

DEERFOOT ON THE PRAIRIES

EDWARD S. ELLIS

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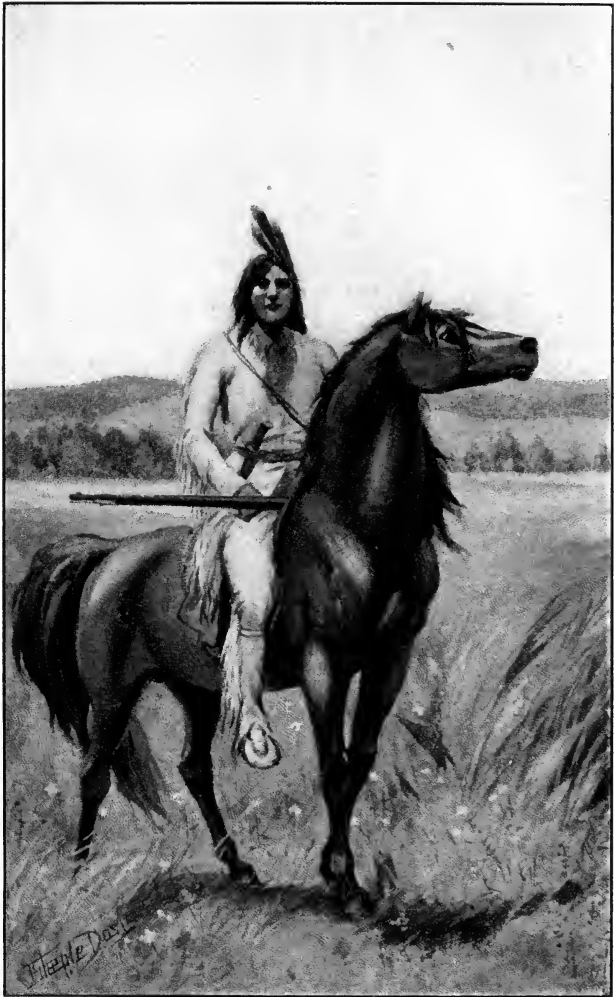


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Deerfoot and Whirlwind.

NEW DEERFOOT SERIES

Deerfoot on the Prairies

BY

EDWARD S. ELLIS

Author of "Deerfoot in the Forest," "Deerfoot in the Mountains," "An American King," "The Cromwell of Virginia," "The Boy Pioneer Series," "Log Cabin Series," Etc., Etc.

Illustrated

with Eight Engravings by J. Steeple Davis

PHILADELPHIA:
THE JOHN C. WINSTON CO.
1905

THE NEW DEERFOOT SERIES

BY

EDWARD S. ELLIS

Illustrated by

J. STEEPLE DAVIS

No. 1.—Deerfoot in the Forest

No. 2.—Deerfoot on the Prairies

No. 3.—Deerfoot in the Mountains

Each contains seven half-tone engravings and *color frontispiece*. They make more real the fortunes and adventures of the heroic little band that journeys through the wilderness and prairies from the Ohio to the Pacific. It was in the time of daring when Lewis and Clark were engaged in their thrilling expedition that the adventures narrated by the distinguished author of boys' books are described as occurring. Our old friends, George and Victor, of the "Log Cabin Series," are again met with in these pages, and the opportunity of once more coming face to face with Deerfoot will be welcomed by every juvenile reader.

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DEERFOOT ON THE PRAIRIES.

CHAPTER I.

WESTWARD BOUND.

ONE morning in early spring, at the beginning of the last century, a party of four persons left the frontier town of Woodvale, in southern Ohio, and started on their long journey across the continent.

Do you need an introduction to the little company? Hardly, and yet it is well to recall them to mind.

First of all was our old friend Deerfoot, the Shawanoe, to whom we bade good-bye at the close of the story "Deerfoot in the Forest," with a hint of the important expedition upon which he had decided to enter with his companions. He was mounted on a tough, wiry

pony that had been presented to him by his friend Simon Kenton, and which, in honor of the famous ranger, the new owner had named "Simon."

This horse was provided with a bridle, but that was all. Deerfoot, one of the finest of horsemen, never used a saddle. He said the bare back of a well-conditioned steed was more pleasant than a seat of leather, and he had never yet bestrode an animal that could displace him. On this trip the Indian youth carried as his principal weapon the handsome rifle presented by General William H. Harrison, Governor of Indiana Territory. Deerfoot had not yielded a bit of his faith in his bow, but that implement would not prove so handy as the other in an excursion on horseback. Besides, his three companions had begged him to leave his bow at home, and he was quite willing to do so.

Deerfoot was dressed as he has been before described, but he carried a long, heavy blanket that was strapped to the back of his horse and served in lieu of a saddle. The powder horn and bullet pouch suspended from his neck were as full as they could carry. He

looked so graceful on his animal that many expressions of admiration were heard from the people of Woodvale who had gathered to see the start. Deerfoot did not seem to hear any of the compliments, though some were addressed directly to him. He was never pleased with anything of that nature.

Little need be said of Mul-tal-la, the Blackfoot, who had come from the neighborhood of the Rocky Mountains on an exploring expedition of his own, and was now to return with the Shawanoe as his comrade. The sturdy, shaggy horse, which he had obtained through the help also of Simon Kenton, was accoutred like the one ridden by Deerfoot. The blanket strapped to his back was the one brought by the owner from that far-off region, and served him also as a saddle. The Blackfoot, like nearly all the Indians of the Northwest, was an excellent horseman. Through some whim, which no one understood, Mul-tal-la had named his animal "Bug," a title so unromantic that for a long time it was never heard without causing a smile from his companions. Sometimes Mul-tal-la also grinned, but nothing could induce him to change the name.

You remember the grief of Victor Shelton was so depressing over the death of his father that he surely would have gone into a decline but for the ardor roused by this proposed excursion to the Pacific. The prospect was so fascinating that he came out of the dark clouds that gathered about him, and was the most enthusiastic of the four.

George was almost as deeply stirred and in as high spirits as his brother, but now and then a tremor of fear passed over him when he thought of what they would have to pass through before their return. He would have shrunk and probably turned back but for Deerfoot. There was no person in the world in whom he had such faith as in the young Shawanoe; but there is a limit to human attainment, and it might be that his dusky friend would soon reach his when the four turned their faces westward.

George had named his horse "Jack," while Victor called his "Prince." All were quite similar to one another, being strong, sturdy, docile and enduring, but none was specially gifted in the way of speed. More than likely they would meet many of their kind among the

Indians which would be their superior in fleetness. But, if danger threatened, our friends would not rely upon their horses for safety.

Now, in setting out on so long a journey, which of necessity must last many months, our friends had to carry some luggage with them. This was made as light as possible, but pared to the utmost there was enough to require a fifth horse. While of the same breed as the others, he was of stronger build and best fitted for burdens. He was the gift of Ralph Genter, who, you may recall, was beaten in the turkey shoot by Deerfoot. It was Genter who named him "Zigzag."

"'Cause," explained the donor, "if you let him to go as he pleases, he'll make the crookedest track in creation; he will beat a ram's horn out of sight."

Excepting his blanket, Mul-tal-la had no luggage which he did not wear on his person. It must be admitted that the American Indian as a rule is much lacking in that virtue which is said to be next to godliness. Despite the romance that is often thrown around the red man, it is generally more pleasant to view him at a distance. Close companionship with him is by no means pleasant.

I need hardly say that it was not so with Deerfoot. He was as dainty as any lady with his person. Kenton, Boone and others had laughed at him many times because of his care in bathing and the frequency with which he plunged into icy cold water for no other reason than for tidiness and health. The material of which his hunting shirt and leggings were made allowed them to be worn a long time without showing the effects, but underneath them was underclothing kept scrupulously clean by Deerfoot's own hands. Only his close friends knew of his care in this respect, and some of them looked upon it as a weakness approaching effeminacy. And you and I esteem him all the more for these traits, which harmonized with the nobility of his character.

So it was that in the large package secured to the back of Zigzag was considerable that Deerfoot himself had wrapped up, and with the modesty of a girl carefully screened from prying eyes. Aunt Dinah, had she been permitted, would have loaded down two horses with articles for the twins, who, she declared, could not possibly get on without them. As it was, it is enough to say that the boys were far

better remembered than they would have been if left to themselves. As Victor expressed it when he saw her gathering and tying up the goods, they had enough to last them for a journey round the world.

The start was made early on Monday morning, when the sun was shining bright and the opening spring stirred every heart into life and filled it with thankfulness to the Giver of All Good. Men, women and children had gathered in the clearing to the north of the settlement to see the party start and to wish them good speed on their journey. Deerfoot and Mul-tal-la had ridden in from the Shawanoe's home the day before, so that the start might be made from the settlement.

There were the laughing, the jesting, the merry and earnest expressions, with here and there a moist eye, when the travelers were seen seated on their horses and pausing for the final words. The one most to be pitied in all the group was Aunt Dinah, who was bravely trying to hide her real feelings under an expansive smile, in which there was not a shadow of mirth or pleasantry. She stood on the outer edge of the boisterous group, her folded hands

under her apron, her eyes fixed on the boys, who were laughing, shaking hands and exchanging wishes and jests with their friends.

Suddenly the colored woman walked forward, pushing her way through the throng to the side of Deerfoot. Then she drew a piece of old-fashioned blue writing paper from under her apron and handed it up to him. He looked smilingly down at her, and she, without saying anything, walked back to the fringe of people and faced around again.

Deerfoot opened the slip and saw some writing in pencil. During the years when George and Victor Shelton struggled, with more or less success, to obtain a common-school education, Aunt Dinah had managed to pick up a bit here and there of elementary knowledge. She had spent a long time the night before, groaning in spirit, often sharpening her stub of a pencil, which, of course, she frequently thrust into her mouth, rubbing out and re-writing, perspiring and toiling with might and main to put together a message for the young Shawanoe's eyes alone. Not until the other members of the household had long been sunk in slumber did she get the missive in final shape.

Some of the letters were turned backward, all curiously twisted, the lines irregular and the writing grotesque, but the youth to whom the paper was passed made out the following:

“Mister Dearfut—i feal orful bad 2 hav u go orf with them preshus babiz—pleas tak gud car of em, and bring em back rite side up—

“i’ll pra 4 u and the babiz evry nite and mornin, and if i doan forgot in de midle ob de da. i’ll pra speshully 4 u, cause as long as ure all rite, they’ll B all rite.

“Ant Dine.

“p. s.—u’ll fine rapped in paper in de top bundel sum caik dat am 4 u speshully, but u may let de oders hab 1 bite if u feels like it—member dat i’m prayin 4 u.

“p. s.—Doan eet 2 mutch ob de caik 2 wunst, or it’ll maik yo syck—it’ll B jus’ like you 2 gib it awl to de oders, *but doan you doot!* Eet mose ob it yoself.

“p. s.—De caik am 4 yo speshully. Ise prayin’ 4 yo.

“p. s.—Doan forgot Ise prayin’ 4 yo. De caik am 4 yo.

“p. s.—De caik am yo’s—Ise prayin’ 4 yo.”

There was not the ghost of a smile on the face of the Shawanoe while carefully tracing the meaning of this crude writing. He gently refolded the paper, reached one hand within his hunting shirt, and, drawing out his Bible, put the folded paper between the leaves and replaced the book. Then, heedless of the clamor around him, he looked over the heads of the people at the lonely woman standing a little way off and watching him with manifest embarrassment.

Turning the head of his horse toward her, he deftly directed him through the throng and halted at the side of Aunt Dinah. She was so confused that she was on the point of making off, for nearly everyone was looking at the two, the action of Deerfoot having drawn attention to the couple. Leaning over his horse he extended his palm.

“Good-bye, Aunt Dinah.”

She bashfully reached up her big hard hand. He held it for a few moments, and, looking down in the ebon countenance, spoke in a low voice:

“Deerfoot thanks you; he is glad that you will pray to the Great Spirit for him, for he

needs your prayers. Your promise is sweet to Deerfoot."

Aunt Dinah did not speak, for with every eye upon her and the Indian she could not think of a syllable to say. While she was trying to do so, Deerfoot did something which no one ever saw him do before, and which was so strange that it hushed every voice. He leaned still farther from the back of his horse and deliberately touched his lips to the cheek of the colored woman. Then he straightened up, and, without a word, started his animal on a brisk walk to the northward, the others falling into line behind him.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST CAMP.

IT was inevitable that, during the weeks and months spent by Deerfoot and Mul-tal-la together, they talked often and long about the journey to the Northwest. At night in the depth of the forest, by the crackling camp-fire, or when lolling in the cavern home of the young Shawanoe, it was the one theme in which both, and especially the younger, was absorbingly interested.

You need hardly be reminded that a hundred years ago the immense territory west of the Mississippi was an unknown region. Teeming to-day with a bustling, progressive people numbering millions, covered with large cities and towns, gridironed by railways, honey-combed with mines, humming with industry, and the seat of future empire, it was at the opening of the nineteenth century a vast solitude, the home of the wild Indian and wild animal.

A few daring hunters and trappers had penetrated for a little way into the "Louisiana Purchase," and they carried on a disjointed barter with the red men, but the fragmentary knowledge brought back by them scarcely pierced the shell of general ignorance. Captains Lewis and Clark had not yet made their famous journey across the continent, but they were getting ready to do so, for President Jefferson's heart was wrapped up in developing the largest real estate transaction ever made.

It may be said that Deerfoot pumped the Blackfoot dry. Had that enterprising traveler kept a diary of his journeyings and experiences from the time he and his companion started eastward, it would not have told the Shawanoe more than he gained from his friend by his continuous questioning. Deerfoot traced with a pencil on a sheet of paper a rude map of the western country, based wholly on the information gained from his guest. He made many changes and corrections before he completed and filed it away, as may be said, for future use.

Several important facts were thus established, and these you must bear in mind in order

to understand the incidents I have set out to relate.

In the first place, the home of the Blackfeet Indians a century ago was not to the westward but on the east of the Rocky Mountains, as it is to-day. In order to reach the Pacific Coast one had to climb over that great range and enter the country of the Flatheads and numerous other tribes. Mul-tal-la had proved his enterprise as an explorer by doing this several years previous to making his longer journey to the eastward.

When Mul-tal-la left home he and his companion rode southward until well into the present State of Colorado. Then they turned east, passing through what is now Kansas and Missouri, crossing the Mississippi and entering the fringe of civilization, for they were fairly within the Northwest Territory organized a number of years before.

Deerfoot planned to take this route in reverse. Where the Blackfoot was impressed by everything he saw, he had retained an excellent recollection of the route, and this knowledge was sure to be of great help to Deerfoot and his friends. The course to be followed may be roughly outlined thus:

A little to the north of Woodvale the party would turn westward, crossing the present States of Indiana and Illinois to St. Louis. Thence they would follow the course of the Missouri to where it makes its abrupt bend northward. At that point they intended to leave it and push westward until the time came to head due north and make for the Blackfoot country. This in a general way was the route upon which took place most of the incidents recorded in the following pages.

When the border settlement dropped out of sight, the company fell into what may be called the line of march. Deerfoot was in the lead, next rode the Blackfoot, then Zigzag the pack horse, and last George Shelton, with Victor bringing up the rear. The rule was to advance in Indian file except when they reached the plains, where the topography permitted them to bunch together. In fact this lining out of the horsemen was necessary most of the time, for the trails used by them did not allow two to ride abreast. However, it permitted free conversation, so long as there was no necessity for silence.

Deerfoot led the way over a well-marked

trail which was familiar to him, for he had traversed it often by day and by night. As was his custom at such times, he rode for hours without speaking a syllable. There was no call for this, but it was his habit. He heard the chat of the boys to the rear, George continually turning his head to address or listen to his brother. Deerfoot did not care, for no danger threatened any of them, and he was pleased that the couple, especially Victor, were in such overflowing spirits.

The Blackfoot showed the same peculiarity as the leader, and which it may be said is characteristic of the American race—that of silence and reserve when on the march, even while there is perfect freedom to converse. The Shawanoe would not have objected had his friends called to him, but they did not do so.

At the end of half an hour the trail, which led directly through the woods, became so level and open that Deerfoot struck his horse into a gentle trot. Bug did the same, but Zigzag did not seem to think it was expected of him, and continued plodding forward at his usual sluggish gait. The load, however, which he carried was not burdensome, and George Shelton

shouted to him in so startling a voice that Zigzag broke into a trot so vigorous that it threatened to displace his pack. It is not impossible that the animal was planning for that, but the burden had been secured too well to fall.

Suddenly Zigzag swerved to the right and pushed among the trees. A sharp order from George brought him back, and then he displayed a tendency to wobble to the left. To convince him that no nonsense would be permitted, George galloped nigh enough to deliver a resounding whack on his haunch with the stock of his gun. After that Zigzag conducted himself properly.

“It seems strange, George,” said Victor, as well as his jolting horse would permit, “that only a few months ago we were in danger of our lives in this very place, and now we needn’t have the least fear.”

“All due to Deerfoot,” replied George; “the whole cause of the trouble was Red Wolf, when he started to climb that rope and it broke with him; that also broke up the plotting; with their leader gone they had no heart to try anything further in that line.”

“I spoke to Deerfoot about it, and he says the cause was more than that. Tecumseh means well, and is determined to make his warriors keep the treaty of Greenville. He did not know all the mischief Red Wolf was up to, and was in a fury when he learned it. About that time, too, Tecumseh got a hint from Governor Harrison through Simon Kenton that no more such doings would be tolerated, and he took the hint. No harm would come to us if we rode alone into any of the Shawanoe or Miami or Wyandot villages. But,” added Victor, “I’d feel a good deal better to have Deerfoot with us.”

“He’ll be as much a stranger as we after we get out of this country.”

“Still he’s an Indian and knows better than anyone else how to handle those of his race. Mul-tal-la is sure to be of good service, too.”

“Have you any idea how long we shall be gone?”

“No; and I don’t care. I feel as if I should like to spend several years on the other side of the Mississippi.”

“You’ll get homesick before that. I had a talk with Deerfoot last night and found he

doesn't expect to start on the return before next spring."

"Will it take us as long as that to reach the Blackfoot country?"

"Of course not, but Deerfoot means to look upon the Pacific Ocean before he comes back, and that, as he figures it, is about a thousand miles beyond the Blackfoot country. According to what Mul-tal-la says, the biggest mountains in the world lie just west of his country, and we have got to climb over or get through them some way. What do you think of the plan?"

"It tickles me half to death. I wonder whether Deerfoot would care if I threw up my hat and yelled."

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Well, here goes, anyway!"

And what did the irrepressible youth do but fling his cap a dozen feet above his head and emit a whoop of which Tecumseh would not have been ashamed. Both Deerfoot and Mul-tal-la looked wonderingly around, and each smiled. The Shawanoe's smile grew broader when Victor made a grasp to catch his cap as it came down, but missed it and it fell to the earth.

“Plague take it!” exclaimed the lad, slipping out of the saddle without stopping his horse, and running back to recover his head-gear.

While he was doing so Deerfoot emitted a war-whoop himself, and struck the heels of his moccasins against the ribs of Simon, who instantly broke into a gallop. Bug was hardly a moment behind him, and Zigzag, for a wonder, caught the infection. George saw what their leader was up to, and he pretended he could not restrain his own horse. The shouts he sent out while seeming to do his best frightened Jack into a gallop, and Prince proved that he did not mean to be left behind.

Thus when Victor had snatched his cap from the ground, replaced it on his head and turned to trot the necessary few paces, he saw the whole line in a gallop, with his own horse several rods in advance of him.

“Whoa! Plague take you! Whoa! Don’t you hear me?” shouted the indignant lad, breaking into a desperate run.

There could be no doubt that all the animals as well as their riders heard the command, which was loud enough to penetrate the woods for half a mile. Prince being the nearest,

surely must have noted the order, but he seemed to think that, inasmuch as the horses ahead of him increased their speed, it was proper for him to do the same. At any rate he did it, and succeeded so well that his owner saw the space widening between them.

By this time Victor knew that Deerfoot was at the bottom of it all. No man can do his best when laughing or shouting, and the pursuer ceased his call and bent all his energies to overtaking the fleeing horses. He thought the leader would soon show some consideration for him and slacken his pace, but the Shawanoe seemed to be stern and unsympathizing that forenoon, for he maintained the gallop, with the others doing the same, and the task of the running youngster loomed up as impossible.

It wouldn't do to get mad and sulk, for no one would pay any attention to him—least of all Deerfoot, who liked fun as well as anybody. Besides, the exercise promised to do the youth a world of good.

But fortune came to his relief when least expected. Victor had traveled this trail so often that he knew it almost as well as Deerfoot. He remembered it made a sharp curve

to the left not far in advance. When he caught sight of the young Shawanoe, therefore, calmly galloping around the bend, the lad dived among the trees and sped at a reckless rate.

“They ain’t so smart as they think they are! I’ll beat ’em yet—confound it!”

He thought surely his head had been lifted from his shoulders, for at that moment a projecting maple limb, not quite as high as his crown, slipped under his chin and almost hoisted him off his feet. He speedily found he was intact and had suffered little more than a shock to his feelings. He was quickly at it again and soon caught sight of Deerfoot rising and sinking with the motion of his horse and the others stringing behind him.

A moment later Victor leaped into the trail, recoiling just enough to let the leader pass him as he stood. But Deerfoot reined up and stared at him as if in wonder.

“Does my brother love to wander in the woods that he should leave his saddle?” was the innocent query of the dusky wag.

“You think you know a good deal, don’t you? Wait till I get a chance; I’ll pay you for this,” was the half-impatient answer.

“Deerfoot is so scared by the words of his brother that he may fall off his horse,” said the Shawanoe with mock alarm. “Will he not forgive Deerfoot because he did not stop when he heard his brother crying behind him?”

“You go on. I’ll catch you one of these days and make you sorry.”

With an expression of grief Deerfoot started forward again, his horse on a walk. Those behind had also stopped, and they now resumed the journey. The Shawanoe kept his eye to the rear until he saw Victor was in the saddle again, when his pace immediately rose to a trot and all were quickly jogging forward as before.

George tried to look sympathetic, but he could not, and his brother saw his shoulders shaking with laughter as he rode on, not daring to trust himself to speak. By this time the impulsive Victor had rallied from his partial anger, and decided that the best thing to do was to join in the general good-nature and merriment over his mishap.

Noon came and passed, but Deerfoot showed no intention of going into camp. He humored the animals by dropping to a walk. They were allowed to drink several times from the small

streams crossed, and occasionally were given a breathing spell of fifteen or twenty minutes. The Shawanoe knew how to treat their kind and did not press them too hard. When these long pauses were made the riders dismounted, lolled at the side of the trail, talked together, but neither Deerfoot nor Mul-tal-la made reference to food for themselves, and the boys were too proud to hint anything of their hunger.

When the afternoon was well advanced the party came to an open space, crossed near the middle by a sparkling brook, which issued from under some mossy rocks to the right. Early as was the season, there was considerable growth of succulent grass, which offered the best kind of nourishment for the horses. Deerfoot announced that they would spend the night in this place, and, leaping from the back of Simon, plunged into the wood in quest of game, of which they had had more than one glimpse while on the road.

Meanwhile the Blackfoot and the boys relieved Zigzag of his load, removed the other saddle and bridles, and devoted themselves to gathering wood for the night. With such an abundance on every hand this was a light task.

When the leaves were heaped up, with a mass of dry twigs loosely arranged on top and larger sticks above them, George Shelton took out the sun-glass which had been presented to him by one of his neighbors. The sun was still high enough for him to catch a few of the rays and concentrate them upon the leaves, which speedily broke into a smoking flame that soon spread into a roaring fire. The method was not much superior, after all, to the old-fashioned flint and steel, but the instrument was new so far as the present owner was concerned, and he liked to use it.

One of the most treasured presents to Victor was a good spy-glass that had been used by one of General Wayne's officers throughout the Revolutionary War, and afterward in the Indian campaigns in the West. The lad had not found a good chance as yet to employ it, but when its power was explained to Mul-tal-la he was delighted and declared it would prove beyond value to them while crossing the plains, and he spoke the truth.

The fire was no more than fairly going when the report of Deerfoot's rifle sounded not far off in the woods. No one was surprised, for

game was plenty, though it was not the most favorable season, and it was safe to rely upon the dusky youth for an unfailing supply of food whenever it could possibly be secured.

When a few minutes later Deerfoot came in sight he was carrying a big wild turkey, from which he had torn the feathers, plucked the inedible portions, and washed the rest in the clear water of the brook. All that remained to do was to broil the meat over the fire and coals as soon as they were ready.

Aunt Dinah had expressed an ardent wish to stow among the bundles of the packhorse some specimens of her best cookery in the way of bread and cake, but the brothers protested so vigorously that there was neither need nor room for anything of that kind that she refrained. There was, however, considerable salt, pepper and other condiments, though neither tea nor coffee.

Deerfoot broiled the turkey without help from the others. It was cut into pieces which he toasted on green sticks skewered through them, turned over in front of the blaze and laid for a few minutes over the blazing coals. When the first piece was ready he passed it to Victor.

“That’s ’cause he feels remorse for his meanness towards me,” reflected the lad, sprinkling salt on the juicy flesh and then sinking his sharp incisors into it, realizing, as many a youngster has realized before and since, that the best sauce for any sort of food is hunger.

The next portion went to George, the third to Mul-tal-la, and last of all Deerfoot provided for himself. This was his invariable rule, and all his friends knew it so well that they never protested.

