. He had an unctuous spirit, and his heart was soft for women—so soft that he never had had one on his conscience, though he had brushed gay smiles off the lips of many. But that was an amiable weakness in a strong man. "Aw, Pierre," he said coaxingly, "kape it down; aisy, aisy! me heart 's goin' like a trip-hammer at thought av it; aw yis, yis, Pierre!"

"Well, it was like that to me—all sun and a sweet sting in the air. At night to sit and tell tales and such things; and perhaps a little brown brandy, a look at the stars, a half-hour with the cattle—the same old game. Of course, there was the wife of Hilton the factor—fine, always fine to see, but deaf and dumb. We were good

friends, Ida and me. I had a hand in her wedding. Holy, I knew her when she was a little girl. We could talk together by signs. She was a good woman; she had never guessed at evil. She was quick, too, like a flash, to read and understand without words. A face was a book to her.

"*Eh bien.* One afternoon we were all standing outside the Post, when we saw someone ride over the Long Divide. It was good for the eyes. I cannot tell quite how, but horse and rider were so sharp and clear-cut against the sky, that they looked very large and peculiar—there was something in the air to magnify. They stopped for a minute on the top of the Divide, and it seemed like a messenger out of the strange country at the farthest north—the place of legends. But, of course, it was only a traveller like ourselves, for in a half-hour she was with us.

"Yes, it was a girl dressed as a man. She did not try to hide it; she dressed so for ease. She would make a man's heart leap in his mouth —if he was like Macavoy, or the pious Mowley there."

Pierre's last three words had a touch of irony, for he knew that the Trapper had a precious tongue for Scripture when a missionary passed that way, and a bad name with women to give it

point. Mowley smiled sourly; but Macavoy laughed outright, and smacked his lips on his pipe-stem luxuriously.

"Aw now, Pierre—all me little failin's—aw!" he protested.

Pierre swung round on the bench, leaning upon the other elbow, and, cherishing his cigarette, presently continued:

"She had come far and was tired to death, so stiff that she could hardly get from the saddle; and the horse, too, was ready to drop. Handsome enough she looked, for all that, in man's clothes and a peaked cap, with a pistol in her belt. She was n't big built—*mais*, a feathery kind of sapling—but she was set fair on her legs like a man, and a hand that was as good as I have seen, so strong, and like silk and iron with a horse. Well, what was the trouble?—for I saw there was trouble. Her eyes had a hunted look, and her nose breathed like a deer's in the chase. All at once, when she saw Hilton's wife, a cry come from her and she reached out her hands. What would women of that sort do? They were both of a kind. They got into each other's arms. After that there was nothing for us men but to wait. All women are the same, and Hilton's wife was like the rest. She must get the secret first; then the men should know.

"We had to wait an hour. Then Hilton's wife beckoned to us. We went inside. The girl was asleep. There was something in the touch of Hilton's wife like sleep itself—like music. It was her voice—that touch. She could not speak with her tongue, but her hands and face were words and music. *Bien*, there was the girl asleep, all clear of dust and stain: and that fine hand it lay loose on her breast, so quiet, so quiet. *Enfin*, the real story—for how she slept there does not matter—but it was good to see when we knew the story."

The Trapper was laughing to himself to hear Pierre in this romantic mood. A woman's hand—it was the game for a boy, not an adventurer; for the Trapper's only creed was, that women, like deer, were spoils for the hunter. Pierre's keen eye noted this, but he was above petty anger. He merely said:

"If a man have an eye to see behind the face, he understands the laugh of a fool, or the hand of a good woman, and that is much. Hilton's wife told us all. She had rode two hundred miles from the south-west, and was making for Fort Micah, sixty miles farther north. For what? She had loved a man against the will of her people. There had been a feud, and Garrison—that was the lover's name—was the

last on his own side. There was trouble at a Company's post, and Garrison shot a half-breed. Men say he was right to shoot him, for a woman's name must be safe up here. Besides, the half-breed drew first! Well, Garrison was tried, and must go to jail for a year. At the end of that time he would be free. The girl Janie knew the day. Word had come to her. She made everything ready. She knew her brothers were watching—her three brothers and two other men who had tried to get her love. She knew also that they five would carry on the feud against the one man. So one night she took the best horse on the ranch and started away toward Fort Micah. *Alors*, you know how she got to Guidon Hill after two days' hard riding —enough to kill a man, and over fifty yet to do. She was sure her brothers were on her track. But if she could get to Fort Micah, and be married to Garrison before they came, she wanted no more.

"There were only two horses of use at Hilton's post then; all the rest were away, or not fit for hard travel. There was my Tophet, and a lean chestnut, with a long propelling gait, and not an ounce of loose skin on him. There was but one way: the girl must get there. *Allons*, what is the good! What is life without these

things! The girl loves the man : she must have him in spite of all. There was only Hilton and his wife and me at the Post, and Hilton was lame from a fall and one arm in a sling. If the brothers followed, well, Hilton could not interfere—he was a Company's man ; but for myself, as I said, I was hungry for adventure, I had an ache in my blood for something. I was tingling to the toes, my heart was thumping in my throat. All the cords of my legs were straightening like I was in the saddle.

"She slept for three hours. I got the two horses saddled. Who could tell but she might need help? I had nothing to do ; I knew the shortest way to Fort Micah every foot—and then it is good to be ready for all things. I told Hilton's wife what I had done. She was glad. She made a sign at me as to a brother; and then began to put things in a bag for us to carry. She had settled all how it was to be. She had told the girl. You see, a man may be—what is it they call me?—a plunderer, and yet a woman will trust him, *comma ça!*"

"Aw yis, aw yis, Pierre ; but she knew yer hand and yer tongue niver wint agin a woman, Pierre. Naw, niver a wan. Aw, swate, swate, she was, wid a heart—a heart, Hilton's wife, aw yis!"

Pierre waved Macavoy into silence. "The girl waked with a start after three hours. Her hand caught at her heart. 'Oh,' she said, still staring at us, 'I thought that they had come!' A little after she and Hilton's wife went to another room. All at once there was a sound of horses outside, and then a knock at the door, and four men come in. They were the girl's hunters.

"It was hard to tell what to do all in a minute; but I saw at once the best thing was to act for all, and to get the men inside the house. So I whispered to Hilton, and then pretended that I was a great man in the Company. I ordered Hilton to have the horses cared for, and, not giving the men time to speak, I fetched out the old brown brandy, wondering all the time what could be done. There was no sound from the other room, though I thought I heard a door open once. Hilton played the game well, and showed nothing when I ordered him about, and agreed word for word with me when I said no girl had come, laughing when they told why they were after her. More than one of them did not believe at first; but, pshaw, what have I been doing all my life to let such fellows doubt me! So the end of it was that I got them all inside the house. There was one bad thing—their

horses were all fresh, as Hilton whispered to me. They had only rode them a few miles—they had stole or bought them at the first ranch to the west of the Post. I could not make up my mind what to do. But it was clear I must keep them quiet till something shaped.

"They were all drinking brandy when Hilton's wife come into the room. Her face, *mon Dieu!* it was so innocent, so childlike. She stared at the men; and then I told them she was deaf and dumb, and I told her why they had come. *Voilà*, it was beautiful—like nothing you ever saw. She shook her head so simple, and then told them like a child that they were wicked to chase a girl. I could have kissed her feet. Thunder, how she fooled them! She said, would they not search the house? She said all through me, on her fingers and by signs. And I told them at once. But she told me something else—that the girl had slipped out as the last man came in, had mounted the chestnut, and would wait for me by the iron spring, a quarter of a mile away. There was the danger that some one of the men knew the finger talk, so she told me this in signs mixed up with other sentences.

"Good! There was now but one thing—for me to get away. So I said, laughing, to one of

the men, 'Come, and we will look after the horses, and the others can search the place with Hilton.' So we went out to where the horses were tied to the railing, and led them away to the corral.

"Of course you will understand how I did it. I clapped a hand on his mouth, put a pistol at his head, and gagged and tied him. Then I got my Tophet, and away I went to the spring. The girl was waiting. There were few words. I gripped her hand, gave her another pistol, and then we got away on a fine moonlit trail. We had not gone a mile when I heard a faint yell far behind. My game had been found out. There was nothing to do but to ride for it now, and maybe to fight. But fighting was not good; for I might be killed, and then the girl would be caught just the same. We rode on—such a ride, the horses neck and neck, their hoofs pounding the prairie like drills, rawbone to rawbone, a hell-to-split gait. I knew they were after us, though I saw them but once on the crest of a Divide about three miles behind. Hour after hour like that, with ten minutes' rest now and then at a spring or to stretch our legs. We hardly spoke to each other; but, God of love! my heart was warm to this girl who had rode a hundred and fifty miles in twenty-four hours.

Just before dawn, when I was beginning to think that we would easy win the race if the girl could but hold out, if it did not kill her, the chestnut struck a leg into the crack of the prairie, and horse and girl spilt on the ground together. She could hardly move, she was so weak, and her face was like death. I put a pistol to the chestnut's head, and ended it. The girl stooped and kissed the poor beast's neck, but spoke nothing. As I helped her on my Tophet I put my lips to the sleeve of her dress. Mother of Heaven! what could a man do? she was so dam' brave!

"Dawn was just breaking oozy and grey at the swell of the prairie over the Jumping Sandhills. They lay quiet and shining in the green-brown plain; but I knew that there was a churn beneath which could set those swells of sand in motion, and make Glory-to-God of an army. Who can tell what it is? A flood under the surface, a tidal river—what? No man knows. But they are sea monsters on the land. Every morning at sunrise they begin to eddy and roll —and who ever saw a stranger sight? *Bien*, I looked back. There were those four pirates coming on, about three miles away. What was there to do? The girl and myself on my blown horse were too much. Then a great idea come to me. I must reach and cross the Jumping

Sandhills before sunrise. It was one deadly chance.

"When we got to the edge of the sand they were almost a mile behind. I was all sick to my teeth as my poor Tophet stepped into the silt. God! how I watched the dawn! Slow, slow, we dragged over that velvet powder. As we reached the farther side I could feel it was beginning to move. The sun was showing like the lid of an eye along the plain. I looked back. All four horsemen were in the sand, plunging on towards us. By the time we touched the brown-green prairie on the farther side the sand was rolling behind us. The girl had not looked back. She was too dazed. I jumped from the horse, and told her that she must push on alone to the Fort, that Tophet could not carry both, that I should be in no danger. She looked at me so deep—ah, I cannot tell how! then stooped and kissed me between the eyes—I have never forgot. I struck Tophet, and she was gone to her happiness; for before 'lights out!' she reached the Fort and her lover's arms.

"But I stood looking back on the Jumping Sandhills. So, was there ever a sight like that—those hills gone like a smelting-floor, the sunrise spotting it with rose and yellow, and three horses and their riders fighting what cannot be

fought?—What could I do? They would have got the girl and spoiled her life, if I had not led them across, and they would have killed me if they could. Only one cried out, and then but once, in a long shriek. But after, all three were quiet as they fought, until they were gone where no man could see, where none cries out so we can hear. The last thing I saw was a hand stretching up out of the sand."

There was a long pause, painful to bear. The Trader sat with eyes fixed humbly as a dog's on Pierre. At last Macavoy said:

"She kissed ye, Pierre, aw yis; she did that! Jist betune the eyes. Do yees iver see her now, Pierre?"

But Pierre, looking at him, made no answer.

A Lovely Bully

He was seven feet and fat. He came to Fort O'Angel at Hudson's Bay, an immense slip of a lad, very much in the way, fond of horses, a wonderful hand at wrestling, pretending a horrible temper, threatening tragedies for all who differed from him, making the Fort quake with his rich roar, and playing the game of bully with a fine simplicity. In winter he fattened, in summer he sweated, at all times he ate eloquently.

It was a picture to see him with the undercut of a haunch of deer or buffalo, or with a whole prairie-fowl on his plate, his eyes measuring it shrewdly, his coat and waistcoat open, and a clear space about him—for he needed room to stretch his mighty limbs, and his necessity was recognized by all.

Occasionally he pretended to great ferocity, but scowl he ever so much, a laugh kept idling in his irregular bushy beard, which lifted about his face in the wind like a mane, or made a kind of underbrush through which his blunt fingers ran at hide-and-seek.

He was Irish, and his name was Macavoy. In later days, when Fort O'Angel was invaded by settlers, he had his time of greatest importance.

He had been useful to the Chief Trader at the Fort in the early days, and having the run of the Fort and the reach of his knife at table, was little likely to discontinue his adherence. But he ate and drank with all the dwellers at the Post, and abused all impartially.

"Malcolm," said he to the Trader, "Malcolm, me glutton o' the H.B.C., that wants the Far North for your footstool—Malcolm, you villain, it 's me grief that I know you, and me thumb to me nose in token!"

Wiley and Hatchett, the principal settlers, he abused right and left, and said, "Was n't there land in the East and West, that ye steal the country God made for honest men?—ye robbers of the wide world! Me tooth on the Book, and I tell you what, it 's only me charity that kapes me from spoilin' ye. For a wink of me eye, an' away you 'd go, leaving your tails behind you—and pass that shoulder of bear, ye pirates, till I come to it side-ways, like a hog to war!"

He was even less sympathetic with Bareback, the chief, and his braves. "Sons o' Anak y' are; here to-day and away to-morrow, like the clods

of the valley—and that 's yer portion, Bareback. It 's the word o' the Pentytook—in pieces you go, like a potter's vessel. Do n't shrug your shoulders at me, Bareback, you pig, or you 'll think that Ballzeboob 's loose on the mat! But take a sup o' this whisky, while you shwear wid your hand on your chist, 'Amin' to the words o' Tim Macavoy!"

Beside Macavoy, Pierre the notorious, was a child in height. Up to the time of the half-breed's coming the Irishman had been the most outstanding man at Fort O'Angel, and was sure of a good-natured homage, acknowledged by him with a jovial tyranny.

Pierre put a flea in his ear. He was pensively indifferent to him even in his most royal moments. He guessed the way to bring down the gusto and pride of this Goliath, but, for a purpose, he took his own time, nodding indolently to Macavoy when he met him, but avoiding talk with him.

Among the Indian maidens Macavoy was like a king or khan; for they count much on bulk and beauty, and he answered to their standards —especially to Wonta's. It was a sight to see him of a summer day, sitting in the shade of a pine, his shirt open, showing his firm brawny chest, his arms bare, his face shining with per-

spiration, his big voice gurgling in his beard, his eyes rolling amiably upon the maidens as they passed or gathered near demurely, while he declaimed of mighty deeds in patois or Chinook to the braves.

Pierre's humour was of the quietest, most subterranean kind. He knew that Macavoy had not an evil hair in his head; that vanity was his greatest weakness, and that through him there never would have been more half-breed population. There was a tradition that he had a wife somewhere—based upon wild words he had once said when under the influence of bad liquor; but he had roared his accuser the lie when the thing was imputed to him.

At Fort Ste. Anne, Pierre had known an old woman, by name of Kitty Whelan, whose character was all tatters. She had told him that many years agone she had had a broth of a lad for a husband; but because of a sharp word or two across the fire, and the toss of a handful of furniture, he had left her, and she had seen no more of him. "Tall like a chimney he was," said she, "and a chest like a wall, so broad, and a voice like a huntsman's horn, though only a b'y, an' no hair an his face; an' she did n't know whether he was dead or alive; but dead belike, for he 's sure to come rap agin' somethin' that 'd

kill him; for he, the darlin', was that aisy and gentle, he would n't pull his fightin' iron till he had death in his ribs."

Pierre had drawn from her that the name of this man whom she had cajoled into a marriage (being herself twenty years older), and driven to deserting her afterward, was Tim Macavoy. She had married Mr. Whelan on the assumption that Macavoy was dead. But Mr. Whelan had not the nerve to desert her, and so he departed this life, very loudly lamented by Mrs. Whelan, who had changed her name with no right to do so. With his going her mind dwelt greatly upon the virtues of her mighty vanished Tim : and ill would it be for Tim if she found him.

Pierre had journeyed to Fort O'Angel almost wholly because he had Tim Macavoy in his mind; in it Mrs. Whelan had only an incidental part: his plans journeyed beyond her and her lost consort. He was determined on an expedition to capture Fort Comfort, which had been abandoned by the great Company, and was now held by a great band of the Shunup Indians.

Pierre had a taste for conquest for its own sake; though he had no personal ambition. The love of adventure was deep in him, he adored sport for its own sake, he had had a long range of experiences—some discreditable,

and now he had determined on a field for his talent.

He would establish a kingdom, and resign it. In that case he must have a man to take his place. He chose Macavoy.

First he must humble the giant to the earth, then make him into a great man again, with a new kind of courage. The undoing of Macavoy seemed a civic virtue. He had a long talk with Wonta, the Indian maiden most admired by Macavoy. Many a time the Irishman had cast an ogling, rolling eye on her, and had talked his loudest within her ear-shot, telling of splendid things he had done: making himself like another Samson as to the destruction of men, and a Hercules as to the slaying of cattle.

Wonta had a sense of humour also, and when Pierre told her what was required of her, she laughed with a quick little gurgle, and showed as handsome a set of teeth as the half-breed's; which said much for her. She promised to do as he wished. So it chanced when Macavoy was at his favorite seat beneath the pine, talking to a gaping audience, Wonta and a number of Indian girls passed by. Pierre was leaning against a door smoking, not far away. Macavoy's voice became louder.

"'Stand them up wan by wan,' says I, 'and

give me a leg loose and a fist free; and at that—' "

"At that there was thunder and fire in the sky, and because the great Macavoy blew his breath over them they withered like the leaves," cried Wonta laughing; but her laugh had an edge.

Macavoy stopped short, open-mouthed, breathing hard in his great beard. He was astonished at Wonta's raillery: the more so when she presently snapped her fingers, and the other maidens, laughing, did the same. Some of the half-breeds snapped their fingers also in sympathy, and shrugged their shoulders. Wonta came up to him softly, patted him on the head, and said: " Like Macavoy there is nobody. He is a great brave. He is not afraid of a coyote, he has killed prairie-hens in numbers as pebbles by the lakes. He has a breast like a fat ox,"—here she touched the skin of his broad chest,—"and he will die if you do not fight him."

Then she drew back, as though in humble dread, and glided away with the other maidens, Macavoy staring after her with a blustering kind of shame in his face. The half-breeds laughed, and, one by one, they got up and walked away also. Macavoy looked round: there was no one near save Pierre, whose eye rested on him lazily.

Macavoy got to his feet muttering. This was the first time in his experience at Fort O'Angel that he had been bluffed—and by a girl; one for whom he had a very soft place in his big heart. Pierre came slowly over to him.

"I 'd have it out with her," said he. "She called you a bully and a brag."

"Out with her!" cried Macavoy. "How can ye have it out wid a woman?"

"Fight her," said Pierre pensively.

"Fight her! fight her! Holy smoke! How can ye fight a woman?"

"Why, what—do you—fight?" asked Pierre innocently.

Macavoy grinned in a wild kind of fashion. "Faith, then, y' are a fool. Bring on the divil an' all his angels, say I, and I 'll fight thim where I shtand."

Pierre ran his fingers down Macavoy's arm, and said, "There 's time enough for that. I 'd begin with the five."

"What five, then?"

"Her half-breed lovers: Big Eye, One Toe, Jo-John, Saucy Boy, and Limber Legs."

"Her lovers! Her lovers, is it? Is there truth on y'r tongue?"

"Go to her father's tent at sunset, and you 'll find one or all of them there."

"Oh, is that it?" said the Irishman, opening and shutting his fists. "Then I 'll carve their hearts out, an' ate thim wan by wan this night."

"Come down to Wiley's," said Pierre, "there 's better company there than here."

Pierre had arranged many things, and had secured partners in his little scheme for humbling the braggart. He so worked on the other's good nature that by the time they reached the settler's place, Macavoy was stretching himself with a big pride. Seated at Wiley's table, with Hatchett and others near, and drink going about, someone drew the giant on to talk, and so deftly and with such apparent innocence did Pierre, by a word here and a nod there, encourage him, that presently he roared at Wiley and Hatchett—

"Ye shameless buccaneers that push yer way into the tracks of honest men, where the Company 's been three hundred years by the will o' God—if it was n't for me, ye Jack Sheppards—"

Wiley and Hatchett both got to their feet with pretended rage, saying he 'd insulted them both, that he was all froth and brawn, and giving him the lie.

Utterly taken aback, Macavoy could only stare, puffing in his beard, and drawing in his

legs, which had been spread out at angles. He looked from Wiley to the impassive Pierre.

"Buccaneers, you call us," Wiley went on; "we 'll have no more of that, or there 'll be trouble at Fort O'Angel."

"Ah, sure y 'are only jokin'," said Macavoy, "for I love ye, ye scoundrels. It 's only me fun."

"For fun like that you 'll pay, ruffian!" said Hatchett, bringing down his fist on the table with a bang.

Macavoy stood up. He looked confounded, but there was nothing of the coward in his face. "Oh, well," said he, "I 'll be goin', for ye 've got y'r teeth all raspin'."

As he went the two men laughed after him mockingly. "Wind like a bag," said Hatchett. "Bone like a marrowfat pea," added Wiley.

Macavoy was at the door, but at that he turned. "If ye care to sail agin that wind, an' gnaw on that bone, I 'd not be sayin' you no."

"Will tonight do—at sunset?" said Wiley.

"Bedad, then, me b'ys, sunset 'll do—an' not more than two at a toime," he added softly, all the roar gone from his throat. Then he went out, followed by Pierre.

Hatchett and Wiley looked at each other and laughed a little confusedly. "What 's that he

said?" muttered Wiley. "Not more than two at a time, was it?"

"That was it. I do n't know that it 's what we bargained for, after all." He looked round on the other settlers present, who had been awed by the childlike, earnest note in Macavoy's last words. They shook their heads now a little sagely; they were n't so sure that Pierre's little game was so jovial as it had promised.

Even Pierre had hardly looked for so much from his giant as yet. In a little while he had got Macavoy back to his old humour.

"What was I made for but war!" said the Irishman, "an' by war to kape thim at peace, wherever I am."

Soon he was sufficiently restored in spirits to go with Pierre to Bareback's lodge, where, sitting at the tent door, with idlers about, he smoked with the chief and his braves. Again Pierre worked upon him adroitly, and again he became loud in speech and grandly patronizing.

"I 've stood by ye like a father, ye loafers," he said, "an' I give you my word, ye howlin' rogues—"

Here Bareback and a half-dozen braves came up suddenly from the ground, and the chief said fiercely: "You speak crooked things. We are no rogues. We will fight."

Macavoy's face ran red to his hair. He scratched his head a little foolishly, and gathered himself up. "Sure, 't was only me tasin', darlin's," he said, "but I 'll be comin' again, when y' are not so narvis." He turned to go away.

Pierre made a sign to Bareback, and the Indian touched the giant on the arm. "Will you fight?" said he.

"Not all o' ye at once," said Macavoy slowly, running his eye carefully along the half-dozen; "not more than three at a toime," he added with a simple sincerity, his voice again gone like the dove's. "At what time will it be convaynyint for ye?" he asked.

"At sunset," said the chief, "before the Fort."

Macavoy nodded and walked away with Pierre, whose glance of approval at the Indians did not make them thoroughly happy.

To rouse the giant was not now so easy. He had already three engagements of violence for sunset. Pierre directed their steps by a roundabout to the Company's stores, and again there was a distinct improvement in the giant's spirits. Here at least he could be himself, he thought, here no one should say him nay. As if nerved by the idea, he plunged at once into boisterous

raillery of the Chief Trader. "Oh, ho," he began, "me freebooter, me captain av the looters av the North!"

The Trader snarled at him. "What d' ye mean, by such talk to me, sir? I 've had enough—we 've all had enough—of your brag and bounce; for you 're all sweat and swill-pipe, and I give you this for your chewing, that though by the Company's rules I can 't go out and fight you, you may have your pick of my men for it. I 'll take my pay for your insults in pounded flesh—Irish pemmican!"

Macavoy's face became mottled with sudden rage. He roared, as, perhaps, he had never roared before—

"Are ye all gone mad—mad—mad? I was jokin' wid ye, whin I called ye this or that. But by the swill o' me pipe, and the sweat o' me skin, I 'll drink the blood o' yees, Trader, me darlin'. An' all I 'll ask is, that ye mate me to-night whin the rest o' the pack is in front o' the Fort—but not more than four o' yees at a time —for little scrawney rats as y' are, too many o' yees wad be in me way." He wheeled and strode fiercely out. Pierre smiled gently.

"He 's a great bully that, is n't he, Trader? There 'll be fun in front of the Fort to-night. For he 's only bragging, of course—eh?"

The Trader nodded with no great assurance, and then Pierre said as a parting word: "You 'll be there, of course—only 'four o' yees!' " and hurried out after Macavoy, humming to himself—

"For the King said this, and the Queen said that,
But he walked away with their army, O!"

So far Pierre's plan had worked even better than he expected, though Macavoy's moods had not been altogether after his imaginings. He drew alongside the giant, who had suddenly grown quiet again. Macavoy turned and looked down at Pierre with the candour of a schoolboy, and his voice was very low—

"It 's a long time ago, I 'm thinkin'," he said, "since I lost me frinds—ages an' ages ago. For me frinds are me inimies now, an' that makes a man old. But I 'll not say that it cripples his arm or humbles his back." He drew his arm up once or twice and shot it out straight into the air like a catapult. "It 's all right," he added, very softly, "an', Half-breed, me b'y, if me frinds have turned inimies, why, I 'm thinkin' me inimy has turned frind, for that I 'm sure you were, an' this I 'm certain y' are. So here 's the grip av me fist, an' y' ll have it."

Pierre remembered that disconcerting, iron grip of friendship for many a day. He laughed

to himself to think how he was turning the braggart into a warrior.