Water was brought from the brook in one of the tin cups with which they were furnished, and all made a nourishing and palatable meal.

The last mouthful had been masticated to a pulp and swallowed when Deerfoot, without a word, rose gravely to his feet and walked to where the big pack of Zigzag lay. The corners of the huge parcel had been gathered, and were tied over the middle with big knots. Under these was so large a gap that Deerfoot readily thrust in his hand without undoing the fastening. Fumbling around for several minutes he brought out a goodly sized package wrapped about with coarse brown paper.

Every eye was upon him, for all were won-

dering what he was seeking and had found. He carefully unwrapped the paper and then took from within something about a foot in diameter, of circular shape, three or four inches in thickness, and bulging upward in the middle. It was of a dark-brown color, the interior so full of richness that it had burst the crust in one or two places and, pushing outward, gave a glimpse of the slightly browned wealth within. Raising the object in one hand, Deerfoot broke off a piece, whose craggy sides were of a golden yellow, creamy and light as a feather. Then the others identified it.

It was a "sugar cake," specially prepared by Dinah, and in mixing and baking it she had excelled herself. It certainly was a triumph of skill, and, despite the meal just finished, the sight of the delicious richness—with which the brothers had become familiar many a time—made their mouths water.

Deerfoot acted as if nobody else was in the neighborhood. Having broken off the golden spongy chunk, he lifted it to his mouth, and it was a wonder how fast it disappeared. The Shawanoe certainly had a sweet tooth, for his eyes sparkled as he munched the soft delicacy.

In a minute or two the first segment vanished, and he instantly set to work on the second, meanwhile looking longingly at the mangled original, as if grudging the time he had to wait before disposing of that.

“Well, did you ever?” whispered Victor. “Aunt Dinah made that on purpose for him, and we were dunces enough not to take what she offered us.”

Neither of the boys was unjust enough to attribute the salute which the young Shawanoe gave the colored woman to this cause, for they knew that was impossible, but it was a sight, nevertheless, to see the fellow place himself outside of the cake. When it was about one-fourth gone he seemed to become aware that he had companions. Looking up as if in astonishment, he broke and divided the major portion between the boys. Some was offered to the Blackfoot, but he shook his head. He had never tasted of such food, and, if he knew his own heart, never would give it a chance at his interior organization.

CHAPTER III.

THIEVES OF THE NIGHT.

DEERFOOT could be a stern master when necessary. While it would have been no hardship for him and Mul-tal-la to divide the duties of sentinel each night, he meant that the boys should bear their part. They were big and strong enough to do so, and there was no reason why they should not. He informed them that George was to watch the camp for the first half of the night, or rather for an hour beyond the turn, when he was to awake Victor, who would take his place until daylight. This was to be the rule throughout the expedition, except when some exigency demanded the services of the elders.

Enough fuel had been gathered to last through the darkness. It was Deerfoot's plan to avoid the Indian villages so far as was practical, although little or nothing was to be feared from meeting those of his own race. The Blackfoot had come in contact with many tribes

on his long journey eastward, but excepting in two instances nothing of an unpleasant nature occurred. You have learned that the tribes which formed the confederacy crushed by "Mad Anthony" Wayne at Fallen Timber were now so peaceably inclined toward the white settlers that not much was to be feared from them.

And yet it was not wise to tempt them too far. An Indian loves a horse, and among the tribes were plenty of thieves who would run off the animals of our friends if the chance were offered. So the latter did not mean to offer the chance.

The air was crisp, for the spring was only fairly open, and the little company that gathered round the crackling blaze called their blankets into use. The animals were allowed to crop the grass near at hand, and to lie down when they chose. None was tethered, for they were not likely to wander off, and if they showed a disposition to do so the sentinel could easily prevent it.

The four lolled about the blaze after finishing their evening meal, talking mainly of the long journey and the experiences awaiting them.

Mul-tal-la answered Deerfoot's questions again, for though the Shawanoe was well informed, his inquiries were for the benefit of the boys, whose interest naturally was keen.

When the night was well advanced, Deerfoot, without any preliminary, drew his little Bible from his hunting shirt, and leaning forward so that the light fell upon the small print, read the Twenty-third Psalm, which, you remember, was one of his favorite chapters. His voice was low, musical and reverent, and no professional elocutionist could have given the sublime passage more impressively.

The three listened attentively, none speaking during the reading. It seemed to George and Victor that they had never felt the beauty and sweetness of the book whose utterances are sufficient for every condition of man and every state of the human mind. The surroundings, the great future which spread out so mysteriously before them, the certain dangers that impended, their utter helplessness and a sense of the all-protecting care of their Heavenly Father, filled their souls as never before.

It would be hard to fathom the imaginings and thoughts of the Blackfoot. He was sitting

erect, with his blanket about his shoulders, only a few paces from the young Shawanoe, and kept his eyes upon the noble countenance as the precious words filled the stillness, the listener fearful that some syllable might escape him. He had learned much of the true God in his talks with the devout youth, and, like him, had fallen into the habit of praying morning and evening, and sometimes for a few moments in the busiest part of the day.

The brothers recalled that loved parent who had been lying in his grave for weeks, and remembered how he had prayed and how triumphantly he had passed away when the last solemn moment arrived, and both firmly resolved from that time forward so to live that there could be no question of the reunion that to both was the dearest, most joyous and thrilling hope that could possibly fill their hearts.

While the two sat beside each other, silent and listening, George gently reached out his hand. Victor saw the movement, and, taking the palm within his own, fervently pressed it. At the same moment the brothers looked into each other's eyes. It was enough; volumes could have said no more.

Deerfoot finished, and, closing the book, returned it to its resting place over his heart. Then without a word he turned and knelt on the cool earth. Instinctively the three did the same and all prayed.

Not a word was heard, but heart spoke to heart, and all communed with Him whose ear is never closed against the petition of his children. Had either of the boys prayed aloud he would have stammered, for he could not have shaken off the question as to how his words impressed his companions. It is the impossibility in many cases of one freeing himself from this hindrance that makes the sentences of the petitioner halt and stumbling, because to a certain degree they are addressed to men rather than directly to the Father. The Blackfoot would have found it almost impossible to shape intelligently his sentences if he spoke aloud, but he could talk freely in his own way to his Maker. Deerfoot could have done far better than any of the others, for he would not have hesitated, but he preferred the silent petition, and rarely spoke his words unless he was asked to do so or a special necessity existed.

The others took their cue from him, and when

they heard the gentle rustling which showed that he had resumed his sitting posture they did the same. Then he nodded to George, who, rifle in hand, walked softly out in the gloom to where the animals had lain down for the night, in the midst of the grass and near the rippling brook. As he did so he bade his friends good night, and they disposed of themselves in the usual way, each with his blanket wrapped about him and his feet turned toward the fire. Within ten minutes every one of the three was sunk in sweet, refreshing slumber.

The night was clear and studded with stars. There was no moon, the gloom being so deep that the watcher could see only a few paces in any direction. Often as he had spent the night in the dim solitudes, sometimes with danger brooding and again when all was tranquil, he could never cast off the emotions that filled his being when he stood thus alone, with friends dependent perhaps upon his vigilance. He listened to the soft rippling of the brook, the hollow stillness of the vast forest, like the moaning of the far-away ocean which has been called the voice of silence, the occasional restless movement of one of the horses, and the

gentle stir of the night wind among the bursting foliage overhead and around him. Then he looked toward the fire at the dimly outlined forms, partly within and partly without the circle of illumination, and again his heart was lifted to the only One who could ward off danger from him and his friends.

The youth marked out a beat for himself parallel with the brook and two or three rods in length. Sometimes he paused and, leaning on his gun, peered into the hollow gloom which inclosed him on every hand. He knew that so long as he kept on his feet he would not fall asleep, but if he sat down the lapse was inevitable. Better still to walk to and fro, as is the practice of the sentinel, for while doing so he was safe against the insidious weakness which steals the senses from the most rugged man ere he is aware.

George did not believe that any danger threatened the camp unless of the nature hinted by Deerfoot. It might be that some wandering Miamis or Wyandots or Shawanoes had observed the little party and their horses and cast covetous eyes upon the latter. If so, they would not dare to proceed to violence, but might

try to run off one or two of the animals, hoping to get far enough away with them before discovery of the theft to make pursuit useless. It was this apprehension which kept the youth alert and watchful.

George Shelton had paced to and fro for more than an hour without hearing, or seeing anything to excite misgiving. The cry of a wolf in the distance and the nearer scream of a panther were given scarcely a thought, for both were too common to cause alarm.

The first disturbance came from the action of his horse Jack, who had lain down at a point farther off than the others. All the animals seemed to be resting quietly, when, at the moment the lad was nearest his own and was about to turn to retrace his steps, Jack raised his head and emitted a slight whinny, though none of the others showed any disquiet.

The sentinel paused and looked at his pony, dimly outlined in the darkness. He saw he had raised his head and appeared to be interested in something on the other side of the brook. George lifted the hammer of his rifle, suspecting that some prowling wolf or other wild beast was trying to creep nigh enough to assail the

horses. The youth peered into the gloom and listened, but all remained as silent as the grave.

He held his motionless position for several minutes, in doubt what he ought to do, if indeed he could do anything. Then with rare courage he began slowly walking toward the point in which Jack seemed interested, holding his gun ready to raise and fire on the instant.

He reached the brook and was about to leap lightly across when the figure of an Indian rose from the grass and stood revealed hardly ten feet distant. He did not move, and seemed to have come up from a hole in the earth. The sight was so startling to the lad that he stopped abruptly and exclaimed in a low tone:

“Helloa! Who are you?”

“Howdy, brudder?” replied the redskin in the same guarded voice.

“What do you want, stealing into our camp like this?”

“Me Par-o-wan—friend of paleface—me brudder.”

“You haven’t told me what you want,” repeated the impatient youth, with his gun half raised, for he was suspicious, and saw that the other held a rifle almost in the same position as his own.

“Par-o-wan brudder; sit down—talk wid brudder—lub brudder.”

“Dog of a Miami! leave at once! You have others with you! If you tarry we shall shoot every one of you!”

It was not George Shelton who uttered this warning, but Deerfoot, who appeared at his side so suddenly and noiselessly that the lad had no thought of anything of the kind until he heard the familiar voice.

“Par-o-wan friend ob Deerfoot—he no hunt him—he go away,” replied the Miami, plainly scared by the words and manner of the young Shawanoe, who now raised his rifle to a “dead level” and acted as if he meant to fire.

“Deerfoot knows you and those that are with you, Par-o-wan! You are the thieves who have come to steal our horses. Go quick or I shoot!”

In a panic of fear the Miami wheeled and dashed off so fast that he threshed through the undergrowth and wood like a frightened wild animal. Deerfoot waited a minute in the same vigilant attitude, and then quietly remarked:

“They will trouble us no more. Now Deerfoot will sleep.”

“But tell me what woke you; I didn’t give any alarm,” said the mystified George Shelton.

“My brother spoke. Deerfoot heard his voice. My brother is watchful, but he will not be troubled again by the Miamis, for they are alarmed.”

And without anything further the Shawanoe walked silently back to his place by the camp-fire, drew his blanket around him and five minutes later was sleeping as peacefully as before he was awakened by the soft voices of the man and boy.

“Well, that beats all creation!” muttered the grinning lad, as he resumed his pacing to and fro. “We didn’t make enough noise to wake a sleeping baby, but he must have been roused by the first word, for he was at my side in a few seconds. I don’t see the need of putting one of us on guard when Deerfoot wakes up like that. He’s a wonder and no mistake.”

So full was George’s faith in the young Shawanoe that he was absolutely sure nothing more was to be feared from the Miamis who had evidently stolen up to the camp with the intention of running off one or more of the horses. He paced regularly over his beat until

certain it was well past midnight, when he went up to the fire, threw more wood on it and touched the arm of his brother.

You know that when you sink into slumber with the wish strongly impressed on your mind of awaking at a certain minute, you are almost sure to do so, or at least very near the time stamped on your brain. While George Shelton was in the act of stooping to rouse Victor the latter opened his eyes and rose to the sitting posture.

“I’m ready,” he said softly, coming to his feet, gun in hand. “Have you seen anything, George?”

The latter quickly whispered the particulars of the little incident already told.

“Well, if Deerfoot said they won’t be back, they won’t be back; but I mean to keep a look-out for them.”

With which philosophical decision Victor strolled out to the beat whose location his brother had made known to him. While gathering the blanket about him to lie down George glanced at Deerfoot, who lay within arm’s length. At that moment one of the embers at the base of the fire fell apart and the flare of light fell upon the face of the Shawanoe.

George saw that his large dark eyes were open, and no doubt he had heard every word of the cautious bit of conversation between the brothers. He did not speak, however, and immediately closed his eyes again, no doubt dropping off to sleep as quietly as before. It was a considerable time before George slumbered, for the experience of the evening, even though it amounted to little, touched his nerves. Finally he glided off into the land of dreams.

Victor did his duty faithfully, as his brother had done, and with his senses keyed to a high tension, but not the slightest disturbance occurred. Deerfoot was right in his declaration. If Par-o-wan had companions they had been too thoroughly frightened to risk rousing the anger of the Shawanoe.

The latter acted as provider again and furnished his friends with another meal upon wild turkey, promising to vary the diet in the course of a day or two, though no one felt like complaining, since there was an abundance for all, and such meat is not to be despised, even though one can become tired of it.

Thus early in their venture our friends met with a disagreeable experience, for though the

day dawned with the sun visible, the temperature fell and a cold, drizzling rain set in, which promised to last for hours. Deerfoot read the signs aright, and before the rainfall began conducted his companions to a rocky section a little way off the trail, where they found shelter for themselves and partial protection for their horses. Had there been an Indian village within easy distance they would have made their way thither, being sure of a welcome.

It was not the cheerless day itself that was so trying, for that was much improved by the fire they kept going, but it was the enforced inaction. Few things are harder to bear than idleness when one is anxious to get forward. The boys fretted, but Deerfoot and Mul-tal-la accepted the situation philosophically, as they always accepted the bad with the good. No murmur would have been heard from either had they been halted for several days. Deerfoot, indeed, had reached that wise state of mind in which his conscience reproved him for complaining of anything, since he knew it was ordered by One who doeth all things well.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ACQUAINTANCE.

THE cold, dismal, drizzling rain lasted without cessation till night closed in.

The horses were allowed to graze sufficiently to satisfy their hunger, but they shrank shivering under the lee of the rocks, where they were only partly protected. Every member of the party proved his sympathy by covering an animal with his blanket, an extra one being provided for Zigzag, so that after a time all became comfortable. The fire that was kept blazing on the stony floor under a projecting ledge warmed the four so well that they were able to get on quite well without additional covering.

Mul-tal-la asked the privilege of going off on a hunt in the afternoon. His bow was at disadvantage in the wet, and he borrowed Deer-foot's rifle, with which he had practiced enough to acquire a fair degree of skill.

“What will my brother bring back?” asked the Shawanoe.

“Whatever his brothers want,” replied the Blackfoot in good English. He looked first at Deerfoot for his request.

“Let my brother bring a buffalo,” he replied, knowing very well that none was in the neighborhood.

“Mul-tal-la would have to journey too far,” said the warrior, who had acquired from his friend the habit of speaking of himself in the third person; “but if Deerfoot wants it he will hunt till he finds a buffalo.”

“Then let my brother bring *anything*,” added the Shawanoe significantly, as if he doubted the ability of his friend to shoot any kind of game. That was the impression, too, he meant to make.

The Blackfoot turned to the boys.

“I’m not particular,” remarked George, who was inclined to sympathize with the homely but good-natured fellow.

“What would my brother like more than anything else?” persisted Mul-tal-la.

“I think a meal of venison would taste good. What do *you* say, Victor?”

“Nothing can suit me better.”

“My brothers shall eat deer’s meat when Mul-tal-la comes back,” was the confident comment of the hunter.

Deerfoot looked alarmed.

“Let not my brother wait till he shoots a deer,” he said.

“Why shall he not wait?”

“Because my brother may *never* come back if he waits for that,” was the slurring explanation of the young Shawanoe. The Blackfoot grinned almost to his ears, displaying a set of teeth that rivaled those of the Shawanoe. No one could accept a joke better than this dusky wanderer from the Rocky Mountains.

Mul-tal-la had not been gone more than a quarter of an hour when the report of his gun was heard. Deerfoot smiled and wondered what the result had been. But it was Mul-tal-la’s moment of triumph when, soon after, he came in sight bending under the weight of the forequarters of a goodly sized deer. He had come upon three of the animals as they were plucking the tender shoots of the young trees and undergrowth. The meeting was as much of a surprise to him as to the deer themselves. A

hunter could not have asked a fairer shot, and as the three terrified creatures whirled about to make off, he sent a bullet into one just back of the fore leg and brought him down.

No one ever saw the proud Blackfoot do more amazing grinning than when he emerged from the woods and flung the carcass at the feet of the Shawanoe.

“Now, if my brother wishes Mul-tal-la to bring him a buffalo, he will do so.”

Deerfoot reached out his hand and shook that of the Blackfoot.

“Mul-tal-la is a great hunter. He brings back that which he goes out to seek. Deerfoot is sorry that he said doubting words.”

“Oh, he needn't worry, for Mul-tal-la cares not for his idle talk.”

The prospect of a clear day on the morrow and the bountiful meal of venison, even though it was perhaps fresher than was desirable, put all in the best of spirits. The evening passed much as the previous one. The boys made themselves a bed of boughs that had been dried by the heat of the fire, and slept undisturbed till morning, the Indians acting the part of sentinels and not being disturbed through the night.

The morning came bright, mild and sunshiny. The breakfast was eaten early, and the sun had hardly risen when the little cavalcade was in motion. Deerfoot now made an abrupt turn to the left, and by nightfall had penetrated a goodly distance into the present State of Indiana. The pace was a walk and was maintained until night began closing in. Then followed days so similar to one another that it would be monotonous to give the history of each. The adventurers were compelled to cross a number of streams, several of considerable size, but, by searching, fords or shallow places were found where the horses waded without submerging their riders and without making it necessary to unload Zigzag and transport his burden on a raft. This good fortune, however, could not be expected to last. The rivers that interposed were sure to prove the most serious obstacles in their path.

Most of the time Deerfoot was able to discover well marked trails, which he turned to account if they led in the right direction. A curious sight was the "salt licks" which now and then they came upon. Sometimes these covered more than an acre and marked where

the brackish water, oozing upward, left a fine incrustation of salt, of which all kinds of animals are very fond. Some portions had been licked over hundreds and perhaps thousands of times by the buffalo, deer, bears, wolves and other beasts, until they were worn as smooth as a parlor floor. The horses of our friends were allowed to do considerable lapping for themselves, for they appreciated the privilege.

Hardly a day passed on which strange Indians were not met. None showed any hostility, and responded to the signs of friendship always made by Deerfoot at first sight of them. These signs are so universal among the red men that a native of the American coast could readily make himself understood by an Indian on the banks of the Pacific. The Shawanoe kept to his rule of avoiding villages so far as he could. While he felt little fear for himself and companions, he thought the horses were likely to arouse the cupidity of the strangers, with the result that some of the animals would be stolen or unpleasant consequences would flow from the meetings.

So, with now and then an unpleasant variation in the weather, but never checked for more

than an hour or two, and heading slightly to the south, the party steadily progressed until in a little less than a week they passed out of the section now known as Indiana into that of southern Illinois. Straight across this they rode, still crossing the interposing rivers, sometimes with the help of a raft, with the horses swimming alongside, but oftener by wading. They found the Indians of this section inclined to be rovers, and it was generally easy to find the fords used by them. Pushing steadily on, with the spring rapidly advancing on every hand, and with fine weather most of the time, our friends finally came to the banks of the mighty Mississippi, at a point directly opposite St. Louis.

This city, which to-day is one of the leading ones in the Union, was at that time an unsightly collection of cabins and wooden houses strung along the river. Founded long before by the French as a trading post, it had not developed much beyond that when visited by Deerfoot and his companions. The Mississippi was broad, muddy from recent freshets and rapid. Looking across to the town the Shawanoe declared that it would not do to attempt to swim the river, though the task was not impossible.

It was early in the forenoon when they came to the Father of Waters, and they began making signals to those on the other side to come to their help. There were plenty of boatmen who turned an honest penny in this way, and the party was not kept waiting long. A broad flat boat, with a square sail, was seen to put out from the wharf, and the two occupants began laboring with might and main. They used long poles for most of the distance, for the wind was more favorable for the return, then swung big paddles, and so at last brought the awkward craft to the eastern bank.

The situation was complicated at first because the couple were Frenchmen who could hardly speak a word of English, but it was easy to make them understand that their services were needed to place the party in the town on the other bank. George and Victor Shelton had a moderate supply of Spanish silver—that country still claiming the territory—and Deer-foot carried some. The Blackfoot, of course, had nothing of the kind. The price asked by the Frenchmen was moderate, and men and animals went aboard.

Horses and owners proved a dangerously

heavy cargo. The looks of fear showed on the faces of the *voyageurs*, as they were by profession, when Zigzag, the last, stepped gingerly aboard with his load. Even Deerfoot was anxious, for the flatboat sank near to its gunwales. Fortunately a moderate breeze was blowing in the right direction, and by trimming boat and using care the party made the passage without mishap.

On the western bank our friends found themselves in a motley and interesting community. The chief business of St. Louis, as it continued to be long afterward, was trading in furs. From that point boats ascended the Mississippi or, a short distance above, turned off up the Missouri, the big brother of the great stream, carrying with them hunters and trappers, some of whom remained for long months in the wild regions of the Northwest. When the *voyageurs*, with their rhythmic songs and vigorous swing of their oars, came down the river again, they brought with them valuable loads of peltries, which found ready sale at the post. The pay received by these hardy adventurers, and which represented in most instances toil, privations and perils extending through many

weary weeks, was, as a rule, speedily wasted in riotous living. Penniless, remorseful and without credit, the hunters and trappers had no choice but to make off again, returning in due time to repeat their folly, or mayhap to fall victims to the treachery of the red men whose territory they invaded.

The visitors attracted less attention than they expected. Indians and white hunters were too common a sight in St. Louis to be remarked upon. Perhaps if the inhabitants had known that the last visitors were on their way to the other side of the continent they would have given them more heed, but, on the advice of Deerfoot, the secret was kept from all chance acquaintances.

When Mul-tal-la and his companion came down the Missouri in a canoe it was easy enough to transport themselves to the eastern bank. They obtained the boat in the country of Iowa Indians, and, leaving it on the eastern bank, never saw it again.

As a good deal of the day remained the travelers ate their noon meal at one of the taverns, where the food was less inviting than the game secured by their own rifles, and then

remounting, they headed across the country for a hamlet named La Charrette, about which they had made inquiries and learned that it was the last white settlement on the Missouri. It was too far to reach that day, but they expected to make it on the morrow if no check occurred. Even though they were so near St. Louis they found no lack of game, and the question of food gave them the least concern of any. The Blackfoot, however, had told his friend more than once that they were to reach sections where the matter would be found one of considerable difficulty.

La Charrette proved to be a dilapidated hamlet of half a dozen log cabins, standing close to the river. The country was so open when they approached the wretched dwellings that our friends were riding in a bunch, with Zigzag a little to the rear. Several half-clothed children were seen playing in the mud near the water's edge, but no one else for the moment was visible. Deerfoot had just remarked that he was so unfavorably impressed with the appearance of the little settlement that they would not stop, as had been his intention, when a man was seen to come out of the door of the

nearest cabin. He carried a long rifle, was dressed in the costume of the hunters of Kentucky, and was as straight and erect as an Indian. He paused and looked down at the children, apparently unaware of the approach of the horsemen.

Victor, who was riding at the elbow of Deerfoot, heard him utter an exclamation of astonishment. Turning his head, he saw the Shawanoe intently studying the man who had just come into view. The next moment Deerfoot made another exclamation, and, leaping from his horse, ran toward the other. The latter was quick to detect the sound of his footsteps, and turned to look at him. As he did so the boys gained a fair view of his face. He had a somewhat elongated countenance, was smoothly shaven, with a prominent nose, and seemed to be in middle life.

It was evident that he recognized Deerfoot before the latter reached him. The man was seen to smile, stride forward and warmly grasp the hand of the dusky youth, while the two talked fast, though their words could not be overheard.

“They seem to be old acquaintances,” said

the wondering Victor. "I don't see how that can be, for Deerfoot has never been in this part of the country."

"But the man may have been in ours. I never saw him before; have you?"

The hunter had turned his gaze from the face of Deerfoot, apparently because of something said by him, and was looking at the Blackfoot and the brothers, who were approaching with their horses on a slow walk. Deerfoot also turned and beckoned the boys to draw near. They did so, scrutinizing the stranger, whom they certainly had never seen until then.

To their amazement the young Shawanoe introduced them to Daniel Boone, the most famous pioneer of the early West. The boys had heard of him times without number, for he was an old acquaintance of their father, and they knew how intimate he and Kenton had been. He was genial and pleasant, although always inclined to reserve, and insisted that the company should dismount and spend the rest of the day and night with him.

It was hard to refuse, but the signs of poverty, and especially the sight of several wan faces peering through the broken windows,



Daniel Boone and Deerfoot.

decided Deerfoot that it would be more considerate for them to make excuse. The presence of so many, even if divided among several households, could not but be burdensome.