"Well," said Pierre, "what about those five at Wonta's tent?"

"I 'll be there whin the sun dips below the Little Red Hill," he said, as though his thoughts were far away, and he turned his face towards Wonta's tent. Presently he laughed out loud. "It 's many a long day," he said, "since—"

Then he changed his thoughts. "They 've spoke sharp words in me teeth," he continued, "and they 'll pay for it. Bounce! sweat! brag! wind! is it? There 's dancin' beyant this night, me darlins!"

"Are you sure you 'll not run away when they come on?" said Pierre, a little ironically.

"Is that the word av a frind?" replied Macavoy, a hand fumbling in his hair.

"Did you never run away when faced?" Pierre asked pitilessly.

"I never turned tail from a man, though, to be sure, it 's been more talk than fight up here: Fort Ste. Anne 's been but a graveyard for fun these years."

"Eh, well," persisted Pierre, "but did you never turn tail from a slip of a woman?"

The thing was said idly. Macavoy gathered his beard in his mouth, chewing it confusedly.

"You 've a keen tongue for a question," was his reply. "What for should any man run from a woman?"

"When the furniture flies, and the woman knows more of the world in a day than the man does in a year; and the man 's a hulking bit of an Irishman—*bien*, then things are so and so!"

Macavoy drew back dazed, his big legs trembling. "Come into the shade of these maples," said Pierre, "for the sun has set you quaking a little," and he put out his hand to take Macavoy's arm.

The giant drew away from the hand, but walked on to the trees. His face seemed to have grown older by years on the moment. "What 's this y' are sayin' to me?" he said hoarsely. "What do you know av—av *that woman?*"

"Malahide is a long way off," said Pierre, "but when one travels why should n't the other?"

Macavoy made a helpless motion with his lumbering hand. "Mother o' saints," he said, "has it come to that, after all these years? Is she—tell me where she is, me frind, and you 'll niver want an arm to fight for ye, an' the half av a blanket, while I have wan!"

"But you 'll run as you did before, if I tell

you, an' there 'll be no fighting to-night, accordin' to the word you 've given."

"No fightin', did ye say? an' run away, is it? Then this in your eye, that if ye 'll bring an army, I 'll fight till the skin is in rags on me bones, whin it 's only men that 's before me; but women, and that wan! Faith, I 'd run, I 'm thinkin', as I did, you know when— Do n't tell me that she 's here, man; arrah, do n't say that!"

There was something pitiful and childlike in the big man's voice, so much so that Pierre, calculating gamester as he was, and working upon him as he had been for many weeks, felt a sudden pity, and dropping his fingers on the other's arm, said: "No, Macavoy, my friend, she is not here; but she is at Fort Ste. Anne—or was when I left there."

Macavoy groaned. "Does she know that I 'm here?" he asked.

"I think not. Fort Ste. Anne is far away, and she may not hear."

"What—what is she doing?"

"Keeping your memory and Mr. Whelan's green." Then Pierre told him somewhat bluntly what he knew of Mrs. Macavoy.

"I 'd rather face Ballzeboob himself than her," said Macavoy. "An' she 's sure to find me."

Not if you do as I say."

"An' what is it ye say, little man?"

"Come away with me where she 'll not find you."

"An' where is that, Pierre darlin'?"

"I 'll tell you that when to-night's fighting 's over. Have you a mind for Wonta?" he continued.

"I 've a mind for Wonta an' many another as fine, but I 'm a married man," he said, "by priest and by book; an' I can't forget that, though the woman 's to me as the pit below."

Pierre looked curiously at him. "You 're a wonderful fool," he said, "but I 'm not sure that I like you less for that. There was Shon M'Gann—but it is no matter." Here he sighed. "When to-night is over, you shall have work and fun that you 've been fattening for this many a year, and the woman 'll not find you, be sure of that. Besides—" he whispered in Macavoy's ear.

"Poor divil, poor divil, she 'd always a throat for that; but it 's a horrible death to die, I 'm thinkin'." Macavoy's chin dropped on his breast.

When the sun was falling below Little Red Hill, Macavoy came to Wonta's tent. Pierre was not far away. What occurred in the tent

Pierre never quite knew, but presently he saw Wonta run out in a frightened way, followed by the five half-breeds, who carried themselves awkwardly. Behind them again, with head shaking from one side to the other, traveled Macavoy; and they all marched away towards the Fort.

"Well," said Pierre to Wonta, "he 's amusing, eh?—so big a coward, eh?"

"No, no," she said, "you are wrong. He is no coward. He is a great brave. He spoke like a little child, but he said he would fight them all when—"

"When their turn came," interposed Pierre, with a fine "bead" of humour in his voice; "well, you see he has much to do."

He pointed towards the Fort, where people were gathering fast. The strange news had gone abroad, and the settlement, laughing joyously, came to see Macavoy swagger: they did not think there would be fighting.

Those whom Macavoy had challenged were not so sure. When the giant reached the open space in front of the Fort, he looked slowly round him. A great change had come over him. His skin seemed drawn together more firmly, and running himself up finely to his full height, he looked no longer the lounging braggart.

Pierre measured him with his eye, and chuckled to himself. Macavoy stripped himself of his coat and waistcoat, and rolled up his sleeves. His shirt was flying at the chest.

He beckoned to Pierre.

"Are you standin' me frind in this?" he said.

"Now and after," said Pierre.

His voice was very simple. "I never felt as I do, since the day the coast-guardsmin dropped on me in Ireland far away, an' I drew blood, an' every wan o' them — fine beautiful b'ys they looked — stretchin' out on the ground wan by wan. D' ye know the double-an'-twist?" he suddenly added, "for it 's a honey trick whin they gather in an you, an' you can 't be layin' out wid yer fists. It plays the divil wid the spines av thim. Will ye have a drop av drink — cold wather, man — near, an' a sponge betune whiles? For there 's many in the play — makin' up for lost time. Come an," he added to the two settlers, who stood not far away, "for ye began the trouble, an' we 'll settle accordin' to a, b, c."

Wiley and Hatchett, responding to his call, stepped forward, though they had now little relish for the matter. They were pale, but they stripped their coats and waistcoats, and Wiley stood bravely in front of Macavoy. The giant looked down on him, arms folded. "I said two

of you," he crooned, as if speaking to a woman. Hatchett stepped forward also. An instant after the settlers were lying on the ground at different angles, bruised and dismayed, and little likely to carry on the war. Macavoy took a pail of water from the ground, drank from it lightly, and waited. None other of his opponents stirred. "There 's three Injins," he said, "three rid divils, that wants showin' the way to their happy huntin' grounds. . . . Sure, y' are comin', ain't you, me darlins?" he added coaxingly, and he stretched himself, as if to make ready.

Bareback, the chief, now harangued the three Indians, and they stepped forth warily. They had determined on strategic wrestling, and not on the instant activity of fists. But their wiliness was useless, for Macavoy's double-and-twist came near to lessening the Indian population of Fort O'Angel. It only broke a leg and an arm, however. The Irishman came out of the tangle of battle with a wild kind of light in his eye, his beard all torn, and face battered. A shout of laughter, admiration, and wonder went up from the crowd. There was a moment's pause, and then Macavoy, whose blood ran high, stood forth again. The Trader came to him.

"Must this go on?" he said; "have n't you had your fill of it?"

Had he touched Macavoy with a word of humour the matter might have ended there; but now the giant spoke loud, so all could hear.

"Had me fill av it, Trader, me angel? I 'm only gettin' the taste av it. An' ye 'll plaze bring on yer men—four it was—for the feed av Irish pemmican."

The Trader turned and swore at Pierre, who smiled enigmatically. Soon after, two of the best fighters of the Company's men stood forth. Macavoy shook his head. "Four, I said, an' four I 'll have, or I 'll ate the heads aff these."

Shamed, the Trader sent forth two more. All on an instant the four made a rush on the giant; and there was a stiff minute after, in which it was not clear that he was happy. Blows rattled on him, and one or two he got on the head, just as he spun a man senseless across the grass, which sent him staggering backward for a moment, sick and stunned.

Pierre called over to him swiftly: "Remember Malahide!"

This acted on him like a charm. There never was seen such a shattered bundle of men as came out from his hands a few minutes later. As for himself, he had but a rag or two on him, but stood unmindful of his state, and the fever of battle untamable on him. The women drew away.

"Now, me babes o' the wood," he shouted, "that sit at the feet av the finest Injin woman in the North—though she 's no frind o' mine—and are n't fit to kiss her moccasin, come an wid you, till I have me fun wid yer spines."

But a shout went up, and the crowd pointed. There were the five half-breeds running away across the plains.

The game was over.

"Here 's some clothes, man ; for heaven's sake put them on," said the Trader.

Then the giant became conscious of his condition, and like a timid girl he hurried into the clothing.

The crowd would have carried him on their shoulders, but he would have none of it.

"I 've only wan frind here," he said, "an' it 's Pierre, an' to his shanty I go an' no other."

"Come, *mon ami*," said Pierre, "for to-morrow we travel far."

"And what for that?" asked Macavoy.

Pierre whispered in his ear: "To make you a king, my lovely bully."

The Filibuster

Pierre had determined to establish a kingdom, not for gain, but for conquest's sake. But because he knew that the thing would pall, he took with him Macavoy the giant, to make him king instead. But first he made Macavoy from a lovely bully, a bulk of good-natured brag, into a Hercules of fight; for, having made him insult —and be insulted by—near a score of men at Fort O'Angel, he also made him fight them by twos, threes, and fours, all on a summer's evening, and send them away broken. Macavoy would have hesitated to go with Pierre, were it not that he feared a woman. Not that he had wronged her; she had wronged him: she had married him. And the fear of one's own wife is the worst fear in the world.

But though his heart went out to women, and his tongue was of the race that beguiles, he stood to his "lines" like a man, and people wondered. Even Wonta, the daughter of Foot-in-the-Sun, only bent him, she could not break him to her will. Pierre turned her shy coaxing into irony

—that was on the day when all Fort O'Angel conspired to prove Macavoy a child and not a warrior. But when she saw what she had done, and that the giant was greater than his years of brag, she repented, and hung a dead coyote at Pierre's door as a sign of her contempt.

Pierre watched Macavoy, sitting with a sponge of vinegar to his head, for he had had nasty joltings in his great fight. A little laugh came simmering up to the half-breed's lips, but dissolved into silence.

"We 'll start in the morning," he said.

Macavoy looked up. "Whin you plaze; but a word in your ear; are you sure *she 'll* not follow us?"

"She does n't know. Fort Ste. Anne is in the south, and Fort Comfort, where we go, is far north."

"But if she kem!" the big man persisted.

"You will be a king; you can do as other kings have done!" Pierre chuckled.

The other shook his head. "Says Father Nolan to me, says he, ' 't is till death us do part, an' no man put asunder'; an' I 'll stand by that, though I 'd slice out the bist tin years av me life, if I niver saw her face again."

"But the girl, Wonta—what a queen she 'd make!"

"Marry her yourself, and be king yourself, and be damned to you! For she, like the rest, laughed in me face, whin I told thim of the day whin I—"

"That 's nothing. She hung a dead coyote at my door. You do n't know women. There 'll be your breed and hers abroad in the land one day."

Macavoy stretched to his feet—he was so tall that he could not stand upright in the room. He towered over Pierre, who blandly eyed him. "I 've another word for your ear," he said darkly. "Kape clear av the likes o' that wid me. For I 've swallowed a tribe of divils. It 's fightin' you want. Well, I 'll do it—I 've an itch for the throats of men, but a fool I 'll be no more wid wimen, white or red—that hell-cat that spoilt me life an' killed me child, or—"

A sob clutched him in the throat.

"You had a child, then?" said Pierre gently.

"An angel she was, wid hair like the sun, an' 'd melt the heart av an iron god: none like her above or below. But the mother, ah, the mother of her! One day whin she 'd said a sharp word, wid another from me, an' the child clinging to her dress, she turned quick and struck it, meanin' to anger me. Not so hard the blow was, but it sent the darlin's head agin' the chimney-stone,

and that was the end av it. For she took to her bed, an' agin' the crowin' o' the cock wan midnight, she gives a little cry an' snatched at me beard. 'Daddy,' says she, 'daddy, it hurts!' An' thin she floats away, wid a stitch av pain at her lips."

Macavoy sat down now, his fingers fumbling in his beard. Pierre was uncomfortable. He could hear of battle, murder, and sudden death unmoved—it seemed to him in the game; but the tragedy of a child—a mere counter as yet in the play of life—that was different. He slid a hand over the table, and caught Macavoy's arm.

"Poor little waif!" he said.

Macavoy gave the hand a grasp that turned Pierre sick, and asked: "Had ye iver a child av y'r own, Pierre—iver wan at all?"

"Never," said Pierre dreamily, "and I've traveled far. A child—a child—is a wonderful thing. . . . Poor little waif!"

They both sat silent for a moment. Pierre was about to rise, but Macavoy suddenly pinned him to his seat with this question: "Did y' iver have a wife thin, Pierre?"

Pierre turned pale. A sharp breath came through his teeth. He spoke slowly: "Yes, once."

"And she died?" asked the other, awed.

"We all have our day," he replied enigmatically, "and there are worse things than death. . . . Eh, well, *mon ami*, let us talk of other things. To-morrow we go to conquer. I know where I can get five men I want. I have ammunition and dogs."

A few minutes afterward Pierre was busy in the settlement. At the Fort he heard strange news. A new batch of settlers was coming from the south, and among them was an old Irishwoman who called herself now Mrs. Whelan, now Mrs. Macavoy. She talked much of the lad she was to find, one Tim Macavoy, whose fame gossip had brought to her at last. She had clung on to the settlers, and they could not shake her off. "She was comin'," she said, "to her own darlin' b'y, from whom she 'd been parted many a year, believin' him dead, or Tom Whelan had niver touched hand o' hers."

The bearer of the news had but just arrived, and he told it only to the Trader and Pierre. At a word from Pierre the man promised to hold his peace. Then Pierre went to Wonta's lodge. He found her with her father alone, her head at her knees. When she heard his voice she looked up sharply, and added a sharp word also.

"Wait;" he said, "women are such fools.

You snapped your fingers in his face, and laughed at him. Well, that is nothing. He has proved himself great. That is something. He will be greater still, if the other woman does not find him. She should die, but then some women have no sense."

"The other woman!" said Wonta, starting to her feet; "who is the other woman?"

Old Foot-in-the-Sun waked and sat up, but seeing that it was Pierre, dropped again to sleep. Pierre, he knew, was no peril to any woman. Besides, Wonta hated the half-breed, as he thought.

Pierre told the girl the story of Macavoy's life; for he knew that she loved the man after her heathen fashion, and that she could be trusted.

"I do not care for that," she said, when he had finished; "it is nothing. I would go with him. I should be his wife; the other should die. I would kill her if she would fight me. I know the way of knives, or a rifle, or a pinch at the throat—she should die!"

"Yes, but that will not do. Keep your hands free of her."

Then he told her that they were going away. She said she would go also. He said no to that, but told her to wait and he would come back for her.

Though she tried hard to follow them, they slipped away from the Fort in the moist gloom of the morning, the brown grass rustling, the prairie-hens fluttering, the osiers soughing as they passed, the Spirit of the North, ever hungry, drawing them on over the long Divides. They did not see each other's faces till dawn. They were guided by Pierre's voice; none knew his comrades. Besides Pierre and Macavoy, there were five half-breeds—Noel, Little Babiche, Corvette, José, and Jacques Parfaite. When they came to recognize each other they shook hands and marched on. In good time they reached that wonderful and pleasant country between the Barren Grounds and the Lake of Silver Shallows. To the north of it was Fort Comfort, which they had come to take. Macavoy's rich voice roared as of old, before his valour was questioned—and maintained—at Fort O'Angel. Pierre had diverted his mind from the woman who, at Fort O'Angel, was even now calling heaven and earth to witness that "Tim Macavoy was her Macavoy and no other, an' she 'd find him—the divil and darlin', wid an arm like Broin Borhoime, an' a chist you could build a house on—if she walked till Doomsday!"

Macavoy stood out grandly, his fat all gone to muscle, blowing through his beard, puffing

his cheek, and ready with tale or song. But now that they were facing the business of their journey his voice got soft and gentle, as it did before the Fort, when he grappled his foes two by two and three by three, and wrung them out. In his eyes there was the thing which counts as many men in any soldier's sight, when he leads in battle. As he said himself, he was made for war, like Malachi o' the Golden Collar.

Pierre guessed that just now many of the Indians would be away for the summer hunt, and that the Fort would perhaps be held by only a few score of braves, who, however, would fight when they might easier play. He had no useless compunctions about bloodshed. A human life he held to be a trifle in the big sum of time, and that it was of little moment when a man went, if it seemed his hour. He lived up to his creed, for he had ever held his own life as a bird upon a housetop which a chance stone might drop.

He was glad afterward that he had decided to fight, for there was one in Fort Comfort against whom he had an old grudge—the Indian, Young Eye, who, many years before, had been one to help in killing the good Father Halen, the priest who dropped the water on his forehead and set the cross on top of that, when he

was at his mother's breasts. One by one the murderers had been killed, save this man. He had wandered north, lived on the Coppermine River for a long time, and at length had come down among the warring tribes at the Lake of Silver Shallows.

Pierre was for direct attack. They crossed the lake in their canoes, at a point about five miles from the Fort, and so far as they could tell, without being seen. Then ammunition went round, and they marched upon the Fort. Pierre eyed Macavoy—measured him, as it were, for what he was worth. The giant seemed happy. He was humming a tune softly through his beard.

Suddenly José paused, dropped to the foot of a pine, and put his ear to it. Pierre understood. He had caught at the same thing. "There is a dance on," said José, "I can hear the drum."

Pierre thought a minute. "We will reconnoitre," he said presently.

"It is near night now," remarked Little Babiche. "I know something of these. When they have a great snake dance at night, strange things happen." Then he spoke in a low tone to Pierre.

They halted in the bush, and Little Babiche went forward to spy upon the Fort. He came back just after sunset, reporting that the Indians

were feasting. He had crept near, and had learned that the braves were expected back from the hunt that night, and that the feast was for their welcome.

The Fort stood in an open space, with tall trees for a background. In front, here and there, were juniper and tamarack bushes. Pierre laid his plans immediately, and gave the word to move on. Their presence had not been discovered, and if they could but surprise the Indians the Fort might easily be theirs. They made a détour, and after an hour came upon the Fort from behind. Pierre, himself, went forward cautiously, leaving Macavoy in command. When he came again he said:

"It 's a fine sight; and the way is open. They are feasting and dancing. If we can enter without being seen, we are safe, except for food; we must trust for that."

When they arrived at the margin of the woods a wonderful scene was before them. A volcanic hill rose up on one side, gloomy and stern, but the reflection of the fires reached it, and made its sides quiver—the rock itself seemed trembling. The sombre pines showed up, a wall all round, and in the open space, turreted with fantastic fires, the Indians swayed in and out with weird chanting, their bodies mostly naked, and

painted in strange colours. The earth itself was still and sober. Scarce a star peeped forth. A purple velvet curtain seemed to hang all down the sky, though here and there the flame bronzed it. The Indian lodges were empty, save where a few children squatted at the openings. The seven stood still with wonder, till Pierre whispered to them to get to the ground and crawl close in by the walls of the Fort, following him. They did so, Macavoy breathing hard—too hard; for suddenly Pierre clapped a hand on his mouth.

They were now near the Fort, and Pierre had seen an Indian come from the gate. The brave was within a few feet of them. He had almost passed them, for they were in the shadow, but José had burst a puff-ball in his hand, and the dust flying up, made him sneeze. The Indian turned and saw them. With a low cry and the spring of a tiger, Pierre was at his throat; and in another minute they were struggling on the ground. Pierre's hand never let go. His comrades did not stir; he had warned them to lie still. They saw the terrible game played out within arm's length of them. They heard Pierre say at last, as the struggles of the Indian ceased: "Beast! You had Father Halen's life. I have yours."

There was one more wrench of the Indian's limbs, and then he lay still.

They crawled nearer the gate, still hidden in the shadows and the grass. Presently they came to a clear space. Across this they must go, and enter the Fort before they were discovered. They got to their feet, and ran with wonderful swiftness, Pierre leading, to the gate. They had just reached it when there was a cry from the walls, on which two Indians were sitting. The Indians sprang down, seized their spears, and lunged at the seven as they entered. One spear caught Little Babiche in the arm as he swung aside, but with the butt of his musket Noel dropped him. The other Indian was promptly handled by Pierre himself. By this time Corvette and José had shut the gates, and the Fort was theirs—an easy conquest. The Indians were bound and gagged.

The adventurers had done it all without drawing the attention of the howling crowd without. The matter was in its infancy, however. They had the place, but could they hold it? What food and water were there within? Perhaps they were hardly so safe besieged as besiegers. Yet there was no doubt on Pierre's part. He had enjoyed the adventure so far up to the hilt—

an old promise had been kept, and an old wrong avenged.

"What 's to be done now?" said Macavoy. "There 'll be hell's own racket; and they 'll come an like a flood."

"To wait," said Pierre, "and dam the flood as it comes. But not a bullet till I give the word. Take to the chinks. We 'll have them soon."

He was right: they came soon. Someone had found the dead body of Young Eye; then it was discovered that the gate was shut. A big shout went up. The Indians ran to their lodges for spears and hatchets, though the weapons of many were within the Fort, and soon they were about the place, shouting in impotent rage. They could not tell how many invaders were in the Fort; they suspected it was the Little Skins, their ancient enemies. But Young Eye, they saw, had not been scalped. This was brought to the old chief, and he called to his men to fall back. They had not seen one man of the invaders; all was silent and dark within the Fort; even the two torches which had been burning above the gate were down. At that moment, as if to add to the strangeness, a caribou came suddenly through the fires, and, passing not far from the bewildered Indians, plunged into the trees behind the Fort.

The caribou is credited with great powers. It is thought to understand all that is said to it, and to be able to take the form of a spirit. No Indian will come near it till it is dead, and he who kills it out of season is supposed to bring down all manner of evil.

So at this sight they cried out—the women falling to the ground with their faces in their arms—that the caribou had done this thing. For a moment they were all afraid. Besides, as a brave showed, there was no mark on the body of Young Eye.

Pierre knew quite well that this was a bull caribou, traveling wildly till he found another herd. He would carry on the deception. "Wail for the dead, as your women do in Ireland. That will finish them," he said to Macavoy.

The giant threw his voice up and out, so that it seemed to come from over the Fort to the Indians, weird and crying. Even the half-breeds standing by felt a light shock of unnatural excitement. The Indians without drew back slowly from the Fort, leaving a clear space between. Macavoy had uncanny tricks with his voice, and presently he changed the song into a shrill, wailing whistle, which went trembling about the place and then stopped suddenly.

"Sure, that 's a poor game, Pierre," he whis-

pered;" an' I 'd rather be pluggin' their hides wid bullets, or givin' the double-an'-twist. It 's fightin' I come for, and not the trick av Mother Kilkevin!"

Pierre arranged a plan of campaign at once. Every man looked to his gun, the gates were slowly opened, and Macavoy stepped out. Pierre had thrown over the Irishman's shoulders the great skin of a musk-ox which he had found inside the stockade. He was a strange, immense figure, as he walked into the open space, and, folding his arms, looked round. In the shadow of the gate behind were Pierre and the half-breeds, with guns cocked.

Macavoy had lived so long in the north that he knew enough of all the languages to speak to this tribe. When he came out a murmur of wonder ran among the Indians. They had never seen anyone so tall, for they were not great of stature, and his huge beard and wild shock of hair were a wonderful sight. He remained silent, looking on them. At last the old chief spoke. "Who are you?"

"I am a great chief from the Hills of the Mighty Men, come to be your king," was his reply.

"He is your king," cried Pierre in a strange

voice from the shadow of the gate, and he thrust out his gun-barrel, so that they could see it.

The Indians now saw Pierre and the half-breeds in the gateway, and they had not so much awe. They came a little nearer, and the women stopped crying. A few of the braves half raised their spears. Seeing this, Pierre instantly stepped forward to the giant. He looked a child in stature thereby. He spoke quickly and well in the Chinook language.

"This is a mighty man from the Hills of the Mighty Men. He has come to rule over you, to give all other tribes into your hands; for he has strength like a thousand, and fears nothing of gods nor men. I have the blood of red men in me. It is I who have called this man from his distant home. I heard of your fighting and foolishness; also that warriors were to come from the south country to scatter your wives and children, and to make you slaves. I pitied you, and I have brought you a chief greater than any other. Throw your spears upon the ground, and all will be well; but raise one to throw, or one arrow, or axe, and there shall be death among you, so that as a people you shall die. The spirits are with us. . . . Well?"

The Indians drew a little nearer, but they did not drop their spears, for the old chief forbade them.

"We are not dogs or cowards," he said, "though the spirits be with you, as we believe. We have seen strange things"—he pointed to Young Eye—"and heard voices not of men; but we would see great things as well as strange. There are seven men of the Little Skins' tribe within a lodge yonder. They were to die when our braves returned from the hunt, and for that we prepared the feast. But this mighty man, he shall fight them all at once, and if he kills them he shall be our king. In the name of my tribe I speak. And this other," pointing to Pierre, "he shall also fight with a strong man of our tribe, so that we shall know if you are all brave, and not as those who crawl at the knees of the mighty."

This was more than Pierre had bargained for. Seven men at Macavoy, and Indians, too, fighting for their lives, was a contract of weight. But Macavoy was blowing in his beard cheerfully enough.

"Let me choose me ground," he said, "wid me back to the wall, an' I 'll take thim as they come."

Pierre instantly interpreted this to the Indians,

and said for himself that he would welcome their strongest man at the point of a knife when he chose.