But the boys dismounted and walked with Deerfoot and Boone to the cabin from which the pioneer had emerged, and found seats on the broken-down porch. The Blackfoot preferred to stay where he was and look after the horses.

The talk was one that the boys remembered all their lives. The sight of Deerfoot, who was as well known to Boone as to Kenton, seemed to warm the cockles of the pioneer's heart, and he talked with a freedom that would have astonished his friends. Deerfoot did not hesitate to tell him of the destination of himself and boys and the long venturesome journey before them. The mild blue eyes lit up.

"I wish I could go with you!" exclaimed Boone.

"Why can't you?" asked Deerfoot. "It will make all our hearts glad."

The great ranger shook his head.

"No; I'm too old."

"Why, you can't be more than fifty, if you are that much," said the impulsive Victor.

With a smile that showed his fine, even teeth, Boone said:

“Fifty years ago I was older than Deerfoot is now, for I’m close to three score and ten. I do a little hunting, as I expect to do to the end of my life, but I couldn’t stand such a tramp as you have started on, my friends. Howsumever, it’s the best thing in the world for these youngsters, and they couldn’t have better company than Deerfoot.”

“We found that out long ago,” said George Shelton warmly. “If it hadn’t been for him, my brother and I would have never lived to be here.”

“My brother shouldn’t talk that way,” protested the Shawanoe with a blush.

“Haven’t you always told us to speak the truth?” asked Victor. “And you know what George just said is as true as it can be.”

Deerfoot would have liked to deny it, but he could not. Nevertheless, it was not pleasing to listen to praise of himself, as, I am forced to say, he was often compelled to do. He shook his head and looked at Boone.

“How long has my brother lived here?”

“Between two and three years. I expect to stay with my relatives till I die.”

The veteran again urged the company to remain over night with him. Their presence had already drawn the attention of every inhabitant of the hamlet. Boone remarked that most of the men were off hunting, but loungers were noticed in front of several of the cabins staring curiously at the visitors, while the women and children did most of their gaping from the windows. Most of these were composed of oiled paper punched through by soiled fingers, but several had been furnished with glass, and there seemed hardly a single sound pane among them all.

Fearing that the people would crowd closer, as they were beginning to do, Deerfoot took advantage of the renewed invitation to rise to his feet and say that it was time they were on the way again. Throughout the interview the Blackfoot sat on his horse gazing indifferently to the westward, as if he discovered nothing of interest in any direction.

Boone warmly shook the hands of Deerfoot and the boys, and waved them good-bye as they rode away.

You have learned something of Daniel Boone, the great pioneer of Kentucky, though,

as I have told you, Simon Kenton was his superior in many respects. Boone was earlier on the ground, being considerably older than Kenton, and that fact helped his fame. He was a colonel in the United States Army, and went to Kentucky before the opening of the Revolution. In 1793 he removed to Upper Louisiana, which at that time belonged to the Spaniards, who appointed him a commandant of a district. It is worth adding, in conclusion, that both Boone and Kenton lived well beyond four-score. There is no denying that an outdoor life is healthful and tends to longevity, even though, as in their cases, it was attended with privation, suffering and no little danger.

CHAPTER V.

A CLOSE CALL.

NOW you must not forget that most of the names of rivers, mountains and settlements which I use in this story had no existence when Deerfoot and his friends started on their journey across the continent. A large number of these names were bestowed by Captains Lewis and Clark, who came after the little party. Some of the titles have stuck, and a good many have undergone changes. It was these explorers who gave the Rocky (then known as Stony) Mountains their name, to say nothing of other peaks and ranges. Lewis and Clark showed much ingenuity in making up the long list, and it must be admitted that in many instances the change of title since then was not an improvement.

Our friends left the Missouri some distance beyond old Fort Osage, where the stream changes its course, and instead of flowing directly east, comes from the north. They

headed a little south of northwest, and when we look upon them again the four were in the western part of the present State of Kansas and below the Arkansas River. Had they turned south they would have had to cross only a comparatively narrow neck of Oklahoma to enter the immense State of Texas.

By this time it was early summer and the region was like fairyland. The surface was rolling prairie, and the luxuriant grass was dotted with an exuberance of wild flowers, brilliant, beautiful and fragrant, while the soft blue sky, flecked here and there by snowy patches of cloud, shut down on every hand. North, south, east, west, every point of the compass showed the same apparently limitless expanse of rolling prairie, watered by many streams and fertile as the "Garden of the Lord."

The party had become accustomed to the varying scenery which greeted them from the hour of leaving their distant home, and especially after crossing the Mississippi, but they were profoundly impressed by the wonderful loveliness on every hand. Mul-tal-la had passed over the same ground before, but it was not clothed in such enchanting verdure. Not

a single tree was in sight, but the grass in some places brushed the bellies of the horses, and no one needed to be told that at no distant day the region would become one of the most prosperous on the continent.

At intervals the horsemen came to higher swells in the prairies, upon which they halted and surveyed the surrounding country. While the weather was warm, there was just a touch of coolness which made it ideal for riding, walking or, in fact, living and drawing one's breath.

The best of fortune had attended the little company thus far. There had been some delays and checks in crossing the streams, and once Zigzag's stubbornness came within a hair of losing the contents of the pack strapped to his back. Bug, the horse of Mul-tal-la, wandered off one night, and he, too, developed such a spell of obstinacy that it was a whole day before he was found again. Had he not been recovered just when he was he would have been run off by a party of Pawnees, who seemed disposed to make a fight for him. These warriors were large, finely formed and numerous enough to wipe out the four, but the exercise of tact finally adjusted matters, and nothing more of an unpleasant nature occurred.

But, without dwelling upon these and other annoying incidents, we find our friends in the section named on this bright, sunshiny forenoon in early summer, riding at a leisurely gait toward the setting sun, for the time had not yet come to turn northward and make for the hunting grounds of the Blackfeet.

Deerfoot checked his horse on the crest of the moderate elevation, with one of the brothers on either side of him, and Mul-tal-la farther to the left. All carefully scanned the horizon and the grand sweep of prairie that inclosed them on every side.

“Do my brothers see anything more than the stretch of plain?” asked Deerfoot.

Naturally one of the first things done by George Shelton at such times was to bring his spyglass to his eye. It was a good instrument and proved of value to all. He had been thus engaged for several minutes when the Shawanoë asked his question.

“No,” was the reply. “There seems to be no end to waving grass and shining flower.”

“Let my brother look to the northward,” said Deerfoot, pointing in that direction, “and tell me what he sees.”

George did as directed. At first he saw nothing unusual, but as he peered he observed a change in the color of the landscape. Far off toward the horizon he noted, instead of the variegated hue, a dark sweep, as if the prairie ended on the shore of a dun-colored lake or sea. It covered thirty degrees of the circle. His first thought was that it was a large body of water, for as he studied it closer he perceived a restless pulsation of the surface, which suggested waves, though there was not a breath of wind where the company had halted.

“It looks to me like a big body of water,” said the boy, lowering his glass.

“Let me have a squint,” remarked Victor, reaching for the glass, which was passed to him.

Deerfoot and Mul-tal-la did not speak, but exchanged significant looks.

Victor held the glass to his eyes for several minutes, while the others waited for him to speak.

“It looks like a body of water,” he finally said, without lowering the instrument, “but, if it is, *it's coming this way!*”

It was the Blackfoot who grinned and uttered the single word:

“Buffaloes!”

“So they are! You might have known that, George.”

“*You* didn’t know it till Mul-tal-la told you.”

Very soon the animals were identified by the naked eye. Numbers had been seen before, but never so large a herd as that upon which all now gazed with rapt attention. There must have been tens of thousands, all coming with that heavy, plunging pace peculiar to those animals. Sometimes an immense drove would be quietly cropping the herbage, when a slight flurry would set several in motion. Then the excitement ran through the whole lot with almost electric suddenness, and all were soon plunging in headlong flight across the plain.

The buffalo, or more properly the American bison, is a stupid creature and subject to the most senseless panics. Thousands have been known to dash at the highest speed straight away. Sometimes the leaders would come abruptly to the top of a lofty bluff, perhaps overlooking a stream deep below. In vain they attempted to hold back or to swerve to one side. The prodigious pressure from the rear was resistless, and they were driven over the cliff into the water, with the others piling upon

them, and those again borne under by the remainder of the herd until hundreds were trampled, smothered and drowned in the muddy water beneath. Only those at the extreme rear were able to save themselves, and that not through any wit of their own.

As the seething host bore down upon the horsemen it was seen that the front, which was spread out over an expanse of several hundred yards, was coming straight for the elevation upon which our friends were waiting and watching them. Bellowing mingled with the thunderous tread of the mighty mass, and the sight was enough to awe the stoutest heart.

“They will trample us to death,” called the scared Victor, looking at Deerfoot, who was calmly contemplating the approaching army. The horses raised their heads, looked toward the brown, undulating mass, snuffed, snorted and trembled with terror, for their instinct told them that the peril was bearing down upon them with hurricane swiftness.

It would not do to wait, for the most frightful of deaths threatened the party. Mul-tal-la slipped from his horse and whipped the blanket from his back. Deerfoot also dismounted, but

did not take his blanket with him, though he carried his gun.

“Let my brothers come with me,” he said sharply to the boys, who nervously sprang from their saddles and hurried to his side.

The Blackfoot ran a few paces in front of the three and began vigorously waving the blanket over his head, shouting at the top of his voice. At the same moment Deerfoot leveled his gun and fired at the nearest bison, which was less than a hundred yards off. The bullet struck the gigantic head, but the beast did not suffer the slightest harm. He plunged forward with the same impetuosity as before.

Deerfoot caught the gun from George’s grasp and fired again, but with no more effect than at first. The horses were snorting and rearing and in danger of breaking off in the irrestrainable panic shown by the bison. The Shawanoe reached for the rifle of Victor, and the lad eagerly passed the weapon to him.

“Let my brothers look to the horses,” he called, still cool but under restrained excitement. The boys ran to the animals and immediately found their hands full, for a horse frantic with fear is one of the most unmanageable of creatures.

Deerfoot did not discharge the third weapon, but awaited the chance to make his shot effective. It was a waste of ammunition to launch a bullet at the iron-like front of a bison. The surest avenue to his seat of life is back of the foreleg. The heads were held so low by the plunging brutes that they acted as shields to the vulnerable portions from that direction, and the position of the Shawanoe did not allow a favorable aim.

Mul-tal-la ran several steps toward the thundering herd, and then began leaping into the air, swinging his blanket and shouting like a crazy man. In any other circumstances his antics would have caused a laugh, but this was no time for merriment. Deerfoot was the only tranquil member of the party, and he stood with weapon half raised, unable to decide what to do to avert the peril sweeping down upon them like a hurricane.

Seconds were beyond value. Unless the bison were diverted at once the breath of life would be crushed out of the four and out of their animals. Wild bellowings filled the air, and peculiar crackling, rattling sounds, limitless in number, were heard. These were caused

by the contact of the horns of the bison, which were crowded so close in many places that the wonder was how they were able to move at all.

The last hope seemed to lie in the Blackfoot. Unless his shoutings and contortions with the fluttering blanket, which threatened to be whipped into shreds, checked the furious beasts, they could not be stayed at all. He produced no more effect than the flicker of a straw in the wind.

At this appalling juncture, Deerfoot, with both arms outstretched, the left hand holding the rifle of Victor Shelton, dashed toward the head of the herd, which was only a few rods away. He was seen to make a tremendous leap, which landed him on the back of an enormous bull. Instead of firing the gun, he grasped it by the barrel and smote the bison with the stock, the blow descending upon one of his eyes. The youth's strange position, which he managed to maintain, gave him the first chance to make a telling shot. Like a flash he fired at the nearest bison, sending the bullet down through the forepart of his body and into a spot so vital that, with a frenzied bellow, he stumbled forward and rolled over and over like

a huge block of wood driven from the throat of a giant piece of ordnance.

While executing his lightning-like movements, the Shawanoe added his shoutings to those of his friend, and then laid about him with the clubbed weapon. The unique performances of the two did the business. The fall of one bison, the strange figure dancing as it seemed in mid-air, injected a panic into that part of the herd, which split into two divisions that thundered past the terrified group as if the elevation formed a small island in the center of a rushing torrent.

Deerfoot allowed himself to be carried a number of yards on the back of his frantic steed. When abreast of the horses he sprang from his perch and ran up beside them, where the boys had all they could do to restrain the animals. As if nothing unusual had occurred, the Shawanoe joined in their efforts, and, by main force, restrained the brutes from breaking away and diving among the bison, where they could not have survived more than a few minutes.

The wedge having been inserted into the onrushing herd, nothing more remained to be

done. The dividing point not only was maintained, but the bison began separating farther back, so that by and by the partition point was twice as distant as at first.

None of the rifles was loaded, and no attempt was made to ram a charge into them while the stampede continued. The Blackfoot, however, seemed to catch the wild ardor of panic, and, dropping his blanket, brought his bow into play. Arrow after arrow was launched at the bison. Though none fell, a number were grievously hurt and, as they dived past, more than one showed an arrow projecting like a giant feather from some part of his body. So enormous was this herd of bison that nearly an hour passed before the last galloped by and followed with undiminished speed the thousands that were headed southward and running as if they would never stop.

CHAPTER VI.

A MISHAP.

THE flight of so immense a number of bison during the dry season would have filled the air with thick clouds of suffocating dust, but our friends were spared this infliction. It was not only early in the season, when the grass was green and the soil damp, but there had been a heavy rainfall a couple of days before.

After the rear of the herd had thundered past, bellowing, flinging their heels and putting forth their best exertions, as if Death himself were nipping at their heels, the little party having quieted their horses, remounted and gazed after the vanishing drove. A singular result of the shots of Deerfoot and Mul-tal-la showed itself. In neither case was the bison killed outright, but the one struck by the Shaw-anoë and four of those hit by the Blackfoot were so badly wounded that they wobbled and sagged down and were quickly crushed. Here

and there, at varying distances, the dark humps were seen in the trampled grass, looking like mounds of brown dirt.

Since the four made it a rule to depend upon their rifles for food, they had no sooner reloaded the weapons than they set out to secure their dinner from the spoils before them. All had eaten bison meat before. Though some profess to relish it, the flesh is rather tough and sometimes so strong that it takes a hungry man to enjoy such a meal. The animal, however, like all others, has his choice portions.

Mul-tal-la was sure that no more palatable feast could be had than from buffalo tongue. Accordingly, he and Deerfoot, leaving the rest of the game untouched, provided themselves with those delicacies, which were well cooked by means of dried buffalo chips, and all declared themselves well satisfied.

Strange that only a comparatively short time ago millions of bison roamed over the prairies of the West, and to-day you never meet a specimen except the few that are preserved with difficulty in Yellowstone Park, and in several zoological collections. The last bison must soon disappear and the animal become

extinct, all because of the wanton cruelty of men who called themselves sportsmen and butchered the creatures by the thousand.

The dinner was made without water, which was a small matter, for there was no need of the explorers suffering on that account, since streams were abundant and they did not have to travel far to obtain the element of the best quality.

It was about the middle of the afternoon that Deerfoot led the way up another of the numerous rises in the prairie, and halted to give the horses a needed rest. Although the pace was kept at a walk, traveling through the luxuriant grass was trying, and consideration was due the animals who did the work.

As usual, the four who dismounted scanned every part of the visible horizon. George Shelton often called his spyglass into use while riding over the plain, and thus gained the pleasure of being the first to announce certain discoveries; but the elevations, that were never of much extent, gave a more favorable view.

Directly westward, in a line with the course they were pursuing, all, without the aid of the glass, observed five or six animals cropping the

grass. They were of delicate build, resembling deer, but looked more dainty and graceful. It was not until after Mul-tal-la and Deerfoot had studied them for several minutes through the glass that the former made known their nature. They were antelopes, one of the fleetest and most quick-sighted animals in the West.

Although they were fully a fourth of a mile away, they saw the travelers the instant they came up the rise of land. They tossed their heads and stared at the strangers while the latter were studying them. Then they dashed off with the speed of the wind, but did not go far when they stopped short, turned part way round and gazed at the horsemen, as if expecting them to follow. Seeing they did not, the antelopes resumed their grazing, the two most timid stopping every now and then to look up, as if in doubt whether they ought not to place a greater distance between them and the strange-looking creatures on the elevation.

“Would my brothers like to eat of antelope?” asked Mul-tal-la, addressing all three of his companions.

“I suppose it would taste good,” replied Victor, “for everything tastes that way in this

part of the world, which I suppose is because I'm so plaguey hungry most of the time."

"Mul-tal-la cannot get nigh enough to bring down the antelopes," remarked Deerfoot, "for they go faster than any of our horses can run."

"My brother Deerfoot cannot get near enough to shoot an antelope, but Mul-tal-la finds no trouble in doing so."

The brothers were astonished by the audacity of this remark. Did the Blackfoot presume to think his fleetness of foot could be compared with that of the Shawanoe, who had never met his equal? They looked at Deerfoot to see how he took the slur. He was never troubled by such trifles.

"It will please the heart of Deerfoot to see his brother bring back one of the antelopes. Does he want Deerfoot's gun?"

"No; it shall be done with Mul-tal-la's bow and arrow," was another surprising declaration.

Saying no more, the Blackfoot, bearing his long bow in his right hand, walked down the gentle slope and moved, not toward the antelopes, but to the south. The timid creatures noticed him at once, for he made no effort to

conceal himself. All the six raised their heads and watched him with evident misgiving. The two that had shown so much fear from the first glanced first at him and then at the group on the rise in the prairie, as if uncertain which was the most to be dreaded.

Had Mul-tal-la walked directly toward the animals they would have been off like so many arrows, but he bore away as if they were not in his mind. As it was, however, three of the antelopes galloped a hundred yards or so to the north, when, seeing that their companions did not follow, they stopped and resumed their staring.

The warrior walked steadily until he was equidistant from his friends and from the antelopes. Still facing away from the latter, he now sank to the ground and began creeping toward the animals. Deerfoot, who, like the boys, was watching every movement, smiled.

“They will not let my brother come nigh enough to reach them with an arrow,” he remarked, not a little amused over what looked like the certain discomfiture of his companion, for, despite the tall grass, he was sure to be detected by the creatures.

Sure enough, he had advanced but a little way when the whole six bounded off as if they would never stop. Mul-tal-la ceased crawling, but did not rise.

“What is he doing?” asked the puzzled Victor, closely watching the red man, who could be plainly seen without the aid of the glass.

His action was curious. Still lying on his face, he raised one hand as far above his head as he could reach, and slowly waved it from side to side with a regular, pendulum movement. The antelopes that were bounding off abruptly stopped, wheeled part way round and stared at the oscillating hand. They stood for a little while, and then one of them began stepping cautiously toward the object. The others reluctantly imitated him, so that the singular sight of six antelopes marching carefully in Indian file was displayed. Deerfoot chuckled, for he now understood the trick.

Before long the leader paused, stared a moment, and then, whirling suddenly around, dashed off with an amazing burst of speed, only, however, to run for less than fifty yards, when the former performance was repeated. The foremost halted, turned once more and

stepped gingerly in the direction of that hand, with the fringed covering for the arm, swaying from side to side. This time he approached nearer than before, though with frequent halts and bluffs at dashing off again.

Had Mul-tal-la varied his rhythmic swing or risen to a stooping posture even, or tried to creep nearer, the antelopes would have fled like so many birds on the wing. But his action was that of an automaton, and all the time he lay low in the grass, never removing his eyes from the game he had marked for his own.

First forward, then a halt, then a brief retreat, followed by a still closer approach, the little farce went on, until the interested Deerfoot and the boys saw that the foremost antelope was almost within reach of Mul-tal-la. Then for some time the issue looked doubtful.

But the same cause that has been the death of unnumbered antelopes proved the undoing of another on this particular afternoon. Five remained in the background, but one, and he the best of the bunch, kept slowly stepping, with frequent stops, until at last he crossed the dead line and sealed his fate.

The pretty creature seemed to awaken to the

startling fact, for he abruptly wheeled to dash off. In the act of turning Mul-tal-la quickly drew his arrow to a head and launched it. The watchers caught a glimpse of the feathered missile as it rose from the grass, made a slight curve, and, while the antelope was turning, buried itself to the feather in his side, entering just back of the fore leg.

The victim made a leap straight up in air, spun around several times like a top, and then dived to the ground, rolled on its side, and, after some pawings, ceased to struggle. Never was game more fairly brought down.

The moment Mul-tal-la let fly with the arrow he sprang to his feet and hurried after it. The five antelopes were off at full speed, never pausing, and soon disappeared in the distance. The Blackfoot was seen to bend over his quarry and busy himself with his knife. Then he walked proudly toward his friends, bringing his prize with him. He had done what he promised, and all congratulated him.

It was still early in the afternoon and the party resumed traveling, deflecting a little to the south. Before it was dark they came to a small tributary of the Arkansas, where they

decided to camp for the night. When the antelope meat was dressed, washed and broiled in the same way as their midday meal had been prepared, it proved rather disappointing. The animal was lean, the meat tough and not specially palatable. It was agreed that they would have done better by making use of the best portions of one of the bison which had been brought down.

Mul-tal-la, who knew all about these timid creatures, told his friends of their most striking peculiarity. While it is impossible to approach them by direct means, an appeal to their insatiate curiosity rarely or never fails. Even the wolves make use of this remarkable weakness. One of the cunning pests will lie in the grass, revealing just enough of his head or body to attract the notice of the antelopes in the distance. The trick is more difficult in this case than when a hunter plays it. Sometimes it is so prolonged, because of the suspicions of the game, that one wolf will relieve another before the victim is brought near enough to be seized.

A more common plan is for the wolves to attack the creatures when crossing rivers or

large streams. They are poor swimmers, though among the fleetest of animals, and are helpless when thus assailed.

The morrow proved as fine as the preceding two or three days. The sun shone bright and the few clouds drifting across the sky only served to make the deep blue softer and more beautiful. While the morning was somewhat cool, the weather was quickly modified by the rays of the sun. Even the horses seemed to catch the glow of high spirits and broke into an easy gallop without any urging on the part of their riders. Zigzag was the only one that objected, and he did it through simple stubbornness, for his burden was not onerous.

The afternoon of this day brought an experience to Deerfoot the like of which was never known before or afterward. He was thrown from his horse, and that, too, when his gait was a walk. It came about in this manner:

He was riding slightly in advance, as was his custom. He had swept the horizon with his eyes, as he always did at intervals, and seeing nothing unusual, allowed himself to sink into a reverie. This was not amiss, for such spells of meditation never lasted long and nothing

of an alarming character could steal undetected upon them, even if he should forget his surroundings for an indefinite time. Mul-tal-la was always alert, and George Shelton was as fond as ever of appealing to his spyglass.

The horse Simon was walking easily forward when one hoof entered a gopher hole and he sank to his knee. The stop was so abrupt that Deerfoot, who was entirely off his guard, slid over the animal's neck to the ground. He was taken completely by surprise, without a second for preparation, but even then he dropped upon his feet and turned to learn the cause of the mishap.

George and his brother smiled at the discomfiture of their friend, but ceased the next instant when they saw that his horse had been seriously hurt. He attempted to take a step, but checked himself with a moan of pain, and then rested on his three legs. The alarmed Deerfoot stooped and gently passed his hand over the injured portion. Simon moaned again and placed his nose on the shoulder of his owner, as if begging him to give him relief.

The young Shawanoe straightened up, patted the forehead of the suffering beast, and said in a choking voice:

“His leg is broken!”

And then he nerved himself to do the hardest thing of his life. With the eyes of the dumb animal fixed appealingly upon him, as if he read his purpose, Deerfoot brought his rifle to a level and sent a bullet through the brain of the horse.

It was an act of mercy, but it hurt the youth more than the victim. He stood with the smoking weapon in his hand, looked at Simon as he sank unconscious to the ground, breathing out his life as he did so with a single pitiful moan. Then Deerfoot turned away and, bowing his head, sobbed like a child.

Simon had always been a good animal, though he was not the equal, either in speed or intelligence, of many others; but a man and horse cannot be comrades very long without forming an affection for each other. Deerfoot's kindness to such dumb beasts always drew them toward him, and he had learned to love this devoted horse who had borne him hundreds of miles from his home.

Neither George nor Victor Shelton spoke, for they sympathized so deeply with their friend that their voices would have broken had they

tried to utter a word. They had reined up their own animals, and now quietly waited for the Shawanoe to speak. The Blackfoot had also halted and, instead of looking at his comrade, turned his face toward the west. Not a muscle of his face moved, and no one could have read his thoughts, but it cannot be doubted that he sympathized with the young Shawanoe. Unable to console him, Mul-tal-la held his peace.

It was several minutes before Deerfoot was able to master his grief. By and by he regained his self-control, but all saw the traces of tears when he faced his friends. He spoke in an even voice, but his words were remarkable:

“My brothers, Deerfoot has read the Bible through many times. He has searched every page, but has not yet found a place where it says that the poor animals like Simon shall not inherit the kingdom that awaits us. Deerfoot believes he shall meet Simon again in that country, and if my brothers think different let them not say so.”

And yet there are thousands to-day who hold the same sweet belief that was held by Deerfoot the Shawanoe.

CHAPTER VII.

JACK HALLOWAY.