The chief gave an order, and the Little Skins were brought. The fires still burned brightly, and the breathing of the pines, as a slight wind rose and stirred them, came softly over. The Indians stood off at the command of the chief. Macavoy drew back to the wall, dropped the musk-ox skin to the ground, and stripped himself to the waist. But in his waistband there was what none of these Indians had ever seen—a small revolver that barked ever so softly. In the hands of each Little Skin there was put a knife, and they were told their cheerful exercise. They came on cautiously, and then suddenly closed in, knives flashing. But Macavoy's little bulldog barked, and one dropped to the ground. The others fell back. The wounded man drew up, made a lunge at Macavoy, but missed him. As if ashamed, the other six came on again at a spring. But again the weapon did its work smartly, and one more came down. Now the giant put it away, ran in upon the five, and cut right and left. So sudden and massive was his rush that they had no chance. Three fell at his blows, and then he drew back swiftly to the wall. "Drop your knives," he said, as they cowered,

"or I 'll kill you all." They did so. He dropped his own.

"Now come an, ye scuts!" he cried, and suddenly he reached and caught them, one with each arm, and wrestled with them, till he bent the one like a willow rod, and dropped him with a broken back, while the other was at his mercy. Suddenly loosing him, he turned him toward the woods, and said: "Run, ye rid divil, run for y'r life!"

A dozen spears were raised, but the rifles of Pierre's men came in between; the Indian reached cover and was gone. Of the six others, two had been killed, the rest were severely wounded, and Macavoy had not a scratch.

Pierre smiled grimly. "You 've been doing all the fighting, Macavoy," he said.

"There 's no bein' a king for nothin'," he replied, wiping blood from his beard.

"It 's my turn now, but keep your rifles ready, though I think there 's no need."

Pierre had but a short minute with the champion, for he was an expert with the knife. He carried away four fingers of the Indian's fighting hand, and that ended it; for the next instant the point was at the red man's throat. The Indian stood to take it like a man; but Pierre loved that kind of courage, and shot the knife into its sheath instead.

The old chief kept his word, and after the spears were piled, he shook hands with Macavoy, as did his braves one by one, and they were all moved by the sincerity of his grasp: their arms were useless for some time after. They hailed as their ruler, King Macavoy I.; for men are like dogs—they worship him who beats them. The feasting and dancing went on till the hunters came back. Then there was a wild scene, but in the end all the hunters, satisfied, came to greet their new king.

The king himself went to bed in the Fort that night, Pierre and his bodyguard—by name Noel, Little Babiche, Corvette, José, and Parfaite—its only occupants, singing joyfully—

"Did yees iver hear tell o' Long Barney,
That come from the groves o' Killarney?
He wint for a king, oh, he wint for a king,
But he niver kem back to Killarney
Wid his crown, an' his soord, an' his army!"

As a king Macavoy was a success, for the brag had gone from him. Like all his race he had faults as a subject, but the responsibility of ruling set him right. He found in the Fort an old sword and belt, left by some Company's man, and these he furbished up and wore.

With Pierre's aid he drew up a simple constitution, which he carried in the crown of his

cap, and he distributed beads and gaudy trappings as marks of honour. Nor did he forget the frequent pipe of peace, made possible to all by generous gifts of tobacco. Anyone can found a kingdom abaft the Barren Grounds with tobacco, beads, and red flannel.

For very many weeks it was a happy kingdom. But presently Pierre yawned, and was ready to return. Three of the half-breeds were inclined to go with him. José and Little Babiche had formed alliances which held them there—besides, King Macavoy needed them.

On the eve of Pierre's departure a notable thing occurred.

A young brave had broken his leg in hunting, had been picked up by a band of another tribe and carried south. He found himself at last at Fort O'Angel. There he had met Mrs. Whelan, and for presents of tobacco, and purple and fine linen, he had led her to her consort. That was how the king and Pierre met her in the yard of Fort Comfort one evening of early autumn. Pierre saw her first, and was for turning the King about and getting him away ; but it was too late. Mrs. Whelan had seen him, and she called out at him:

"Oh, Tim! me jool! me king! have I found ye, me imp'ror!"

She ran at him, to throw her arms round him. He stepped back, the red of his face going white, and said, stretching out his hand, "Woman, y' are me wife, I know, whativer y' be; an' y've right to have shelter and bread av me; but me arms, an' me bed, are me own to kape or to give; and by God, ye shall have nayther one nor the other! There 's a ditch as wide as hell betune us!"

The Indians had gathered quickly; they filled the yard, and crowded the gate. The woman went wild, for she had been drinking. She ran at Macavoy and spat in his face, and called down such a curse on him as whoever hears, be he the one that 's cursed or any other, shudders at till he dies. Then she fell in a fit at his feet. Macavoy turned to the Indians, stretched out his hands and tried to speak, but could not. He stooped down, picked up the woman, carried her into the Fort, and laid her on a bed of skins.

"What will you do?" asked Pierre.

"She is my wife," he answered firmly.

"She lived with Whelan."

"She must be cared for," was the reply. Pierre looked at him with a curious quietness. "I 'll get liquor for her," he said presently. He started to go, but turned and felt the woman's pulse. "You would keep her?" he asked.

"Bring the liquor."

Macavoy reached for water, and dipping the sleeve of his shirt in it, wetted her face gently.

Pierre brought the liquor, but he knew that the woman would die. He stayed with Macavoy beside her all night. Toward morning her eyes opened and she shivered greatly.

"It 's bither cold," she said. "You 'll put more wood on the fire, Tim, for the babe must be kipt warrum."

She thought she was at Malahide.

"Oh, wurra, wurra! but 'tis freezin'!" she said again. "Why d' ye kape the door opin whin the child 's perishin'?"

Macavoy sat looking at her, his trouble shaking him.

"I 'll shut the door meself, thin," she added; "for 't was I that lift it opin, Tim." She started up, but gave a cry like a wailing wind, and fell back.

"The door is shut," said Pierre.

"But the child! the child!" said Macavoy, tears running down his face and beard.

The Gift of the Simple King

I

Once Macavoy, the giant, ruled a tribe of Northern people, achieving the dignity by the hands of Pierre, who called him King Macavoy. Then came a time when, tiring of his kingship, he journeyed south, leaving all behind, even his queen, Wonta, who, in her bed of cypresses and yarrow, came forth no more into the morning. About Fort Guidon they still gave him his title, and because of his guilelessness, sincerity, and generosity, Pierre called him "The Simple King." His seven feet and over shambled about, suggesting unjointed power, unshackled force. No one hated Macavoy, many loved him, he was welcome at the fire and the cooking-pot: yet it seemed shameful to have so much man useless—such an engine of life, which might do great things, wasting fuel. Nobody thought much of that at Fort Guidon, except, perhaps, Pierre, who sometimes said, "My simple king, some day you shall have your great chance again, but not as a king—as a giant, a man."

The day did not come immediately, but it came.

When Ida, the deaf and dumb girl, married Hilton, of the H.B.C., every man at Fort Guidon, and some from posts beyond, sent her or brought her presents of one kind or another. Pierre's gift was a Mexican saddle. He was branding Ida's name on it with the broken blade of a case-knife, when Macavoy entered on him, having just returned from a vagabond visit to Fort Ste. Anne.

"Is it digging out or carvin' in y' are?" he asked, puffing into his beard.

Pierre looked up contemptuously, but did not reply to the insinuation, for he never saw an insult unless he intended to avenge it; and he would not quarrel with Macavoy.

"What are you going to give?" he asked.

"Aw, give what to who, Hop-o'-me-thumb?" Macavoy said, stretching himself out in the doorway, his legs in the sun, his head in the shade.

"You 've been taking a walk in the country, then?" Pierre asked, though he knew.

"To Fort Ste. Anne: a buryin', two christ'nin's, and a weddin'; an' lashin's av grog an' swill—aw that, me button o' the North!"

"Hey! What a fool you are, my simple king! You 've got the things end foremost. Turn your head to the open air, for I go to light

a cigarette, and if you breathe this way, there will be a grand explode!"

"Aw, yer thumb in yer eye, Pierre! It's like a baby's, me breath is, milk and honey it is—aw yis; an' Father Corraine, that was doin' the trick for the love o' God, says he to me, 'Little Tim Macavoy,'—aw yis, *little* Tim Macavoy,—says he, 'when are you goin' to buckle to, for the love av God!' says he. Ashamed I was, Pierre, that Father Corraine should spake to me like that, for I'd only a twig twisted at me hips to kape me trousies up, an' I thought 'twas that he had in his eye! 'Buckle to,' says I, 'Father Corraine? Buckle to, yer riv'rince!'—feelin' I was at the twigs the while. 'Ay, little Tim Macavoy,' he says, says he, 'you 've bin atin' the husks av idleness long enough; when are you goin' to buckle to? You had a kingdom and ye guv it up,' says he; 'take a field, get a plough, and buckle to,' says he, 'an' turn back no more!'—like that, says Father Corraine; and I thinkin' all the time 'twas the want o' me belt he was drivin' at!"

Pierre looked at him a moment idly, then said: "Such a tom-fool! And where's that grand leather belt of yours, eh, my monarch?"

A laugh shook through Macavoy's beard. "For the weddin' it wint: buckled the two up

wid it for better or worse—an' purty they looked, they did, standin' there in me cinch, an' one hole lift—aw yis, Pierre!"

"And what do you give to Ida?" Pierre asked, with a little emphasis of the branding-iron.

Macavoy got to his feet. "Ida! Ida!" said he. "Is that saddle for Ida? Is it her and Hilton that's to ate aff one dish togither? That rose o' the valley, that bird wid a song in her face and none an her tongue! That daisy dot av a thing, steppin' through the world like a sprig o' glory! Aw, Pierre, thim two!—an I 've divil a scrap to give, good or bad. I 've nothin' at all in the wide wurruld but the clothes on me back, an' thim hangin' on the underbrush!" —giving a little twist to the twigs. "An' many a meal an' many a dipper o' drink she' s guv me, little smiles dancin' at her lips."

He sat down in the doorway again, with his face turned toward Pierre, and the back of his head in the sun. He was a picture of perfect health, sumptuous, huge, a bull in beauty, the heart of a child looking out of his eyes, but a sort of despair, too, in his bearing.

Pierre watched him with a furtive humour for a time, then he said languidly: "Never mind your clothes, give yourself."

"Yer tongue in yer cheek, me spot o' vinegar.

Give meself! What's that for? A purty weddin' gift, says I! Handy thing to have in the house! Use me for a clothes-horse, or shtand me in the garden for a fairy bower!—aw yis, wid a hole in me face that 'd ate thim out o' house and home!"

Pierre drew a piece of brown paper toward him, and wrote on it with a burnt match. Presently he held it up. "*Voilà*, my simple king, the thing for you to do: a grand gift, and to cost you nothing now. Come, read it out, and tell me what you think."

Macavoy took the paper, and in a large, judicial way, read slowly:

"*On demand, for value received, I promise to pay to* . . IDA HILTON, . . *or order, meself, Tim Macavoy, standin' seven foot three on me bare fut, wid interest at nothin' at all.*"

Macavoy ended with a loud smack of the lips. "McGuire!" he said, and nothing more.

McGuire was his strongest expression. In the most important moments of his career he had said it, and it sounded deep, strange and more powerful than many usual oaths. A moment later he said again, "McGuire!" Then he read the paper once more out loud. "What's that, me Frenchman?" he said. "What Ballzeboob's tricks are y' at now?"

Pierre was complacently eyeing his handiwork on the saddle. He now settled back with his shoulders to the wall, and said: "See, then, it 's a little promissory note for a wedding-gift to Ida. When she says some day, 'Tim Macavoy, I want you to do this or that, or to go here or there, or to sell you or trade you, or use you for a clothes-horse, or a bridge over a cañyon, or to hold up a house, or blow out a prairie-fire, or be my second husband,' you shall say, 'Here I am'; and you shall travel from Heaven to Halifax, but you shall come at the call of this promissory!"

Pierre's teeth glistened behind a smile as he spoke, and Macavoy broke into a roar of laughter. "Black 's the white o' yer eye," he said at last, "an' a joke 's a joke. Seven fut three I am, an' sound av wind an' limb—an' a weddin'-gift to that swate rose o' the valley! Aisy, aisy, Pierre. A bit o' foolin' 't was ye put on the paper, but truth I 'll make it, me cock o' the walk! That 's me gift to her an' Hilton, an' no other. An' a dab wid red wax it shall have, an' what more be the word o' Freddy Tarlton the lawyer."

"You 're a great man," said Pierre, with a touch of gentle irony, for his natural malice had no play against the huge ex-king of his own making. With these big creatures—he had con-

nived with several in his time—he had ever been superior, protective, making them to feel that they were as children beside him. He looked at Macavoy musingly, and said to himself, "Well, why not? If it is a joke, then it is a joke; if it is a thing to make the world stand still for a minute some time, so much the better. He is all waste now. By the holy, he shall do it. It is amusing, and it may be great bye and bye."

Presently Pierre said aloud: "Well, my Macavoy, what will you do? Send this good gift?"

"Aw yis, Pierre; I shtand by that from the crown av me head to the sole av me fut sure. Face like a mornin' in May, and hands like the tunes of an organ, she has. Spakes wid a look av her eye and a twist av her purty lips an' swaying body, an' talkin' to you widout a word. Aw motion—motion—motion; yis, that 's it. An' I 've seen her an tap af a hill wid the wind blowin' her hair free, and the yellow buds on the tree, and the grass green beneath her feet, the world smilin' betune her and the sun: pictures—pictures, aw yis! Promissory notice on demand is at anny toime? Seven fut three on me bare toes—but, Father o' Sin! when she calls I come, yis."

"On your oath, Macavoy?" asked Pierre; "by the book of the Mass?"

Macavoy stood up straight till his head scraped the cobwebs between the rafters, the wild indignation of a child in his eye. "D' ye think I 'm a thafe, to stale me own word? Hut! I 'll break ye in two, ye wisp o' straw, if ye doubt me word to a lady. There 's me note av hand, and ye shall have me fist on it, in writin' at Freddy Tarlton's office, wid a blotch av red and the queen's head at the bottom. *McGuire!*" he said again, and paused, puffing his lips through his beard.

Pierre looked at him a moment, then waving his fingers idly, said, "So, my straw-breaker! Then to-morrow morning at ten you will fetch your wedding-gift. But come so soon now to M'sieu' Tarlton's office, and we will have it all as you say, with the red seal and the turn of your fist—yes. Well, well, we travel far in the world, and sometimes we see strange things, and no two strange things are alike—no; there is only one Macavoy in the world, there was only one Shon M'Gann. Shon M'Gann was a fine fool, but he did something at last, truly yes: Tim Macavoy, perhaps, will do something at last on his own hook. Hey, I wonder!"

He felt the muscles of Macavoy's arm musingly, and then laughed up in the giant's face. "Once I made you a king, my own, and you

threw it all away; now I make you a slave, and we shall see what you will do. Come along, for M'sieu' Tarlton."

Macavoy dropped a heavy hand on Pierre's shoulder.

"'T is hard to be a king, Pierre, but 't is aisy to be a slave for the likes o' her. I 'd kiss her dirty shoe sure!"

As they passed through the door, Pierre said, "*Dis donc*, perhaps, when all is done, she will sell you for old bones and rags. Then I will buy you, and I will burn your bones and the rags, and I will scatter to the four winds of the earth the ashes of a king, a slave, a fool, and an Irishman,—truly!"

"Bedad, ye 'll have more earth in yer hands then, Pierre, than ye 'll ever earn, and more heaven than ye 'll ever shtand in."

Half an hour later they were in Freddy Tarlton's office on the banks of the Little Big Swan, which tumbled past, swelled by the first rain of the early autumn. Freddy Tarlton, who had a gift of humour, entered into the spirit of the thing and treated it seriously; but in vain did he protest that the large red seal with Her Majesty's head on it was unnecessary; Macavoy insisted, and wrote his name across it with a large indistinctness worthy of a king. Before

the night was over everybody at Guidon Hill, save Hilton and Ida herself, knew what gift would come from Macavoy to the wedded pair.

II

The next morning was almost painfully beautiful, so delicate in its clearness, so exalted by the glory of the hills, so grand in the limitless stretch of the green-brown prairie north and south. It was a day for God's creatures to meet in, and speed away, and having flown round the boundaries of that spacious domain, to return again to the nest of home on the large plateau between the sea and the stars. Gathered about Ida's home was everybody who lived within a radius of a hundred miles. In the large front room all the presents were set:—rich furs from the far north, cunningly carved bowls, rocking-chairs made by hand, knives, cooking utensils, a copy of Shakespeare in six volumes from the Protestant missionary who performed the ceremony, a nugget of gold from the Long Light River, and outside the door, a horse, Hilton's own present to his wife, on which was put Pierre's saddle, with its silver mounting and Ida's name branded deep on pommel and strap. When Macavoy arrived, a cheer went up, which

was carried on waves of laughter into the house to Hilton and Ida, who even then were listening to the first words of the brief service which begins, "*I charge you both if you do know any just cause or impediment*—" and so on.

They did not turn to see what it was, for just at that moment they themselves were the very centre of the universe. Ida being deaf and dumb, it was necessary to interpret to her the words of the service by signs, as the missionary read it, and this was done by Pierre himself, the half-breed Catholic, the man who had brought Hilton and Ida together, for he and Ida had been old friends. After Father Corraine had taught her the language of signs, Pierre had learned them from her, until at last his gestures had become as vital as her own. The delicate precision of his every movement, the suggestiveness of look and motion were suited to a language which was nearer to the instincts of his own nature than word of mouth. All men did not trust Pierre, but all women did ; with those he had a touch of Machiavelli, with these he had no sign of Mephistopheles, and few were the occasions in his life when he showed outward tenderness to either: which was equally effective. He had learnt, or knew by instinct, that exclusiveness as to men, and indifference as

to women, are the greatest influences on both. As he stood there, slowly interpreting to Ida, by graceful allusive signs, the words of the service, one could not think that behind his impassive face there was any feeling for the man or for the woman. He had that disdainful smile which men acquire, who are all their lives aloof from the hopes of the hearthstone, and acknowledge no laws but their own.

More than once the eyes of the girl filled with tears, as the pregnancy of some phrase in the service came home to her. Her face responded to Pierre's gestures, as do one's nerves to the delights of good music, and there was something so unique, so impressive in the ceremony, that the laughter which had greeted Macavoy passed away, and a dead silence, beginning from where the two stood, crept out until it covered all the prairie. Nothing was heard except Hilton's voice in strong tones saying, "*I take thee to be my wedded wife*," etc., but when the last words of the service were said, and the new-made bride turned to her husband's embrace, and a little sound of joy broke from her lips, there was plenty of noise and laughter again, for Macavoy stood in the doorway, or rather outside it, stooping to look in upon the scene. Someone had lent him the cinch of a

broncho, and he had belted himself with it, no longer carrying his clothes about "an the underbrush." Hilton laughed and stretched out his hand. "Come in, King," he said, "come and wish us joy."

Macavoy parted the crowd easily, forcing his way, and instantly was stooping before the pair —for he could not stand upright in the room.

"Aw, now, Hilton, is it you, is it you, that's pluckin' the roses av the valley, snatchin' the stars out av the sky! aw, Hilton, the like o' that! Travel down I did yistiday from Fort Ste. Anne, and divil a word I knew till Pierre hit me in the eye wid it last night—and no time for a present, for a wedding gift—no, aw no!"

Just here Ida reached up and touched him on the shoulder. He smiled down on her, puffing and blowing in his beard, bursting to speak to her, yet knowing no word by signs to say; but he nodded his head at her, and he patted Hilton's shoulder, and he took their hands and joined them together, her's on top of Hilton's, and shook them in one of his own till she almost winced. Presently, with a look at Hilton, who nodded in reply, Ida lifted her cheek to Macavoy to kiss—Macavoy, the idle, ill-cared-for, boisterous giant. His face became red like that of a child caught in an awkward act, and with an ab-

surd shyness he stooped and touched her cheek. Then he turned to Hilton, and blurted out, "Aw, the rose o' the valley, the pride o' the wide wurruld! aw the bloom o' the hills! I 'd have kissed her dirty shoe. *McGuire!*"

A burst of laughter rolled out on the clear air of the prairie, and the hills seemed to stir with the pleasure of life. Then it was that Macavoy, following Hilton and Ida outside, suddenly stopped beside the horse, drew from his pocket the promissory note that Pierre had written, and said, "Yis, but all the weddin-gifts are n't in. 'Tis nothin' I had to give—divil a cint in the wurruld, divil a pound av baccy, or a pot for the fire, or a bit av linin for the table; nothin' but meself an me dirty clothes, standin' seven feet three an me bare toes. What was I to do? There was only meself to give, so I give it free and hearty, and here it is wid the Queen's head an it, done in Mr. Tarlton's office. Ye'd better have had a dog, or a gun, or a ladder, or a horse, or a saddle, or a quart of brown brandy; but such as it is I give it ye—I give it to the rose o' the valley and the star o' the wide wurruld."

In a loud voice he read the promissory note, and handed it to Ida. Men laughed till there were tears in their eyes, and a keg of whisky was opened; but somehow Ida did not laugh. She

and Pierre had seen a serious side to Macavoy's gift: the childlike manliness in it. It went home to her woman's heart without a touch of ludicrousness, without a sound of laughter.

III

After a time the interest in this wedding-gift declined at Fort Guidon, and but three people remembered it with any singular distinctness —Ida, Pierre and Macavoy. Pierre was interested, for in his primitive mind he knew that, however wild a promise, life is so wild in its events, there comes the hour for redemption of all I.O.U.'s.

Meanwhile, weeks, months, and even a couple of years passed, Macavoy and Pierre coming and going, sometimes together, sometimes not, in all manner of words at war, in all manner of fact at peace. And Ida, out of the bounty of her nature, gave the two vagabonds a place at her fireside whenever they chose to come. Perhaps, where speech was not given, a gift of divination entered into her instead, and she valued what others found useless, and held aloof from what others found good. She had powers which had ever been the admiration of Guidon Hill. Birds and animals were her friends—she called them

her kinsmen. A peculiar sympathy joined them ; so that when, at last, she tamed a white wild duck, and made it do the duties of a carrier-pigeon, no one thought it strange.

Up in the hills, beside the White Sun River, lived her sister and her sister's children ; and, by and by, the duck carried messages back and forth, so that when, in the winter, Ida's health became delicate, she had comfort in the solicitude and cheerfulness of her sister, and the gaiety of the young birds of her nest, who sent Ida many a sprightly message and tales of their good vagrancy in the hills. In these days Pierre and Macavoy were little at the Post, save now and then to sit with Hilton beside the fire, waiting for spring and telling tales. Upon Hilton had settled that peaceful, abstracted expectancy which shows man at his best, as he waits for the time when, through the half-lights of his fatherhood, he shall see the broad fine dawn of motherhood spreading up the world—which, all being said and done, is that place called Home. Something gentle came over him while he grew stouter in body and in all other ways made a larger figure among the people of the West.

As Pierre said, whose wisdom was more to be trusted than his general morality, "it is strange that most men think not enough of themselves

till a woman shows them how. But it is the great wonder that the woman does not despise him for it. *Quel caractére!* She has so often to show him his way like a babe, and yet she says to him, *Mon grand homme!* my master! my lord! Pshaw! I have often thought that women are half saints, half fools, and men half fools, half rogues. But, *quelle vie!*—what life! without a woman you are half a man; with one you are bound to a single spot in the world, you are tied by the leg, your wing is clipped—you cannot have all. *Quelle vie!*—what life!"

To this Macavoy said: "Spit-spat! But what the devil good does all yer thinkin' do ye, Pierre? It 's argufy here and argufy there, an' while yer at that, me an' the rest av us is squeezin' the fun out o' life. Aw, go 'long wid ye. Y' are only a bit o' hell an' grammar, annyway. Wid all yer cuttin' and carvin' things to see the internals av thim, I 'd do more to the call av a woman's finger than for all the logic and knowalogy y' ever chewed—an' there y' are, me little tailor o' jur'sprudince!"

"To the finger call of Hilton's wife, eh?"

Macavoy was not quite sure what Pierre's enigmatical tone meant. A wild light shone in his eyes, and his tongue blundered out: "Yis, Hilton's wife's finger, or a look av her eye, or

nothin' at all. Aisy, aisy, ye wasp! ye'd go stalkin' divils in hell for her yerself, so ye would. But the tongue av ye—hut, it 's gall to the tip!"

"Maybe, my king. But I 'd go hunting because I wanted; you because you must. You 're a slave to come and to go, with a Queen's seal on the promissory."

Macavoy leaned back and roared. "Aw, that! The rose o' the valley! the joy o' the wurrld! S't, Pierre—" his voice grew softer on a sudden, as a fresh thought came to him—"did y' ever think that the child might be dumb like the mother?"

This was a day in the early spring, when the snows were melting in the hills, and freshets were sweeping down the valleys far and near. That night a warm heavy rain came on, and in the morning every stream and river was swollen to twice its size. The mountains seemed to have stripped themselves of snow, and the vivid sun began at once to color the foothills with green. As Pierre and Macavoy stood at their door, looking out upon the earth cleansing itself, Macavoy suddenly said: "Aw, look, look, Pierre—her white duck aff to the nest on Champak Hill!"

They both shaded their eyes with their hands. Circling round two or three times above the

Post, the duck then stretched out its neck to the west, and floated away beyond Guidon Hill, and was hid from view. Pierre, without a word, began cleaning his rifle, while Macavoy smoked, and sat looking into the distance, surveying the sweet warmth and light. His face blossomed with colour, and the look of his eyes was like that of an irresponsible child. Once or twice he smiled and puffed in his beard, but perhaps that was involuntary, or was, maybe, a vague reflection of his dreams, themselves most vague, for he was only soaking in sun and air and life.