THE loss of Deerfoot's horse was received more seriously by the friends of the young Shawanoe than by himself. There were several ways of meeting the difficulty. George Shelton proposed that the load carried by Zigzag should be divided among the others and the animal used by the dismounted one. The latter shook his head, and Victor suggested that he and his brother take turns with him in riding their horses. Before that proposition was made Mul-tal-la came forward with a similar one affecting only him and his comrade.

The Shawanoe declined them all.

“Deerfoot will walk,” he calmly said. “He has done so many times. He will not grow tired as soon as the horses. Let us go forward.”

To show that the question was settled he strode off across the prairie, carrying his rifle

in a trailing position and stepping with his elastic gait, which he could maintain hour after hour without fatigue. Moreover, it would have been no hardship for him to strike into a lope which would have kept the animals at a trot throughout the day. You know that a man, trained to the exercise, can walk farther than a horse, and no person was ever better trained than the young Shawanoe.

The oppression caused by his loss showed itself for a long time. He held his place in advance of the others, rarely speaking and often acting as if unaware that he had companions with him. They respected his moods, and though they chatted among themselves, said little or nothing to him.

About the middle of the afternoon the boys descried an object in the horizon to the northeast, which at first they took to be a white cloud heaped against the sky. But its stationary position and its peculiar form revealed that it was a mountain peak whose summit was covered with snow. Seen against the sky it had a soft bluish tint which made it a most striking figure in the landscape. The clear air of these regions makes distances deceptive, objects

seeming to be much nearer the spectator than they are. When Victor said he thought they might camp that night at its base, the Blackfoot told him that by traveling all of next day they would hardly be able to reach the mountain, which is one of the loftiest of that section.

The truth of Mul-tal-la's words was evident when, after fully four hours of brisk walking, they camped on the bank of a small creek and saw the sun sink behind the mountain peak, which appeared to be as far away as ever. The plain was still treeless, and the fire kindled on the gently sloping bank was of dry buffalo chips such as had already done them service. Before daylight had departed the horizon was scanned with the aid of the spyglass without discovering anything of an unusual character.

It was the turn of the red men to act as sentinels, and Deerfoot quietly said that he would take the first watch, calling the Blackfoot when he thought proper. As usual, he read a chapter from his Bible. After he had finished and the devotions of all were over, he again took out the book, placing himself so that enough light fell upon the pages to permit him to read. The last sight that the boys had of him was in this

motionless posture and occasionally turning a leaf. Thus he sat when the three sank into restful slumber. The succulent grass was so abundant that the horses, relieved of saddles, bridles and burdens, were left free to crop as long as they chose and to sleep when the notion came to them.

A half hour after his friends had fallen asleep Deerfoot put away his book and rose to his feet. It was profoundly still. On his right flowed the slightly muddy stream, no more than fifty feet wide and of shallow depth. In other directions stretched the slightly rolling prairie until lost in the gloom. The moon was near the full, but its light was treacherous and uncertain because of the masses of clouds that slowly drifted across its face. At times one could see quite clearly for a hundred yards or more, and then the shadows crept up to the camp, whose fire threw out comparatively little light. Now and then the watchful sentinel was able to detect the dim outlines of the farther shore, even when the surface of the stream did not reflect the mild glow of the fire.

Nothing escaped his vigilant eye. It was not yet midnight when Bug, the horse of Mul-tal-la,

showed a strange restlessness. He whinnied softly two or three times, and finally came to his feet. Deerfoot moved silently to his side, patted his neck and spoke soothingly. The animal showed no alarm, but rather curiosity. His nose was pointed to the south, where he seemed to scent something unusual.

The Shawanoe waited till the moon emerged from the clouds and then peered in that direction. He could detect nothing out of the common. He walked a little way and again waited for the moon's face to become unveiled. Still all looked the same as before. He went back to Bug and found him in the former position, with ears pricked forward, nose thrust slightly out and breathing more rapidly than was his wont. The other horses gave no sign of disturbance.

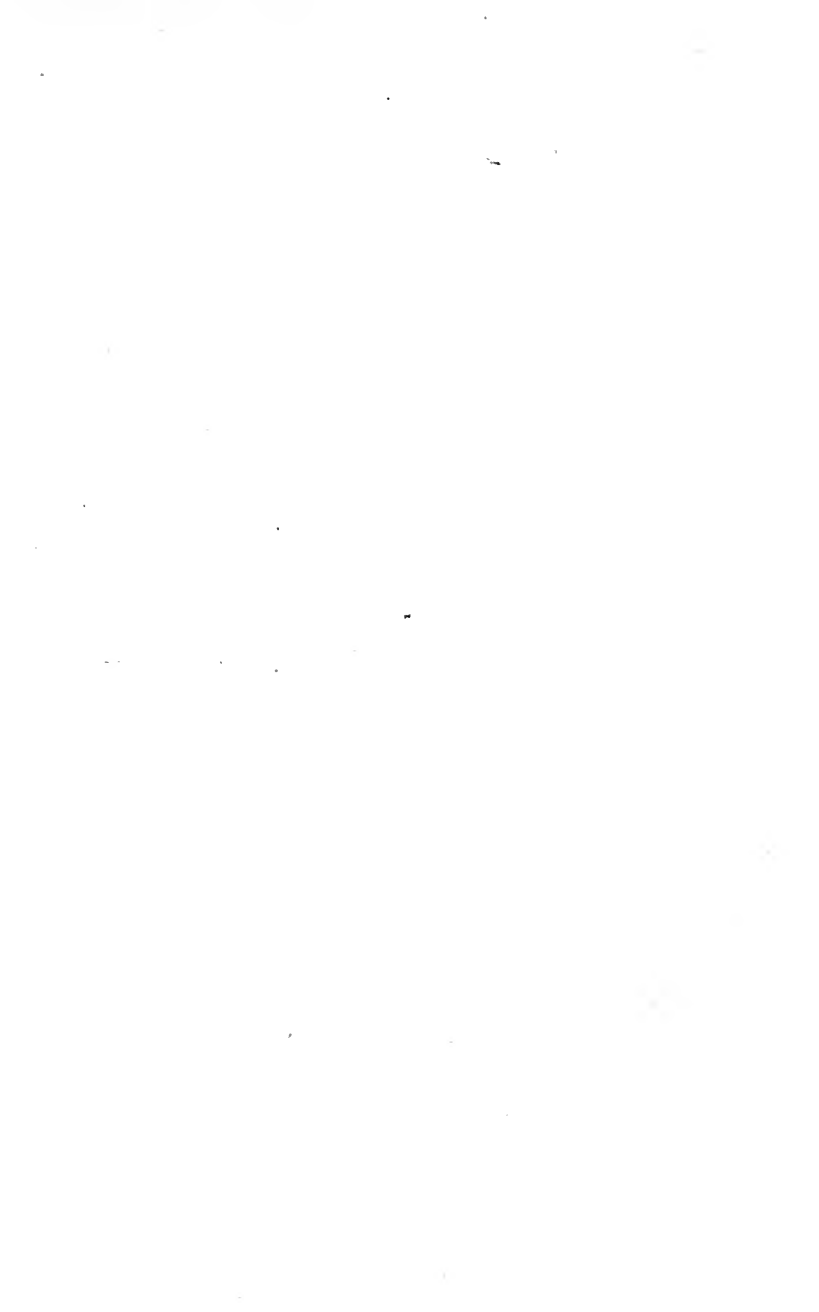
The Shawanoe was puzzled. He felt that if this dumb brute was able to detect the approach of danger he ought to do the same. Kneeling, he pressed one ear against the damp ground.

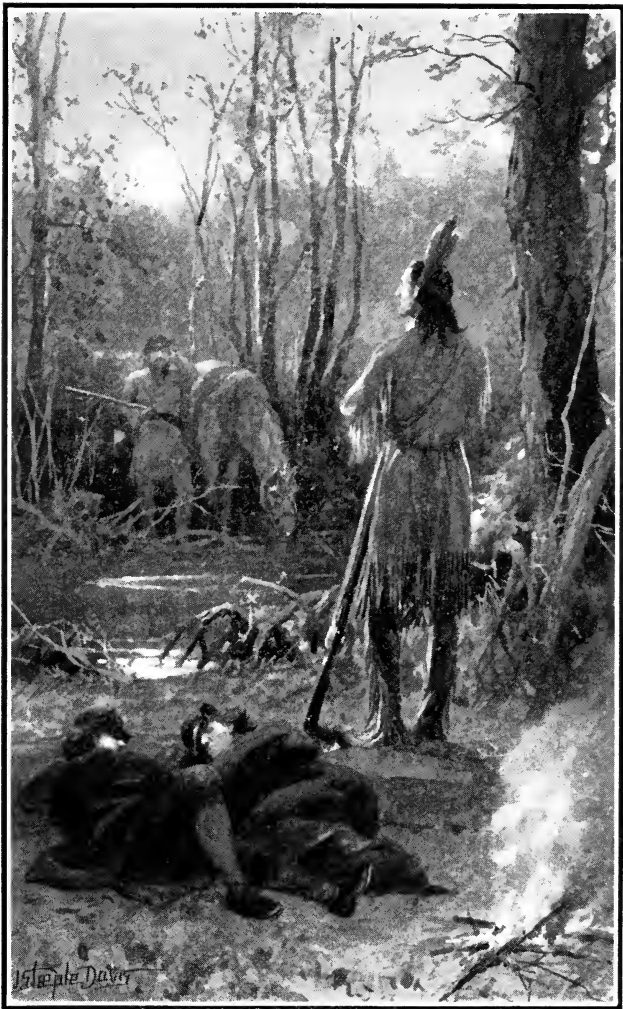
As he did so he was sensible of a faint rhythmic, velvet-like tremor, which was inaudible when he raised his head. Using the earth again as a medium, he listened and brought all

his faculties into play. The singular pulsation neither increased nor diminished. The best comparison he could make was to that of the multitudinous tramping of thousands of tiny feet upon the earth miles away, recalling the gradual subsidence of the racket created by the stamping of the bison. Deerfoot knew it was not produced by those animals. It could not have been elk or deer, for they never herded in such vast numbers, nor could it have been made by wolves, since their tread was too soft for the sound to penetrate far.

The Shawanoe was mystified. Rising to his feet again he stood gazing southward, wondering what strange thing was to come out of the flickering moonlight. But none appeared, and hearing a movement of Bug, he turned and saw him disposing himself for the night. He lay down on the grassy earth, prepared to continue the rest which had been broken so curiously.

This looked as if the uneasiness of the horse was over. A few minutes later Deerfoot again placed his ear against the ground. Immediately he was aware that that faint, tremulous throbbing which had so mystified him was passing away. Whatever had caused it was





“ ‘ Helloa ! ’ ”

receding, and soon the silence became as profound as before. He was still at a loss to understand its nature, though he thought it was produced by animals treading the earth in immense numbers.

Walking back to camp, he noted the three unconscious forms wrapped in their blankets, for there was enough sharpness in the air to make the warmth pleasant and little heat was given out by the fire. The Shawanoe paused just far enough away to be revealed dimly in the subdued glow, and was leaning on his rifle, listening, looking and meditating, when the stillness was broken by a single exclamation:

“*Helloa!*”

It was the voice of a white man on the other side of the stream which ran close to the camp. The face of the moon happened to be clear at that moment, and glancing across, Deerfoot saw a shadowy figure standing on the edge of the water. The head and front of a horse showed at his side, and he was evidently studying the camp upon which he had come.

Deerfoot straightened up and promptly called back:

“Helloa! Come over and see us.”

As he spoke he walked down to the edge of the stream, as if to meet the stranger, who in a cheery voice replied:

“That suits me. I was thinkin’ of doin’ that same thing.”

He was seen to swing himself upon the back of his horse, whose ribs he kicked with his heels and ordered forward. The animal stepped with some hesitation into the water, snuffing and feeling his way. He had advanced only two or three paces when Deerfoot observed that he was followed by two other horses, each of which carried a large pack on his back. The distance was short, but it took some time for the three animals to ford the stream, which was no more than two or three feet deep, with a bottom of soft mud.

The moment the leader touched dry land the man slipped from the saddle and extended his hand.

“Why, you’re an Injin!” he exclaimed. “I didn’t think that, but I’m powerful glad to see you.”

“And Deerfoot is glad to see his brother,” replied the smiling Shawanoe, returning the pressure of the other.

“Who are you?” asked the white man, peering closely into the countenance as dimly seen in the firelight.

“Deerfoot, and a Shawanoe by birth.”

“Shawanoe,” repeated the white man. “I don’t remember havin’ heerd tell of them varmints—that is of that *tribe*,” he corrected with a laugh; “no offence.”

“Their home is a good many miles from here, in Ohio.”

“Ah! that explains it. I’ve seed worse lookin’ redskins than you.”

“And plenty better ones,” said Deerfoot, rather taken with the off-hand manner of the newcomer.

“Dunno ’bout that. There are a few good ones among the redskins and some powerful mean ones. I’m suited with you so fur, from the ground up.”

The visitor was of massive frame, fully six feet high, broad in proportion, with a grizzly beard that covered his face to the eyes and flowed over his breast. He was dressed like a half-civilized Indian, wearing a fur cap, thick shoes instead of moccasins, and with a heavy, loose coat flung over his deerskin hunting shirt.

He had a strong, well-formed nose and bright gray eyes, which peered keenly from under his shaggy brows. His voice was deep, and with a genial musical tone which was pleasing and fitted well his frank manner. He shifted his long rifle to his left hand when he extended the other to the Shawanoe and scanned him with a sharpness evidently acquired by his long experience on the prairies and in the mountains.

“Deerfoot is glad to meet his brother. He hopes he will stay for the rest of the night with him and his friends.”

“Who mought they be?” asked the man, looking around at the three forms wrapped in blankets near the fire. The boys were sleeping quietly, and even the Blackfoot did not seem to have been disturbed by the rather boisterous greeting of the visitor.

“Afore you tell me about 'em, I guess I may as well unship my rudder,” added the latter, who proceeded deliberately to remove the loads from the other two horses and place them on the ground. Then each was freed from his belongings and given a resounding slap in turn.

“Off with you and none of your tricks. If I haven't cured you of tryin' to sneak off I'll cure you in the mornin', and don't you forget it.”

His own horse kicked up his heels, flirted his head and led the way, the others soberly following out into the gloom till they came to the place where the animals of our friends were reposing. There was some neighing, meant for greetings, and then no further attention was given by them to one another.

Deerfoot flung some chips on the blaze and sat down, inviting his visitor by a gesture to do the same. He assumed a lolling posture and produced a short black clay pipe. Crumbling some plug tobacco in the palm of his hand, he poked it into the bowl with his forefinger and lit it from the fire.

“My name is Jack Halloway,” he said, after several puffs. “I’ve spent the winter in the mountains, trapping beaver and foxes and sich, and am on my way to St. Louis with a good load of peltries. I’ve had better luck than usual and am later in gettin’ back than is gin’rally the case, but it paid to wait, though I did have some trouble with the Snake Injins. Howsumever, you said you was goin’ to tell me ’bout your friends that seem to be sleepin’ powerful heavy like.”

Deerfoot had decided that no harm could

come from telling this man the truth about himself and his companions, and he now did so. The Indian belonged to the Blackfoot tribe, and had been on a visit a long way to the east. Deerfoot had agreed to accompany him on his return home, but hoped to be with his own friends again the following year. Then he told of the twin boys, sons of a friend of his. One was going into a decline because of grief over the loss of his parent, and it was agreed that the only cure was through diverting his thoughts and energies by this long and hard journey. That no mistake had been made was proved long before, for the lad had gained so rapidly in strength and spirits that he was his former self again and physically the equal of his brother in every respect.

Jack Halloway listened with close interest, for the story was remarkable. He sagely remarked, however, that if the boys had been so greatly benefited the wisest thing to do was for the three to turn back and allow the Blackfoot to finish his journey alone.

“I jedge from what I’ve heerd that you’re a powerful cute Injin and know that, though you’re a good many miles from St. Louis, you

ain't half way to the Pacific yit. I've never been there myself, but I know 'nough of the mountains and Injins to know that the job is the biggest thing in all creation. Depend upon it, Shawanoe, *you'll never get home onless you turn back now!*"

This was said with great earnestness, the trapper nodding his head and slapping his knee with his palm.

"The words of my brother are wise, but it would sadden the hearts of my brothers if we went home, and he who was ill would become ill again and die."

"See here, younker, own up now; it's *you* who'd feel the worst."

And to help make his meaning clear, Jack Halloway leaned over and thrust his thumb into the ribs of Deerfoot and chuckled. The Shawanoe could not help smiling.

"Deerfoot can never be happy till he looks upon the face of the great water that lies far toward the setting sun. He must go on."

"Wal, you're boss of the job, as I can see from what you say, but I want to tell you one thing that you don't know."

"There are many things that Deerfoot doesn't know."

The trapper glanced around, as if afraid of being overheard, and then lowered his voice almost to a whisper as he leaned toward him:

“The varmints in the mountains that you’ve got to git through are gettin’ more cantakerous than ever. I’ve trapped and hunted among ’em for nigh onto twenty year, and never had as much trouble as last winter. I’ve been told by the boys that come down the Missouri in the spring that there’s just as good huntin’ and trappin’ up that way, and the varmints don’t bother ’em half as much as out here; so I’ve made up my mind to strike out for that part of the world next fall when I go for the beaver runs agin.”

Jack Halloway was not slow to see that his warnings were thrown away on the young Shawanoe, and was discreet enough to take another line. He puffed his lips for some minutes, continually glancing at Deerfoot, who tried to act as if unconscious of this scrutiny, which at times became embarrassing. Suddenly the trapper started like a man who had forgotten something.

“That’s powerful qu’ar,” he said, “and I beg your pardon.”

While speaking he was groping hurriedly through an interior pocket of his coat, and now brought forth a flask and twisted the cork from it.

“I allers take a keg of it into the mountains, for there’s nothin’ like it when you find the weather a bit too cold, and it’s just as good when it’s too hot or you’ve got the blue devils and don’t feel right. After you.”

And he leaned over and reached the flask to Deerfoot.

CHAPTER VIII.

GOOD SEED.

THE young Shawanoe smiled, shook his head and looked into the keen eyes before him.

“Deerfoot thanks his brother, but he never tasted of liquor and will die before he wets his lips with it.”

The amazement of the trapper was not without its humorous feature. He remained leaning toward the youth, his hand outstretched with the uncorked flask in it and staring at him as if literally paralyzed. Then he drew a deep breath, swung back and exclaimed:

“Wal, I’ll be skulped! You’re the first Injin I ever seed that wouldn’t sell his moccasins for a swaller of red eye. It gits me!”

Deerfoot watched him with amused interest. Jack Halloway held up the flask at arm’s length and surveyed it thoughtfully. Once he started to place it to his lips, but shook his head, then jammed the cork back in place (the

screwed tops were unknown in those days) and thrust the flask into his pocket again.

“Ef you won’t drink with me, Shawanoe, I won’t drink afore you.”

“Let my brother do as he feels like doing.”

“Which the same is what I’ve done. As I was sayin’, I allers take a keg of the extract of happiness with me and manage things so it will last till I get back to St. Louis; but bein’ as I stayed longer than usual, I’ve come so near running out that that flask has got to keep me alive for some weeks to come. I tell you it’s powerful tough, but there’s no help for it. Every trapper or hunter that I run across—if I run across any—will be as bad off as me.”

“When my brother gets to St. Louis what will he do with his peltries?”

“Why, sell ’em, of course. What did you think?”

“He has a good many,” remarked Deerfoot, glancing at the piles on the ground near at hand.

“You’re right. It has been a good season, and them skins is vallyble. There’s one black fox that’s the same as a hundred dollars to me, and the rest will bring three hundred dollars more.”

“My brother has much money saved from his labor.”

“Much money! Not a blamed cent, though I orter have. Shawanoe, the biggest fools—I admit it—is we trappers, who spend winters in the mountains, freezin’, starvin’ and dodging redskins, and then travel hundreds of miles to git back to St. Louis, where we can sell our peltries as quick as a wink. Then we go onto a big, glorious spree, and at the end of a week or two haven’t enough left to buy a plug of ’backer. We loaf around, doin’ ’nough odd jobs to keep us from starvin’ till the weather begins to git cold, when we’re off for the mountains agin. And so it goes year after year, and we’re fools to the end.”

“Is my brother alone in the world?”

“Lucky I haven’t any wife or children, but I’ve got the best old mother that ever drawed breath. She has a little home which she manages to hold onto by takin’ in sewin’ and doin’ little fancy things for the neighbors, who be kind to her. If they warn’t I don’t know what would become of her, for I’m no good; I don’t deserve such a mother,” added the trapper with a sigh, “for she is never as happy as when I’m

with her, and she'd work her fingers off for me. 'Bout all she does is work and pray, and never an unkind word to say to her good for nothin' son."

"By and by she will close her eyes and go to the Great Spirit, and when my brother walks into the little home she will be gone and"—

"Thar! thar! Don't say nothin' more!" interrupted the trapper with a wave of his hand. "I can't stand it. If I go back home and find her dead, as I 'spose I shall some day, I'll die myself; if I don't, I'll blow my worthless brains out, for I won't want to live."

"My brother longs to see his mother again. If he should kill himself or do wrong he will never see her more. Let him live right and they shall dwell together forever. Let him go back to St. Louis and drink no more. Let him give the money to the mother who loves her son and has suffered much for him. Then my brother will make her face shine with happiness, and she will live much longer."

Jack Halloway turned his head and stared at Deerfoot for a full minute without stirring or speaking. The Shawanoe kept his gaze upon the fire, but he knew the scrutiny he was

under, and he "waited." When the trapper spoke it was in a low voice, as if addressing himself:

"To think of an Injin talkin' that way to Jack Halloway! Why, I never had a white man do it; but his words are as true as gospel. Fact is, they *are* gospel."

He relapsed into a reverie which lasted so long that Deerfoot gently interposed.

"My brother tells me that his mother prays. Does my brother pray?"

Jack started and again stared at the dusky youth.

"This beats all creation. Yas, I used to pray, but it was a long time ago, when I was a younker and bowed my head at my mother's knee. I've been a wild, wicked scamp that ain't worth the prayer of such an angel as she is. Shawanoe, do *you* pray?"

"Once when Deerfoot was a child he was as wicked as Satan himself; but he was made a prisoner by the palefaces. There was a good woman among them who told him about the Great Spirit who is a loving Father to all His children, and she taught him to pray to Him. Deerfoot prays to his Father every morning

and night, and often through the day, and his Father always listens and does that which is best for him. Let my brother do the same. He will give him strength to drink that poison no more, and when he dies he will see his mother again."

Again Jack Halloway asked himself whether he was awake or dreaming. He had heard in a vague way of the missionaries and their labors among the Indians. He had been told that there were some converts among the red men, but never until now had he seen one. Like most of his calling, he looked upon all Indians as bad, and therefore the implacable enemies of the white men. He had had more than one desperate encounter with them, and when he groped his way into the mountains it was always a contest of wits between him and them, with the prospects more than once against him. He looked upon them as he looked upon so many rattlesnakes, that were likely to be found coiled at any moment in his path.

And yet here was a full-blooded Indian talking to him better than he had ever heard any missionary talk. The trapper knew from the build, the alertness, the assurance of move-

ment of the youth, and a certain something impossible to describe that he would be a terrific antagonist in a fight, but nothing seemed further from the Shawanoe's thoughts. He talked with the persuasive gentleness of a woman, and in all his experience never had the grizzled trapper felt such an arrow pierce right into the core of his heart.

In a few simple words Deerfoot had drawn a vivid picture of that sweet, patient, forgiving, praying parent, waiting in her far-away home the return of the rough, profane, wicked son, for whom she was ready to sacrifice her life at any time, and, indeed, was sacrificing it to his thoughtlessness and indifference. Most astounding of all, the Shawanoe had held out a hope to him that he had never known of or in fact dreamed had an existence.

With that fine-grained tact which was one of Deerfoot's most marked traits, he refrained from breaking in upon the meditation of the other. He knew the leaven was working and did not wish to interfere with it.

Jack Halloway, the trapper, now did a singular and unexpected thing. Without a word, he rose to his feet and faced the stream flowing

past the camp. The youth, who was watching his movements, saw him bring the flask from his breast pocket and swing his arm backward. Then he brought it quickly forward, striking and checking his hand smartly against his hip and making the throw known as "jerking." The flask shot from his grasp and sped out in the gloom, falling with a splash that was plainly heard in the stillness.

"Thar, Shawanoe!" he exclaimed, facing about, "you've made me do what I never believed any man could make Jack Halloway do. Now I've got to travel all the way to St. Louis without a swaller of the infarnal stuff. It'll take two or three weeks, and I know it'll be powerful tough, but *I'm going to do it!*"

Deerfoot had risen to his feet and, in a voice tremulous with emotion, he said:

"My brother has done well. He will never be sorry. The Great Spirit will make him strong, but my brother must pray to Him for himself."

"Pray!" repeated the trapper; "that's goin' to be 'bout all I'll do atween here and St. Louis, and I won't let up till the good Lord does what you say, and what I know He'll be power-

ful glad to do for such a miserable scamp as me.”

The next act of the trapper was as remarkable as the former one. He strode out to where he had sent the three horses, roused each and began reloading them and saddling and bridling his own. Suspecting his purpose, Deerfoot asked:

“Will not my brother wait till morning?”

“Not a minute longer than I have to. I’m afeard that mother of mine will die afore I can git to her and beg her to forgive and help me to be a half-decent man.”

Instead of protesting, Deerfoot aided in reloading the animals. Neither spoke while this was going on. When it was finished and the massive trapper had swung again into his saddle, he reached his broad palm down to his new friend.

“Good-bye, Shawanoe. May I ax you when you’re at your prayers to put in a word for me? I’ve an idee that the Lord will be more pleased to hear from you than me.”

“Deerfoot will never forget to do as his brother asks, and he is sure that all will now be well with his brother.”

“I’ll make a big wrastle for it. Good-bye!”

He struck his heels against the side of his horse, who, though roused from rest, moved off, followed by the pack animals as if they were a couple of docile dogs. They soon disappeared in the moonlight, but Deerfoot stood for a long time gazing thoughtfully toward the point where he had last seen the man who had come so strangely into his life and then passed out again.

“Something tells Deerfoot that his brother shall do well and they shall meet again.”

The Shawanoe, as we shall learn in due time, was right in this belief.

A soft rustling caused him to look round. The Blackfoot was standing at his side.

“My brother is late in awaking Mul-tal-la,” he quietly said.

“My brother did not need to be awakened, for he heard the words of the white man who has just gone.”

“Yes; Mul-tal-la heard all that was said by him and Deerfoot. The Great Spirit is pleased with Deerfoot.”

“Deerfoot prays that He will ever be pleased with him. He is striving to live so the Great Spirit will not frown upon him.”

Forgetting in his ardor the somewhat formal manner of speaking, the Blackfoot earnestly said:

“If you are not good, then there *never* was a good man. Let my brother rest, for the Great Spirit will watch over him like a father.”

The Shawanoe walked to the place vacated by the other and lay down, while the Blackfoot took upon himself the duty of sentinel for the remainder of the night.

As Deerfoot stretched out he recalled the singular disturbance heard earlier in the evening, and he shifted the enveloping blanket so as to allow him to rest one ear against the cool, damp earth.

As he did so he caught the same faint, curious pulsing again. It was more distinct and instantly drove all thought of sleep from his brain. It was as if thousands of feet were striking the ground, mingling, running into one another, and yet preserving a certain regularity that was puzzling to the last degree.

Because the noises were heard more plainly he believed that whatever caused them was drawing near the camp. Still the approach was slow, which it would seem could not have

been the fact if the unknown animals were approaching. They must be following a course that, while bringing them somewhat closer, would carry them by on one side or the other.

The strange peculiarity already noted again presented itself. By and by the sounds grew fainter, as if the creatures, whatever their nature, were receding. This suggested the odd theory that they were traveling in a great circle and might again approach. Deerfoot rose and walked to where Mul-tal-la was standing near the resting horses, which still showed no signs of uneasiness. The Shawanoe told of the puzzle that troubled him.

The Blackfoot had not observed anything of that nature. When lying on his blanket it interposed between him and the earth, and thus shut out the almost inaudible throbbings that mystified his companion. Mul-tal-la now knelt and pressed his ear against the ground, Deerfoot doing the same.

Both held their position for some time and then rose.

“They are strange sounds,” remarked the Blackfoot, “but very soft.”

“They were a little louder when Deerfoot

first heard them. They must be made by some animals that cannot be buffaloes."

"No, the noise would be different. Muttal-la knows what they are, for he heard them when he came this way many moons ago and his eyes rested on the animals."

"What are they?" asked the surprised Deerfoot.

"Wild horses," was the answer.

The Shawanoe was astonished, for he had never thought of anything of that nature. He had heard rumors, as far away as his own home, of droves of wild horses that roamed over the western plains, numbering many thousands. Reports of the same nature reached him when in St. Louis. Some one had told him that when the Spaniards came to the Southwest, more than two centuries before, a few of their horses had wandered off, and it was from them that the numberless droves had descended.

You need not be reminded that this is a fact. A century ago enormous droves of wild horses roamed over the Llano Estacado and in northern Texas, to which region and neighborhood they mainly confined themselves, though many of them were met on the plains a consid-

erable distance to the northward. It would not be strange if our friends came in contact with them, though not one had yet been seen.

Mul-tal-la said that he and his companion encountered a herd that was as numerous as the buffaloes that had lately threatened them, and at one time the two were in danger of being run down by the equine rovers. By hard work, however, they got out of their way.

CHAPTER IX.

A BATTLE ROYAL.

THE camp was astir early. George and Victor Shelton were surprised when told by Deerfoot of the visit received the night previous. A trapper had called upon him with three horses, conversed for an hour or more, and then departed, and was now miles away on the road to St. Louis. The Shawanoe related nothing of what passed between him and Jack Halloway except to say that he was belated in leaving the beaver runs in the mountains and meant to lose no time in reaching his distant home.

The towering peak, crested with snow, showed to the westward, but apparently it was little nearer than when first descried in relief against the blue sky. Mul-tal-la said that instead of keeping on to the peak and the range, which was quite extensive, they would now swerve to the northward and make more directly for the Blackfoot country. The head-

waters of the North Fork of the Platte were among these elevations, and the journey would become easier through flanking them, as he and his companion had done when coming eastward. The range, however, trended to the northeast, and they would have to cross it in order to reach the sources of the numerous branches of the Yellowstone and Missouri. Then the course would bend to the northwest, parallel to the great Rocky Mountain range, but always east of it. Remember that the names of rivers and mountains which I use were wholly unknown to our friends, who had to rely for their general knowledge upon the information given by the observant Blackfoot.

The morning meal finished, and animals having been saddled and the packs replaced, Deerfoot, declining all offers to ride, asked George Shelton to loan him his spyglass for a few minutes. He pointed the instrument to the south, and stood for some time closely studying the horizon, for the sky was bright, and in the clear air his vision, thus aided, reached for a long distance.

It was apparent to his friends that he had discovered something of interest. They peered

in the same direction, but without seeing anything except the monotonous undulations of the grassy plain. Not a tree, not a mountain, nor any prominent object was in sight.

Still it was evident that the Shawanoe was interested. Finally he handed the glass to George, who was in the saddle on the back of Jack.

"Let my brother tell me what he sees," he quietly remarked.

The boy leveled the instrument and a moment later exclaimed:

"Horses! There are ten hundred thousand of them!"

"Deerfoot fears his brother has not counted right," remarked the Shawanoe.

"I may be two or three out of the way," replied the lad, "but I never before saw so many."

He passed the glass to the impatient Victor, who took his turn at scanning the remarkable scene. Mul-tal-la sat as immobile as a statue on his horse, calmly waiting for the others to complete their scrutiny. His eyes were turned to the south, and the slight wrinkling of his cheeks showed that he was looking hard,

though there was no other evidence of concern. Victor added his expressions of astonishment to those of his brother, and handed the instrument to the Blackfoot, who, of course, had learned its use long before. Thus the round of observation was finished.

That George had been extravagant in his estimate became clear when it was agreed that the drove of wild horses numbered perhaps two or three hundred. They were coming at an easy canter in a direct line for the camp, so that in a short time all were in plain sight of the unaided eye. No doubt they had wandered northward from the plains of Upper Texas—as it is now called—tempted by the fine pasturage, and possibly by that longing for change which sometimes shows itself in a quadruped to a hardly less degree than in a biped.

The picturesque scene did not make our friends lose sight of their own situation as regarded these wild animals. If they chose they could overrun the camp and trample all to death as the stampeded bison threatened to do but a short time before. Would they do so?

Mul-tal-la, whose previous experience gave him greater knowledge, did not think he and

his companions were in special danger. Wild horses were not disposed to attack travelers, though there was a possibility of their doing so if provoked or if strangers got in their path or annoyed them. He warned his friends to watch against their own horses dashing out and joining the drove, though even if they did so they were liable to harm by the others, who were likely to resent such an intrusion.

The domestic horses were only a few minutes behind their owners in discovering the strangers' approach. They showed considerable excitement, throwing up their heads, snuffing the air and staring affrightedly to the south. Only one, however, betrayed a disposition to make closer acquaintance with his wild brethren. It was Zigzag, who broke into a sudden awkward gallop, heading directly for them.

But he had time to go only a few paces when Deerfoot leaped in front of him, seized the rope halter and whirled him around with no gentle force. The horse persisted, but the youth spoke sharply, slapped the side of his head, and Mul-tal-la, who was the only one of the company that had provided himself with a switch,

brought it down about the head and neck of the stubborn creature with a vicious vigor that quickly subdued him. Zigzag would have cut a fine figure in bouncing about among the wild animals with his huge pack on his back. Meanwhile a close watch was kept on the others, who could not fail to be impressed by the object lesson that had just been given them.

The drove maintained their easy swinging gallop until within two or three hundred yards. They had acted as if unaware of the little group drawn up on the prairie and scrutinizing them. Then the canter dropped to a trot, and then to a walk, the varying movements when these changes took place adding to the novelty of the picture. Among the horses were piebalds, roans, grays, sorrels and several of a milk-white color. The undulating bodies, with their different tints, were like the changing figures of the biograph.

Deerfoot explained to the boys that nothing was to be done unless the wild creatures continued to advance and showed a purpose to attack. At the proper moment he would give the word and they would fire into them, relying upon bringing down a number and stampeding the herd. Each of the party sat or stood, rifle

in hand, awaiting the order from their leader, and closely watching every action of the wild horses, ready to let fly the instant it became necessary.

All at once, as if in obedience to a word of command, the herd paused, threw up their heads and stared at the small group. Several whinnied and showed excitement, for the sight must have been wholly new, and if they were not alarmed they were mystified.

Bug, Jack and Prince behaved better than was expected. They were in a tremor and plainly frightened, but remained under control. Zigzag seemed to be meditating some *coup*, but Deerfoot stood within a pace of his head, and was prepared to check anything of that nature. The animal had enough sense not to invite any more punishment, and remained still.

But previous to this, all had noticed the most striking feature of the exhibition. The drove was under the lead of a stallion that was the most superb steed upon which any of the travelers had ever looked. He was of large size, of a glossy coal-black color, and had a long flowing mane and a tail that reached almost to the ground. With head erect and every limb

and movement the picture of beauty, grace and strength, he was impressively perfect. The sight was one to hold a spectator spellbound with admiration. Even Deerfoot forgot for a moment the situation of himself and companions in his wonder at the picture before him.

Perhaps you know that the roving bands of wild horses are generally under the leadership of a stallion who has attained the honor by beating off all rivals, and who retains his supreme power until, as his years increase and his prowess declines, some younger aspirant dethrones him and takes his place as king. As commander-in-chief of his equine army, the stallion must be of unflinching courage and game to the death. No band of wolves, no matter how numerous, dare attack the compact body under his leadership, nor indeed need the horses fear any marauder of the plains, for with such an example of knightly dauntlessness ever before them, their heels and teeth are impregnable.

Like obedient soldiers, the members of the herd stood motionless, with heads raised, snuffing the air and gazing at the strange creatures, three of whom were astride of members of their

own species, and one afoot; and, like an officer who will not permit a subaltern or private to assume a risk that he fears to take himself, the stallion of midnight blackness now advanced, as if to call the strangers to account.

He came forward at a measured deliberate walk, head high in air, tail sweeping near the ground, mane falling low, with his silken ears thrust forward, eyes glowing, and indulging in a peculiar flirting of his nose, as if he sought thereby to sharpen his perceptions. The mouth was partly open, and it was clear that he did not feel quite at ease in thus approaching the strange group. But the eyes of his subjects were upon him, and he would die before faltering in the face of an enemy. So he came on, with a step that was the more impressive because it was so slow, so deliberate and yet so unhesitating.

While Mul-tal-la, George and Victor Shelton were studying him with absorbing intentness, Deerfoot, the Shawanoe, became an actor in the extraordinary drama.

His position was slightly in advance of his friends. He now handed his rifle to Mul-tal-la and coolly walked forward toward the stallion.

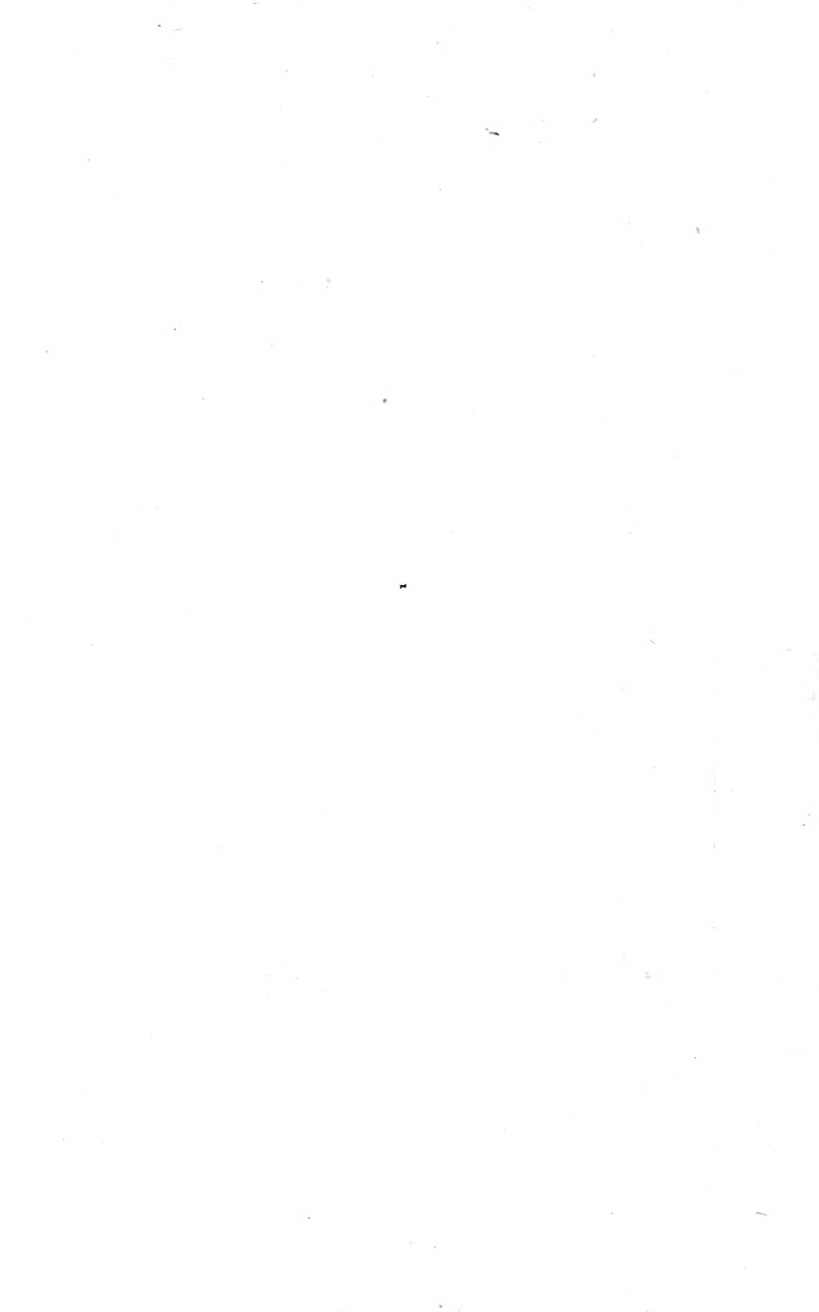
His arms were hanging at his side, and his step was timed to that of the horse, so that it was as if both were marching to the tap of the same drum. His action centered the eyes of all the animals of both parties as well as those of his friends upon him.

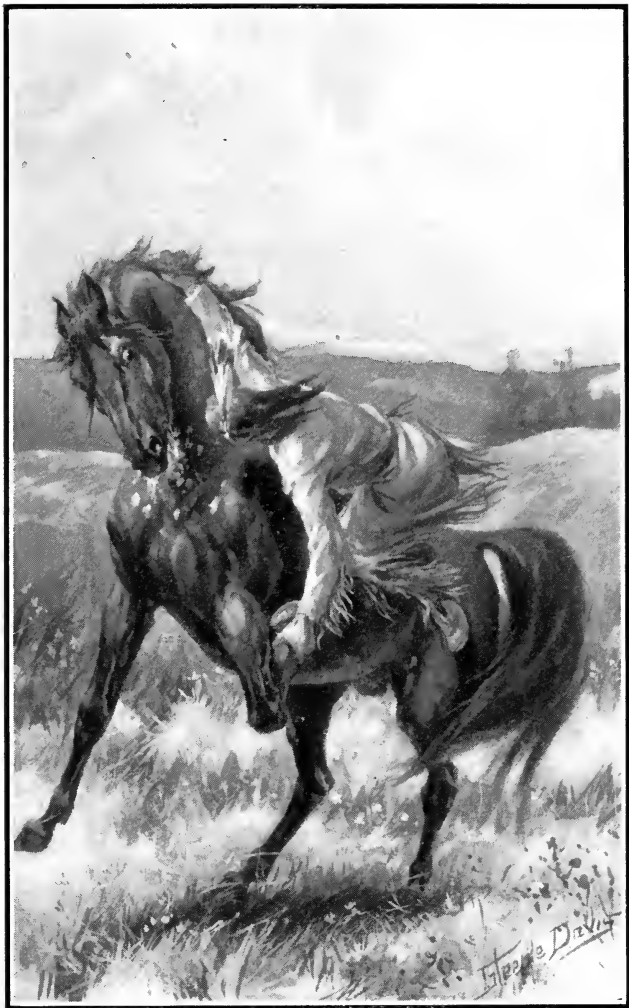
When this singular performance began less than fifty paces separated the Shawanoe and the equine chief. The approach continued until half the interval was passed, when the stallion paused. Evidently he was not clear as to the meaning of the youth's conduct. The latter slowed his pace, but did not stop. The horse raised his head higher, flirted his nose, flinging a speck of foam over his black breast. Probably, had the two been alone, he would have retreated, for there was something uncanny in the advance of the Shawanoe, but he remembered that the eyes of his own soldiers were upon him, and he could not show the white feather. Possibly, too, he understood that his enemy, as he regarded him, was without any formidable weapon with which to defend himself. The next action of the brute gave reasonableness to this theory, for, after his brief pause, he resumed his approach at a brisker step than before.

Deerfoot now stood still and awaited his coming, his arms still at his side, but with all his muscles, nerves and senses strung to the highest tension. The stallion meant to fight him, and the youth was waiting for the battle to open.

Mul-tal-la hardly breathed, so intense was his interest, but he held his bow and arrow ready to launch the missile if it should become necessary to save his friend. The brothers would have shot the stallion without further delay had they dared to do so, but they could only imitate the Blackfoot—hold themselves ready to interfere at the critical moment. They could not run the risk of offending their friend by interposing until the necessity arose.

The black steed advanced with a more confident step, and Deerfoot stood as if he were a figure carved in stone. Then, when they were within a step or two, the stallion thrust forward his head, and his white teeth were seen to gleam as he made a vicious snap at the face of the youth. The latter recoiled just enough to escape the bite, and with the flat of his hand smote the side of the nose with a vigor that must have given a sharp tingle to the horse.





A Battle Royal.

With a neigh of rage he instantly reared and savagely pawed the air with his front hoofs. He struck at the Shawanoe, who leaped slightly back to avoid the feet, which, had they landed, would have cloven his skull in twain. Then he ran swiftly for a few paces and with a single bound rose like a bird in air and dropped astride of the satin back.

“Now throw Deerfoot if you can!” he shouted. Then he called to his dazed friends: “Leave us alone!”

Who can imagine the rage of the stallion when he found that a man was on his back? It took him a few seconds to understand the mortal insult, and then his fury burst forth like the fires of a volcano. In his wild delirium he emitted a shrieking cry, such as his species sometimes utter when in the extremity of terror, and began rearing and plunging in the very desperation of frenzy. “Bucking,” as displayed by the bronchos of the West in these times, was an unknown science to him, but he seemed one moment to be standing on his fore feet with his flying heels kicking vertically upward, and then, reversing in a flash, became upright like a man. Next he spun around as

if he were a top, first to the right and then to the left, up-ended again, alternating with an abruptness that would have made an ordinary spectator dizzy.

Deerfoot held his seat as if he were a part of the brute himself. The luxuriant mane gave him a firm support. Sometimes he lay flat on the back of the steed, when he appeared to be trying to stand on his head, and the next moment was extended on his face and gripping the forelock. Then he was over the shoulders, and, in the same moment, astride of his haunches, but never once did he yield his seat.

While this battle royal was raging the other wild horses did a cowardly thing. Frightened by the struggle, whose nature they could not understand, they broke into a panic and dashed headlong to the southward. Had they possessed a tithe of the courage of their leader and gone forward to his aid, Deerfoot would have been doomed, but they basely deserted him in his extremity. What matter if they lost their despot? There were plenty of rivals to take his place. "The king is dead—long live the king!"

Again the stallion's head went up in air.

The right hand of Deerfoot gripped the forelock, and he seemed to hang suspended, so nearly perpendicular was the position of the two. In the delicate poise the slightest impulse was enough to throw the center of gravity outside the base. The Shawanoe gave that impulse by swinging his feet and body backward while supported by the forelock.

Over went the stallion squarely on his back with a thump that shook the ground. The shock was a severe one and by no means pleasant, nor was it what the brute had figured upon. He pawed the air, kicked and quickly struggled to his feet. The moment he came up Deerfoot, who had easily eluded the danger, sprang upon his back again.

Although he could not have forgotten his overthrow, the stallion reared once more, taking care not to rise as high as before. Standing thus nearly erect, his fore hoofs beating the air, the rider holding himself in place by twisting the fingers of his right hand in the forelock, Deerfoot leaned forward alongside the neck of the brute, and, reaching down with his left hand, seized the ankle of the stallion just below the fetlock, where he could almost span the limb.

The grip was like that of Damascus steel, and when the Shawanoe drew upward and held the hoof against the body of the horse, almost touching the upper part of the leg, because of the abruptness of the bend at the knee, it was as if the foot was imprisoned in a vise. The stallion, in his blind struggles, went forward on one shoulder and rolled over. Deerfoot was off again, and, letting the scared brute clamber to his feet, vaulted upon his back as before.

By this time the stallion was panic-smitten. Sweat was beginning to show, and his satin coat gleamed with new luster. Finding himself once more on his feet, he uttered another wild whinny and burst away over the prairie like a thunderbolt. It is not likely that he recalled the drove of which he was leader. If he did, he must have been angered by their base desertion of him, for he headed straight westward, and, when last seen by our friends, was running at his highest bent toward the snow-clad mountain, with the Shawanoe firmly seated on his back. George Shelton kept the glass to his eye till the two became a flickering speck in the distance and then vanished.

Deerfoot was well satisfied with the way

things had gone and were still going. He had "cut out" the stallion from his herd, had mastered him in the furious fight, and, to complete the conquest, it was necessary still further to subdue him; that could be done only by allowing or compelling the brute to exhaust himself. The fight recalled his conquest years before of Thunderbolt, also a black stallion, on the other side of the Mississippi.

The heart of the Shawanoe glowed with admiration and pride in the magnificent creature whom he had resolved to capture and subdue. Never had he bestrode so matchless a steed, nor one with a more beautiful stride, as he flew westward like the wind. Could he be made a prize he would be worth a prince's ransom.

Deerfoot therefore complacently waited for the stallion to tire himself out. It looked as if he would never do so, but there is a limit to the capacity of every animal. Mile after mile was swept under those rhythmic hoofs with no apparent slackening, but by and by the watchful youth noted a lagging of the gait. The pace was beginning to tell. Waiting until the slowing became more marked, Deerfoot struck his

heels against the ribs, slapped the sweaty neck and emitted a series of striking war-whoops.

The stallion was off again as if fired from the throat of a columbiad, and maintained the pace for fifteen or twenty minutes, when he began falling away. The rider kicked, slapped and shouted, and the horse responded with another burst, which made the air whistle in a gale past the ears of the rider. The brute was reeking with sweat, but he struggled gallantly. He had flung many miles behind him and was good for many more.

The alternating slackening and bursts of speed were kept up till finally the sorely pressed animal was unable to respond. After several brave but useless efforts he ceased the attempt. He had done his best and could do no more.

CHAPTER X.

WHIRLWIND.

DEERFOOT waited till sure of the exhaustion of the stallion. Then while he was still galloping in his tired way, he slipped from his back and, dropping to the ground, began running beside him.

The instant the horse felt himself free of his master he dashed off at the highest bent of his speed, as if determined to be rid of the dreaded one at whatever cost. You know what a wonderful runner the young Shawanoe was, and he now put forth every ounce of energy at his command. The sight was thrilling. The incomparable youth was making a race with the black stallion, and the exhibition was marvelous. Ah, if you could have been there with a camera to take a snapshot of the struggle!

Now, no man ever lived who could outrun a blooded or trained horse. It would be absurd for me to pretend that the Shawanoe youth, with all his marvelous fleetness, could outspeed

a wild animal like the black stallion. It would have been idiotic for him to attempt it, unless his rival was so handicapped that a marked advantage rested with the biped. I have shown that Deerfoot possessed that advantage in the fatigue of the steed. Moreover, as I have made clear in another story concerning the young Shawanoe, he was able to keep up the exertion longer than a horse, and had proved it by running one down when each started fresh.

He had no fear, therefore, when he dropped off the animal's back, nor did he feel any misgiving because, in the first minute or two, the stallion slightly drew away from him. The youth knew he could run him down, and he meant to do it.