Within an hour they saw the wild duck again passing the crest of Guidon, and they watched it sailing down to the Post, Pierre idly fondling the gun, Macavoy half roused from his dreams. But presently they were altogether roused, the gun was put away, and both were on their feet; for after the pigeon arrived there was a stir at the Post, and Hilton could be seen running from the store to his house, not far away.

"Something 's wrong there," said Pierre.

"D' ye think 't was the duck brought it?" asked Macavoy.

Without a word Pierre started away toward the Post, Macavoy following. As they did so, a half-breed boy came from the house, hurrying toward them.

Inside the house Hilton's wife lay on her bed, her great hour coming on before the time, because of ill news from beyond the Guidon. There was with her an old Frenchwoman, who herself, in her time, had brought many children into the world, whose heart brooded tenderly, if uncouthly, over the dumb girl. She it was who had handed to Hilton the paper the wild duck had brought, after Ida had read it and fallen in a faint on the floor.

The message that had felled the young wife was brief and awful. A cloud-burst had fallen on Champak Hill, had torn part of it away, and a part of this part had swept down into the path that led to the little house, having been stopped by some falling trees and a great boulder. It blocked the only way to escape above, and beneath, the river was creeping up to sweep away the little house. So, there the mother and her children waited (the father was in the farthest north), facing death below and above. The wild duck had carried the tale in its terrible simplicity. The last words were, "There may n't be any help for me and my sweet chicks, but I am still hoping, and you must send a man or many. But send soon, for we are cut off, and the end may come any hour."

Macavoy and Pierre were soon at the Post,

and knew from Hilton all there was to know. At once Pierre began to gather men, though what one or many could do none could say. Eight white men and three Indians watched the wild duck sailing away again from the bedroom window where Ida lay, to carry a word of comfort to Champak Hill. Before it went, Ida asked for Macavoy, and he was brought to her bedroom by Hilton. He saw a pale, almost unearthly, yet beautiful face, flushing and paling with a coming agony, looking up at him; and presently two trembling hands made those mystic signs which are the primal language of the soul. Hilton interpreted to him this: "I have sent for you. There is no man so big or strong as you in the north. I did not know that I should ever ask you to redeem the note. I want my gift, and I will give you your paper with the Queen's head on it. Those little lives, those pretty little dears, you will not see them die. If there is a way, any way, you will save them. Sometimes one man can do what twenty cannot. You were my wedding-gift: I claim you now."

She paused, and then motioned to the nurse, who laid the piece of brown paper in Macavoy's hand. He held it for a moment as delicately as if it were a fragile bit of glass, something that his huge fingers might crush by touching. Then

he reached over and laid it on the bed beside her and said, looking Hilton in the eyes, "Tell her, the slip av a saint she is! if the breakin' av me bones, or the lettin' av me blood 's what 'll set all right at Champak Hill, let her mind be aisy—aw yis!"

Soon afterward they were all on their way—all save Hilton, whose duty was beside this other danger, for the old nurse said that, "like as not," her life would hang upon the news from Champak Hill; and if ill came, his place was beside the speechless traveler on the Brink.

In a few hours the rescuers stood on the top of Champak Hill, looking down. There stood the little house, as it were, between two dooms. Even Pierre's face became drawn and pale as he saw what a very few hours or minutes might do. Macavoy had spoken no word, had answered no question since they had left the Post. There was in his eyes the large seriousness, the intentness which might be found in the face of a brave boy, who had not learned fear, and yet saw a vast ditch of danger at which he must leap. There was ever before him the face of the dumb wife; there was in his ears the sound of pain that had followed him from Hilton's house out into the brilliant day.

The men stood helpless, and looked at each

other. They could not say to the river that it must rise no farther, and they could not go to the house, nor let a rope down, and there was the crumbled moiety of the hill which blocked the way to the house: elsewhere it was sheer precipice without trees.

There was no corner in these hills that Macavoy and Pierre did not know, and at last, when despair seemed to settle on the group, Macavoy, having spoken a low word to Pierre, said:

"There 's wan way, an' maybe I can an' maybe I can 't, but I 'm fit to try. I 'll go up the river to an aisy p'int a mile above, get in, and drift down to a p'int below there, thin climb up and loose the stuff."

Every man present knew the double danger: the swift headlong river, and the sudden rush of rocks and stones, which must be loosed on the side of the narrow ravine opposite the little house. Macavoy had nothing to say to the head-shakes of the others, and they did not try to dissuade him; for women and children were in the question, and there they were below near the house, the children gathered round the mother, she waiting—waiting.

Macavoy stripped to the waist, and carrying only a hatchet and a coil of rope tied round him, started away alone up the river. The others

waited, now and again calling comfort to the woman below, though their words could not be heard. About half an hour passed, and then some one called out: "Here he comes!" Presently they could see the rough head and the bare shoulders of the giant in the wild churning stream. There was only one point where he could get a hold on the hillside—the jutting bole of a tree just beneath them, and beneath the dyke of rock and trees.

It was a great moment. The current swayed him out, but he plunged forward, catching at the bole. His hand seized a small branch. It held him an instant, as he was swung round, then it snapt. But the other hand clenched the bole, and to a loud cheer, which Pierre prompted, Macavoy drew himself up. After that they could not see him. He alone was studying the situation. He found the key-rock to the dyked slide of earth. To loosen it was to divert the slide away, or partly away from the little house. But it could not be loosened from above, if at all, and he himself would be in the path of the destroying hill.

"Aisy, aisy, Tim Macavoy," he said to himself. "It's the woman and the darlin's av her, an' the rose o' the valley down there at the Post!"

A minute afterward, having chopped down a hickory sapling, he began to pry at the boulder which held the mass. Presently a tree came crashing down, and a small rush of earth followed it, and the hearts of the men above and the women and children below stood still for an instant. An hour passed as Macavoy toiled with a strange careful skill and a superhuman concentration. His body was all shining with sweat, and sweat dripped like water from his forehead. His eyes were on the key-rock and the pile, alert, measuring, intent. At last he paused. He looked round at the hills—down at the river, up at the sky—humanity was shut away from his sight. He was alone. A long hot breath broke from his lips, stirring his big red beard. Then he gave a call, a long call that echoed through the hills weirdly and solemnly.

It reached the ears of those above like a greeting from an outside world. They answered, "Right, Macavoy!"

Years afterward these men told how then there came in reply one word, ringing roundly through the hills—the note and symbol of a crisis, the fantastic cipher of a soul—

"*McGuire!*"

There was a loud *booming* sound, the dyke was loosed, the ravine spilt into the swollen

stream its choking mouthful of earth and rock : and a minute afterward the path was clear to the top of Champak Hill. To it came the unharmed children and their mother, who, from the warm peak sent the wild duck " to the rose o' the valley," which, till the message came, was trembling on the stem of life. But Joy, that marvellous healer, kept it blooming with a little Eden bird nestling near, whose happy tongue was taught in after years to tell of the gift of The Simple King : who had redeemed, on demand, the promissory note forever.

Malachi

"He 'll swing just the same to-morrow. Exit Malachi!" said Freddy Tarlton gravely.

The door suddenly opened on the group of gossips, and a man stepped inside and took the only vacant seat near the fire. He glanced at none, but stretched out his hands to the heat, looking at the coals with drooping introspective eyes.

"Exit Malachi," he said presently in a soft ironical voice, but did not look up.

"By the holy poker, Pierre, where did you spring from?" asked Tarlton genially.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and—" Pierre responded, with a little turn of his fingers.

"And the wind does n't tell where it 's been, but that's no reason Pierre should n't," urged the other.

Pierre shrugged his shoulders, but made no answer.

"He was a tough," said a voice from the crowd. "To-morrow he 'll get the breakfast he 's paid for."

Pierre turned and looked at the speaker with a cold inquisitive stare. "*Mon Dieu!*" he said presently, "here's this Gohawk playing preacher. What do you know of Malachi, Gohawk? What do any of you know about Malachi? A little of this, a little of that, a drink here, a game of euchre there, a ride after cattle, a hunt behind Guidon Hill!—But what is that? You have heard the cry of the eagle, you have seen him carry off a lamb, you have had a pot-shot at him, but what do you know of the eagle's nest? *Mais non.* The lamb is one thing, the nest is another. You don't know the eagle till you've been there. And you, Gohawk, would not understand, if you saw the nest. Such *cancan!*"

"Shut your mouth!" broke out Gohawk. "D' ye think I 'm going to stand your—"

Freddy Tarlton laid a hand on his arm. "Keep quiet, Gohawk. What good will it do?" Then he said, "Tell us about the nest, Pierre; they 're hanging him for the lamb in the morning."

"Who spoke for him at the trial?" Pierre asked.

"I did," said Tarlton. "I spoke as well as I could, but the game was dead against him from the start. The sheriff was popular, and young; young—that was the thing; handsome, too, and

the women, of course! It was sure from the start; besides, Malachi would say nothing—did n't seem to care."

"No, not to care," mused Pierre. "What did you say for him to the jury?—I mean the devil of a thing to make them sit up and think, 'Poor Malachi!'—like that."

"Best speech y' ever heard," Gohawk interjected; "just emptied the words out, spilt 'em like peas, by gol! till he got to one place right before the end. Then he pulled up sudden, and it got so quiet you could 'a heard a pin drop. 'Gen'lemen of the jury,' says Freddy Tarlton here—gen'lemen, by gol! all that lot—Lagan and the rest! 'Gen'lemen of the jury,' he says, 'be you danged well sure that you 're at one with God A'mighty in this; that you 've got at the core of justice here; that you 've got evidence to satisfy Him who you 've all got to satisfy some day, or git out. Not evidence as to shootin', but evidence as to what that shootin' meant, an' whether it was meant to kill, an' what for.'

" 'The case is like this, gen'lemen of the jury,' says Freddy Tarlton here. 'Two men are in a street alone. There 's a shot, out comes everybody, and sees Fargo the sheriff laid along the ground, his mouth in the dust, and a full-up gun in his fingers. Not forty feet away stands Mal-

achi with a gun smokin' in his fist. It seems to be the opinion that it was cussedness—just cussedness—that made Malachi turn the sheriff's boots to the sun. For Malachi was quarrelsome. I 'll give you a quarter on that. And the sheriff was mettlesome, used to have high spirits, like as if he 's lift himself over the fence with his boot-straps. So, when Malachi come and saw the sheriff steppin' round in his paten' leathers, it give him the needle, and he got a bead on him—and away went Sheriff Fargo—right away! That seems to be the sense of the public.' And he stops again, soft and quick, and looks the twelve in the eyes at once. 'But,' says Freddy Tarlton here, 'are you goin' to hang a man on the little you know? Or are you goin' to credit him with somethin' of what you do n't know? You haint got the inside of this thing, and Malachi does n't let you know it, and God keeps quiet. But be danged well sure that you 've got the bulge on iniquity here; for gen'lemen with pistols out in the street is one thing, and sittin' weavin' a rope in a courtroom for a man's neck is another thing,' says Freddy Tarlton here. 'My client has refused to say one word this or that way, but do n't be sure that Some One that knows the inside of things won't speak for him in the end.'

"Then he turns and looks at Malachi, and Malachi was standin' still and steady like a tree, but his face was white, and sweat poured on his forehead. 'If God has no voice to be heard for my client in this courtroom to-day, is there no one on earth — no man or woman — who can speak for one who won't speak for himself?' says Freddy Tarlton here. Then, by gol! for the first time Malachi opened. 'There 's no one,' he says. 'The speakin' is all for the sheriff. But I spoke once, and the sheriff did n't answer.' Not a bit of beg-yer-pardon in it. It struck cold. 'I leave his case in the hands of twelve true men,' says Freddy Tarlton here, and he sits down.

"So they said he must walk the air?" suggested Pierre.

"Without leavin' their seats," some one added instantly.

"So! But that speech of 'Freddy Tarlton here'?"

"It was worth twelve drinks to me, no more, and nothing at all to Malachi," said Tarlton. "When I said I 'd come to him to-night to cheer him up, he said he 'd rather sleep. The missionary, too, he can make nothing of him. 'I do n't need anyone here,' he says. 'I eat this off my own plate.' And that 's the end of Malachi."

"Because there was no one to speak for him —eh? Well, well."

"If he 'd said anything that 'd justify the thing—make it a manslaughter business or a quarrel—then! But no, not a word, up or down, high or low. Exit Malachi!" added Freddy Tarlton sorrowfully. "I wish he 'd given me half a chance."

"I wish I 'd been there," said Pierre, taking a match from Gohawk, and lighting his cigarette.

"To hear his speech?" asked Gohawk, nodding toward Tarlton.

"To tell the truth about it all. T 'sh, you bats, you sheep, what have you in your skulls ? When a man will not speak, will not lie to gain a case for his lawyer—or save himself, there is something ! Now, listen to me, and I will tell you the story of Malachi. Then you shall judge.

"I never saw such a face as that girl had down there at Lachine in Quebec. I knew her when she was a child, and I knew Malachi when he was on the river with the rafts, the foreman of a gang. He had a look all open then as the sun—yes. Happy ? Yes, as happy as a man ought to be. Well, the mother of the child died, and Malachi alone was left to take care of the little Norice. He left the river and went to work

in the mills, so that he might be with the child ; and when he got to be foreman there he used to bring her to the mill. He had a basket swung for her just inside the mill not far from him, right where she was in the shade ; but if she stretched out her hand it would be in the sun. I 've seen a hundred men turn to look at her where she swung, singing to herself, and then chuckle to themselves afterward as they worked.

"When Trevoor, the owner, come one day, and saw her, he swore, and was going to sack Malachi, but the child—that little Norice—leaned over the basket, and offered him an apple. He looked for a minute, then he reached up, took the apple, turned round, and went out of the mill without a word—so. Next month when he come he walked straight to her, and handed up to her a box of toys and a silver whistle. 'That's to call me when you want me,' he said, as he put the whistle to her lips, and then he put the gold string of it round her neck. She was a wise little thing, that Norice, and noticed things. I don't believe that Trevoor or Malachi ever knew how sweet was the smell of the fresh sawdust till she held it to their noses ; and it was she that had the saws—all sizes—start one after the other, making so strange a tune. She made

up a little song about fairies and others to sing to that tune.

"And no one ever thought much about Indian Island, off beyond the sweating, baking piles of lumber, and the blistering logs and timbers in the bay, till she told stories about it. Sure enough, when you saw the shut doors and open windows of those empty houses, all white without in the sun and dark within, and not a human to be seen, you could believe almost anything. You can think how proud Malachi was —ho! She used to get plenty of presents from the men who had no wives or children to care for—little silver and gold things as well as others. She was fond of them, but no, not vain. She loved the gold and silver for their own sake."

Pierre paused. "I knew a youngster once," said Gohawk, "that—"

Pierre waved his hand. "I 'm not through, M 'sieu' Gohawk the talker. Years went on. Now she took care of the house of Malachi. She wore the whistle that Trevoor gave her. He kept saying to her still, 'If ever you need me, little Norice, blow it, and I will come.' He was droll; that M 'sieu' Trevoor, at times. Well she did not blow, but still he used to come every year, and always brought her something. One year he brought his nephew, a young fellow of about

twenty-three. She did not whistle for him either, but he kept on coming. That was the beginning of 'Exit Malachi.' The man was clever and bad, the girl believing and good. He was young, but he knew how to win a woman's heart. When that is done, there is nothing more to do—she is yours for good or evil; and if a man, through a woman's love, makes her to sin, even his mother cannot be proud of him—no. But the man married Norice, and took her away to Madison, down in Wisconsin. Malachi was left alone—Malachi and Trevoor, for Trevoor felt to her as a father.

"*Alors*, sorrow come to the girl, for her husband began to play cards and to drink, and he lost much money. There was the trouble—the two together. They lived in a hotel. One day a lady missed a diamond necklace from her room. Norice had been with her the night before. Norice come into her own room the next afternoon, and found detectives searching. In her own jewel-case, which was tucked away in the pocket of an old dress, was found the necklace. She was arrested. She said nothing—for she waited for her husband, who was out of town that day. He only come in time to see her in court next morning. She did not deny anything; she was quiet like Malachi. The man

played his part well. He had hid the necklace where he thought it would be safe, but when it was found, he let the wife take the blame—a little innocent thing. People were sorry for them both. She was sent to jail. Her father was away in the Rocky Mountains, and he did not hear; Trevoor was in Europe. The husband got a divorce, and was gone. Norice was in jail for over a year, and then she was set free, for her health went bad, and her mind was going, they thought. She did not know till she come out that she was divorced. Then she nearly died. But then Trevoor come."

Freddy Tarlton's hands were cold with excitement, and his fingers trembled so he could hardly light a cigar.

"Go on, go on, Pierre," he said huskily.

"Trevoor said to her—he told me this himself—'Why did you not whistle for me, Norice? A word would have brought me from Europe.' 'No one could help me, no one at all,' she answered. Then Trevoor said, 'I know who did it, for he has robbed me too.' She sank in a heap on the floor. 'I could have stood it and anything for him, if he hadn't divorced me,' she said. Then they cleared her name before the world. But where was the man? No one knew. At last Malachi, in the Rocky Mountains,

heard of her trouble, for Norice wrote to him, but told him not to do the man any harm, if he ever found him—ah, a woman, a woman! . . . But Malachi met the man one day at Guidon Hill, and shot him in the street."

"Fargo the sheriff!" said half-a-dozen voices.

"Yes; he had changed his name, had come up here, and because he was clever and spent money, and had a pull on someone,—got it at cards, perhaps,—he was made sheriff."

"In God's name, why did n't Malachi speak?" said Tarlton; "why didn't he tell me this?"

"Because he and I had our own plans. The one evidence he wanted was Norice. If she would come to him in his danger, and in spite of his killing the man, good. If not, then he would die. Well, I went to find her and fetch her. I found her. There was no way to send word, so we had to come on as fast as we could. We have come just in time."

"Do ye mean to say that she 's here, Pierre?" said Gohawk.

Pierre waved his hand emphatically. "And so we came on with a pardon."

Every man was on his feet, every man's tongue was loosed, and each ordered liquor for Pierre, and asked him where the girl was. Freddy Tarlton wrung his hand, and called a

boy to go to his rooms and bring three bottles of wine, which he had kept for two years, to drink when he had won his first big case.

Gohawk was importunate. "Where is the girl, Pierre?" he urged.

"Such a fool as you are, Gohawk! She is with her father."

A half-hour later, in a large sitting-room, Freddy Tarlton was making eloquent toasts over the wine. As they all stood drinking to Pierre, the door opened from the hallway, and Malachi stood before them. At his shoulder was a face, wistful, worn, yet with a kind of happiness, too; and the eyes had depths which any man might be glad to drown his heart in.

Malachi stood still, not speaking, and an awe or awkwardness fell on the group at the table.

But Norice stepped forward a little, and said: "May we come in?"

In an instant Freddy Tarlton was by her side, and had her by the hand, her and her father, drawing them over.

His ardent, admiring look gave Norice thought for many a day.

And that night Pierre made an accurate prophecy.

The Lake of the Great Slave

When Tybalt the tale-gatherer asked why it was so called, Pierre said: "Because of the Great Slave;" and then paused.

Tybalt did not hurry Pierre, knowing his whims. If he wished to tell, he would in his own time; if not, nothing could draw it from him. It was nearly an hour before Pierre eased off from the puzzle he was solving with bits of paper and obliged Tybalt. He began as if they had been speaking the moment before:

"They have said it is legend, but I know better. I have seen the records of the Company, and it is all there. I was at Fort O'Glory once, and in a box two hundred years old the factor and I found it. There were other papers, and some of them had large red seals, and a name scrawled along the end of the page."

Pierre shook his head, as if in contented musing. He was a born story-teller. Tybalt was aching with interest, for he scented a thing of note.

"How did any of those papers, signed with a scrawl, begin?" he asked.

"'*To our dearly-beloved*,' or something like that," answered Pierre. "There were letters also. Two of them were full of harsh words, and these were signed with the scrawl."

"What was that scrawl?" asked Tybalt.

Pierre stooped to the sand, and wrote two words with his finger. "Like that," he answered.

Tybalt looked intently for an instant, and then drew a long breath. "*Charles Rex*," he said, hardly above his breath.

Pierre gave him a suggestive sidelong glance. "That name was droll, eh?"

Tybalt's blood was tingling with the joy of discovery. "It is a great name," he said, shortly.

"The Slave was great — the Indians said so at the last."

"But that was not the name of the Slave?"

"*Mais non.* Who said so? *Charles Rex* — like that! was the man who wrote the letters."

"To the Great Slave?"

Pierre made a gesture of impatience. "Very sure."

"Where are those letters now?"

"With the Governor of the Company."

Tybalt cut the tobacco for his pipe savagely.

"You 'd have liked one of those papers?" asked Pierre, provokingly.

"I 'd give five hundred dollars for one!" broke out Tybalt.

Pierre lifted his eyebrows. "T'sh, what 's the good of five hundred dollars up here? What would you do with a letter like that?"

Tybalt laughed with a touch of irony, for Pierre was clearly "rubbing it in."

"Perhaps for a book?" gently asked Pierre.

"Yes, if you like."

"It is a pity. But there is a way."

"How?"

"Put me in the book. Then —

"How does that touch the case?"

Pierre shrugged a shoulder gently, for he thought Tybalt was unusually obtuse. Tybalt thought so himself before the episode ended.

"Go on," he said, with clouded brow, but interested eye. Then, as if with sudden thought: "To whom were the letters addressed, Pierre?"

"Wait!" was the reply. "One letter said: 'Good cousin, We are evermore glad to have thee and thy most excelling mistress near us. So, fail us not at our cheerful doings yonder at Highgate.' Another — a year after — said:

'Cousin, for the sweetening of our mind, get thee gone into some distant corner of our pasturage — the farthest doth please us most. We would not have thee on foreign ground, for we bear no ill-will to our brother princes, and yet we would not have thee near our garden of good loyal souls, for thou hast a rebel heart and a tongue of divers tunes — thou lovest not the good old song of duty to thy prince. Obeying us, thy lady shall keep thine estates untouched; failing obedience, thou wilt make more than thy prince unhappy. Fare thee well.' That was the way of two letters," said Pierre.

"How do you remember so?"

Pierre shrugged a shoulder again. "It is easy with things like that."

"But word for word?"

"I learned it word for word."

"Now for the story of the Lake — if you won't tell me the name of the man."

"The name afterward — perhaps. Well, he came to that farthest corner of the pasturage, to the Hudson's Bay country, two hundred years ago. What do you think? Was he so sick of all, that he would go so far he could never get back? Maybe those 'cheerful doings' at Highgate, eh? And the lady — who can tell?"

Tybalt seized Pierre's arm. "You know

more. Damnation! can't you see I'm on needles to hear? Was there anything in the letters about the lady?—anything more than you've told?"

Pierre liked no man's hand on him. He glanced down at the eager fingers, and said coldly:

"You are a great man; you can tell a story in many ways, but I in one way alone, and that is my way—*mais oui!*"

"Very well, take your own time."

"*Bien.* I got the story from two heads. If you hear a thing like that from Indians, you call it legend; if from the Company's papers, you call it history. Well, in this there is not much difference. The papers tell precise the facts; the legend gives the feeling, is more true. How can you judge the facts if you don't know the feeling? No! what is bad turns good sometimes, when you know the how, the feeling, the place. Well, this story of the Great Slave—eh! . . . There is a race of Indians in the far north who have hair so brown like yours, m'sieu', and eyes no darker. It is said they are of those that lived at the Pole, before the sea swamped the Isthmus, and swallowed up so many islands. So in those days the fair race came to the south for the first time, that is, far below the Circle. They

had their women with them. I have seen those of to-day : fine and tall, with breasts like apples, and a cheek to tempt a man like you, m'sieu' ; no grease in the hair—no, M'sieu' Tybalt ! "

Tybalt sat moveless under the obvious irony, but his eyes were fixed intently on Pierre, his mind ever traveling far ahead of the tale.

"*Alors:* the 'good cousin' of Charles Rex, he made a journey with two men to the Far-off Metal River, and one day this tribe from the north come on his camp. It was summer, and they were camping in the Valley of the Young Moon, more sweet, they say, than any in the north. The Indians cornered them. There was a fight, and one of the Company's men was killed, and five of the other. But when the king of the people of the Pole saw that the great man was fair of face, he called for the fight to stop.

"There was a big talk all by signs, and the king said for the great man to come and be one with them, for they liked his fair face—their fore-fathers were fair like him. He should have the noblest of their women for his wife, and be a prince among them. He would not go : so they drew away again and fought. A stone-axe brought the great man to the ground. He was stunned, not killed. Then the other man gave up, and said he would be one of them if they

would take him. They would have killed him but for one of their women. She said that he should live to tell them tales of the south country and the strange people, when they came again to their camp-fires. So they let him live, and he was one of them. But the chief man, because he was stubborn and scorned them, and had killed the son of their king in the fight, they made a slave, and carried him north a captive, till they came to this lake—the Lake of the Great Slave.

"In all ways they tried him, but he would not yield, neither to wear their dress nor to worship their gods. He was robbed of his clothes, of his gold-handled dagger, his belt of silk and silver, his carbine with rich chasing, and all, and he was among them almost naked,—it was summer, as I said,—yet defying them. He was taller by a head than any of them, and his white skin rippled in the sun like soft steel."