The horse gained until he was fifty feet in advance. The consciousness of his advantage nerved him to the utmost. With head aloft and the sweat showing in foam where the limbs rubbed the body, he kept an eye on the fearful thing he seemed to have shaken off. There he was, a short distance to the rear, and a little to one side. The form slowly receded, but while the horse was doing his best it began to close the gap between them. The brute saw it drawing

steadily nearer, with the resistless certainty of fate. The Shawanoe's feet doubled under him so rapidly that the eye would have found it hard to see the twinkling moccasins. He was doing his very best, and you have been able to form some idea of what *that* was. Not the least remarkable feature of all was that Deerfoot did not seem to be affected in the least by his terrific exertions. He breathed no faster than when walking, and was capable of keeping up the tremendous run for a time that, were it named, would sound incredible.

Near and nearer drew the dreaded figure, and the stallion, if capable of such an emotion, must have felt the chill of despair creeping through his frame. But it was useless to fight against fate, and he put forth no further effort, even when the pursuer drew up alongside, and, repeating his remarkable bound, once more dropped astride the perspiring body.

Deerfoot now changed his treatment of the exhausted stallion. Instead of speaking sharply and beating his heels against his sides, he patted his neck, rubbed a palm gently down its side and uttered soothing expressions. It was hardly to be expected that the brute would

understand this, for it was all new and strange to him, but the fiercest wild animal instinctively knows the difference between brutality and kindness. Something within the horse responded to these advances, and by and by he dropped to a walk and made no effort to unseat or harm his rider.

Deerfoot's wish was to return to his friends, for they must have been left many miles to the rear, and, though they were quite likely to follow him, they must still be separated from him by a long distance. He therefore tried to turn the stallion the other way. This proved harder than he anticipated. He first drew the nose around, but the animal kept going straight on as before, even with his head awry. Then the youth slipped to the ground, placed himself in front of his charge, and flung up his arms. The stallion stopped, made a motion as if to bite him, and then, frightened by his own temerity, paused. Still he refused to change his course.

The Shawanoe was working patiently when the horse turned to one side, pricked up his ears and started off at a trot. The youth suspected the meaning of this action: the brute had scented water, of which he must have felt

the need, and was hurrying to it. Instead of remounting Deerfoot ran ahead of the animal, and glancing over his shoulder to make sure he was followed, broke into a lope which he accommodated to the speed of his pursuer.

The youth was right in his supposition. Not far in advance, in a slight depression of the prairie, he caught the gleam of water, marking where a small tributary of the North Fork flowed from the mountainous regions on the west. Increasing his speed, the Shawanoe reached the water first, and, stooping down, drank his fill of the clear current, which still retained much of the coolness of the elevated regions whence it came.

The stallion broke into a faster gait as he drew near, and pushed his nose into the stream beside the youth and drank his fill. It was odd, when he had finished, to see him raise his head, with the current dripping from his frothy mouth, and look earnestly at the youth. Had he been gifted with the power of speech he probably would have said:

“I have come across many queer creatures while roving the plains, but you are the queerest of them all. You don't look as if you would

stand any show in a fight with me. I've beaten many rivals and am ready to beat more, but you're too much for me. I take off my hat to you, and now what do you intend to do with me? If I get the chance to lay you out, *I'll do it*, but I'm afraid I won't get the chance."

The Shawanoe was on the alert, suspecting the stallion would try some trick after refreshing himself with water. In turning away from the stream, the head of the steed happened to point eastward, the direction in which Deerfoot wished to go. He again vaulted upon his back and the brute continued on that course.

What the rider feared was that the stallion would set out to find the drove that had deserted him. This could not be permitted, for it would ruin the plan the Shawanoe had in mind. He expected to have another battle with his prize, and held himself alert for it, but he was pleased and surprised by the docility of his captive. This may have been partly due to his exhaustion, or who shall say that the brute did not wish for time in which to formulate some scheme for overthrowing the being that had outwitted him?

Deerfoot kept up his caresses and gentle

treatment of the prisoner. He strove to familiarize him with his voice and to win his confidence. He had proved he was master of the terrible brute, and the task was now to convince the brute that he was his friend. This was sure to be hard, and he could not hope to succeed for awhile to come.

They had traveled a few miles when once more Deerfoot slipped to the ground. As he landed he walked close to the shoulder of the horse and patted and addressed him as he would a child whom he loved. The stallion at first resented the familiarity. He shook his head as if displeased, edged away and finally snapped at the youth. The Shawanoe knew it would not do to let the animal forget who was master. So, when the black muzzle and gleaming teeth showed, he slapped his nose and spoke brusquely to him. This was followed by more caresses and soothing expressions. By and by the horse ceased showing resentment. Then Deerfoot remounted as before.

Thus the strange acquaintanceship progressed. It was impossible for the wild stallion to become tamed in a few hours, though we have professors in these times who conquer

the most vicious beasts in less than a single hour, but sometimes the horses do not stay conquered. It can be said that the youth and horse became quite intimate as they journeyed together, and the youth had good reason to believe that ere long they would become friends.

As he had supposed, Mul-tal-la and the boys did not remain idle after the Shawanoe's hurricane departure. Hardly had he vanished in the horizon when the three set out to follow him, pressing their animals hard. While it cannot be said that they were free from anxiety for their friend, they were not much alarmed. There could be no after-contest that would be fiercer than that which had taken place under their very eyes, and they had come to ask one another whether there was any situation in which the young Shawanoe would not be well able to take care of himself.

At every few paces George Shelton brought his glass into use and scanned the prairie in advance, not forgetting to bestow a glance now and then in other directions, for there was no saying what whim would control the black stallion.

"I see them!" suddenly called George.
"They are coming this way!"

“Is Deerfoot on the horse?”

“Of course; you don’t suppose he would walk, do you?”

“I didn’t know but that the stallion was so tired Deerfoot would have to carry him,” was the innocent answer. “Let me have a squint.”

Victor and Mul-tal-la each descried the animal, but since he was in a direct line and held his head high it was some minutes before they could make sure that the Shawanoe was on his back. It was the Blackfoot who announced that he was riding the captured horse at a walk.

But Deerfoot had descried his friends before this, and he now showed his mastery over the animal by forcing him to a moderate gallop, which was kept up till the two parties had come within a few rods of each other. Then the stallion stopped and showed renewed excitement. It was due to the nearness of the other horses, whom he did not like, and he repelled a closer acquaintance.

Three of the animals were indifferent and displayed no curiosity, but Zigzag seemed to think he was excepted from the disfavor of the captive. He pointed his nose toward him, whinnied, and then advanced rapidly. Mul-

tal-la was about to interfere when Deerfoot called to him not to do so.

The Shawanoe did all he could to quiet his horse, but with the light of mischief in his eyes watched the meeting between the two brutes. Zigzag came right on, with nose thrust out, as if he intended to kiss the other, who grew more and more displeased. Suddenly the stallion whirled around—his rider not trying to restrain him—and let fly with both heels, which, had they landed fairly, would have injured Zigzag, but a portion of the bulging pack interposed. Zigzag was sent backward for several steps, and so shaken that he was disgusted. The snubbing was too direct to be misunderstood, and he sullenly wheeled and rejoined his own friends, quite content to leave the aristocratic interloper to himself.

All four laughed, for there was a humanness about the whole thing that was amusing. The boys and the Blackfoot were delighted, while the expression of Deerfoot left no doubt of his pleasure over the prize he had gained. Many a wild horse had been brought to earth by the skilfully thrown lasso or riata, hobbled and mastered by the horseman who had his own

animal to give him aid, but whoever knew of such a thing being done by a single person without help in any form whatever? And yet you have been shown that that was precisely what was done by Deerfoot the Shawanoe.

Mul-tal-la quite overwhelmed his youthful friend with praise. Addressing him in the tongue of the Blackfeet—for he did not wish the boys to understand his earnest words—he declared that the feat was one that no other living man could perform. There were fine horsemen among the different tribes, and Mul-tal-la had witnessed many of their exhibitions of skill, but there was none to be compared with Deerfoot. The dusky fellow was specially ardent in praising the deftness, power and quickness with which the Shawanoe had thrown the wild stallion without bridle or saddle or aid of any kind.

“See the fellow blush!” said the grinning Victor to his brother. “That shows that Mul-tal-la is praising Deerfoot. I never saw an Indian blush, for it’s too much like a negro trying to do it, but Deerfoot can’t help showing his confusion.”

“There,” added George, watching the coun-

tenance of their friend, "he has told Mul-tal-la to stop, and he daren't refuse. If I had half the smartness of Deerfoot I should expect to sit down and hear everybody praise me. They couldn't help it."

"I don't know about that. I don't wait for folks to praise *me*."

"Because you would grow gray before they did it. Hark!"

Sitting astride of the motionless stallion their friend called:

"Will my brothers give Deerfoot a name for his horse?"

"Yes," George hastened to answer; "call him Dewdrop."

The Shawanoe shook his head. The inappropriateness of the name was apparent, even to the Blackfoot. Indeed, the proposer was in jest.

"I have it," said Victor. "Make it Whirlwind."

"My brother speaks with the words of wisdom," replied the Shawanoe. "His name shall be Whirlwind, though it would not be bad if it were Thunderbolt, like the steed that was conquered many moons ago."

CHAPTER XI.

PHYSICIAN AND PATIENT.

THUS the noble black stallion was named. If ever a person felt proud of his prize it was Deerfoot, the Shawanoe. The wild horse had been literally cut out from the herd of which he was monarch and made captive by the dusky youth. The battle between the two was a fair one, and the Indian was the victor, and never was a more striking victory won.

Deerfoot, however, knew that his work was not yet done, though he had made fair progress with it. He must win the affection of the creature, or all that had been previously done would go for naught.

Since the Shawanoe never made use of a saddle, his blanket serving that purpose, and since also there was none at command, no suggestion was offered him in that respect. Victor Shelton, however, took upon himself to say:

“You will have to bridle him, and he will fight *that*.”

The captor shook his head.

“So long as Deerfoot lives Whirlwind shall not wear saddle or bridle. He shall be ruled by kindness, as all animals should be ruled.”

“Well, if anyone can do it, you’re the chap, but it will be as big a job as teaching him that you’re his master.”

The Shawanoe improved every minute. He continually spoke soothingly to the stallion, patted his neck and sides, and never lost patience with his restlessness. By and by the youth approached and in the gentlest manner possible spread his blanket over the glossy coat, not yet dry from the moisture caused by his determined fight. Whirlwind shied and for some minutes would not permit the liberty, but after a time suffered himself to be persuaded. The blanket was held in place only by the weight of Deerfoot, who bestrode it. Then, rifle in hand, he urged the steed forward, and he responded somewhat uncertainly.

One thing interested and amused our friends from the beginning. Whirlwind did not hesitate to show his contempt for the common

horses around him. The snubbing given to the presumptuous Zigzag was no more marked than his feeling toward the others. Had they invited the rebuff, it would have been as decisive as the one described, but they knew enough to keep their distance. When cropping the grass at the noon halt, the stallion did so at some distance from the others, and it may be added that at night Deerfoot humored his aristocratic prejudices by allowing him to "flock by himself." He would have nothing to do with any of his species, further than a captured prince is obliged to come in contact with his inferiors.

Toward Mul-tal-la and the Shelton brothers the steed was indifferent. While he displayed no ill will to them, he exhibited no special friendship. If they approached with caresses he permitted the liberty, but it gave him no pleasure, and he would have been quite content if they kept their distance and left him to himself.

It was different, however, regarding Deerfoot. No animal living is quicker to recognize his master, or to know when an incompetent has him in charge, than a horse. To his last

day Whirlwind would vividly remember that desperate struggle in which he was thrown and subdued by the matchless youth. There must have been a feeling akin to respect, mingled perhaps with fear, toward the victor who had done what was never yet done to Whirlwind by man or animal.

This sentiment may be considered the foundation upon which Deerfoot set to work to build the friendship, the trust and the affection of the magnificent brute. It was a task demanding limitless patience, prudence, tact and skill; but the Shawanoe possessed all those virtues, and he called them into play. While riding in advance of his companions he set out to teach Whirlwind to understand and obey his commands. In this task he showed a peculiar shrewdness which I cannot help believing would not have occurred to another.

When he wished the stallion to turn to the right or left, he employed two methods. The pressure of the right knee meant that Whirlwind should turn in that direction, and of the left knee that he should take that course; the pressure of both knees that he should increase his pace, the increase to be added to so long as

the pressure was repeated, the same as if he were pricking his sides with his spurs.

Now, all these methods are in use at the present day and have been from time immemorial, so there was nothing noteworthy in them. But Deerfoot had a word or synonym for each, as he had for several other commands, and which he taught his steed after a time to obey with equal promptness. These words were not English, but a mixture of Shawanoe and Blackfoot, accompanied by sounds that were original with himself.

His reason for adopting this plan was to prevent anyone else knowing how to control Whirlwind. It might come about that at some time in the future the animal would fall temporarily (Deerfoot would not allow himself to believe it could ever be permanently) into the possession of some one else. That person, not knowing the code of the Shawanoe and the stallion, would be at great disadvantage. The trick was worthy of the Shawanoe.

While leading the advance the youth held little or no communication with his friends; his whole interest was in the instruction of Whirlwind, and he gave his skill to that. The

stallion possessed a fine grade of intelligence, much above that of the animals plodding behind him. Deerfoot was not long in discovering that his horse was pretending to a dullness that was not real. But the time came when the kind patience of the youth made its impression, and the steed responded with a quickness that delighted Deerfoot. Thenceforward his progress was so rapid that it astonished the Blackfoot and the boys.

The party were now journeying almost due north. The guide would have insisted upon this change of route had it not been made by Mul-tal-la, because he was not wholly free of the fear of the reappearance of the herd of wild horses which had deserted their chief that morning. A troublesome if not dangerous complication was more than probable in such an event. Every mile, therefore, that the travelers progressed made the meeting less likely, and, I may as well say, it never took place.

While there was no lack of pasturage for the animals, the men and boys were not always so fortunate. At that time the country through which they were journeying abounded with elk, deer, antelopes, wild turkeys, grouse and

beaver, and the streams were stocked with pike, bass, salmon-trout, catfish, buffalo fish, perch and other fish, including a species of shrimp, yet these were not always within reach. Some of the game mentioned were scarce in one section and plentiful in another, and, although they often showed themselves in the distance, were often shy and fled upon the first approach of a hunter. Instinctively they feared man, and the raids of the Indians taught them lessons that were not forgotten.

When at noon a halt was made on the bank of a small, winding, sluggish stream that found its way into one of the branches of the Platte, the boys tried their luck at fishing. It need not be said that several hooks and lines were in their outfit. The couple were not rewarded with a single bite. Then Mul-tal-la took up the task with no better success. Finally Deerfoot was appealed to, for, as you know, the brothers believed he could do anything within the range of human possibility. He carefully baited his hook with angleworms and seized the occasion to remark:

“Mul-tal-la and my brothers are small children. They are slow to learn. Let them watch

Deerfoot and he will teach them how to bring fish from the water.”

He whirled the line, weighted with a pebble, out to the middle of the creek, and was so confident of quickly drawing in some sort of fish that he did not squat down as the boys and Mul-tal-la had done. The three stood around and looked wishful, though had they not been so a-hungered they would have been glad to see the Shawanoe make the failure they had made.

By and by the boys began to make remarks:

“I like to see Deerfoot yank out the fish just as soon as he throws in his hook,” was the first observation of George, made within five minutes after the pebble had sunk from sight.

“He’s waiting to catch two at a time. He knows how hungry we are, and I shouldn’t wonder if he feels that way himself,” added the grinning Victor.

“Maybe some of the fish saw him throw out the line, and have gone off to bring up their friends, so as to give him a good show.”

“Don’t catch too many, Deerfoot. We don’t need more than fifty or a hundred.”

Mul-tal-la said nothing, but his teeth showed. He was enjoying the quiet fun. The Shawa-

noe acted as if he heard nothing. The line rested lightly in his fingers, which were so delicately poised that he was sure to feel the slightest tug or twitch, and he kept his eyes on the surface of the turbid stream.

Suddenly he gave a jerk and rapidly hauled in the line, hand over hand. When the hook came creeping out of the current the bait was gone, and no fish was in sight.

The brothers snickered.

“Did you ever know of meaner fish?” asked Victor; “that hook was fast in his gills, but he twisted it loose. It wasn’t fair. I hope Deerfoot doesn’t feel bad.”

“I saw something like the tail of a fish as he flirted off,” added George. “I guess he doesn’t know who is fishing—that is, who is *trying* to fish.”

Never a word did Deerfoot speak. He baited his hook with the utmost care, and in obedience to an old superstition which prevailed even at that day among fishermen, spat upon the bait before casting it into the water.

“Ah, *that’ll* fetch ’em!” exclaimed George, smacking his lips in anticipation of the coming feast. “No fish can refuse such a bait as *that*.”

All the same they did refuse it. Though the Shawanoe waited patiently for a full half hour and once or twice felt something toying with the hook, he caught nothing. Finally he drew in the line and wound it up.

“My brothers talked so much they scared the fish away,” he remarked. “We shall have to wait till to-night or to-morrow or next week for food.”

The dismay on the faces of the brothers gave Deerfoot his turn at merriment. They knew he was able to go a day or two without food and not seem to mind it. With them, however, it was different, but seemingly there was no help for them. They accepted the situation with the best grace possible, which was poor enough.

Meanwhile the horses were cropping the juicy grass, Whirlwind by himself and the others herding together. All had had a good rest, and the party now gathered together for their journey, which was pressed as before, Deerfoot in the lead, talking with and giving instructions to Whirlwind. The weather became perceptibly colder, as if from the proximity of the snow-covered peak and the lofty range of mountains that stretched beyond the limit of their vision.

About the middle of the afternoon Whirlwind showed a slight limp. It was so slight, indeed, that no one noticed it except Deerfoot. He instantly checked the stallion, slipped off his back and made an investigation. The cause was apparent: the left knee showed signs of swelling. That was the leg whose ankle the Shawanoe had gripped and imprisoned for a minute or two during the fight in the morning. In falling violently the knee had been injured, but to so small an extent that this was the first evidence of any such thing.

The hunters and trappers, when absent on their long excursions in the mountains and solitudes, were, of course, without the means of shoeing their animals, and it need not be said that Whirlwind's hoofs had never been thus shielded. This was a small matter, for the protection was not needed. Moreover, the outfit of our friends contained nothing in the nature of liniment, ointment, unguent or even grease that could be used in an emergency like the present. Deerfoot was without any medication that could be applied to the knee of the stallion. All he could do was to give it rest and leave the healing to nature. That he instantly decided should be done.

“Let my brothers go on. When Whirlwind is well Deerfoot will join them,” he said, addressing the three.

“How far shall we go?” asked George.

“My brothers will go as far as they can. Deerfoot will find them when Whirlwind is able to walk without pain. It may be one, or two or three days, but Deerfoot will have no trouble, for the trail will be plain.”

The Shawanoe and Blackfoot talked for a few minutes in order to perfect an understanding, and then the three rode off, leaving Deerfoot alone with Whirlwind, to whom he gave his full attention.

No mother ever passed her cool hand across the fevered brow of her child more lovingly than did the young Shawanoe fondle the sensitive knee of the mettled steed. The latter did not twitch or resent the caress, for the magnetism of the touch, its gentleness and the soothing words were worth more than any medicinal oil could have been. The soft, cool palm slid over the silken hair like the brush of down. The motion was always toward the hoof and never up the limb “against the grain.” Sometimes, while one hand was thus employed, the

other patted the nose that was bent down in acknowledgment of the kindness.

When finally Deerfoot stepped back and straightened up, Whirlwind stood firmly on all his legs. Had his master called for it, he would have galloped off with hardly a perceptible limp.

But Deerfoot had no such thought. That knee should not be permitted to go into service until as strong and sound as the other. While the injury was insignificant, it was sure to become worse through unwise treatment. All that was necessary was to give nature a chance; she always strives to right such matters, and the most that medical skill can do is to help, and all too often the effort proves a hindrance rather than an aid.

The downy rubbing was repeated at intervals and did much good. Whirlwind showed his appreciation by lowering his head and resting his nose on the shoulder of the stooping Deerfoot, whose heart responded to the caress. He felt that they had become real friends.

Some time later he coaxed Whirlwind to lie down. The stallion was reluctant at first, for a horse dislikes to do this except when tired out,

and then he is often satisfied with rolling on his back, but he yielded. Then Deerfoot plucked several handfuls of grass, cutting off the roots with his knife, and fed them to his friend, who ate probably to please him, for surely he could not have been hungry.

Now and then the knee was tenderly kneaded, and certainly improved, if indeed it was not already cured. When at last the chilly night closed in, the young Shawanoe lay down beside Whirlwind, so arranging the blanket that it covered both, and their bodies were mutually warmed by the contact. Physician and patient were doing well, thank you.

CHAPTER XII.

A HURRIED FLIGHT.

ALTHOUGH George and Victor Shelton parted for the time from Deerfoot with regret, it cannot be said that either felt any misgiving. There could be no doubt of the Shawanoe's ability to track them all the way to the Pacific if necessary, for the trail would be plain except when they took to the water, which was not likely to be for a long time to come. Moreover, Mul-tal-la had said that little was to be feared from the Indians of the country through which they must make their way. Had the boys been alone danger might threaten, for most of the hunters and trappers who penetrated those vast solitudes looked upon and treated the red men as their enemies, and naturally were thus looked upon and treated in their turn.

The Blackfoot and his companion met with no trouble of this nature on their eastward journey. They were always able to make clear

their meaning by signs, and the fact that the two belonged to the same race with the different tribes was a sufficient passport. It seemed reasonable, therefore, to believe that the presence of Mul-tal-la gave all the protection that could be needed.

The Blackfoot took Deerfoot's place as leader, the brothers riding a little to the rear, with Zigzag plodding in his usual indifferent fashion. Just now the chief concern of the boys was as to how they were to obtain a meal, for the thought of going to sleep without food was intolerable.

To the left, in the direction of the foothills, they descried a half-dozen elk browsing; but the game were as timid as antelopes, without their fatal defect of overwhelming curiosity, and they made off long before our friends could get within range. Several miles to the eastward a dark undulating mass which covered hundreds of acres showed where another vast herd of bison were moving southward. Victor was disposed to ask Mul-tal-la to change their course so as to get a shot at one of the animals, but his brother urged him to wait in the hope of a better chance to bring down something edible.

An hour later this chance presented itself. Three graceful antelopes came in sight as the horsemen rode over an elevation. They were cropping the grass on the slope of a hill nearly a half mile distant. George brought his glass to his eye and saw that the alert creatures had already caught sight of them. They were standing with heads erect and staring at the strangers, ready to dash off like the wind on the first demonstration or further move toward them.

“There’s our supper!” exclaimed Victor, as the three halted, for the Blackfoot was also interested in the sight. “I know they aren’t the best food in the world, but I’m too hungry to be particular. Mul-tal-la, how are we to manage it?”

“I will let my brother shoot one of them,” replied the Blackfoot, who, as you know, had caught Deerfoot’s manner of speech.

“That suits me. George, you don’t mind. It will be your turn next time.”

“I’m satisfied,” returned his brother; “but you must remember and not let your impatience run away with you. Keep cool or we shall have to go without supper.”

“Don’t fear for me,” remarked the ardent Victor, who slipped out of the saddle and set off without delay; “I know what’s at stake.”

Had he gone directly toward the antelopes they would have been off on the instant. Instead, he went back over the ridge just crossed, thus interposing that screen between him and the animals. By following this he could approach within a fourth of a mile of the game, and from that moment the utmost caution and skill would be necessary. His brother and the Blackfoot withdrew so as to occupy a position on the crest of the elevation, where they could observe the actions of Victor from the beginning and at the same time keep an eye upon the antelopes themselves.

The latter fixed their attention upon the point where the horsemen had first come into view, hesitating whether to break away in swift flight or to wait until they could gratify their resistless curiosity. George Shelton and Multal-la had dismounted, and lying down in the grass, took care not to show themselves, through fear of alarming the game, for, if the antelopes should make off, slight chance of securing a meal would remain.

Meanwhile Victor was stealing along the ridge until, as he judged, he had reached a point nearly opposite the animals, who were a furlong distant. Then he crept up the elevation, whose crest fortunately was crowned with the same exuberant growth of grass that grew in the valley beyond.

So painstaking was he that his friends lost sight of him and did not know when he was at the crest of the elevation until the antelopes showed by their excitement that they had detected him. They had resumed cropping the grass, when all three abruptly raised their heads and dashed off at the height of their astonishing speed. A moment later Victor was seen running down the slope until a little beyond the base, when he dropped on his face.

Immediately after, while his body was screened from sight, he raised the ramrod of his rifle, with his cap on the upper end. The lower point was pushed down into the earth so that unaided it supported the headgear. He had improved on the method of the Blackfoot.

At first it looked as if this artifice had come too late, for the antelopes continued running. When first seen they were in a valley-like

depression with a width of a third of a mile. They made a pretty picture as they skimmed up the opposite slope with their bodies showing in relief against the green background.

The cap, however, on top of the ramrod was so conspicuous that they were not long in discovering it. The three stopped, turned sideways and stood a few minutes gazing intently at the strange object. Then all three broke into a gentle trot toward it, keeping side by side most of the way. One of the trio had more sense or possibly more timidity than his companions, for he abruptly stopped and refused to go any farther. Strangely enough, the others showed no hesitation until within a hundred yards of where the boy, stretched out in the grass, was waiting for the moment when he could make his aim sure.

"I wonder if they ain't twins like me and George," was the whimsical fancy of the lad, as he watched the similarity of action on the part of the two antelopes. They had halted at precisely the same second, and now moved forward again, both stepping high and advancing with a curious hesitation which indicated the mental struggle between fear and curiosity.

One turned to the left and ran nimbly in a circle of several rods diameter, coming around and facing the ramrod and cap again, as if hypnotized. At the same moment the other described a similar circle to the right, returning like his companion, so that the two stood side by side, with heads raised, and stepped off again, as if keeping time with the signals of some one who had trained them to the performance.

Victor was impatient, but he had too much prudence to throw away the opportunity that he knew would come to him in a few minutes. When both animals were nigh enough for him to be sure of his aim he still hesitated, with gun pointed, hammer raised and finger on the trigger. He was wondering how much nearer they would approach. Surely, when they caught sight of him in the grass, their curiosity would vanish, and they would dash off in the very extremity of terror. He lay low and waited.

His plan was to hold his fire until the discovery should burst upon the antelopes and they wheeled to flee. This turning would give him his best chance, and he intended to shoot at the crisis of the change of direction.

One of the creatures paused, as if he had observed something that warned him to halt. His companion took three steps more and then halted, with head high in air and one foot lifted and poised like a pointer dog.

It was at this juncture that Victor Shelton bore hard on the trigger, for he dared wait no longer, though he had decided a moment before to fire as the animals wheeled.

To his dismay the hammer of his rifle did not descend. He pressed harder, but the iron claw which grasped the flint remained immovable. Then the truth flashed upon him. In his excitement he had only half-cocked his gun. There should have been three clicks when he drew back the hammer, but there were only two. In that position it would not obey the trigger, no matter how hard the pressure. It must be drawn to a full cock.

Without shifting his posture, he raised his thumb from the trigger guard, so that it passed over the hammer, and then pulled it back as far as it would go. It was at full cock, but in reaching that point it emitted a single click.

Faint as was the sound, it was heard by the two antelopes fully fifty yards away, and they

whirled to dash off. At the instant that their sides were toward him, Victor discharged his gun and sent the bullet straight and true. One antelope kept on running, his head flung back, while he sped across the valley like a swallow on the wing. The one that had been smitten flirted back again and then came on a full run straight for the spot in the grass from which the fatal missile had been fired, as if determined to slay his foe before his own strength failed him.

“Great Cæsar!” exclaimed the scared Victor; “I didn’t know an antelope was that sort of beast. I’ve got to get out of here mighty quick!”

There was no time to reload his weapon. Never did he leap to his feet and make off at greater speed than when he saw the antelope bearing down upon him, and it may be added that never did he run so fast as in going up the slope and down the other side, and then in a line for his companions.

At such critical moments a boy does not consider his duty done unless he does all he can in the way of yelling. The shouts that Victor Shelton sent resounding over the surrounding

country must have reached several miles. He did not look behind him, for that would have interfered to a fractional extent with his speed, but ran with might and main, marking each leap by a tremendous outcry.

He expected with every breath to feel the antelope's razor-like hoofs carve their way downward into his shoulders. That several minutes passed without such carving he accepted as proof that he was making as good time as his furious pursuer. If this was gratifying it was also surprising, for Victor had never been noted for his fleetness of foot, and he knew something of the fleetness of the antelope. He concluded that there was no telling what a boy of his age can accomplish in the way of running until the actual necessity for it arises.

All this time Victor did not forget to yell. But after awhile the expenditure of so much breath began to affect his strength. So he closed his mouth and gave his whole attention to getting over the ground in the best possible time.

Because of this cessation of his outcries he became aware that his brother was also shout-

ing. Listening carefully, Victor was finally able to catch his words:

“What are you running for?”

“That’s a pretty question!” he reflected, “when he can see for himself that the antelope is determined to have my life!”

It occurred to the fugitive to look around and see how far he was leaving his fearful enemy behind. He was not in sight. He had not even come over the ridge, but had fallen before taking more than a dozen steps in the direction of the lad. This spurt was a blind, aimless flight, its direction being involuntary. The antelope would not have dared to attack the boy any more than it would have dared to assail a grizzly bear.

CHAPTER XIII.

A STARTLING AWAKENING.

THAT night, after a bountiful meal, George Shelton quietly said to his brother:

“You remember, Victor, that you and I left home on the morning of the turkey shoot, telling father that we didn’t wish to stay and win the prize?”

“Of course, but nobody believed us.”

“I don’t suppose anyone did, but if you had gone into that foot-race against Deerfoot and Ralph Genter, neither would have had a show. I never dreamed how fast you can run till I saw that antelope after you.”

“See here now, George, what’s the use of talking forever about that? You would have done just as I did if you saw a wild animal coming down on you like a whirlwind, and just after you had wounded him.”

“I suppose I should, but I couldn’t have made the time *you* did.”

“I wonder whether Deerfoot will come up with us to-night,” remarked Victor, anxious to change the subject of conversation, and peering in the gloom to the southward.

“No,” replied the grinning Mul-tal-la; “you will see nothing of our brother for some days. He will not let Whirlwind use his leg till he knows he can’t hurt it, and that won’t be for some time yet.”

The camp had been made on the slope of the ridge, over which they had passed once or twice, and at the base of which meandered a small stream that finally made its way into one of the tributaries of the Platte, and so finally reached the Gulf of Mexico. Beyond this water the land sloped upward again. Thus it will be seen that our friends were near the bottom of a valley, covered with succulent grass, and showing here and there growths of willows and a species of alfalfa, whose bark sometimes serves animals for food, but owing to the small size of the growth itself the wood is comparatively worthless.

It was the turn of Victor to mount guard for the first half of the night. The horses had become so accustomed to the routine that, after

packs, saddles and bridles were removed, they could be trusted to crop the herbage until ready to lie down for the night. Zigzag had gotten into the habit of nibbling much longer than his companions. Perhaps his teeth were not so good, but the sentinels had often observed him moving here and there long after his companions were asleep. George Shelton named his natural stubbornness as the cause, though the charge was hardly fair.

The night had progressed far enough for George to wrap himself in his blanket, for the night was quite cold, and lie down with his feet to the fire. The Blackfoot was not yet ready to sleep. Instead, he sat with his blanket around his shoulders and seemed to sink into a reverie. He remained motionless for a long time, gazing absently into the fire and saying nothing to anyone. At last Victor gently reminded him that he was at liberty to sleep while the boy guarded the camp.

Instead of lying down the Indian rose to his feet and stood for some minutes looking off to the northward toward the nearest stretch of mountains or the opposite side of the valley. It was as if he had noted something in that

direction which interested him. He turned to the boy:

“Let not my brother fear; Mul-tal-la will not be away long.”

And with this remark he walked down the slope, soon passing from sight in the gloom.

“That’s a queer piece of business,” reflected Victor. “I wonder what’s the matter; maybe he’s seen some of his people over yonder and has gone to call upon them.”

However, there was no cause for misgiving, and the youth gave the Blackfoot no further thought, knowing he would return when he thought proper. Meanwhile the brothers need not fear disturbance from man or animal.

The weather was still clear, though the travelers had observed a heavy black cloud over the mountains, just before sunset, which threatened a downpour of rain, but the black mass was moving northward above the peaks and soon disappeared. The moon was near the end of the first quarter, and shed enough light for one to see quite clearly for a distance of fifty yards more or less. This illumination was steady, for not a cloud drifted across its face to produce the shifting shadows and alternations of

light and obscurity which often mystified the man or boy on guard.

It had struck Victor more than once that whoever acted as sentinel was—for most of the time—wasting the hours that might as well have been spent in rest. Not once had anyone been in danger of attack from wild animals, nor since crossing the Mississippi had any Indians molested them. Moreover, he was sure that in the event of anything of the kind the horses would give timely warning. But Deerfoot had made the order, before leaving the young State of Ohio, that never was the camp to be left unguarded, and while he was with them the rule had not been disobeyed. It was useless to protest to the Shawanoe, who had a way of enforcing his views which no one dared oppose. No argument, therefore, had been offered, and that sense of honor which was ingrained with the twins made each more careful of carrying out the views of the “guide, counsellor and friend” during his absence than when he was with them. Consequently, Victor Shelton, resting his gun over his shoulder, began slowly pacing to and fro, after the manner of a veteran sentinel. His beat was twenty steps or so, and

one termination brought him near where the horses had already lain down for the night. Rather it should be said that only three of them had done so, for Zigzag, acting out his queer disposition, was seen moving slowly here and there as he munched the lush grass. He was likely to keep it up for an hour or two, and the boy gave no heed to him.

A monotonous hour had worn away when Victor's attention was drawn to the wakeful horse. He was standing with head raised, bits of grass dripping from his jaws, ears pricked, and staring toward the other side of the valley, as if he had discovered something in that direction.

"I guess Mul-tal-la is coming back," was the thought of the lad, "and Zigzag hasn't noticed that he is absent."

But no Blackfoot came into view in the dim light, and the animal's restlessness, instead of passing, became more marked. He threw his head still higher, looked more keenly and emitted a faint neigh.

"I wonder what's the matter with him," said Victor, turning aside from his beat and walking out to the animal, whom he patted and tried

to soothe. To his astonishment he found the horse was in a tremor, as if scared by something he either saw or heard.

Victor turned his gaze in the same direction, but could discover nothing to explain the alarm of the brute. Then he listened.

From the direction of the mountains he heard a peculiar sound. It was a dull but steadily increasing roar, such as you have noticed at night when a railway train was first detected miles distant. The boy supposed it was a gale of wind, similar to what he had felt more than once since crossing the Mississippi, and, indeed, while still on the other side of that river.

But no sooner had he formed this conclusion than he was sensible of a difference in the sound from that which had come to mind. It was more intense and its volume was growing faster than he had ever observed before.

"I wish Mul-tal-la was here," was the thought of Victor, who began to feel uncomfortable; "he would know the meaning of that, which is more than *I* know."

He still believed the uproar was caused by wind, though of a more violent nature than any yet noted by him. A whirlwind, a hurricane,

or what in these times is called a cyclone, may have been born among the mountains, and would soon be careering over the prairies with terrific might. If such proved the fact, Victor could think of nothing to do; for, though he and his brother fled, they would be as liable to run into the vortex or centre of disturbance as to be caught where they were.

His alarm, however, led him to hurry to the side of George and awaken him. The latter was on his feet in an instant, startled by the terrifying noise, which had aroused the other horses, who also arose and showed signs of fear. Before the two could exchange more than a few words the darkness was pierced by the voice of the Blackfoot from some point on the other side of the valley.

“Make haste, brothers! Flee to the highest land you can reach!”

“That means a cloudburst!” exclaimed George. “That is what the black cloud did. The valley will be a rushing torrent in a few minutes!”

The words were yet in his mouth when the roar of the brook a little way off was heard. The forerunner of the flood was sweeping down

the valley and would be quickly followed by a Niagara of water.

The boys ran to the horses and began with desperate haste to make them ready for flight. The goods on hand were too valuable to be lost. Saddles and bridles were hurriedly adjusted in a slipshod fashion, and then both bent their energies to replacing the packs upon Zigzag, who won the gratitude of the brothers by acting as if he understood the danger and was eager to give all the help he could. He stood motionless while with nervous, trembling hands the two fixed the bulky bundles in position.

"It's here!" called out Victor, who felt the water about his ankles and rapidly rising. *"It won't do to wait another minute!"*

The horses were headed up the slope and all broke into a gallop, for the instinct of their species often surpasses the reason of man in such crises of peril. The lads ran alongside, slapping their haunches and urging them to greater speed.

It looked for a few minutes as if, despite their haste, they would be overwhelmed, for within two or three minutes after starting they were wading through the rushing volume that

reached to their knees. Victor stumbled, and George, with a cry, caught his arm, believing he was about to be swept off his feet, but he recovered himself and plunged up the slope faster than before.

Nothing could have saved the boys and animals but the steady ascent which they made. A river was sweeping down the valley like that which wiped out Johnstown in the Conemaugh Valley nearly a century later. Few comprehend the appalling power of a great volume of water, which in the disaster referred to tossed locomotives about as if they were so many corks.

The moonlight showed the muddy torrent carrying limbs, trees and even rocks, tumbling and rolling together in one fearful swirl down the valley. The stream was already more than a hundred feet wide, and gathered width and volume with terrifying rapidity.

In a few minutes—though it seemed ten times as long—boys and horses paused on the crest of the ridge. They were now fifty feet higher than their camp, and the torrent steadily pursued them until within a dozen paces of where they stood. If it climbed that interval

nothing could save them. They watched the rushing river for a time in silence.

"Is it coming any higher?" asked Victor in an awed voice.

"I think it is creeping up, but not so fast as at first."

"Won't it be safer to keep on running?"

"No; we shall have to go down into the lowland beyond, and if the water comes over this ridge we shall be caught."

"And if it does that we shall be caught here."

"It's likely to pass round at some point above, and then it will be all up with us—*it has done so!*" added the startled George.

As he spoke he pointed down the other side of the slope which they had climbed. He was right; the muddy current had forked above and was flowing down on both sides of them. Boys and horses were standing on an elongated island which might be overflowed at any moment.

The destructive cloudbursts that sometimes break with cyclonic suddenness in the West are as shortlived as they are violent. It is impossible that it should be otherwise, for they con-

sist simply of a sudden precipitation or fall of an enormous mass of water from the skies, which naturally hunts with the utmost swiftness for the lowest level. That found, the frightful flurry is speedily over.

It was with unspeakable relief that George and Victor Shelton finally saw that the torrent had ceased to climb the slope. A few minutes later they uttered a prayer of thankfulness when they perceived that the volume was diminishing and the margin of the torrent was steadily retreating down the incline again. All danger for the time was over.

“How is it that Mul-tal-la is on the other side of the valley?” asked George.

“I don’t know. He left camp soon after you lay down, telling me he wouldn’t be gone long. He must have had some business or pleasure to look after. I thought maybe he had gone to make a call on some of his people. It was lucky for us that he saw what was coming and gave us warning in time.”

CHAPTER XIV.

SHOSHONE CALLERS.

THE torrent loosed by the cloudburst steadily grew less and less, and at the end of two hours the stream had shrunk almost to its former insignificant proportions. The boys might have returned to the site of the camp and remained in safety until morning, but they had no inclination to do so. Indeed, it would have been hard to identify the spot, for the grass everywhere lay as flat as if a mountainous roller had pressed it down. Here and there could be dimly seen the trees, some shorn of their limbs, so that they were like so many logs, twisted and pronged stumps and, strange as it may seem, boulders weighing in some instances several tons, lay where they had been flung by the raging waters.

When no doubt remained that the danger was over, the bridles, saddles and packs were again placed on the ground and the horses set free. It was impossible to start another fire, since

no fuel was obtainable, and the brothers sat on the ground, wrapped in their blankets and near enough to feel their mutual warmth. The shock through which they had passed drove away all inclination to sleep, and they talked and speculated until the gray light of morning glowed in the east.

Naturally they looked for the return of the Blackfoot, who had left them the night before. The valley, strewn with the debris of the flood, stretched out before them, and they gazed up and down its winding extent and across to the corresponding slope, but without seeing man or animal. Not the least striking feature of the scene was the carcasses of several elks and antelopes, while in the distance was recognized the brown, bulky body of an immense bison or buffalo. These various animals, doubtless with others that were not visible, had paid the penalty of being caught in the irrestrainable rush of the torrent.

That Mul-tal-la had met with any mishap was impossible, for it was he who discovered the nature of the peril before the brothers knew of it. The same recourse was at his command, for all he had to do was to make for the higher land,

where he would be beyond reach of the wrathful waters.

But the sun climbed the sky and the longing, wandering and impatient boys saw nothing of their friend. Almost directly opposite and a fourth of a mile away was a mass of boulders, some of which had apparently been brought down by the torrent.

"It seems to me," said Victor, "that something is moving near those rocks. Try your spyglass on them, George."

A minute's scrutiny was enough to show that Victor was right.

"There are several Indians," said George, still holding the glass in place. "They seem to be looking at us."

"Mul-tal-la must be with them. I suppose he is telling about his two companions."

"I don't make him out, for the rocks interfere. You try it."

He passed the glass to Victor, and, as the brothers stood side by side, the second leveled the instrument at the group. At the same moment the red men came from behind the boulders and moved down the slope in the direction of the boys, as if they meant to call

on them. All were afoot, and two were of shorter stature than the others.

With the help of the glass Victor Shelton gained a clear view of the faces of the whole party, who were dressed much the same as the Blackfoot.

“Mul-tal-la isn’t there,” said the surprised lad. “I don’t understand that.”

“He can’t be far off. He’s likely to show up pretty soon. Shall we wait for those Indians, for they mean to visit us—that’s certain?”

“I don’t see how we can help ourselves. If we start to leave it will look as if we are afraid of them, and, though they are on foot, they can overhaul us without trouble. No; let’s stand our ground. I don’t believe they mean any harm, but I should feel a good deal easier in mind if Mul-tal-la was on hand. It is odd that he and Deerfoot should be away at the time we are most likely to need them.”

The strangers came straight forward, and were soon so near that every face was clearly seen without the aid of the glass. The brothers learned that what they suspected was true: two of the Indians were boys, perhaps a little older

than our young friends, and one of them was certainly taller. All were armed with bows and arrows, their dress being similar, as has been already said, to that worn by the Blackfoot.

George and Victor felt anything but comfortable. Previous experience warranted the hope that the Indians meant no harm, but for the time the youths could not be certain on that point. While the strangers probably would have acted friendly had either the Shawanoe or Blackfoot been with the lads, it was doubtful how it would be when they found the two alone. Place a party of lawless persons, no matter what their race, in a tempting situation, where they have no fear of any consequences of wrong-doing, and they may be depended upon to do wrong.

Had the boys been certain that mischief impended they would have warned the party off, but doubting and puzzled as to what was best to do, they waved their hands in token of good-will and awaited their coming as if nothing in the world could please them more.

The nearer the Indians approached the less the boys liked their looks. Their dress was shabby and their faces ugly. The taller of the

dusky youths had daubed his face with paint at some remote period in the past, and enough remained to add to his repulsive looks, which were not diminished when his broad mouth expanded into a grin. His companion was not quite so tall, and was of broader and huskier frame.

The least repellent of the three warriors displayed some superiority in dress to the others. The hunting shirt had more fringes at the bottom; the dilapidated moccasins showed a few more beads, and he had three stained eagle feathers pointing upward from his crown, while neither of the others sported more than two. From these facts and a certain deference shown by the couple, George and Victor believed this fellow was a chief among his people. Furthermore, our friends were convinced that this particular redskin was the father of the boys, and I may add that in both suppositions the brothers were right.

“Howdy?” grinned the leader, who was a pace or two in advance of the others. As he spoke he extended his right hand to George, his long bow being in the left hand.

“Howdy?” replied George, taking the palm

of the other. "I am glad to see my brothers," he hypocritically added.

It was quickly apparent that none of the Indians could speak English. The salutation of the leader was the only word he knew. He made a response to George's greeting, but it was unintelligible to the boys. He said something more, and, releasing his hand, reached out and took George's rifle from his grasp.

It was done so deftly that the weapon was gone before the owner knew it.

"Why did you let him have that?" asked the resentful Victor.

"He took it before I had any idea of what he was after. Maybe he only wants to look over it."

The chief held up the gun, inspected the hammer and trigger, squinted one eye down the barrel (and Victor Shelton never wished more fervently that the rifle would go off), pretended to aim at some target in the distance, and then, instead of returning the weapon to the owner, passed it to one of his warriors.

He next looked at Victor, and took two or three steps toward him. The boy retreated, shaking his head and griping his weapon with both hands.

“There’ll be a fight before you get this, you old scamp!” replied the lad, compressing his lips and showing his anger so plainly that no one could mistake.

The dusky countenance of the chief took on a dangerous glint and his black eyes twinkled threateningly.

“Better let him have it,” said his brother. “There’s no help for it.”

“He doesn’t get it without a fight. I won’t stand like a lamb and let him rob me.”

The consequences must have been serious had not Mul-tal-la, the Blackfoot, put in an appearance at this critical moment. He came over the ridge from behind the boys, proving that he had crossed the devastated valley some time before.

All the strangers turned their faces toward the new arrival, and it was apparent from the expression on the face of the chief that he recognized Mul-tal-la. They had met when the Blackfoot passed through this region the year before, though none of the other four knew him.

The chief seemed really glad to meet the wanderer. They greeted each other and talked

for several minutes, as if they had not the slightest knowledge of the presence of the others.

"They act as if they belonged to the same tribe," said George, who, like his brother, was closely watching the couple. "I wonder if these folks are Blackfeet."

"I don't think so. They are not dressed quite the same. They look different, and the home of the Blackfeet is a good many miles to the north."

Victor was in a combative mood. He could not get over his anger because of the robbery they had suffered, not to mention the second one that impended. He scowled at the chief and then glared at the youths standing by themselves. The shorter looked back and grinned threateningly.

"I'd like to have a set-to with that imp," said Victor to his brother. "Did you ever see a meaner-looking thing?"

And to show his contempt Victor deliberately doubled his fist and shook it at the fellow, who grinned and placed his hand threateningly on the haft of his knife at his girdle. When matters looked ominous it was the lot of Mul-tal-la

to interfere again in the interests of peace. Turning abruptly, he said to the boys:

“This Indian is Black Elk, chief of the Shoshones. Their warriors sometimes visit the Blackfeet, and he and I talk each other’s tongue. Those are his boys, Young Elk and Antelope.”

“What does he mean by taking George’s gun from him? He was about to rob me of mine when you came up, but he won’t get it without a row.”

“Let not my brother be hasty,” said the Blackfoot soothingly. “Black Elk has thousands of warriors and can do as he wills with us, but he is a friend of the Blackfeet; I stayed for several days and nights with him when on my way through here a year ago. Because he is a friend, he will not do what he meant to do. He says you shall make contest with his two sons, and the two that beat shall own the guns. Are you willing?”

“Nothing will suit me better, if the fight is to be a fair one,” was the prompt reply of Victor.

“I am ready,” added George; “but can you trust these people?”

“Mul-tal-la does not know about the others,

but what Black Elk says he will do, that he will do."

"Well, what is his plan?"

The Blackfoot now turned and talked for some minutes with Black Elk, one of the chiefs of the Shoshones. Then the chief called his sons to him, and there was more talk. The dusky youths looked at the boys and grinned in a way that showed they were pleased over the prospect and counted upon making short work of the palefaced intruders.

"I'm aching to get at that chunky chap," said Victor, who for some reason had taken an intense dislike of the ill-favored youth.

"Maybe you will ache more after you are through with him. You must keep cool, Victor, or it will go hard with you."

Mul-tal-la now addressed himself to the boys.

"Black Elk has made these rules: My brother," indicating George, "shall wrestle with Antelope—he is the tall one—and, if he throws Antelope, then the gun shall be given back to my brother; but if Antelope throws him, then he shall keep the gun of my brother."

Mul-tal-la was slyer than his friends had supposed. He had been in the company of the

youths long enough to learn that George Shelton was the superior of his brother in wrestling, and indeed possessed no little skill in that respect. The Blackfoot was sanguine that the white youth could overturn Antelope. And yet he was by no means certain, for the Indian was taller and showed that he was strong and agile. Many red men pride themselves on their skill in wrestling, and have good grounds for doing so. Mul-tal-la warned George of this and impressed upon him not to throw away the slightest advantage he could gain from the very outset.

To prove that Black Elk meant to be fair, he compelled his son to lay his knife on the ground beside his bow. The youth carried no tomahawk or other weapon, and to reciprocate, George handed his knife to Mul-tal-la.

“I suppose I am to wrestle that other monkey,” muttered Victor, scowling at the youth.

“No!” replied the Blackfoot, with a grin; “you and he are to fight.”

“Good! that suits me to a dot!” exclaimed the pleased Victor.

CHAPTER XV.

A QUESTION OF SKILL AND COURAGE.

THE situation had taken on a most singular phase. The Shelton brothers were waiting on the crest of the ridge for the return of their Blackfoot friend, when in a brief time they were called upon to enter into a brief struggle with two Shoshone or Snake Indians for the possession of their own property.

Withal, the paleface youths were eager for the contest. This was especially true of Victor, who, as he expressed it, was aching for a set-to with the broad, strongly built youth, toward whom he had taken an intense dislike from the first.

The arrangements were made by the chief Black Elk and Mul-tal-la, the two warriors standing as immobile as if hundreds of miles removed from the spot, though it is not to be supposed they were not interested. Their leader and the Blackfoot talked again for two

or three minutes, while George and Victor stood side by side, awaiting the test. The rifle of one was still held by a Shoshone, while Victor clung to his own weapon.

"I don't give it up till I have to," grimly remarked the lad. "One of them has yours, and Mul-tal-la shall take charge of mine; he'll act fair, but I don't believe any of the others will. George, if you don't throw that copper-colored scamp you're no brother of mine, and you'll have to settle with *me*."

"I'll do my best—I promise you that. Don't forget that *you* have a tough job before you."

Mul-tal-la addressed the brothers:

"My brother George will wrestle with Antelope first; then my brother Victor will see whether Young Elk is stronger than he."

"How many falls are we to have?" asked George.

"Only one. If he lays you on your back you must give up your gun to the Antelope. You will not have another chance, but will have to go without a rifle till you can get one somewhere else."