Tybalt was inclined to ask Pierre how he knew all this, but he held his peace. Pierre, as if divining his thoughts, continued :

"You ask how I know these things. Very good : there are the legends, and there were the papers of the Company. The Indians tried every way, but it was no use ; he would have nothing to say to them. At last they come to

this lake. Now something great occurred. The woman who had been the wife of the king's dead son, her heart went out in love of the Great Slave; but he never looked at her. One day there were great sports, for it was the Feast of the Red Star. The young men did feats of strength, here on this ground where we sit. The king's wife called out for the Great Slave to measure strength with them all. He would not stir. The king commanded him; still he would not, but stood among them silent and looking far away over their heads. At last, two young men of good height and bone threw arrows at his bare breast. The blood came in spots. Then he give a cry through his beard, and was on them like a lion. He caught them, one in each arm, swung them from the ground, and brought their heads together with a crash, breaking their skulls, and dropped them at his feet. Catching up a long spear, he waited for the rest. But they did not come, for, with a loud voice, the king told them to fall back, and went and felt the bodies of the men. One of them was dead; the other was his second son—he would live.

"'It is a great deed,' said the king, 'for these were no children, but strong men.'

"Then again he offered the Great Slave women to marry, and fifty tents of deerskin for

the making of a village. But the Great Slave said no, and asked to be sent back to Fort O'Glory.

"The king refused. But that night, as he slept in his tent, the girl-widow came to him, waked him, and told him to follow her. He came forth, and she led him softly through the silent camp to that wood which we see over there. He told her she need not go on. Without a word, she reached over and kissed him on the breast. Then he understood. He told her that she could not come with him, for there was that lady in England—his wife, eh? But never mind, that will come. He was too great to save his life, or be free at the price. Some are born that way. They have their own commandments and they keep them.

"He told her that she must go back. She gave a little cry, and sank down at his feet, saying that her life would be in danger if she went back.

"Then he told her to come; for it was in his mind to bring her to Fort O'Glory, where she could marry an Indian there. But now she would not go with him, and turned toward the village. A woman is a strange creature—yes, like that! He refused to go and leave her. She was in danger, and he would share it, what-

ever it might be. So, though she prayed him not, he went back with her ; and when she saw that he would go in spite of all, she was glad : which is like a woman.

"When he entered the tent again, he guessed her danger, for he stepped over the bodies of two dead men. She had killed them. As she turned at the door to go to her own tent, another woman faced her. It was the wife of the king, who had suspected, and had now found out. Who can tell what it was ? Jealousy, perhaps. The Great Slave could tell, maybe, if he could speak, for a man always knows when a woman sets him high. Anyhow, that was the way it stood. In a moment the girl was marched back to her tent, and all the camp heard a wicked lie of the widow of the king's son.

"To it there was an end, after the way of their laws. The woman should die by fire, and the man as the king might will. So there was a great gathering in the place where we are, and the king sat against that big white stone, which is now as it was then. Silence was called, and they brought the girl-widow forth. The king spoke :

"'Thou who hadst a prince for thy husband, didst go in the night to the tent of the slave who killed thy husband ; whereby thou also

becamest a slave, and didst shame the greatness which was given thee. Thou shalt die, as has been set in our law.'

"The girl-widow rose and spoke: 'I did not know, O king, that he whom thou mad'st a slave slew my husband, the prince of our people, and thy son. That was not told me. But had I known it, still would I have set him free, for thy son was killed in fair battle, and this man deserves not slavery or torture. I did seek the tent of the Great Slave, and it was to set him free — no more. For that did I go, and, for the rest, my soul is open to the Spirit Who Sees. I have done naught, and never did, nor ever will, that might shame a king, or the daughter of a king, or the wife of a king, or a woman. If to set a great captive free is death for me, then am I ready. I will answer all pure women in the far Camp of the Great Fires without fear. There is no more, O king, that I may say, but this: She who dies by fire, being of noble blood, may choose who shall light the faggots — is it not so?'

"Then the king replied: 'It is so; such is our law.'

"There was counselling between the king and his oldest men, and so long were they handing the matter back and forth that it looked as

if she might go free. But the king's wife, seeing, came and spoke to the king and the others, crying out for the honor of her dead son; so that in a moment of anger they all cried out for death.

"When the king said again to the girl that she must die by fire, she answered: 'It is as the gods will. But it is so, as I said, that I may choose who shall light the fires?'

"The king answered yes, and asked her whom she chose. She pointed towards the Great Slave. And all, even the king and his councillors, wondered, for they knew little of the heart of women. What is a man with a matter like that? Nothing—nothing at all. They would have set this for punishment: that she should ask for it was beyond them. Yes, even the king's wife—it was beyond her. But the girl herself, see you, was it not this way?—If she died by the hand of him she loved, then it would be easy, for she could forget the pain, in the thought that his heart would ache for her, and that at the very last he might care, and she should see it. She was great in her way also—that girl, two hundred years ago.

"*Alors*, they led her a little distance off,—there is the spot, where you see the ground heave a little,—and the Great Slave was brought up.

The king told him why the girl was to die. He stood like stone, looking, looking at them. He knew that the girl's heart was like a little child's, and the shame and cruelty of the thing froze him silent for a minute, and the color flew from his face to here and there on his body, as a flame on marble. The cords began to beat and throb in his neck and on his forehead, and his eyes gave out fire like flint on an arrow-head.

"Then he began to talk. He could not say much, for he knew so little of their language. But it was 'No!' every other word. 'No—no—no—no!' the words ringing from his chest. 'She is good!' he said. 'The other—no!' and he made a motion with his hand. 'She must not die—no! Evil? It is a lie! I will kill each man that says it, one by one, if he dares come forth. She tried to save me—well?'

"Then he made them know that he was of high place in a far country, and that a man like him would not tell a lie. That pleased the king, for he was proud, and he saw that the Slave was of better stuff than himself. Besides, the king was a brave man, and he had strength, and more than once he had laid his hand on the chest of the other, as one might on a grand animal. Perhaps, even then, they might have spared the girl was it not for the queen. She would not hear

of it. Then they tried the Great Slave, and he was found guilty. The queen sent him word to beg for pardon. So he stood out and spoke to the queen. She sat up straight, with pride in her eyes, for was it not a great prince, as she thought, asking? But a cloud fell on her face, for he begged the girl's life. Since there must be death, let him die, and die by fire in her place! It was then two women cried out: the poor girl for joy—not at the thought that her life would be saved, but because she thought the man loved her now, or he would not offer to die for her; and the queen for hate, because she thought the same. You can guess the rest: they were both to die, though the king was sorry for the man.

"The king's speaker stood out and asked them if they had anything to say. The girl stepped forward, her face without any fear, but a kind of noble pride in it, and said: 'I am ready, O king.'

"The Great Slave bowed his head, and was thinking much. They asked him again, and he waved his hand at them. The king spoke up in anger, and then he smiled and said: 'O king, I am not ready; if I die, I die.' Then he fell to thinking again. But once more the king spoke: 'Thou shalt surely die, but not by fire, nor now;

nor till we have come to our great camp in our own country. There thou shalt die. But the woman shall die at the going down of the sun. She shall die by fire, and thou shalt light the faggots for the burning.'

"The Great Slave said he would not do it, not though he should die a hundred deaths. Then the king said that it was the woman's right to choose who should start the fire, and he had given his word, which should not be broken.

"When the Great Slave heard this he was wild for a little, and then he guessed altogether what was in the girl's mind. Was not this the true thing in her, the very truest? *Mais oui!* That was what she wished — to die by his hand rather than by any other; and something troubled his breast, and a cloud came in his eyes, so that for a moment he could not see. He looked at the girl, so serious, eye to eye. Perhaps she understood. So, after a time, he got calm as the farthest light in the sky, his face shining among them all with a look none could read. He sat down, and wrote upon pieces of bark with a spear-point—those bits of bark I have seen also at Fort O'Glory. He pierced them through with dried strings of the slippery-elm tree, and with the king's consent gave them to the Company's man, who had become one of

the people, telling him, if ever he was free, or could send them to the Company, he must do so. The man promised, and shame came upon him that he had let the other suffer alone; and he said he was willing to fight and die if the Great Slave gave the word. But he would not; and he urged that it was right for the man to save his life. For himself, no. It could never be; and if he must die, he must die.

"You see, a great man must always live alone and die alone, when there are only such people about him. So, now that the letters were written, he sat upon the ground and thought, looking often towards the girl, who was placed apart with guards near. The king sat thinking also. He could not guess why the Great Slave should give the letters now, since he was not yet to die, nor could the Company's man show a reason when the king asked him. So the king waited, and told the guards to see that the Great Slave should not kill himself.

"But the queen wanted the death of the girl, and was glad beyond telling that the Slave must light the faggots. She was glad when she saw the young braves bring a long sapling from the forest, and, digging a hole, put it stoutly in the ground, and fetch wood, and heap it about.

"The Great Slave noted that the bark of the

sapling had not been stripped, and more than once he measured, with his eye, the space between the stake and the shores of the Lake; he did this most private, so that no one saw but the girl.

"At last the time was come. The Lake was all rose and gold out there in the west, and the water so still—so still. The cool, moist scent of the leaves and grass came out from the woods and up from the plain, and the world was so full of content that a man's heart could cry out, even as now, while we look—eh, is it not good? See the deer drinking on the other shore there!"

Suddenly he became silent, as if he had forgotten the story altogether. Tybalt was impatient, but he did not speak. He took a twig, and in the sand he wrote "*Charles Rex.*" Pierre glanced down and saw it.

"There was beating of the little drums," he continued, "and the crying of the king's speaker; and soon all was ready, and the people gathered at a distance, and the king and the queen, and the chief men nearer; and the girl was brought forth.

"As they led her past the Great Slave, she looked into his eyes, and afterwards her heart was glad, for she knew that at the last he would be near her, and that his hand should light the

fires. Two men tied her to the stake. Then the king's man cried out again, telling of her crime, and calling for her death. The Great Slave was brought near. No one knew that the palms of his hands had been rubbed in the sand for a purpose. When he was brought beside the stake a torch was given him by his guards. He looked at the girl, and she smiled at him, and said: 'Good-bye. Forgive. I die not afraid, and happy.'

"He did not answer, but stooped and lit the sticks here and there. All at once he snatched a burning stick, and it and the torch he thrust, like lightning, in the faces of his guards, blinding them. Then he sprang to the stake, and, with a huge pull, tore it from the ground, girl and all, and rushed to the shore of the Lake, with her tied so in his arms.

"He had been so swift, that, at first, no one stirred. He reached the shore, rushed into the water, dragging a boat out with one hand as he did so, and, putting the girl in, seized a paddle and was away with a start. A few strokes, and then he stopped, picked up a hatchet that was in the boat with many spears, and freed the girl. Then he paddled on, trusting, with a small hope, that through his great strength he could keep on ahead till darkness came, and then, in the

gloom, they might escape. The girl also seized an oar, and the canoe—the king's own canoe—came on like a swallow.

"But the tribe was after tnem in fifty canoes, some coming straight along, some spreading out, to close in later. It was no equal game, for these people were so quick and strong with the oars, and they were a hundred or more to two. There could be but one end. It was what the Great Slave had looked for: to fight till the last breath. He should fight for the woman who had risked all for him—just a common woman of the north, but it seemed good to lose his life for her; and she would be happy to die with him.

"So they stood side by side when the spears and arrows fell round them, and they gave death and wounds for wounds in their own bodies. When, at last, the Indians climbed into the canoe, the Great Slave was dead of many wounds, and the woman, all gashed, lay with her lips to his wet, red cheek. She smiled as they dragged her away; and her soul hurried after his to the Camp of the Great Fires."

It was long before Tybalt spoke, but at last he said: "If I could but tell it as you have told it to me, Pierre!"

Pierre answered: "Tell it with your tongue,

and this shall be nothing to it, for what am I? What English have I, a gipsy of the snows? But do not write it, *mais non!* Writing wanders from the matter. The eyes, and the tongue, and the time, that is the thing. But in a book! —it will sound all cold and thin. It is for the north, for the camp-fire, for the big talk before a man rolls into his blanket, and is at peace. No! no writing, monsieur. Speak it everywhere with your tongue."

"And so I would, were my tongue as yours. Pierre, tell me more about the letters at Fort O'Glory. You know his name—what was it?

"You said five hundred dollars for one of those letters. Is it not?"

"Yes." Tybalt had a new hope.

"T'sh! What do I want of five hundred dollars! But, here, answer me a question: Was the lady—his wife, she that was left in England —a good woman? Answer me out of your own sense, and from my story. If you say right you shall have a letter—one that I have by me."

Tybalt's heart leaped into his throat. After a little he said huskily: "She was a good woman —he believed her that, and so shall I."

"You think he could not have been so great unless, eh? And that 'Charles Rex,' what of him?"

"What good can it do to call him bad now?"

Without a word, Pierre drew from a leather wallet a letter, and, by the light of the fast-setting sun, Tybalt read it, then read it again, and yet again.

"Poor soul! poor lady!" he said. "Was ever such another letter written to any man? And it came too late; this, with the king's recall, came too late!"

"So—so. He died out there where that wild duck flies—a Great Slave. Years after, the Company's man brought word of all."

Tybalt was looking at the name on the outside of the letter.

"How do they call that name?" asked Pierre. "It is like none I 've seen—no."

Tybalt shook his head sorrowfully, and did not answer.

St. Augustine's, Canterbury, had given him its licentiate's hood, the Bishop of Rupert's Land had ordained him, and the north had swallowed him up. He had gone forth with surplice, stole, hood, a sermon-case, the prayer-book, and that other book of all. Indian camps, trappers' huts, and Company's posts had given him hospitality, and had heard him with patience and consideration. At first he wore the surplice, stole, and hood, took the eastward position, and intoned the service, and no man said him nay, but watched him curiously and was sorrowful—he was so youthful, clear of eye, and bent on doing heroical things.

But little by little there came a change. The hood was left behind at Fort O'Glory, where it provoked the derision of the Methodist missionary who followed him ; the sermon-case stayed at Fort O'Battle ; and at last the surplice itself was put by at the Company's post at Yellow Quill. He was too excited and in earnest at first to see the effect of his ministrations, but there came

slowly over him the knowledge that he was talking into space. He felt something returning on him out of the air into which he talked, and buffetting him. It was the Spirit of the North, in which lives the awful natural, the large heart of things, the soul of the past. He awoke to his inadequacy, to the fact that all these men to whom he talked, listened, and only listened, and treated him with a gentleness which was almost pity—as one might a woman. He had talked doctrine, the Church, the sacraments, and at Fort O'Battle he faced definitely the futility of his work. What was to blame—the Church—religion—himself?

It was at Fort O'Battle he met Pierre, that he heard some one say over his shoulder as he walked out into the icy dusk: "*The voice of one crying in the wilderness. . . . and he had sackcloth about his loins, and his food was locusts and wild honey.*"

He turned to see Pierre, who in the large room of the Post had sat and watched him as he prayed and preached. He had remarked the keen, curious eye, the musing look, the habitual disdain at the lips. It had all touched him, confused him; and now he had a kind of anger.

"You know it so well, why don't you preach yourself?" he said feverishly.

"I have been preaching all my life," Pierre answered drily.

"The devil's games: cards and law-breaking; and you sneer at men who try to bring lost sheep into the fold."

"The fold of the Church—yes, I understand all that," Pierre answered. "I have heard you and the priests of my father's Church talk. Which is right? But as for me, I am a missionary. Cards, law-breaking—these are what I have done; but these are not what I have preached."

"What have you preached?" asked the other, walking on into the fast gathering night, beyond the Post and the Indian lodges, into the wastes where frost and silence lived.

Pierre waved his hand towards space. "This," he said suggestively.

"What 's *this?*" asked the other fretfully.

"The thing you feel round you here."

"I feel the cold," was the petulant reply.

"I feel the immense, the far off," said Pierre slowly.

The other did not understand as yet. "You 've learned big words," he said disdainfully.

"No; big things," rejoined Pierre sharply—"a few."

"Let me hear you preach them," half snarled Sherburne.

"You will not like to hear them—no."

"I'm not likely to think about them one way or another," was the contemptuous reply.

Pierre's eyes half closed. The young, impetuous, half-baked college man! To set his little knowledge against his own studious vagabondage! At that instant he determined to play a game and win; to turn this man into a vagabond also; to see John the Baptist become a Bedouin. He saw the doubt, the uncertainty, the shattered vanity in the youth's mind, the missionary's half retreat from his cause. A crisis was at hand. The lad was fretful with his great theme, instead of being severe upon himself. For days and days Pierre's presence had acted on Sherburne silently but forcibly. He had listened to the vagabond's philosophy, and knew that it was of a deeper—so much deeper—knowledge of life than he himself possessed, and he knew also that it was terribly true; he was not wise enough to see it was only true in part. The influence had been insidious, delicate, cunning, and he himself was only "a voice crying in the wilderness," without the simple creed of that voice. He knew that the Meth-

odist missionary was believed in more, if less liked, than himself.

Pierre would work now with all the latent devilry of his nature to unseat the man from his saddle.

"You have missed a great thing, *alors*, though you have been up here two years," he said. "You do not feel; you do not know. What good have you done? Who has got on his knees and changed his life because of you? Who has told his beads or longed for the Mass because of you? Tell me, who has ever said, 'You have showed me how to live'? Even the women, though they cry sometimes when you sing-song your prayers, go on just the same when the little 'bless you' is over. Why? Most of them know a better thing than you tell them. Here is the truth: you are little — eh, so very little. You never lied — direct; you never stole the waters that are sweet; you never knew the big dreams that come with wine in the dead of night; you never swore at your own soul and heard it laugh back at you; you never put your face in the breast of a woman — do not look so wild at me! — you never had a child; you never saw the world and yourself through the doors of real life. You never have said, 'I am tired; I am sick of all; I have seen all.'

"You have never felt what came after—understanding. *Chut*, your talk is for children—and missionaries. You are a prophet without a call, you are a leader without a man to lead, you are less than a child up here. For here the children feel a peace in their blood when the stars come out, and a joy in their brains when the dawn comes up and reaches a yellow hand to the Pole, and the west wind shouts at them. Holy Mother! we in the far north, we feel things; for all the great souls of the dead are up there at the Pole in the pleasant land, and we have seen the Scarlet Hunter and the Kimash Hills. You have seen nothing. You have only heard, and because, like a child, you have never sinned, you come and preach to us!"

The night was folding down fast, all the stars were shooting out into their places, and in the north the white lights of the aurora were flying to and fro.

Pierre had spoken with a slow force and precision, yet, as he went on, his eyes almost became fixed on those shifting flames, and a deep look came into them, as he was moved by his own eloquence. Never in his life had he made so long a speech at once. He paused, and then said suddenly: "Come, let us run."

He broke into a long, sliding trot, and Sher-

burne did the same. With their arms gathered to their sides they ran for quite two miles without a word, until the heavy breathing of the clergyman brought Pierre up suddenly.

"You do not run well," he said; "you do not run with the whole body. You know so little. Did you ever think how much such men as Jacques Parfaite know? The earth they read like a book, the sky like an animal's ways, and a man's face like — like the writing on the wall."

"Like the writing on the wall," said Sherburne, musing; for, under the other's influence, his petulance was gone. He knew that he was not a part of this life, that he was ignorant of it; of, indeed, all that was vital in it and in men and women.

"I think you began this too soon. You should have waited; then you might have done good. But here we are wiser than you. You have no message—no real message—to give us; down in your heart you are not even sure of yourself."

Sherburne sighed. "I'm of no use," he said; "I'll get out; I'm no good at all."

Pierre's eyes glistened. He remembered how, the day before, this youth had said hot words about his card-playing; had called him — in effect — a thief; had treated him as an in-

ferior, as became one who was of St. Augustine's, Canterbury.

"It is the great thing to be free," Pierre said, "that no man shall look for this or that of you. Just to do as far as you feel — as far as you are sure — that is the best. In this you are not sure — no. *Hein*, is it not?"

Sherburne did not answer. Anger, distrust, wretchedness, the spirit of the alien, loneliness, were alive in him. The magnetism of this deep, penetrating man, possessed of a devil, was on him, and in spite of every reasonable instinct he turned to him for companionship.

"It's been a failure," he burst out, "and I'm sick of it — sick of it; but I can't give it up."

Pierre said nothing. They had come to what seemed a vast semicircle of ice and snow — a huge amphitheatre in the plains. It was wonderful: a great round wall on which the northern lights played, into which the stars peered. It was open towards the north, and in one side was a fissure shaped like a gothic arch. Pierre pointed to it, and they did not speak till they had passed through it. Like great seats the steppes of snow ranged round, and in the center was a kind of plateau of ice, as it might seem a stage or an altar. To the north there was a huge

opening, the lost arc of the circle, through which the mystery of the Pole swept in and out, or brooded there where no man may question it. Pierre stood and looked. Time and again he had been here, and had asked the same question: Who had ever sat on those frozen benches and looked down at the drama on that stage below? Who played the parts? was it a farce or a sacrifice? To him had been given the sorrow of imagination, and he wondered and wondered. Or did they come still — those strange people, whoever they were — and watch ghostly gladiators at their fatal sport? If they came, when was it? Perhaps they were there now, unseen. In spite of himself he shuddered. Who was the keeper of the house?

Through his mind there ran—pregnant to him for the first time—a chanson of the Scarlet Hunter, the Red Patrol, who guarded the sleepers in the Kimash Hills against the time they should awake and possess the land once more: the friend of the lost, the lover of the vagabond, and of all who had no home:

"Strangers come to the outer walls—
(*Why do the sleepers stir?*)
Strangers enter the Judgment House—
(*Why do the sleepers sigh?*)
Slow they rise in their judgment seats,

Sieve and measure the naked souls,
Then with a blessing return to sleep—
(*Quiet the Judgment House.*)
Lone and sick are the vagrant souls—
(*When shall the world come home?*)"

He reflected upon the words, and a feeling of awe came over him, for he had been in the White Valley and had seen the Scarlet Hunter. But there came at once also a sinister desire to play a game for this man's life-work here. He knew that the other was ready for any wild move; there was upon him the sense of failure and disgust; he was acted on by the magic of the night, the terrible delight of the scene, and that might be turned to advantage.

He said: "Am I not right? There is something in the world greater than the creeds and the book of the Mass. To be free and to enjoy, that is the thing. Never before have you felt what you feel here now. And I will show you more. I will teach you how to know, I will lead you through all the north and make you to understand the big things of life. Then, when you have known, you can return if you will. But now—see: I will tell you what I will do. Here on this great platform we will play a game of cards. There is a man whose life I can ruin. If you win I promise to leave him safe, and to

go out of the far north forever, to go back to Quebec"—he had a kind of gaming fever in his veins. "If I win, you give up the Church, leaving behind the prayer-book, the Bible and all, coming with me to do what I shall tell you, for the passing of twelve moons. It is a great stake —will you play it? Come"—he leaned forward, looking into the other's face—"will you play it? They drew lots—those people in the Bible. We will draw lots, and see, eh?—and see?"

"I accept the stake," said Sherburne, with a little gasp.

Without a word they went upon that platform, shaped like an altar, and Pierre at once drew out a pack of cards, shuffling them with his mittened hands. Then he knelt down and said, as he laid out the cards one by one till there were thirty: "Whoever gets the ace of hearts first, wins — *hein?*"

Sherburne nodded and knelt also. The cards lay back upward in three rows. For a moment neither stirred. The white, metallic stars saw it, the small crescent moon beheld it, and the deep wonder of night made it strange and dreadful. Once or twice Sherburne looked round as though he felt others present, and once Pierre looked out to the wide portals, as though he saw some

one entering. But there was nothing to the eye —nothing. Presently Pierre said: "Begin."

The other drew a card, then Pierre drew one, then the other, then Pierre again; and so on. How slow the game was! Neither hurried, but both, kneeling, looked and looked at the card long before drawing and turning it over. The stake was weighty, and Pierre loved the game more than he cared about the stake. Sherburne cared nothing about the game, but all his soul seemed set upon the hazard. There was not a sound out of the night, nothing stirring but the Spirit of the North. Twenty, twenty-five cards were drawn, and then Pierre paused.

"In a minute all will be settled," he said. "Will you go on, or will you pause?"

But Sherburne had got the madness of chance in his veins now, and he said: "Quick, quick, go on!"

Pierre drew, but the great card held back. Sherburne drew, then Pierre again. There were three left. Sherburne's face was as white as the snow around him. His mouth was open, and a little white cloud of frosted breath came out. His hand hungered for the card, drew back, then seized it. A moan broke from him. Then Pierre, with a little weird laugh, reached out and turned over—the ace of hearts.

They both stood up. Pierre put the cards in his pocket.

"You have lost," he said.

Sherburne threw back his head with a reckless laugh. The laugh seemed to echo and echo through the amphitheatre, and then from the frozen seats, the hillocks of ice and snow, there was a long, low sound, as of sorrow, and a voice came after:

"*Sleep — sleep! Blessed be the just and the keepers of vows.*"

Sherburne stood shaking as though he had seen a host of spirits. His eyes on the great seats of judgment, he said to Pierre:

"See! see! how they sit there! grey and cold and awful!"

But Pierre shook his head,

"There is nothing," he said, "nothing," yet he knew that Sherburne was looking upon the men of judgment of the Kimash Hills, the sleepers. He looked round half fearfully, for if here were those great children of the ages, where was the keeper of the house, the Red Patrol?

Even as he thought, a figure in scarlet with a noble face and a high pride of bearing stood before them, not far away. Sherburne clutched his arm.

Then the Red Patrol, the Scarlet Hunter, spoke :

" Why have you sinned your sins and broken your vows within our house of judgment ? Know ye not that in the new springtime of the world ye shall be outcast, because ye have called the sleepers to judgment before their time ? But I am the hunter of the lost. Go you," he said to Sherburne, pointing, " where a sick man lies in a hut in the Shikam Valley In his soul find thine own again." Then to Pierre: " For thee, thou shalt know the desert and the storm and the lonely hills ; thou shalt neither seek nor find. Go, and return no more."

The two men, Sherburne falteringly, stepped down and moved to the open plain. They turned at the great entrance and looked back. Where they had stood there rested on his long bow the Red Patrol. He raised it, and a flaming arrow flew through the sky toward the south. They followed its course, and when they looked back a little afterward the great judgment-house was empty and the whole north was silent as the sleepers.

At dawn they came to the hut in the Shikam Valley, and there they found a trapper dying. He had sinned greatly, and he could not die without some one to show him how,

to tell him what to say to the angel of the cross-roads.

Sherburne, kneeling by him, felt his own new soul moved by a holy fire, and, first praying for himself, he said to the sick man: "*For if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

Praying for both, his heart grew strong, and he heard the sick man say, ere he journeyed forth to the cross-roads:

"You have shown me the way; I have peace."

"Speak for me in the Presence," said Sherburne, softly.

The dying man could not answer, but that moment, as he journeyed forth on the Far Trail, he held Sherburne's hand.

The Going of the White Swan

"Why don't she come back, father?"

The man shook his head, his hand fumbled with the wolfskin robe covering the child, and he made no reply.

"She'd come if she knew I was hurted, would n't she?"

The father nodded, and then turned restlessly toward the door, as though expecting some one. The look was troubled, and the pipe he held was not alight, though he made a pretence of smoking.

"Suppose the wildcat had got me, she'd be sorry when she comes, would n't she?"

There was no reply yet, save by gesture, the language of primitive man; but the big body shivered a little, and the uncouth hand felt for a place in the bed where the lad's knee made a lump under the robe. He felt the little heap tenderly, but the child winced.

"S-sh, but that hurts! This wolf-skin's most too much on me, is n't it, father?"

The man softly, yet awkwardly too, lifted the

robe, folded it back, and slowly uncovered the knee. The leg was worn away almost to skin and bone, but the knee itself was swollen with inflammation. He bathed it with some water, mixed with vinegar and herbs, then drew down the deer-skin shirt at the child's shoulder, and did the same with it. Both shoulder and knee bore the marks of teeth — where a huge wild-cat had made havoc — and the body had long red scratches.

Presently the man shook his head sorrowfully, and covered up the small disfigured frame again, but this time with a tanned skin of the caribou. The flames of the huge wood fire dashed the walls and floor with a velvety red and black, and the large iron kettle, bought of the Company at Fort Sacrament, puffed out geysers of steam.

The place was a low hut with parchment windows and rough mud-mortar lumped between the logs. Skins hung along two sides, with bullet-holes and knife-holes showing: of the great grey wolf, the red puma, the bronze hill-lion, the beaver, the bear, and the sable; and in one corner was a huge pile of them. Bare of the usual comforts as the room was, it had a sort of refinement also, joined to an inexpress-

ible loneliness; you could scarce have told how or why.

"Father," said the boy, his face pinched with pain for a moment, "it hurts so, all over, every once in a while."

His fingers caressed the leg just below the knee.

"Father," he suddenly added, "what does it mean when you hear a bird sing in the middle of the night?"

The woodsman looked down anxiously into the boy's face. "It has n't no meaning, Dominique. There ain't such a thing on the Labrador Heights as a bird singin' in the night. That's only in warm countries where there's nightingales. So — *bien sur!*"

The boy had a wise, dreamy, speculative look. "Well, I guess it was a nightingale — it didn't sing like any I ever heard."

The look of nervousness deepened in the woodman's face. "What did it sing like, Dominique?"

"So it made you shiver. You wanted it to go on, and yet you did n't want it. It was pretty, but you felt as if something was going to snap inside of you."

"When did you hear it, my son?"

"Twice last night — and — and I guess it was Sunday the other time. I don't know, for there hasn't been no Sunday up here since mother went away — has there ?"

"Mebbe not."

The veins were beating like live cords in the man's throat and at his temples.

"'Twas just the same as Father Corraine bein' here, when mother had Sunday, wasn't it ?"

The man made no reply ; but a gloom drew down his forehead, and his lips doubled in as if he endured physical pain. He got to his feet and paced the floor. For weeks he had listened to the same kind of talk from this wounded, and, as he thought, dying son, and he was getting less and less able to bear it. The boy at nine years of age was, in manner of speech, the merest child, but his thoughts were sometimes large and wise. The only white child within a compass of a thousand miles or so ; the lonely life of the hills and plains, so austere in winter, so melted to a sober joy in summer ; listening to the talk of his elders at camp-fires and on the hunting-trail, when, even as an infant almost, he was swung in a blanket from a tree or was packed in the torch-crane of a canoe ; and more than all, the care of a good, loving — if passion-

ate — little mother: all these had made him far wiser than his years. He had been hours upon hours each day alone with the birds, and squirrels, and wild animals, and something of the keen scent and instinct of the animal world had entered into his body and brain, so that he felt what he could not understand.

He saw that he had worried his father, and it troubled him. He thought of something.

"Daddy," he said, "let me have it."

A smile struggled for life in the hunter's face, as he turned to the wall and took down the skin of a silver fox. He held it on his palm for a moment, looking at it in an interested, satisfied way, then he brought it over and put it into the child's hands; and the smile now shaped itself, as he saw an eager pale face buried in the soft fur.

"Good! good!" he said involuntarily.

"*Bon! bon!*" said the boy's voice from the fur, in the language of his mother, who added a strain of Indian blood to her French ancestry.

The two sat there, the man half-kneeling on the low bed, and stroking the fur very gently. It could scarcely be thought that such pride should be spent on a little pelt, by a mere backwoodsman and his nine-year-old son. One

has seen a woman fingering a splendid necklace, her eyes fascinated by the bunch of warm, deep jewels—a light not of mere vanity, or hunger, or avarice in her face—only the love of the beautiful thing. But this was an animal's skin. Did they feel the animal underneath it yet, giving it beauty, life, glory?

The silver-fox skin is the prize of the north, and this one was of the boy's own harvesting. While his father was away he saw the fox creeping by the hut. The joy of the hunter seized him, and guided his eye over the "sights" of his father's rifle as he rested the barrel on the window-sill, and the animal was his! Now his finger ran into the hole made by the bullet, and he gave a little laugh of modest triumph. Minutes passed as they studied, felt, and admired the skin, the hunter proud of his son, the son alive with a primitive passion, which inflicts suffering to get the beautiful thing. Perhaps the tenderness as well as the wild passion of the animal gets into the hunter's blood, and tips his fingers at times with an exquisite kindness—as one has noted in a lion fondling her young, or in tigers as they sport upon the sands of the desert. This boy had seen his father shoot a splendid moose, and, as it lay dying, drop down and kiss it in the neck for sheer love of its hand-

someness. Death is no insult. It is the law of the primitive world—war, and love in war.

They sat there for a long time, not speaking, each busy in his own way: the boy full of imaginings, strange, half-heathen, half-angelic feelings; the man roaming in that savage, romantic, superstitious atmosphere which belongs to the north, and to the north alone. At last the boy lay back on the pillow, his finger still in the bullet-hole of the pelt. His eyes closed, and he seemed about to fall asleep, but presently looked up and whispered: "I have n't said my prayers, have I?"

The father shook his head in a sort of rude confusion.

"I can pray out loud if I want to, can't I?"

"Of course, Dominique." The man shrank a little.

"I forget a good many times, but I know one all right, for I said it when the bird was singing. It is n't one out of the book Father Corraine sent mother by Pretty Pierre; it 's one she taught me out of her own head. P'r'aps I 'd better say it."

"P'r'aps, if you want to." The voice was husky.

The boy began:

"O bon Jésu, who died to save us from our

sins, and to lead us to Thy country, where there is no cold, nor hunger, nor thirst, and where no one is afraid, listen to Thy child. . . . When the great winds and rains come down from the hills, do not let the floods drown us, nor the woods cover us, nor the snow-slide bury us, and do not let the prairie-fires burn us. Keep wild beasts from killing us in our sleep, and give us good hearts that we may not kill them in anger."

His finger twisted involuntarily into the bullet-hole in the pelt, and he paused a moment.

"Keep us from getting lost, O gracious Savior."

Again there was a pause, his eyes opened wide, and he said:

"Do you think mother 's lost, father?"

A heavy broken breath came from the father, and he replied haltingly: "Mebbe, mebbe so."

Dominique's eyes closed again. "I 'll make up some," he said slowly: "And if mother 's lost, bring her back again to us, for everything 's going wrong."

Again he paused, then went on with the prayer as it had been taught him.

"Teach us to hear Thee whenever Thou callest, and to see Thee when Thou visitest us, and let the blessed Mary and all the saints speak

often to Thee for us. O Christ, hear us. Lord have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Amen."

Making the sign of the cross, he lay back, and said : "I 'll go to sleep now, I guess."

The man sat for a long time looking at the pale, shining face, at the blue veins showing painfully dark on the temples and forehead, at the firm little white hand, which was as brown as a butternut a few weeks before. The longer he sat, the deeper did his misery sink into his soul. His wife had gone he knew not where, his child was wasting to death, and he had for his sorrows no inner consolation. He had ever had that touch of mystical imagination inseparable from the far north, yet he had none of that religious belief which swallowed up natural awe and turned it to the refining of life, and to the advantage of a man's soul. Now it was forced in upon him that his child was wiser than himself; wiser and safer. His life had been spent in the wastes, with rough deeds and rugged habits, and a youth of hardship, danger, and almost savage endurance had given him a half-barbarian temperament, which could strike an angry blow at one moment and fondle to death at the next.

When he married sweet Lucette Barbond his

religion reached little farther than a belief in the Scarlet Hunter of the Kimash Hills and those voices that could be heard calling in the night, till their time of sleep be past and they should rise and reconquer the north.

Not even Father Corraine, whose ways were like those of his Master, could ever bring him to a more definite faith. His wife had at first striven with him, mourning yet loving. Sometimes the savage in him had broken out over the little creature, merely because barbaric tyranny was in him — torture followed by the passionate kiss. But how was she philosopher enough to understand the cause !

When she fled from their hut one bitter day, as he roared some wild words at her, it was because her nerves had all been shaken from threatened death by wild beasts (of this he did not know), and his violence drove her mad. She had ran out of the house, and on, and on, and on — and she had never come back. That was weeks ago, and there had been no word nor sign of her since. The man was now busy with it all, in a slow, cumbrous way. A nature more to be touched by things seen than by things told, his mind was being awakened in a massive kind of fashion. He was viewing this crisis of his life as one sees a human face in the wide

searching light of a great fire. He was restless, but he held himself still by a strong effort, not wishing to disturb the sleeper. His eyes seemed to retreat farther and farther back under his shaggy brows.

The great logs in the chimney burned brilliantly, and a brass crucifix over the child's head now and again reflected soft little flashes of light. This caught the hunter's eye. Presently there grew up in him a vague kind of hope that, somehow, this symbol would bring him luck — that was the way he put it to himself. He had felt this — and something more — when Dominique prayed. Somehow, Dominique's prayer was the only one he had ever heard that had gone home to him, had opened up the big sluices of his nature, and let the light of God flood in. No, there was another: the one Lucette made on the day that they were married, when a wonderful timid reverence played through his hungry love for her.

Hours passed. All at once, without any other motion or gesture, the boy's eyes opened wide with a strange, intense look.

"Father," he said slowly, and in a kind of dream, "when you hear a sweet horn blow at night, is it the Scarlet Hunter calling?"

"P'r'aps. Why, Dominique?" He made

up his mind to humor the boy, though it gave him strange aching forebodings. He had seen grown men and women with these fancies—and they had died.

"I heard one blowing just now, and the sounds seemed to wave over my head. Perhaps he 's calling some one that's lost."

"Mebbe."

"And I heard a voice singing—it was n't a bird to-night."

"There was no voice, Dominique."

"Yes, yes." There was something fine in the grave, courteous certainty of the lad. "I waked, and you were sitting there thinking, and I shut my eyes again, and I heard the voice. I remember the tune and the words."

"What were the words?" In spite of himself the hunter felt awed.

"I 've heard mother sing them, or something most like them :

"Why does the fire no longer burn?
(I am so lonely.)
Why does the tent-door swing outward?
(I have no home.)
Oh, let me breathe hard in your face!
(I am so lonely.)
Oh, why do you shut your eyes to me?
(I have no home.)"

The boy paused.

"Was that all, Dominique?"

"No, not all."

"Let us make friends with the stars;
(I am so lonely.)
Give me your hand, I will hold it.
(I have no home.)
Let us go hunting together.
(I am so lonely.)
We will sleep at God's camp to-night.
(I have no home.)"

Dominique did not sing, but recited the words with a sort of chanting inflection.

"What does it mean when you hear a voice like that, father?"

"I don't know. Who told—your mother—the song?"

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose she just made them up—she and God. . . . There! There it is again? Don't you hear it—don't you hear it, daddy?"

"No, Dominique, it's only the kettle singing."

"A kettle isn't a voice. Daddy—" He paused a little, then went on, hesitatingly: "I saw a white swan fly through the door over your shoulder when you came in to-night."

"No, no, Dominique, it was a flurry of snow blowing over my shoulder."

"But it looked at me with two shining eyes."

"That was two stars shining through the door, my son."

"How could there be snow flying and stars shining too, father?"

"It was just drift-snow on a light wind, but the stars were shining above, Dominique."

The man's voice was anxious and unconvincing, his eyes had a hungry, hunted look. The legend of the White Swan had to do with the passing of a human soul. The swan had come in—would it go out alone? He touched the boy's hand—it was hot with fever; he felt the pulse—it ran high; he watched the face—it had a glowing light. Something stirred with him, and passed like a wave to the farthest course of his being. Through his misery he had touched the garment of the Master of Souls. As though a voice said to him there, "Some one hath touched me," he got to his feet, and, with a sudden blind humility, lit two candles, placed them on a shelf in a corner before a porcelain figure of the Virgin, as he had seen his wife do. Then he picked a small handful of fresh spruce twigs from a branch over the chimney, and laid them beside the candles. After a short pause he came

slowly to the head of the boy's bed. Very solemnly he touched the foot of the Christ on the cross with the tips of his fingers, and brought them to his lips with an indescribable reverence. After a moment, standing with eyes fixed on the face of the crucified figure, he said, in a shaking voice:

"*Pardon, bon Jésu! Sauves mon enfant! Ne me laissez pas seul!*" *

The boy looked up with eyes again grown unnaturally heavy, and said:

"Amen! . . . *Bon Jésu!* . . . *Encore! Encore, mon père!*"

The boy slept. The father stood still by the bed for a time, but at last slowly turned and went toward the fire.

Outside, two figures were approaching the hut—a man and a woman; yet at first glance the man might easily have been taken for a woman, because of the long black robe which he wore, and because his hair fell loose on his shoulders and his face was clean-shaven.

"Have patience, my daughter," said the man. "Do not enter till I call you. But stand close to the door, if you will, and hear all."

So saying he raised his hand as in a kind of benediction, passed to the door, and after tap-

* "Pardon, good Jesus. Save my child. Leave me not alone."

ping very softly, opened it, entered, and closed it behind him—not so quickly, however, but that the woman caught a glimpse of the father and the boy. In her eyes there was the divine look of motherhood.

"Peace be to this house!" said the man gently, as he stepped forward from the door.

The father, startled, turned shrinkingly on him, as if he had seen a spirit.

"M'sieu' le curé!" he said in French, with an accent much poorer than that of the priest, or even of his own son. He had learned French from his wife; he himself was English.

The priest's quick eye had taken in the lighted candles at the little shrine, even as he saw the painfully changed aspect of the man.

"The wife and child, Bagot?" he asked, looking round. "Ah, the boy!" he added, and going toward the bed, continued, presently, in a low voice: "Dominique is ill?"

Bagot nodded, and then answered: "A wild-cat and then fever, Father Corraine."

The priest felt the boy's pulse softly, then with a close personal look he spoke hardly above his breath, yet distinctly too:

"Your wife, Bagot?"

"She is not here, m'sieu'." The voice was low and gloomy.

"Where is she, Bagot?"

"I do not know, m'sieu'."

"When did you see her last?"

"Four weeks ago, m'sieu'."

"That was September, this is October—winter. On the ranches they let their cattle loose upon the plains in winter, knowing not where they go, yet looking for them to return in the spring. But a woman—a woman and a wife—is different. . . . Bagot, you have been a rough, hard man, and you have been a stranger to your God, but I thought you loved your wife and child!"

The hunter's hands clenched, and a wicked light flashed up into his eyes; but the calm, benignant gaze of the other cooled the tempest in his veins. The priest sat down on the couch where the child lay, and took the fevered hand in his very softly.

"Stay where you are, Bagot, just there where you are, and tell me what your trouble is, and why your wife is not here. . . . Say all honestly—by the name of the Christ!" he added, lifting up a large iron crucifix that hung on his breast

Bagot sat down on a bench near the fireplace the light playing on his bronzed, powerful face, his eyes shining beneath his heavy brows like two coals. After a moment he began:

"I don't know how it started. I 'd lost a lot of pelts—stolen they were, down on the Child o' Sin River. Well, she was hasty and nervous, like as not—she always was brisker and more sudden than I am. I—I laid my powder-horn and whisky-flask—up there!"

He pointed to the little shrine of the Virgin, where now his candles were burning. The priest's grave eyes did not change expression at all, but looked out wisely, as though he understood everything before it was told.

Bagot continued: "I did n't notice it, but she had put some flowers there. She said something with an edge, her face all snapping angry, threw the things down, and called me a heathen and a wicked heretic—and I do n't say now but she 'd a right to do it. But I let out then, for them stolen pelts were rasping me on the raw. I said something pretty rough, and made as if I was goin' to break her in two—just fetched up my hands, and went like this!—" With a singular simplicity he made a wild gesture with his hands, and an animal-like snarl came from his throat. Then he looked at the priest with the honest intensity of a boy.

"Yes, that was what you *did*—what was it you *said* which was 'pretty rough'?"

There was a slight hesitation, then came the reply:

"I said there was enough powder spilt on the floor to kill all the priests in heaven."

A fire suddenly shot up into Father Corraine's face, and his lips tightened for an instant, but presently he was as before, and he said:

"How that will face you one day, Bagot! Go on. What else?"

Sweat began to break out on Bagot's face, and he spoke as though he were carrying a heavy weight on his shoulders, low and brokenly.

"Then I said, 'And if virgins has it so fine, why did n't you stay one?"

"Blasphemer!" said the priest in a stern, reproachful voice, his face turning a little pale, and he brought the crucifix to his lips. "To the mother of your child—shame! What more?"

"She threw up her hands to her ears with a wild cry, ran out of the house, down the hills, and away. I went to the door and watched her as long as I could see her, and waited for her to come back—but she never did. I 've hunted and hunted, but I can't find her." Then, with a sudden thought, "Do you know anything of her, m'sieu'?"

The priest appeared not to hear the question. Turning for a moment toward the boy who now was in a deep sleep, he looked at him intently. Presently he spoke.

"Ever since I married you and Lucette Barbond you have stood in the way of her duty, Bagot. How well I remember that first day when you knelt before me! Was ever so sweet and good a girl—with her golden eyes and the look of summer in her face, and her heart all pure! Nothing had spoiled her—you cannot spoil such women—God is in their hearts. But you, what have you cared? One day you would fondle her, and the next you were a savage—and she, so gentle, so gentle all the time! Then, for her religion and the faith of her child—she has fought for it, prayed for it, suffered for it. You thought you had no need, for you had so much happiness, which you did not deserve—that was it. But she! with all a woman suffers, how can she bear life—and man—without God? No, it is not possible. And you thought you and your few superstitions were enough for her.—Ah, poor fool! She should worship you! So selfish, so small, for a man who knows in his heart how great God is.—You did not love her."

"By the Heaven above, yes!" said Bagot, half starting to his feet.

"Ah, 'by the Heaven above,' no! nor the child. For true love is unselfish and patient, and where it is the stronger, it cares for the weaker; but it was your wife who was unselfish, patient, and cared for you. Every time she said an *ave* she thought of you, and her every thanks to the good God had you therein. They know you well in heaven, Bagot—through your wife. Did you ever pray—ever since I married you to her?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"An hour or so ago."

Once again the priest's eyes glanced towards the lighted candles.

Presently he said: "You asked me if I had heard anything of your wife. Listen, and be patient while you listen. . . . Three weeks ago I was camping on the Sundust Plains, over against the Young Sky River. In the morning, as I was lighting a fire outside my tent, my young Cree Indian with me, I saw coming over the crest of a landwave, from the very lips of the sunrise, as it were, a band of Indians. I could not quite make them out. I hoisted my

little flag on the tent, and they hurried on to me. I did not know the tribe—they had come from near Hudson's Bay. They spoke Chinook, and I could understand them. Well, as they came near, I saw that they had a woman with them."

Bagot leaned forward, his body strained, every muscle tense. "A woman!" he said, as if breathing gave him sorrow—"my wife!"

"Your wife."

"Quick! Quick! Go on—oh, go on, m'sieu'—good father."

"She fell at my feet, begging me to save her. . . . I waved her off."

The sweat dropped from Bagot's forehead, a low growl broke from him, and he made such a motion as a lion might make at its prey.

"You would n't—would n't save her—you coward!" He ground the words out.

The priest raised his palm against the other's violence. "Hush! . . . She drew away, saying that God and man had deserted her. . . . We had breakfast, the chief and I. Afterwards, when the chief had eaten much and was in good humor, I asked him where he had got the woman. He said that he had found her on the plains—she had lost her way. I told him then that I wanted to buy her. He said to me, 'What

does a priest want of a woman?' I said that I wished to give her back to her husband. He said that he had found her, and she was his, and that he would marry her when they reached the great camp of the tribe. I was patient. It would not do to make him angry. I wrote down on a piece of bark the things that I would give him for her: an order on the Company at Fort o' Sin for shot, blankets and beads. He said no."

The priest paused. Bagot's face was all swimming with sweat, his body was rigid, but the veins of his neck knotted and twisted.

"For the love of God go on!" he said hoarsely.

"Yes, 'for the love of God.' I have no money, I am poor, but the Company will always honor my orders, for I pay sometimes by the help of Christ. *Bien*, I added some things to the list: a saddle, a rifle, and some flannel. But no, he would not. Once more I put many things down. It was a big bill — it would keep me poor for five years.—To save your wife, John Bagot, you who drove her from your door, blaspheming and railing at such as I. . . . I offered the things, and told him that was all that I could give. After a little he shook his head, and said that he must have the woman for

his wife. I did not know what to add. I said — 'She is white, and the white people will never rest till they have killed you all, if you do this thing. The Company will track you down.' Then he said, 'The whites must catch me and fight me before they kill me.' . . . What was there to do?"

Bagot came near to the priest, bending over him savagely:

"You let her stay with them — you, with hands like a man!"

"Hush," was the calm, reproving answer. "I was one man, they were twenty."

"Where was your God to help you, then?"

"Her God and mine was with me."

Bagot's eyes blazed. "Why did n't you offer rum — rum? They 'd have done it for that — one — five — ten kegs of rum!"

He swayed to and fro in his excitement, yet their voices hardly rose above a hoarse whisper all the time.

"You forget," answered the priest, "that it is against the law, and that as a priest of my order I am vowed to give no rum to an Indian."

"A vow! A vow! Son of God! what is a vow beside a woman — my wife?"

His misery and his rage were pitiful to see.

"Perjure my soul! Offer rum! Break my vow in the face of the enemies of God's Church! What have you done for me that I should do this for you, John Bagot?"

"Coward!" was the man's despairing cry, with a sudden threatening movement. "Christ himself would have broke a vow to save her."

The grave, kind eyes of the priest met the other's fierce gaze, and quieted the wild storm that was about to break.

"Who am I that I should teach my Master?" he said, solemnly. "What would you give Christ, Bagot, if He *had* saved her to you?"

The man shook with grief, and tears rushed from his eyes, so suddenly and fully had a new emotion passed through him.

"Give—give!" he cried; "I would give twenty years of my life!"

The figure of the priest stretched up with a gentle grandeur. Holding out the iron crucifix, he said: "On your knees and swear it! John Bagot."

There was something inspiring, commanding, in the voice and manner, and Bagot, with a new hope rushing through his veins, knelt and repeated his words.

The priest turned to the door, and called, "Madame Lucette!"

The boy, hearing, waked, and sat up in bed suddenly.

"Mother! mother!" he cried, as the door flew open.

The mother came to her husband's arms, laughing and weeping, and an instant afterwards was pouring out her love and anxiety over her child.

Father Corraine now faced the man, and with a soft exaltation of voice and manner said:

"John Bagot, in the name of Christ, I demand twenty years of your life— of love and obedience of God. I broke my vow; I perjured my soul; I bought your wife with ten kegs of rum!"

The tall hunter dropped again to his knees, and caught the priest's hand to kiss it.

"No, no—this!" the priest said, and laid his iron crucifix against the other's lips.

Dominique's voice came clearly through the room:

"Mother, I saw the white swan fly away through the door when you came in."

"My dear, my dear," she said, "there was no white swan." But she clasped the boy to her breast protectingly, and whispered an *ave*.

"Peace be to this house," said the voice of the priest.

And there was peace: for the child lived, and the man has loved, and has kept his vow, even unto this day.

For the visions of the boy, who can know the divers ways in which God speaks to the children of men!

At Bamber's Boom

I

His trouble came upon him when he was old. To the hour of its coming he had been of shrewd and humorous disposition. He had married late in life, and his wife had died, leaving him one child—a girl. She grew to womanhood, bringing him daily joy. She was beloved in the settlement; and there was no one at Bamber's Boom, in the valley of the Madawaska, but was startled and sorry when it turned out that Dugard, the river-boss, was married. He floated away down the river, with his rafts and drives of logs, leaving the girl sick and shamed. They knew she was sick at heart, because she grew pale and silent; they did not know for some months how shamed she was. Then it was that Mrs. Lauder, the sister of the Roman Catholic missionary, Father Halen, being a woman of notable character and kindness, visited her and begged her to tell all.

Though the girl—Nora—was a Protestant, Mrs. Lauder did so: but it brought sore grief to

her. At first she could hardly bear to look at the girl's face, it was so hopeless, so numb to the world: it had the indifference of despair. Rumor now became hateful fact. When the old man was told, he gave one loud cry, then sat down, his hands pressed hard between his knees, his body trembling, his eyes staring before him.

It was Father Halen who told him. He did it as man to man, and not as a priest, having traveled fifty miles for the purpose. "George Magor," said he, "it's bad, I know, but bear it— with the help of God. And be kind to the girl."

The old man answered nothing. "My friend," the priest continued, "I hope you'll forgive me for telling you. I thought 'twould be better from me, than to have it thrown at you in the settlement. We've been friends one way and another, and my heart aches for you, and my prayers go with you."

The old man raised his sunken eyes, all their keen humor gone, and spoke as though each word were dug from his heart. "Say no more, Father Halen." Then he reached out, caught the priest's hand in his gnarled fingers, and wrung it.

The father never spoke a harsh word to the girl. Otherwise he seemed to harden into stone.

When the Protestant missionary came he would not see him. The child was born before the river-drivers came along again the next year with their rafts and logs. There was a feeling abroad that it would be ill for Dugard if he chanced to camp at Bamber's Boom. The look of the old man's face was ominous, and he was known to have an iron will.

Dugard was a handsome man, half French, half Scotch, swarthy and admirably made. He was proud of his strength, and showily fearless in danger. For there were dangerous hours to the river life; when, for instance, a mass of logs became jammed at a rapids, and must be loosened; or a crib struck into the wrong channel, or, failing to enter a slide straight, came at a nasty angle to it, its timbers wrenched and tore apart, and its crew, with their great oars, were plumped into the busy current. He had been known to stand singly in some perilous spot when one log, the key to the jam, must be shifted to set free the great tumbled pile. He did everything with a dash. The handspike was waved and thrust into the best leverage, the long robust cry, "O-hee-hee-hoi!" rolled over the waters, there was a devil's jumble of logs, and he played a desperate game with them, tossing here, leaping there, balancing elsewhere, till,

reaching the smooth rush of logs in the current, he ran across them to the shore as they spun beneath his feet.

His gang of river-drivers, with their big drives of logs, came sweeping down one beautiful day of early summer, red-shirted, shouting, good-tempered. It was about this time that Pierre came to know Magor.

It was the old man's duty to keep the booms of several great lumbering companies, and to watch the logs when the river-drivers were engaged elsewhere. Occasionally he took a place with the men, helping to make cribs and rafts. Dugard worked for one lumber company, Magor for others. Many in the settlement showed Dugard how much he was despised. Some warned him that Magor had said he would break him into pieces; it seemed possible that Dugard might have a bad hour with the people of Bamber's Boom. Dugard, though he swelled and strutted, showed by a furtive eye and a sinister watchfulness that he felt himself in an atmosphere of danger. But he spoke of his wickedness lightly as, "A slip—a little accident, *mon ami*."

Pierre said to him one day: "*Bien*, Dugard, you are a bold man to come here again. Or is it that you think old men are cowards?"

Dugard, blustering, laid his hand suddenly upon his case-knife.

Pierre laughed softly, contemptuously, came over, and throwing out his perfectly formed but not robust chest in the fashion of Dugard, added: "Ho, ho, m'sieu' the butcher, take your time at that. There is too much blood in your carcass. You have quarrels plenty on your hands without this. Come, don't be a fool and a scoundrel too!"

Dugard grinned uneasily, and tried to turn the thing off as a joke, and Pierre, who laughed still a little more, said: "It would be amusing to see old Magor and Dugard fight. It would be—so equal." There was a keen edge to Pierre's tones, but Dugard dared not resent it.

One day Magor and Dugard must meet. The square-timber of the two companies had got tangled at a certain point, and gangs from both must set them loose. They were camped some distance from each other. There was rivalry between them, and it was hinted that if any trouble came from the meeting of Magor and Dugard the gangs would pay off old scores with each other. Pierre wished to prevent this. It seemed to him that the two men should stand alone in the affair. He said as much here and there to members of both camps, for

he was free of both: a tribute to his genius at poker.

The girl, Nora, was apprehensive—for her father; she hated the other man now. Pierre was courteous to her, scrupulous in word and look, and fond of her child. He had always shown a gentleness to children, which seemed little compatible with his character; but for this young outlaw in the world he had something more. He even labored carefully to turn the girl's father in its favor; but as yet to little purpose. He was thoughtful of the girl too. He only went to the house when he knew her father was present, or when she was away. Once while he was there Father Halen and his sister, Mrs. Lauder, came. They found Pierre with the child, rocking the cradle, and humming as he did so an old song of the *coureurs de bois:*

"Out of the hills comes a little white deer—
Poor little *vaurien*, O, *ci, ci!*
Come to my home, to my home down here,
Sister and brother and child o' me—
Poor little, poor little *vaurien!*

Pierre was alone, save for the old woman who had cared for the home since Nora's trouble came. The priest was anxious lest any harm should come from Dugard's presence at Bamber's Boom. He knew Pierre's doubtful repu-

tation, but still he knew he could speak freely and would be answered honestly.

"What will happen?" he abruptly asked.

"What neither you nor I should try to prevent, m'sieu'," was Pierre's reply.

"Magor will do the man injury?"

"What would you have? Put the matter on your own hearthstone, eh? . . . *Pardon*, if I say these things bluntly." Pierre still lightly rocked the cradle with one foot.

"But vengeance is in God's hands."

"M'sieu'," said the half-breed, "vengeance also is man's, else why did we ten men from Fort Cypress track down the Indians who murdered your brother, the good priest, and kill them one by one?"

Father Halen caught his sister as she swayed, and helped her to a chair, then turned a sad face on Pierre. "Were you—were you one of that ten?" he asked, overcome; and he held out his hand.

The two rivers-driving camps joined at Mud Cat Point, where was the crush of great timber. The two men did not at first come face to face, but it was noticed by Pierre, who smoked on the bank while the others worked, that the old man watched his enemy closely. The work of undoing the great twist of logs was exciting, and

they fell on each other with a great sound as they were pried off, and went sliding, grinding into the water. At one spot they were piled together, massive and high. These were left to the last.

It was here that the two met. Old Magor's face was quiet, if a little haggard, and his eyes looked out from under his shaggy brows piercingly. Dugard's manner was swaggering, and he swore horribly at his gang. Presently he stood at a point alone, working at an obstinate log. He was at the foot of an incline of timber, and he was not aware that Magor had suddenly appeared at the top of that incline. He heard his name called out sharply. Swinging round, he saw Magor thrusting a handspike under a huge timber hanging at the top of the incline. He was standing in a hollow, a kind of trench. He was shaken with fear, for he saw the old man's design. He gave a cry and made as if to jump out of the way, but with a laugh Magor threw his whole weight on the handspike, the great timber slid swiftly down and crushed Dugard from his thighs to his feet, breaking his legs terribly. The old man called down at him: "A slip—a little accident, *mon ami!*" Then, shouldering his handspike, he made his way through the silent gangs to the shore, and so on homewards.

Magor had done what he wished. Dugard would be a cripple for life; his beauty was all spoiled and broken: there was much to do to save his life.

II

Nora also about this time took to her bed with fever. Again and again Pierre rode thirty miles and back to get ice for her head. All were kind to her now. The vengeance upon Dugard seemed to have wiped out much of her shame in the eyes of Bamber's Boom. Such is the way of the world. He that has the last blow is in the eye of advantage. When Nora began to recover the child fell ill also. In the sickness of the child the old man had a great temptation—far greater than that concerning Dugard. As the mother grew better the child became much worse. One night the doctor came, driving over from another settlement, and said that if the child got sleep till morning it would probably live, for the crisis had come. He left an opiate to procure the sleep, the same that had been given to the mother. If it did not sleep it would die. Pierre was present at this time.

All through the child's illness the old man's mind had been tossed to and fro. If the child

died, the living stigma would be gone; there would be no reminder of his daughter's shame in the eyes of the world. They could go away from Bamber's Boom, and begin life again somewhere. But, then, there was the child itself which had crept into his heart—he knew not how—and would not be driven out. He had never, till it was taken ill, even touched it, nor spoken to it. To destroy its life! Well, would it not be better for the child to go out of all possible shame, into peace, the peace of the grave?

This night he sat down beside the cradle, holding the bottle of medicine and a spoon in his hand. The hot, painful face of the child fascinated him. He looked from it to the bottle, and back, and then again to the bottle. He started, and the sweat stood out on his forehead. For though the doctor had told him in words the proper dose, he had by mistake written on the label the same dose as for the mother! Here was the responsibility shifted in any case. More than once the old man uncorked the bottle, and once he dropped out the opiate in the spoon steadily; but the child opened its suffering eyes at him, its little wasted hand wandered over the coverlet, and he could not do it just then.

But again the passion for its destruction came

on him, because he heard his daughter moaning in the other room. He said to himself that she would be happier when it was gone. But as he stooped over the cradle, no longer hesitating, the door softly opened, and Pierre entered. The old man shuddered, and drew back from the cradle. Pierre saw the look of guilt in the old man's face, and his instinct told him what was happening. He took the bottle from the trembling hand, and looked at the label.

"What is the right dose?" he asked, seeing that a mistake had been made by the doctor.

In a hoarse whisper Magor told him. "It may be too late," Pierre added. He knelt down, with light fingers opened the child's mouth, and poured the medicine in slowly. The old man stood for a time rigid, looking at them both. Then he came round to the other side of the cradle, and seated himself beside it, his eyes fixed on the child's face. For a long time they sat there. At last the old man said: "Will he die, Pierre?"

"I am afraid," answered Pierre painfully. "But we shall see." Then early teaching came to him—never to be entirely obliterated—and he added: "Has the child been baptized?"

The old man shook his head. "Will you do it?" asked Pierre hesitatingly.

"I can 't—I can 't," was the reply.

Pierre smiled a little ironically, as if to himself, got some water in a cup, came over, and said:

"Remember, I 'm a Papist!"

A motion of the hand answered him.

He dipped his fingers in the water, and dropped it ever so lightly on the child's forehead.

"George Magor"—it was the old man's name—"I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Then he drew the sign of the cross on the infant's forehead.

Sitting down, he watched beside the child. After a little he heard a long choking sigh. Looking up he saw tears slowly dropping from Magor's eyes.

And to this day the child and the mother of the child are dear to the old man's heart.

The Bridge House

It stood on a wide wall between two small bridges. These were approaches to the big covered bridge spanning the main channel of the Madawaska River and when swelled by the spring thaws and rains, the two flanking channels divided at the foundations of the house, and rustled away through the narrow paths of the small bridges to the rapids. You could stand at any window in the House and watch the ugly, rushing current, gorged with logs, come battering at the wall, jostle between the piers, and race on to the rocks and the dam and the slide beyond. You stepped from the front door upon the wall, which was a road between the bridges, and from the back door into the river itself.

The House had once been a tavern. It looked a wayfarer, like its patrons the river-drivers, with whom it was most popular. You felt that it had no part in the career of the village on either side, but was like a rock in a channel, at which a swimmer caught or a vagrant fish loitered.

Pierre knew the place, when, of a night in the springtime or early summer, throngs of river-drivers and their bosses sauntered at its doors, or hung over the railing of the wall, as they talked and smoked.

The glory of the Bridge House suddenly declined. That was because Finley, the owner, a rich man, came to hate the place—his brother's blood stained the bar-room floor. He would have destroyed the house but that John Rupert, the beggared gentleman, came to him, and wished to rent it for a dwelling.

Mr. Rupert was old, and had been miserably poor for many years, but he had a breeding and a manner superior to anyone at Bamber's Boom. He was too old for a labourer, he had no art or craftsmanship; his little money was gone in foolish speculations, and he was dependent on his granddaughter's slight earnings from music-teaching and needlework. But he rented an acre of ground from Finley, and grew vegetables; he gathered driftwood from the river for his winter fire, and made up the accounts of the storekeeper occasionally; yet it was merely keeping off starvation. He was not popular. He had no tongue for the meaningless village talk. People held him in a kind of awe, and yet they felt a mean satisfaction when they saw

him shouldering driftwood, and piling it on the shore to be dragged away—the last resort of the poor, for which they blush.

When Mr. Rupert asked for the House Finley knew the chances were he would not get the rental; yet, because he was sorry for the old man, he gave it to him at a low rate. He closed up the bar-room, however, and it was never opened afterwards.

So it was that Mr. Rupert and Judith, his granddaughter, came to live there. Judith was a blithe, lissome creature, who had never known comfort or riches; they were taken from her grandfather before she was born, and her father and mother both died when she was yet a little child. But she had been taught by her grandmother, when she lived, and by her grandfather, and she had felt the graces of refined life. Withal, she had a singular sympathy for the rude, strong life of the river. She was glad when they came to live at the Bridge House; and shamed too; glad because they could live apart from the other villagers; shamed because it exposed her to the curiosity of those who visited the House, thinking it was yet a tavern. But that was only for a time.

One night Jules Brydon, the young river-boss, camped with his men at Bamber's Boom.

He was of parents Scotch and French, and the amalgamation of races in him was a striking product. He was cool and indomitable, yet hearty and joyous. It was exciting to watch him at the head of his men, breaking up a jam of logs, and it was a delight to hear him of an evening as he sang :

"Have you heard the cry of the Long Lachine,
When happy is the sun in the morning?
The rapids long and the banks of green,
As we ride away in the morning,
On the froth of the Long Lachine?"

One day, soon after they came, the dams and booms were opened above, and forests of logs came riding down to Bamber's Boom. The current was strong, and the logs came on swiftly. As Brydon's gang worked they saw a man out upon a small raft of driftwood, which had been suddenly caught in the drive of logs, and was carried out towards the middle channel. The river-drivers laughed, for they failed to see that the man was old, and that he could not run across the rolling logs to the shore. The old man, evidently hopeless, laid down his pike-pole, folded his hands and drifted with the logs. The river-drivers stopped laughing. They began to understand.

Brydon saw a woman standing at a window

of the House waving her arms, and there floated up the river the words, "Father! father!" He caught up a pike-pole and ran over that spinning floor of logs to the raft. The old man's face was white, but there was no fear in his eyes.

"I cannot run the logs," he said at once; "I never did; I am too old, and I slip. It's no use. It is my granddaughter at that window. Tell her that I'll think of her to the last. Good-bye!"

Brydon was eyeing the logs. The old man's voice was husky; he could not cry out, but he waved his hand to the girl.

"Oh, save him!" came from her faintly.

Brydon's eyes were now on the covered bridge. Their raft was in the channel, coming straight between two piers. He measured his chances. He knew if he slipped, doing what he intended, that both might be drowned, and certainly Mr. Rupert; for the logs were close, and to drop among them was a bad business. If they once closed over there was an end of everything.

"Keep quite still," he said, "and when I throw you, catch."

He took the slight figure in his arms, sprang out upon the slippery logs, and ran. A cheer

went up from the men on the shore, and the people who were gathering on the bridges, too late to be of service. Besides, the bridge was closed, and there was only a small opening at the piers. For one of these piers Brydon was making. He ran hard. Once he slipped and nearly fell, but recovered. Then a floating tree suddenly lunged up and struck him, so that he dropped upon a knee; but again he was up, and strained for the pier. He was within a few feet of it as they came to the bridge. The people gave a cry of fear, for they saw that there was no chance of both making it; because, too, at the critical moment a space of clear water showed near the pier. But Brydon raised John Rupert up, balanced himself, and tossed him at the pier, where two river-drivers stood stretching out their arms. An instant afterwards the old man was with his granddaughter. But Brydon slipped and fell; the roots of a tree bore him down, and he was gone beneath the logs!

There was a cry of horror from the watchers, then all was still. But below the bridge they saw an arm thrust up between the logs, and then another arm crowding them apart. Now a head and shoulders appeared. Luckily the piece of timber which Brydon grasped was square, and did not roll. In a moment he was standing on

it. There was a wild shout of encouragement. He turned his battered, blood-stained face to the bridge for an instant, and, with a wave of the hand and a sharp look towards the rapids below, once more sprang out. It was a brave sight, for the logs were in a narrower channel and more riotous. He rubbed the blood out of his eyes that he might see his way. The rolling forest gave him no quarter, but he came on, rocking with weakness, to within a few rods of shore. Then a half-dozen of his men ran out on the logs — they were packed closely here — caught him up and brought him to dry ground.

They took him to the Bridge House. He was hurt — more than he or they thought. The old man and the girl met them at the door. Judith gave a little cry when she saw the blood and Brydon's bruised face. He lifted his head as though her eyes had drawn his, and, their looks meeting, he took his hat off. Her face flushed; she dropped her eyes. Her grandfather seized Brydon's big hand and said some trembling words of thanks. The girl stepped inside, made a bed for him upon the sofa, and got him something to drink. She was very cool; she immediately asked Pierre to go for the young doctor who had lately come to the place, and made ready warm water with which she wiped Brydon's

blood-stained face and hands, and then gave him some brandy.

His comrades standing round watched her admiringly, she was so deft and delicate. Brydon, as if to be nursed and cared for was not manly, felt ashamed, and came up quickly to a sitting posture, saying, "Pshaw! I'm all right!" But he turned sick immediately, and Judith's arms caught his head and shoulders as he fell back. His face turned, and was pillowed on her bosom. At this she blushed, but a look of singular dignity came into her face. Those standing by were struck with a kind of awe; they were used mostly to the daughters of habitants and fifty-acre farmers. Her sensitive face spoke a wonderful language; a divine gratitude and thankfulness; and her eyes had a clear moisture which did not dim them. The situation was trying to the river-drivers—it was too refined; and they breathed more freely when they got outside and left the girl, her grandfather, Pierre, and the young doctor alone with the injured man.

That was how the thing began. Pierre saw the conclusion of events from the start. The young doctor did not. From the hour when he bound up Brydon's head, Judith's fingers aiding him, he felt a spring in his blood new to him.

When he came to know exactly what it meant, and acted, it was too late. He was much surprised that his advances were gently repulsed. He pressed them hard; that was a mistake. He had an idea, not uncommon in such cases, that he was conferring an honour. But he was very young. A gold medal in anatomy is likely to turn a lad's head at the start. He falls into the error that the ability to demonstrate the *medulla oblongata* should likewise suffice to convince the heart of a maid. Pierre enjoyed the situation; he knew life all round; he had boxed the compass of experience. He believed in Judith. The old man interested him; he was a wreck out of an unfamiliar life.

"Well, you see," Pierre said to Brydon one day, as they sat on the high cross-beams of the little bridge, "you can't kill it in a man—what he was born. Look, as he piles up the driftwood over there. Broken down, eh? Yes, but then there is something—a manner, an eye. He piles the wood like champagne bottles. On the raft, you remember, he took off his hat to death. That's different altogether from us!"

He gave a sidelong glance at Brydon, and saw a troubled look.

"Yes," Brydon said, "he is different: and so is she."

"She is a lady," Pierre said, with slow emphasis. "She could n't hide it if she tried. She plays the piano, and looks all silk in calico. Made for this"—he waved his hand towards the Bridge House. "No, no! made for—"

He paused, smiled enigmatically, and dropped a bit of wood on the swift current.

Brydon frowned, then said: "Well, made for what, Pierre?"

Pierre looked over Brydon's shoulder, towards a pretty cottage on the hillside. "Made for homes like that, not this," he said, and he nodded first towards the hillside, then to the Bridge House. (The cottage belonged to the young doctor.) A growl like an animal's came from Brydon, and he clinched the other's shoulder. Pierre glanced at the hand, then at Brydon's face, and said sharply: "Take it away."

The hand dropped, but Brydon's face was hot, and his eyes were hard.

Pierre continued: "But then women are strange. What you expect they will not—no. Riches?—it is nothing; houses like that on the hill, nothing. They have whims. The hut is as good as the house, with the kitchen in the open where the river welts and washes, and a man—the great man of the world to them—to play the little game of life with. . . . Pshaw! you

are idle—move; you are thick in the head—think hard; you like the girl—speak!"

As he said this, there showed beneath them the front timbers of a small crib of logs with a crew of two men, making for the rapids and the slide below. Here was an adventure, for running the rapids with so slight a craft and small a crew was smart work. Pierre, measuring the distance, and with a "Look out below!" swiftly let himself down by his arms as far as he could, and then dropped to the timbers as lightly as if it were a matter of two feet instead of twelve. He waved a hand to Brydon, and the crib shot on. Brydon sat eyeing it abstractedly till it ran into the teeth of the rapids, the long oars of the three men rising and falling to the monotonous cry. The sun set out the men and the craft against the tall dark walls of the river in strong relief, and Brydon was carried away from what Pierre had been saying. He had a solid pleasure in watching, and he sat up with a call of delight when he saw the crib drive at the slide. Just glancing the edge, she shot through safely. His face blazed.

"A pretty sight," said a voice behind him.

Without a word he swung round, and dropped, more heavily than Pierre, beside Judith.

"It gets into our bones," he said. "Of course, though, it ain't the same to you," he added, looking down at her over his shoulder. "You don't care for things so rough, mebbe?"

"I love the river," she said quietly.

"We're a rowdy lot, we river-drivers. We have to be. It's a rowdy business."

"I never noticed that," she replied, gravely smiling. "When I was small I used to go to the river-drivers' camps with my brother, and they were always kind to us. They used to sing and play the fiddle, and joke; but I didn't think that they were rowdy, and I don't now. They were never rough with us."

"No one'd ever be rough with you," was the reply.

"Oh yes," she said suddenly, and turned her head away. She was thinking of what the young doctor had said to her that morning; how like a foolish boy he had acted: upbraiding her, questioning her, saying unreasonable things, as young egotists always do. In years she was younger than he, but in wisdom much older; in all things more wise and just. He had not struck her, but with his reckless tongue he had cut her to the heart.

"Oh yes," she repeated, and her eyes ran up

to his face and over his great stalwart body; and then she leaned over the railing and looked into the water.

"I'd break the man in two that was rough with you," he said between his teeth.

"Would you?" she asked in a whisper. Then, not giving him a chance to reply, "We are very poor, you know, and some people are rough with the poor—and proud. I remember," she went on, simply, dreamily, and as if talking to herself, "the day when we first came to the Bridge House. I sat down on a box and looked at the furniture—it was so little—and cried. Coming here seemed the last of what grandfather used to be. I couldn't help it. He sat down too, and didn't say anything. He was very pale, and I saw that his eyes ached as he looked at me. Then I got angry with myself, and sprang up and went to work—and we get along pretty well."

She paused and sighed; then, after a minute: "I love the river; I don't believe I could be happy away from it. I should like to live on it, and die on it, and be buried in it."

His eyes were on her eagerly. But she looked so frail and dainty, that his voice, to himself, sounded rude. Still, his hand blundered along the railing to hers, and covered it tenderly—

for so big a hand. She drew her fingers away, but not very quickly. "Do n't," she said, "and —and some one is coming!"

There were footsteps behind them. It was her grandfather, carrying a board fished from the river. He grasped the situation, and stood speechless with wonder. He had never thought of this. He was a gentleman, in spite of all, and this man was a common river-boss. Presently he drew himself up with an air. The heavy board was still in his arms. Brydon came over and took the board, looking him squarely in the eyes.

"Mr. Rupert," he said, "I want to ask something."

The old man nodded.

"I helped you out of a bad scrape on the river?"

Again the old man nodded.

"Well, mebbe, I saved your life. For that I 'm going to ask you to draw no more driftwood from the Madawaska—not a stick, now or ever."

"It is the only way we can keep from freezing in winter." Mr. Rupert scarcely knew what he said.

Brydon looked at Judith, who turned away, then answered: "*I'll* keep you from freezing, if you 'll let me, you—and Judith."

"Oh, please let us go into the house," Judith said hastily.

She saw the young doctor driving towards them out of the covered bridge!

When Brydon went to join his men far down the river he left a wife behind him at the Bridge House, where she and her grandfather were to stay until the next summer. Then there would be a journey from Bamber's Boom to a new home.

In the late autumn he came, before he went away to the shanties in the backwoods, and again in the winter just before the baby was born. Then he went far up the river to Rice Lake and beyond, to bring down the drives of logs for his Company. June came, and then there was a sudden sorrow at the Bridge House. How great it was, Pierre's words as he stood at the door one evening will testify. He said to the young doctor: "Save the child, and you shall have back the I.O.U. on your house:" which was also evidence that the young doctor had fallen into the habit of gambling.

The young doctor looked hard at him. He had a selfish nature. "You can only do what you can do," he said.

Pierre's eyes were sinister. "If you do not save it, one would guess why."

The other started, flushed, was silent, and

then said: "You think I'm a coward. We shall see. There is a way, but it may fail."

And though he sucked the diphtheria poison from the child's throat, it died the next night.

Still, the cottage that Pierre and Company had won was handed back with such good advice as only a world-wise adventurer can give.

Of the child's death its father did not know. They were not certain where he was. But when the mother took to her bed again, the young doctor said it was best that Brydon should come. Pierre had time and inclination to go for him. But before he went he was taken to Judith's bedside. Pierre had seen life and death in many forms, but never anything quite like this: a delicate creature floating away upon a summer current: travelling in those valleys which are neither of this life nor of that; but where you hear the echoes of both, and are visited by solicitous spirits. There was no pain in her face—she heard a little, familiar voice from high and pleasant hills, and she knew, so wise are the dying, that her husband was travelling after her, and that they would all be together soon. But she did not speak of that. For the knowledge born of such a time is locked up in the soul.

Pierre was awe-stricken. Unconsciously he crossed himself.

"Tell him to come quickly," she said, "if you find him"—her fingers played with the coverlet—"for I wish to comfort him. . . . Someone said that you were bad, Pierre. I do not believe it. You were sorry when my baby went away. I am—going away—too. But do not tell him that. Tell him I cannot walk about. I want him to carry me—to carry me. Will you?"

Pierre put out his hand to hers creeping along the coverlet to him; but it was only instinct that guided him, for he could not see. He started on his journey with his hat pulled down over his eyes.

One evening when the river was very high and it was said that Brydon's drives of logs would soon be down, a strange thing happened at the Bridge House.

The young doctor had gone, whispering to Mr. Rupert that he would come back later. He went out on tiptoe, as from the presence of an angel. His selfishness had dropped away from him. The evening wore on, and in the little back room a woman's voice said:

"Is it morning yet, father?"

"It is still day. The sun has not set, my child."

"I thought it had gone, it seemed so dark."

"You have been asleep, Judith. You have come out of the dark."

"No, I have come out into the darkness—into the world."

"You will see better when you are quite awake."

"I wish I could see the river, father. Will you go and look?"

Then there was a silence. "Well?" she asked.

"It is beautiful," he said, "and the sun is still bright."

"You see as far as Indian Island?"

"I can see the white comb of the reef beyond it, my dear."

"And no one—is coming?"

"There are men making for the shore, and the fires are burning, but no one is coming this way. . . . He would come by the road, perhaps."

"Oh no, by the river. Pierre has not found him. Can you see the Eddy?"

"Yes. It is all quiet there; nothing but the logs tossing round it."

"We used to sit there—he and I—by the big cedar tree. Everything was so cool and sweet. There was only the sound of the force-pump and the swallowing of the Eddy. They say that a

woman was drowned there, and that you can see her face in the water, if you happen there at sunrise, weeping and smiling also: a picture in the water. . . . Do you think it true, father?"

"Life is so strange, and who knows what is not life, my child?"

"When baby was dying I held it over the water beneath that window, where the sunshine falls in the evening; and it looked down once before its spirit passed like a breath over my face. Maybe, its look will stay, for him to see when he comes. It was just below where you stand. . . . Father, can you see its face?"

"No, Judith; nothing but the water and the sunshine!"

"Dear, carry me to the window."

When this was done she suddenly leaned forward with shining eyes and anxious fingers. "My baby! My baby!" she said.

She looked up the river, but her eyes were fading, she could not see far. "It is all a grey light," she said, "I cannot see well." Yet she smiled. "Lay me down again, father," she whispered.

After a little she sank into a slumber. All at once she started up. "The river, the beautiful river!" she cried out gently. Then, at the last, "Oh, my dear, my dear!"

And so she came out of the valley into the high hills.

Later he was left alone with his dead. The young doctor and others had come and gone. He would watch till morning. He sat long beside her, numb to the world. At last he started, for he heard a low, clear call behind the House. He went out quickly to the little platform, and saw through the dusk a man drawing himself up. It was Brydon. He caught the old man's shoulders convulsively. "How is she?" he asked.

"Come in, my son," was the low reply. The old man saw a grief greater than his own. He led the husband to the room where the wife lay beautiful and still.

"She is better, as you see," he said bravely.

The hours went, and the two sat near the body, one on either side. They knew not what was going on in the world.

As they mourned, Pierre and the young doctor sat silent in that cottage on the hillside. They were roused at last. There came up to Pierre's keen ears the sound of the river.

"Let us go out," he said; "the river is flooding. You can hear the logs."

They came out and watched. The river went swishing, swilling past, and the dull boom of the

logs as they struck the piers of the bridge or some building on the shore came rolling to them.

"The dams and booms have burst!" Pierre said.

He pointed to the camps far up the river. By the light of the camp-fires there appeared a wide weltering flood of logs and débris. Pierre's eyes shifted to the Bridge House. In one room was a light. He stepped out and down, and the other followed. They had almost reached the shore, when Pierre cried out sharply: "What's that?"

He pointed to an indistinct mass bearing down upon the Bridge House. It was a big shed that had been carried away, and, jammed between timbers, had not broken up. There was no time for warning. It came on swiftly, heavily. There was a strange, horrible, grinding sound, and then they saw the light of that one room move on, waving a little to and fro—on to the rapids, the cohorts of logs crowding hard after.

Where the light was two men had started to their feet when the crash came. They felt the House move.

"Run—save yourself!" cried the old man quietly. "We are lost!"

The floor rocked.

"Go," he said again. "I will stay with her."

"She is mine," Brydon said; and he took her in his arms. "I will not go."

They could hear the rapids below. The old man steadied himself in the deep water on the floor, and caught out yearningly at the cold hands.

"Come close, come close," said Brydon. "Closer; put your arms round her."

Mr. Rupert did so. They were locked in each other's arms—dead and living.

The old man spoke, with a piteous kind of joy:

"*We therefore commit her body to the deep—!*"

The three were never found.

The Epaulettes

Old Athabasca, chief of the Little Crees, sat at the door of his lodge, staring down into the valley where Fort Pentecost lay, and Mitawawa his daughter sat near him, fretfully pulling at the fringe of her fine buckskin jacket. She had reason to be troubled. Fyles the trader had put a great indignity upon Athabasca. A factor of twenty years before, in recognition of the chief's merits and in reward of his services, had presented him with a pair of epaulettes, left in the fort by some officer in Her Majesty's service. A good, solid, honest pair of epaulettes, well fitted to stand the wear and tear of those high feasts and functions at which the chief paraded them upon his broad shoulders. They were the admiration of his own tribe, the wonder of others, and the envy of many chiefs. It was said that Athabasca wore them creditably, and was no more immobile and grand-mannered than became a chief thus honored above his kind.

But the years went, and there came a man to Fort Pentecost that knew not Athabasca. He was young, and tall and strong, had a hot temper, knew naught of human nature, was possessed by a pride more masterful than his wisdom, and a courage stronger than his tact. He was ever for high-handedness, brooked no interference, and treated the Indians more as Company's serfs than as Company's friends and allies. Also, he had an eye for Mitawawa, and found favor in return, though to what depth it took a long time to show. The girl sat high in the minds and desires of the young braves, for she had beauty of a heathen kind, a deft and dainty finger for embroidered buckskin, a particular fortune with a bow and arrow, and the fleetest foot.

There were mutterings now because Fyles the white man came to sit often in Athabasca's lodge. He knew of this, but heeded not at all. At last Konto, a young brave, who very accurately guessed at Fyles' intentions, stopped him one day on the Grey Horse Trail, and in a soft, indolent voice begged him to prove his regard, in a fight without weapons, to the death, the survivor to give the other burial where he fell. Fyles was neither fool nor coward. It would have been foolish to run the risk of leav-

ing Fort and people masterless for an Indian's whim; it would have been cowardly to do nothing. So he whipped out a revolver, and bade his rival march before him to the Fort, which Konto very calmly did, begging the favor of a bit of tobacco as he went.

Fyles demanded of Athabasca that he should sit in judgment and should at least banish Konto from his tribe, hinting the while that he might have to put a bullet into Konto's refractory head if the thing were not done. He said large things in the name of the H. B. C., and was surprised that Athabasca let them pass unmoved. But that chief, after long consideration, during which he drank Company's coffee and ate Company's pemmican, declared that he could do nothing, for Konto had made a fine offer, and a grand chance of a great fight had been missed.

This was in the presence of several petty officers and Indians and woodsmen at the Fort. Fyles had vanity and a nasty temper. He swore a little, and with words of bluster went over and ripped the epaulettes from the chief's shoulders, as a punishment, a mark of degradation. The chief said nothing. He got up, and reached out his hands as if to ask them back; and when Fyles refused, he went away, drawing

his blanket high over his shoulders. It was wont before to lie loosely about him, to show his badges of captaincy and alliance.

This was about the time that the Indians were making ready for the buffalo, and when their chief took to his lodge and refused to leave it they came to ask him why. And they were told. They were for making trouble, but the old chief said the quarrel was his own: he would settle it in his own way. He would not go to the hunt. Konto, he said, should take his place; and when his braves came back there should be great feasting, for then the matter would be ended.

Half the course of the moon and more, and Athabasca came out of his lodge—the first time in the sunlight since the day of his disgrace. He and his daughter sat silent and watchful at the door. There had been no word between Fyles and Athabasca, no word between Mitawawa and Fyles. The fort was well-nigh tenantless, for the half-breeds also had gone after buffalo, and only the trader, a clerk, and a half-breed cook were left.

Mitawawa gave a little cry of impatience: she had held her peace so long that even her slow Indian nature could endure no more. "What will my father Athabasca do?" she

asked. "With idleness the flesh grows soft, and the iron melts from the arm."

"But when the thoughts are stone, the body is that of the Mighty Men of the Kimash Hills. When the bow is long drawn, beware the arrow."

"It is no answer," she said; "what will my father do?"

"They were of gold," he answered, "that never grew rusty. My people were full of wonder when they stood before me, and the tribes had envy as they passed. It is a hundred moons and one red mid-summer moon since the Great Company put them on my shoulders. They were light to carry, but it was as if I bore an army. No other chief was like me. That is all over. When the tribes pass they will laugh, and my people will scorn me if I do not come out to meet them with the yokes of gold."

"But what will my father do?" she persisted.

"I have had many thoughts, and at night I have called on the Spirits who rule. From the top of the Hill of Graves I have beaten the soft drum, and called, and sung the hymn which wakes the sleeping Spirits: and I know the way."

"What is the way?" Her eyes filled with a kind of fear or trouble, and many times they

shifted from the Fort to her father, and back again. The chief was silent. Then anger leapt into her face.

"Why does my father fear to speak to his child?" she said. "I will speak plain. I love the man; but I love my father also."

She stood up, and drew her blanket about her, one hand clasped proudly on her breast. "I cannot remember my mother; but I remember when I first looked down from my hammock in the pine tree, and saw my father sitting by the fire. It was in the evening like this, but darker, for the pines made great shadows. I cried out, and he came and took me down, and laid me between his knees, and fed me with bits of meat from the pot. He talked much to me, and his voice was finer than any other. There is no one like my father—Konto is nothing; but the voice of the white man, Fyles, had golden words that our braves do not know, and I listened. Konto did a brave thing. Fyles, because he was a great man of the Company, would not fight, and drove him like a dog. Then he made my father as a worm in the eyes of the world. I would give my life for Fyles the trader, but I would give more than my life to wipe out my father's shame, and to show that Konto of the Little Crees is no dog. I have

been carried by the hands of the old men of my people, I have ridden the horses of the young men; their shame is my shame."

The eyes of the chief had never lifted from the Fort; nor from his look could you have told that he heard his daughter's words. For a moment he was silent, then a deep fire came into his eyes, and his wide heavy brows drew up so that the frown of anger was gone. At last, as she waited, he arose, put out a hand and touched her forehead.

"Mitawawa has spoken well," he said. "There will be an end. The yokes of gold are mine; an honour given cannot be taken away. He has stolen; he is a thief. He would not fight Konto; but I am a chief and he shall fight me. I am as great as many men—I have carried the golden yokes; we will fight for them. I thought long, for I was afraid my daughter loved the man more than her people; but now I will break him in pieces. Has Mitawawa seen him since the shameful day?"

"He has come to the lodge, but I would not let him in unless he brought the epaulettes. He said he would bring them when Konto was punished. I begged of him as I never begged of my own father, but he was hard as the ironwood

tree. I sent him away. Yet there is no tongue like his in the world; he is tall and beautiful, and has the face of a spirit."

From the Fort Fyles watched the two. With a pair of field-glasses he could follow their actions, could almost read their faces. "There 'll be a lot of sulking about those epaulettes, Mallory," he said at last, turning to his clerk. "Old Athabasca has a bee in his bonnet."

"Wouldn 't it be just as well to give 'em back, sir?" Mallory had been at Fort Pentecost a long time, and he understood Athabasca and his Indians. He was a solid, slow-thinking old fellow, but he had that wisdom of the north which can turn from dove to serpent and from serpent to lion in the moment.

"Give 'em back, Mallory? I'll see him in Jericho first, unless he goes on his marrow-bones and kicks Konto out of the camp."

"Very well, sir. But I think we 'd better keep an eye open."

"Eye open, be hanged! If he 'd been going to riot he 'd have done so before this. Besides, the girl— !"

Mallory looked long and earnestly at his master, whose forehead was glued to the field-glass. His little eyes moved as if in debate, his

slow jaws opened once or twice. At last he said: "I'd give the girl the go-by, Mr. Fyles, if I was you, unless I meant to marry her."

Fyles suddenly swung round. "Keep your place, blast you, Mallory, and keep your morals too. One'd think you were a missionary." Then with a sudden burst of anger: "Damn it all, if my men don't stand by me against a pack of treacherous Indians, I'd better get out."

"Your men will stand by you, sir; no fear. I've served three traders here, and my record is pretty clean, Mr. Fyles. But I'll say it to your face, whether you like it or not, that you're not as good a judge of the Injin as me, or even Duc the cook; and that's straight as I can say it, Mr. Fyles."

Fyles paced up and down in anger—not speaking; but presently threw up the glass and looked towards Athabasca's lodge. "They're gone," he said presently; "I'll go and see them to-morrow. The old fool must do what I want or there'll be ructions."

The moon was high over Fort Pentecost when Athabasca entered the silent yard. The dogs growled, but Indian dogs growl without reason, and no one heeds them. The old chief stood a moment looking at the windows, upon which slush-lights were throwing heavy shadows.

He went to Fyles' window; no one was in the room. He went to another; Mallory and Duc were sitting at a table. Mallory had the epaulettes, looking at them, and fingering the hooks by which Athabasca had fastened them on. Duc was laughing; he reached over for an epaulette, tossed it up, caught it and threw it down with a guffaw. Then the door opened, and Athabasca walked in, seized the epaulettes, and went swiftly out again. Just outside the door Mallory clapped a hand on one shoulder, and Duc caught at the epaulettes.

Athabasca struggled wildly. All at once there was a cold white flash, and Duc came huddling to Mallory's feet. For a brief instant Mallory and the Indian fell apart, then Athabasca with a contemptuous fairness tossed his knife away, and ran in on his man. They closed; strained, swayed, became a tangled wrenching mass; and then Mallory was lifted high into the air, and came down with a broken back.

Athabasca picked up the epaulettes, and hurried away, breathing hard, and hugging them to his bare, red-stained breast. He had nearly reached the gate when he heard a cry. He did not turn, but a heavy stone caught him high in the shoulders, and he fell on his face and lay

clutching the epaulettes in his outstretched hands.

Fyles' own hands were yet lifted with the effort of throwing when he heard the soft rush of footsteps and someone came swiftly into his embrace. A pair of arms ran round his shoulders—lips closed with his—something ice-cold and hard touched his neck—he saw a bright flash at his throat.

In the morning Konto found Mitawawa sitting with wild eyes by her father's body. She had fastened the epaulettes on its shoulders. Fyles and his men made a grim triangle of death at the door of the Fort.

The Finding of Fingall

"*Fingall! Fingall! Oh, Fingall!*"

A grey mist was rising from the river, the sun was drinking it delightedly, the swift blue water showed underneath it, and the top of Whitefaced Mountain peaked the mist by a hand-length. The river brushed the banks like rustling silk, and the only other sound, very sharp and clear in the liquid monotone, was the crack of a woodpecker's beak on a hickory tree.

It was a sweet, fresh autumn morning in Lonesome Valley. Before night the deer would bellow reply to the hunters' rifles, and the mountain-goat call to its unknown gods; but now there was only the wild duck skimming the river, and the high hill-top rising and fading into the mist, the ardent sun, and again that strange cry:

"*Fingall! Oh, Fingall! Fingall!*"

Two men, lounging at a fire on a ledge of the hills, raised their eyes to the mountain-side beyond and above them, and one said presently:

"The second time. It's a woman's voice, Pierre."

Pierre nodded, and abstractedly stirred the coals about with a twig.

"Well, it is a pity—the poor Cynthie," he said at last.

"It *is* a woman, then. You know her, Pierre —her story?"

"*Fingall! Fingall! Oh, Fingall!*"

Pierre raised his head towards the sound; then after a moment, said:

"I know Fingall."

"And the woman? Tell me."

"And the girl. Fingall was all fire and heart, and devil-may-care. She—she was not beautiful except in the eye, but that was like a flame of red and blue. Her hair, too—then—would trip her up, if it hung loose. That was all, except that she loved him too much. But women—*et puis,* when a woman gets a man between her and the heaven above and the earth beneath, and there comes the great hunger, what is the good? A man cannot understand, but he can see and he can fear. What is the good! To play with life, that is not much; but to play with soul is more than a thousand lives. Look at Cynthie."

He paused, and Lawless waited patiently. Presently Pierre continued:

"Fingall was *gentil;* he would take off his hat

to a squaw. It made no difference what others did, he didn't think—it was like breathing to him. How can you tell the way things happen? Cynthie's father kept the tavern at St. Gabriel's Fork, over against the great sawmill. Fingall was foreman of a gang in the lumber-yard. Cynthie had a brother—Fenn. Fenn was as bad as they make, but she loved him, and Fingall knew it well, though he hated the young skunk. The girl's eyes were like two little fireflies when Fingall was about.

"He was a gentleman, though he had only half a name—Fingall—like that. I think he did not expect to stay; he seemed to be waiting for something—always when the mail come in he would be there; and afterwards you wouldn't see him for a time. So it seemed to me that he made up his mind to think nothing of Cynthie, and to say nothing."

"*Fingall! Fingall! Oh, Fingall!*"

The strange, sweet, singing voice sounded nearer.

"She's coming this way, Pierre," said Lawless.

"I hope not to see her. What is the good?"

"Well, let us have the rest of the story."

"Her brother Fenn was in Fingall's gang. One day there was trouble. Fenn called Fin-

gall a liar. The gang stopped piling; the usual thing did not come. Fingall told him to leave the yard, and they would settle some other time. That night a wicked thing happened. We were sitting in the bar-room when we heard two shots and then a fall. We ran into the other room; there was Fenn on the floor, dying. He lifted himself on his elbow, pointed at Fingall—and fell back. The father of the boy stood white and still a few feet away. There was no pistol showing—none at all.

"The men closed in on Fingall. He did not stir—he seemed to be thinking of something else. He had a puzzled, sorrowful look. The men roared round him, but he waved them back for a moment, and looked first at the father, then at the son. I could not understand at first. Someone pulled a pistol out of Fingall's pocket and showed it. At that moment Cynthie came in. She gave a cry. By the holy! I do not want to hear a cry like that often! She fell on her knees beside the boy, and caught his head to her breast. Then with a wild look she asked who did it. They had just taken Fingall out into the bar-room. They did not tell her his name, for they knew that she loved him.

"'Father,' she said all at once, 'have you killed the man that killed Fenn?'

"The old man shook his head. There was a sick color in his face.

"'Then I will kill him,' she said.

"She laid her brother's head down, and stood up. Someone put in her hand the pistol, and told her it was the same that had killed Fenn. She took it, and came with us. The old man stood still where he was; he was like stone. I looked at him for a minute and thought; then I turned round and went to the bar-room; and he followed. Just as I got inside the door, I saw the girl start back, and her hand drop, for she saw that it was Fingall; he was looking at her very strange. It was the rule to empty the gun into a man who had been sentenced; and already Fingall had heard his 'God-have-mercy!' The girl was to do it.

"Fingall said to her in a muffled voice, 'Fire —Cynthie!'

"I guessed what she would do. In a kind of a dream she raised the pistol up—up—up, till I could see it was just out of range of his head, and she fired. One! two! three! four! five! Fingall never moved a muscle; but the bullets spotted the wall at the side of his head. She stopped after the five; but the arm was still held out, and her finger was on the trigger; she seemed to be all dazed. Only six chambers

were in the gun, and of course one chamber was empty. Fenn had its bullet in his lungs, as we thought. So someone beside Cynthie touched her arm, pushing it down. But there was another shot, and this time, because of the push, the bullet lodged in Fingall's skull."

Pierre paused now, and waved with his hand toward the mist which hung high up like a canopy between the hills.

"But," said Lawless, not heeding the scene, "what about that sixth bullet?"

"Holy, it is plain! Fingall did not fire the shot. His revolver was full, every chamber, when Cynthie first took it.

"Who killed the lad?"

"Can you not guess? There had been words between the father and the boy: both had fierce blood. The father, in a mad minute, fired; the boy wanted revenge on Fingall, and, to save his father, laid it on the other. The old man? Well, I do not know whether he was a coward, or stupid, or ashamed—he let Fingall take it."

"Fingall took it to spare the girl, eh?"

"For the girl. It wasn't good for her to know her father killed his own son."

"What came after?"

"The worst. That night the girl's father

killed himself, and the two were buried in the same grave. Cynthie—"

"*Fingall! Fingall!—Oh, Fingall!*"

"You hear? Yes, like that all the time as she sat on the floor, her hair about her like a cloud, and the dead bodies in the next room. She thought she had killed Fingall, and she knew now that he was innocent. The two were buried. Then we told her that Fingall was not dead. She used to come and sit outside the door, and listen to his breathing, and ask if he ever spoke of her. What was the good of lying? If we said he did, she'd have come in to him, and that would do no good, for he wasn't right in his mind. By and by we told her he was getting well, and then she didn't come, but stayed at home, just saying his name over to herself. *Alors*, things take hold of a woman — it is strange! When Fingall was strong enough to go out, I went with him the first time. He was all thin and handsome as you can think, but he had no memory, and his eyes were like a child's. She saw him, and came out to meet him. What does a woman care for the world when she loves altogether? Well, he just looked at her as if he'd never seen her before, and passed by without a sign, though afterwards a trouble came in his face. Three days later he

was gone, no one knew where. That is two years ago. Ever since she has been looking for him."

"Is she mad?"

"Mad? Holy Mother! It is not good to have one thing in the head all the time! What do you think? So much all at once! And then—"

"Hush! Pierre! There she is!" said Lawless, pointing to a ledge of rock not far away.

The girl stood looking out across the valley, a weird, rapt look in her face, her hair falling loose, a staff like a shepherd's crook in one hand, the other hand over her eyes as she slowly looked from point to point of the horizon.

The two watched her without speaking. Presently she saw them. She gazed at them for a minute, then descended to them. Lawless and Pierre rose, doffing their hats. She looked at both a moment, and her eyes settled on Pierre. Presently she held out her hand to him.

"I knew you — yesterday," she said.

Pierre returned the intensity of her gaze with one kind and strong.

"So-so, Cynthie," he said; "sit down and eat."

He dropped on a knee and drew a scone and some fish from the ashes. She sat facing them, and, taking from a bag at her side some wild

fruits, ate slowly, saying nothing. Lawless noticed that her hair had become gray at her temples, though she was but one-and-twenty years old. Her face, brown as it was, shone with a white kind of light, which may, or may not, have come from the crucible of her eyes, where the tragedy of her life was fusing. Lawless could not bear to look long, for the fire that consumes a body and sets free a soul is not for the sight of the quick. At last she rose, her body steady, but her hands having that tremulous activity of her eyes.

"Will you not stay, Cynthie?" asked Lawless very kindly.

She came close to him, and, after searching his eyes, said with a smile that almost hurt him, "When I have found him, I will bring him to your camp-fire. Last night the Voice said to me that he waits for me where the mist rises from the river at daybreak, close to the home of the White Swan. Do you know where is the home of the White Swan? Before the frost comes and the red wolf cries, I must find him. Winter is the time of sleep; I will give him honey and dried meat. I know where we shall live together. You never saw such roses! Hush! I have a place where we can hide."

Suddenly her gaze became fixed and dream-

like, and she said slowly: "In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, and in the Day of Judgment, Good Lord, deliver us!"

"Good Lord, deliver us!" repeated Lawless, in a low voice. Without looking at them, she slowly turned away and passed up the hillside, her eyes scanning the valley as before.

"Good Lord, deliver us!" again said Lawless. "Where did she get it?"

"From a book which Fingall left behind."

They watched her till she rounded a cliff, and was gone; then they shouldered their kits and passed up the river on the trail of the wapiti. One month later, when a fine white surf of frost lay on the ground, and the sky was darkened often by the flight of the wild geese southward, they came upon a hut perched on a bluff, at the edge of a clump of pines. It was morning, and White-faced Mountain shone clear and high, without a touch of cloud or mist from its haunches to its crown.

They knocked at the hut door, and, in answer to a voice, entered. The sunlight streamed in over a woman, lying upon a heap of dried flowers in a corner. A man was kneeling beside her. They came near and saw that the woman was Cynthie.

"Fingall!" broke out Pierre, and caught the kneeling man by the shoulder. At the sound of his voice the woman's eyes opened.

"Fingall!—Oh, Fingall!" she said, and reached up a hand.

Fingall stooped and caught her to his breast:

"Cynthie! poor girl! Oh, my poor Cynthie!" he said.

In his eyes, as in hers, was a sane light, and his voice, as hers, said indescribable things.

Her head sank upon his shoulder, her eyes closed; she slept. Fingall laid her down with a sob in his throat; then he sat up and clutched Pierre's hand.

"In the East, where the doctors cured me, I heard all," he said, pointing to her, "and I came to find her. I was just in time; I found her yesterday."

"She knew you?" whispered Pierre.

"Yes, but this fever came on." He turned and looked at her, and, kneeling, smoothed away the hair from the quiet face. "Poor girl!" he said; "poor girl!"

"She will get well?" asked Pierre.

"God grant it!" Fingall replied. "She is better—better!"

Lawless and Pierre softly turned and stole

away, leaving the man alone with the woman he loved.

The two stood in silence, looking upon the river beneath. Presently a voice crept through the stillness.

"Fingall! Oh, Fingall!—Fingall!"

It was the voice of a woman returning from the dead.