"In all the wrestling matches I ever saw it was the best two out of three falls. The fellow may play some trick on me."

“You mustn’t let him,” said Victor, impatiently; “you know as many tricks as he. Remember I’ve got my eye on you, and if he beats you, you’ll have to take a turn with me.”

“Save your strength for yourself,” replied George. “Well, I’m ready,” he added, addressing his dusky friend.

The spectators formed a sort of ring, and the youths advanced to the middle, each warily watching the other and on the alert for the first advantage.

The wrestling bouts of the early days were not conducted as in these times. The rule was for the contestants to take their places with their sides touching, and each with his arm around the waist or neck of the other. The same style still prevails in many places remote from towns. When thus interlocked the contestants began the struggle, twisting, bending, straining and tugging with might and main and with all the skill the two could bring to their aid. The spectacle of wrestlers standing face to face and using their toes to feint and tap each other, most of the motions being simultaneous, like two fighting chickens, while watching a chance to catch the other unawares, was formerly unknown in this country.

It will be noted that in the old style, provided both were right or left-handed, one of the wrestlers had a manifest advantage, since his stronger side was turned toward the weaker side of the other. Among boys this advantage was often decided by lot, or by the first shout of his claim by one of the contestants. The handicap served also to even matters when there was a marked superiority of strength or skill on the part of one youth.

George Shelton was right-handed, like most boys, and he determined not to yield that point to the other. It speedily developed, however, that the Antelope was left-handed, for he voluntarily placed his left arm over the shoulders of George—something he would not have done had his right side been the stronger.

Instead of placing his arm under that of his foe, George Shelton slipped it on top, though not much was gained thereby. He made up his mind that if there was to be any strangling done he would do his share. Thus they stood, with every nerve braced and every sense alert, waiting for the first test.

The grip of the Antelope, who, it will be remembered, was taller than George, suddenly

tightened and he bore our young friend backward. But the latter kept his feet and braced for the struggle to fling the other forward on his face, which was made the next instant. Then the seesawing went on for several seconds and with the same alternating abruptness as before, when the young Indian put forth his utmost power to lift the other off his feet. Had he succeeded, he would have had no trouble in flinging him forward on his back or face, for a person can do little when kicking in the air with his feet clear of the earth.

George defeated his enemy by also lifting. With both straining in the same manner neither could succeed, and the weight of both remained on the ground. Then the Antelope ceased his effort, with the intention of trying some "lock" of which the white boy knew nothing.

But this was the opportunity for which George Shelton was waiting. In the instant of the cessation by his antagonist, the watchful lad suddenly put forth every ounce of strength and lifted the young Indian clear. He strove desperately to regain his footing, but his shabby moccasins vainly trod the air, and before he could recover his grip George hurled

him violently forward on his side. He struck the ground with a shock that made it tremble. George lay across his body, from which the breath was driven.

Never was fairer fall seen. The young Shoshone was defeated so decisively that, had there been an official umpire or referee, no appeal could have been made to him.

“Good! Good!” exclaimed the delighted Victor, dancing with delight and clapping his hands. “I’ll own you for my brother, George. I couldn’t have done better.”

Mul-tal-la grinned, for he could not conceal his pleasure. The spectators, including Young Elk, looked savage, and the brow of Black Elk was like a thundercloud. No one spoke, but all must have thought volumes.

Having thrown his rival, George Shelton lay across him for a few moments, then leaped up, sprang back several paces, and turning to Mul-tal-la, said:

“Tell him, if he wants it, I’ll give him another chance.”

“No; my brother has won his gun.”

At the same moment Black Elk reached to the warrior holding the rifle, and, taking it from

him, strode to where George Shelton was standing and handed it back without a word. Thus far the chief was certainly disposed to act fairly.

“Thank you for giving me what is mine,” said the exultant youth, bowing so low and smiling so broadly that the chief must have understood he was receiving thanks, even though none of the words was intelligible.

“Now, Victor,” added George, turning to his brother as he stepped beside him, “I’ll say to you what you said to me—that is, that if you don’t get the best of that grinning imp, who is eager to pummel you, you’re no brother of mine.”

While the discomfited wrestler slouched back beside his father, who acted as if he was ashamed of him, the other son fairly bounded into the arena. He stood grinning, with fists doubled, and manifestly impatient for the sport to begin. To hurry his foe he twisted his face into an insulting grimace.

No one knew Victor’s quick temper better than his brother. It was that which caused him his only misgiving.

“Victor,” said he, with much earnestness, “if

you don't keep cool and have all your wits about you, you'll get whipped. He's stronger than his brother, and you have a harder job before you than I did. Remember—KEEP COOL!"

Now, Victor himself was fully aware of his infirmity, but, like many thus afflicted, he often yielded to it. At the very opening of the bout he came within a hair of falling a victim to his own impetuous temper. Neither he nor the Shoshone displayed any of the scientific points which are seen to-day when two professionals face each other in the ring, for they had not had any instruction. You would have said the pose of both was wrong, for, instead of holding the right hand across and in front of the chest for purposes of parrying, while the "leading" was done with the left, they stood with fists thrust out and side by side, but both balanced themselves well on their feet, and were on the watch for an opening.

Victor looked straight into the dusky face and felt a thrill of anger when the Shoshone indulged in another tantalizing grimace. Young Elk made several quick feints, and then, with surprising quickness, smote the cheek of

Victor with the flat of his hand, and leaped back and grinned at him.

The blow set Victor's blood aflame, and, forgetting caution, he rushed upon the other, only, however, to receive a second blow which almost carried him off his feet. It was directly on the mouth and started the blood. But it undid the mischief of the slap given a moment before. Our young friend suddenly realized that he had no slight task before him, and he heeded the words of his brother, who again called to him to keep cool. He mastered his temper and did a clever thing by pretending to be scared. When Young Elk carefully advanced he retreated, and hurriedly glanced over his shoulder, as if looking for a place of refuge.

The Indian was deceived and grew confident. He came forward and drew back his right fist ready to strike, while Victor continued cautiously to give ground. Finally he braced and awaited the attack. The closed hand of the Shoshone shot forward, but the blow was eluded by an instant recoil of the head for an inch or two. Victor felt the wind of the blow on his nose, so close came the fist of his foe.

Then with astonishing quickness he concentrated his strength in his good right arm and landed straight and true upon the cheek of the other, who was sent backward and reeled to one knee, but was up again in a flash.

It became clear that Young Elk was afflicted with as quick a temper as vexed the white youth, for he made a blind, headlong rush, as if to carry everything before him. As he dashed on, his arms sawed the air like a windmill. Victor, never more cool and self-possessed, parried for a moment or two until another opening offered, when he drove his fist again into the flaming countenance with a force that sent his antagonist flat upon his back. He had scored a clean knockdown.

But the Shoshone was not yet vanquished. He bounded to his feet as if made of rubber, and with more coolness than before advanced again upon his antagonist. Each was now in a mental state to do full justice to his own prowess. Several minutes were spent in "sparring for an opening," but Victor Shelton quickly proved he was superior in skill. He dodged and parried several blows, and, when he landed again, it was the most effective stroke

yet done. He delivered his fist accurately upon the jaw of the grinning youth, who again went down.

Victor sprang forward and stood over him, waiting for the Shoshone to rise that he might give him the finishing blow. Young Elk lay as if "taking the count." He was dazed for the moment by the terrific blows he had received, and all the fight was knocked out of him. He looked up at the young gladiator, then rose, and, instead of facing him, turned and ran at full speed down the ridge.

The amazed Victor took two or three steps in pursuit, but immediately saw that he was not the equal of the other in fleetness, and drew back. The exasperated chief shouted to his son to return, but he was too panic-stricken to obey, and continued running.

Victor was thrown into wild rage by his disappointment. He was not yet through with his foe—though it would seem that he ought to have been—and he wheeled around, panting, and looking for some one upon whom to vent his wrath.

"What are you gaping at?"

The question was addressed to the Antelope,

standing bewildered and mystified by the whirlwind rush of events. Before he could answer, if he had been disposed to do so, Victor drove his fist into the partly painted face and toppled the owner over on his back. He was heard to grunt as he struck the ground, and, hastily clambering to his feet, he too turned and fled after his still running brother as if death were at his heels.

“I’ll fight *you*, if you want it,” called Victor, striding in front of the chief, who probably did not understand his meaning. “Fetch on all the Shoshones in the country, and I’ll tumble them on top of one another.”

But George Shelton and Mul-tal-la saw the moment had come to interfere. The latter hastily stepped up to the lad and laid a restraining hand on his shoulder. George did the same.

“Come, Victor,” he said, “you have done enough; you have won your gun, and now don’t spoil everything by your foolishness.”

CHAPTER XVI.

WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY.

LET us do justice to Black Elk, chief of the Shoshones, who acted like a true sportsman. He had witnessed the discomfiture of his sons, and could not conceal his disgust and exasperation. Little doubt that soon after the incidents described he "settled" with his heirs, not so much because of their overthrow, but because of the cowardice they had shown. Courage with the red men, no less than with our own race, is a cardinal virtue, as the lack of it is an unpardonable sin.

Victor Shelton allowed his brother to lead him away from his threatening pose in front of the chieftain of the red men. He saw the rashness of his last act, and hoped the leader would overlook it. And Black Elk not only did that, but he did more. He deliberately strode across to Victor, offered his hand, and said something, which Mul-tal-la interpreted:

"He says my brother is a brave youth; he is

the master of his sons; he would be glad to adopt you and have you live with him as the one who, when he dies, shall become the leading chief of his tribe, which numbers many hundred warriors.

“Great Cæsar!” exclaimed the astonished Victor. “Give him my thanks, but tell him the thing can’t be thought of.”

Black Elk was so pleased with the boys that he still urged Mul-tal-la to go with them to his village and stay for a long time. The Blackfoot finally convinced the chief that being on his return to his own home, from which he had been absent many moons, it would not do to linger on the road. He had sad news to carry to his people and to the relatives of the companion who had met his death in the East. He would be blamed if he delayed in bearing the sorrowful message to them.

So finally the two parties separated. Black Elk shook hands with each of the three, and the grim warriors came forward and did the same. Then the Shoshones passed down the slope and headed toward the rocks on the other side of the valley, where George and Victor Shelton first caught sight of them.

The horses being ready, our friends mounted and started forward again. Their course was a little to the east of the range through which they would soon have to force their way in order to reach the Blackfoot country. Multal-la explained that he had a pass in mind, which was a day's ride away, and probably would not be entered before the following morning. It will be remembered that our friends had partaken of no food since the previous evening. None referred to it, for they could well wait until the middle or, if necessary, until the close of the day.

The weather continued favorable. Summer had come, and in the lower portions of the country the heat at midday was often oppressive. Mosquitoes had begun to annoy the travelers, who might count upon being plagued by them for the rest of their journey. These pests are more unbearable in cold regions, during the brief summer season, than in the temperate regions of a country.

The sun shone clear and strong, but the three were already upon elevated ground, and the nearness of the mountains doubtless helped to cool the air. At intervals they came upon the

interesting creatures peculiar to the West and known as prairie dogs, their dwellings consisting of holes burrowed in the ground, often covering acres in extent, beside which the little animals would sit and gaze at the horsemen as they filed past. Sometimes they emitted queer whistling noises, and, upon observing anything suspicious on the part of the travelers, whisked into these openings and vanished in a twinkling. Then they could be seen peeping out, and, when the seeming danger had passed, they clambered back to their posts, as lively and watchful as ever. To-day the prairie dogs have become so harmful to agriculture in some parts of the West that the problem of extirpating them is under consideration and is a serious one.

The Blackfoot as usual kept his place at the front, while the brothers rode side by side, talking when disposed, and sometimes going for miles without exchanging more than a few sentences. This conversation revealed the fact that both did not feel entirely at ease regarding Black Elk and his Shoshones. At the time of which I am writing this tribe numbered more than five thousand people, and was one of the

most important in the West. Their main villages lay to the westward of the Rocky Mountain range, about the headwaters of the stream now known as South Fork of the Lewis River. With so many warriors, it was not strange that some of their hunting parties often came through the passes in the Rockies and roamed over the level country on the east. Since they were generally provided with horses, it seemed singular that Black Elk and his companions were on foot. Mul-tal-la said beyond a doubt all owned animals, which were at no great distance.

When the Blackfoot was told by the boys of their fears, they were surprised to find that he shared them, though not to the same extent. He explained that for some time to come the chieftain's principal emotion would be that of exasperation against his sons for the sorry showing they had made against the two white youths. They were sure to receive punishment at his hand for running away that would last them a lifetime.

But after the first burst of passion was over, Black Elk would begin to think of the two white lads that had brought this disgrace upon the

royal household, and, as he mused, his resentment would kindle toward them. All the Indians not unnaturally looked upon every white man as an intruder. Though history shows that the aborigines welcomed their visitors, yet the action of the latter was so cruel that the friendship of the red men was turned to enmity. Thus most of the trappers and hunters who ventured into the West and Northwest took their lives in their hands, and many never came back from the wild solitudes. The story of the settlement of our country is a continuous one of outrage and massacre, in which the fault lay almost always at the door of the palefaces.

Black Elk could not fail to feel resentful over the fact that the disgrace of his sons had been inflicted by members of that hated race. It was quite likely, therefore, that, repenting the magnanimity he had shown, he would try to visit his vengeance upon the two youths while they were yet within reach.

The duty of our friends, therefore, was plain: they must lose no time in hurrying beyond danger. When Mul-tal-la was asked what the result would have been had the apparently

honest invitation of Black Elk been accepted, the Blackfoot smiled.

“My brothers would have been treated well for a time, but they would not have lived long.”

“How would it have been with you?” asked George.

“Mul-tal-la did not hurt Young Elk or the Antelope; his skin is of the same color as Black Elk’s. They are brothers.”

This was another way of saying the Blackfoot had nothing to fear from the Shoshones. It was the boys who were in peril.

Victor more than once was tempted to ask their companion the cause of his absence the night before, but refrained after speaking to George, who told him if Mul-tal-la wished he would give the information without questioning. If he did not, it was not tactful to bother him.

The boys noted that the Blackfoot, from his place in front, occasionally turned his head and scanned the horizon, especially to the south and west.

“That means that he doesn’t believe we are through with the Shoshones,” said Victor, when his brother commented upon the action.

“If they intend any harm, I don’t see why

they don't follow us, without trying to hide from our sight. We can't travel fast, and they wouldn't have any trouble in overtaking us before we went many miles."

"That isn't the Indian fashion of doing business."

Inasmuch as Mul-tal-la showed no such interest in studying the country they were leaving behind them, George frequently brought his spyglass into play. Whenever they reached an elevation, though of slight extent, he directed the instrument toward the points which he saw were passing under the scrutiny of their guide. The most careful study, sometimes shared with Victor, failed to reveal anything of a disturbing nature. It was well to be on guard, but it looked as if the Blackfoot was unduly suspicious.

The surface of the country became more broken, for the two were gradually entering the foothill region of that mighty range which extends over many degrees of the American continent. The air remained clear and sharp, different species of wood were met, and it was not yet noon when they halted beside one of the numerous small streams which issued from

the mountains, and, frolicking and tumbling eastward, finally found its way into the Missouri and so on to the Gulf.

The water was crystalline and cold. The horses drank from it, for it was not imprudent to permit them to do so, since their gait had been moderate and they were neither too warm nor too tired. The draught was refreshing to the boys and the Blackfoot. The latter told them that if they would start a fire he would try to woo a meal from the brook, which contained numerous deep pools and abounded with eddies, where fish were sure to be found.

George and Victor set to work with animation. From the stunted pines they broke off dry twigs and fractured larger limbs into pieces until something of a pile was gathered and heaped up against a small boulder. It took some time to make the flame catch from the steel and tinder, but both had had a good deal of experience in kindling a fire in difficulties, and they succeeded in starting a blaze of no mean size.

Mul-tal-la was ready, and appeared with three fish, weighing two or three pounds apiece. They resembled salmon-trout, but were not.

However, there was no doubt they would make an excellent meal, and it did not take our friends long to prepare it. As you remember, the boys had brought considerable seasoning in the form of salt and pepper, and they made sparing use of them. The Blackfoot, like the rest of his people, did not know the use of condiments in preparing his food. It would have mattered little to him had he been forced to eat his fish raw, but he had learned to show deference to the tastes of Deerfoot and other civilized persons, and often affected a fastidiousness which was foreign to him.

When the midday meal was finished Multal-la borrowed the glass from George Shelton, and walking a hundred paces or so to the westward, climbed a rock and pointed the instrument to the south and west. He held his erect posture so long, with the instrument immovable, that the boys, who were watching him, were sure he had made the discovery for which he had groped so long and hoped not to make.

Such was the fact. Some five or six miles to the southwest he descried a finger of smoke climbing into the clear air, and showing distinctly against the blue sky, near the foothills.

Such a sight was so common and so natural in that part of the world that it would not have caused the Blackfoot any unrest had he not noted a new and disquieting feature. The line of vapor did not climb the sky, as such lighter substance naturally does, but its course was sinuous and waving, like a ribbon held by one end and shaken out.

This proved that it was meant as a signal by those who had kindled the fire. That thin, vibratory line of smoke was a message sent for miles across the wild country, and the wireless telegram carried an important meaning. Who was sending it?

“Black Elk, the Shoshone chieftain,” was the instant answer which presented itself to the Blackfoot. Did it bear any relation to the red man and his white companions? Undoubtedly it did in the estimation of Mul-tal-la.

To whom was the message sent?

That question remained to be answered. Of course it could not be meant for Mul-tal-la and his young friends, for there was no conceivable cause for any signal of that nature. It followed, therefore, that the oscillating line of vapor was intended for other Shoshones who were in the neighborhood.

Accordingly, Mul-tal-la now began scrutinizing with the utmost care every other portion of the landscape within his field of vision. To the east and south the view extended for a long distance, but was shortened by the towering mountains to the west and northwest. Somewhere among these rugged masses must be the other wandering Shoshones, and, sooner or later, they were sure to catch sight of the signal fire, because it was too conspicuous to remain hidden for any length of time.

If the signal was seen by those for whom it was intended, they would reply much in the same manner, for the peculiar code does not admit of much variation. Perhaps the most that it could tell would be that the notice had been seen and understood. The party of the second part would then proceed to act.

Again and again the Blackfoot's eye ranged over his field of vision, but at the end of an hour no new discovery had rewarded his efforts

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE MOUNTAINS.

MUL-TAL-LA, the Blackfoot, performed some mental calculations that would have been creditable to Deerfoot, the Shawanoe.

Possessing a remarkable memory of places, he easily recalled the location of the pass which he and his companions had used when on their journey eastward. Naturally he planned to utilize it again on his return with his three friends. He did not forget that during his visit to Black Elk, on the former occasion, he had described the route by which he crossed the formidable mountain range. The Shoshone chieftain praised his skill and wisdom in making use of the pass, which he himself had traversed more than once.

It followed, therefore, that Black Elk would expect his old acquaintance to guide the youths over the same course. He had therefore signalled to the Shoshones in the mountains to cut

off the little party, and the most promising place for that was in the pass which was familiar to both. Consequently, the prudent thing for Mul-tal-la to do was to mislead Black Elk as to his time of entering the pass.

It has been said that the entrance could be reached by the close of the afternoon, but the first intention of the Blackfoot was to camp at this entrance until the following morning, arranging to make the passage by daylight. You must not form the idea that when a mountain pass is referred to, it is in the nature of a road which can be followed without trouble and that few difficulties are met. The great South Pass through the Rockies is twenty miles wide in many places, and a party of emigrants have often entered and tramped it for a long way before learning they were journeying over an old route that has been used by thousands of persons in crossing the plains.

A mountain pass as understood in the West may be described as a means of getting across or through a range. It often involves steep climbing and descent, winding past wild and dangerous precipices, with the hardest work conceivable. It requires several days and

sometimes a week or more to traverse. It has happened that a party, after penetrating to a long distance, has discovered that they have been following a blind path, and they are obliged to turn back and hunt for a new one. The most experienced mountaineers sometimes go astray. On one of Fremont's exploring expeditions his guide lost his way and the most disastrous results followed. Many of the hardest scouts and all of the mules froze to death, and the explorer himself had a narrow escape from a similar fate.

It would have been impossible for the two Blackfeet to find their way through the range had they been forced to depend upon themselves, but the trail had been used for years by hunters and wild animals, and was so clearly marked that, traveling only by daylight, it was easy to avoid going wrong.

Mul-tal-la explained the problem that confronted him, and the boys saw it was both difficult and dangerous. His plan was to press on till they arrived at the entrance to the pass, and then, instead of waiting until morning, do the utmost traveling possible by night. The Shoshones would not expect this. Therefore, if all

went well, our friends would gain a good start and, by keeping it up as long as they could, might throw their enemies so far to the rear that they would be eluded. The Blackfoot thought they could reach the comparatively level country beyond at the end of three days, provided they made good use of the nights, which, you will remember, were partly lit by the moon, and provided also the weather continued fair.

“The smoke of this fire will tell Black Elk where we are,” remarked George Shelton, when they were about to resume their journey.

“Yes; had Mul-tal-la seen the signal of Black Elk the fire would not have been started, but it is too late now.”

“It seems to me,” said Victor, “that since you have located Black Elk and his party, the only thing left is to keep a lookout for the Shoshones in front.”

“My brother speaks the words of wisdom.”

“Thanks—and now, Mul-tal-la, why not go by that pass you have been talking about and take a new one through the mountains?”

The Blackfoot explained that that was the question he had been turning over in his mind,

but the plan could not be followed, because he had no knowledge of any other path. There might be none, or, at best, he would have to spend a long time in hunting for it, and when found, they were likely to be turned back by obstructions of which they could know nothing until they faced them. The conclusion was therefore clear: they must use the old pass with which he was familiar.

But the Blackfoot had a little trick in mind, which he explained to his friends. They would select a camping site among the foothills near where they would have to make the change of route to enter the mountains. They would start another fire, whose smoke would give their enemies the impression that they had halted for the night. The Shoshones, following the rule of their race, were not likely to molest the travelers until the night was well advanced, and by that time Mul-tal-la hoped to be beyond reach. Care and skill and not a little good fortune were necessary to success, but the faithful guide was hopeful.

It took only a fraction of the time I have used for a full understanding to be reached by the Blackfoot and the boys. At the request of

George Shelton, their friend retained the spy-glass, while he and his brother depended upon their unaided eyesight. Mul-tal-la held his position a hundred yards, more or less, in advance, with the laden Zigzag plodding after and the brothers bringing up the rear. All were fortunate in one respect: none of the animals—omitting the previous accident to the horse Simon and later to Whirlwind—had fallen lame. This was fortunate when it is remembered that all were unshod and they had been obliged to pass more than one rough place. This good fortune could hardly be expected to continue, now that the hardest part of the journey thus far confronted them.

The course wound among the elevations and depressions, past boulders and rocks, with grass, trees and undergrowth continually obtruding, and with the rugged outlines of the mountains towering above the cloud line on their left. At varying distances the great peaks climbed far into the sky, their crests white with snow, and in some cases the fleecy clouds wrapped them about so closely that it was hard to tell where one ended and the other began.

Now and then a breath of icy air was wafted over the lads, and they involuntarily shivered. Then in the soft hush the weather for a time became oppressive. Up and down, to the right and left, in and out, the three pushed onward, making better progress than at any time for weeks before.

The guide gave the boys no attention, for none was necessary. They understood matters, and the part they had to play was simple. The Blackfoot could be seen now and then to check his horse and lift the instrument to his eye. While he gave his chief attention to the front, he did not neglect to scan every portion of his field of vision.

One fact puzzled the Blackfoot. Hours had passed since Black Elk sent his signal across the miles of country, but the reply, so far as Mul-tal-la could discover, was yet to be given. It could hardly be done without his seeing it. The fact that nothing showed suggested the possibility of there being no Shoshones in that section to answer the command of their chief. Such might be the fact, but it was unlikely that a veteran like Black Elk would call to any of his warriors unless he knew they would respond.

Mul-tal-la acted as if such a contingency was out of the question.

The sunlight was still in the air when the Blackfoot reined in his horse and dropped from his back. They were in a rough, broken section, filled with rocks, undergrowth, stunted pines, oaks and other varieties of trees, while a small brook brawled and splashed and tumbled some distance away in its eager hunt for a channel to the Platte.

“It looks as if we are done for the day,” said George, noting the action of their friend. “If we are, we have made better time than we expected.”

The Blackfoot beckoned them to approach, and they rode up beside him.

“Here we wait till night,” he explained. “When we turn yonder we begin to travel over the trail that will bring us into the open country on the other side of the mountains—if Black Elk does not say no,” he added, with his meaning grin.

“You have seen nothing of the answer to his signal?” asked George.

“No; the sky in front and over the mountains is clear”——

“How about *that?*” broke in Victor, pointing to the westward, in which direction the pass extended.

The others turned and saw that which they had been hoping not to see. A spiral, oscillating line of smoke was creeping slowly upward in the clear air. Moreover, it was not more than half a mile distant. Although the reply of the Shoshones to their chief had been delayed, it had come at last. The warriors were on hand, and in the path which the travelers had intended to follow.

The three scanned the telltale column of vapor in silence. In the circumstances the glass could give no help. The interval was too brief and the object itself too ethereal and vague to call for any strengthening of vision. Finally George asked, involuntarily dropping his voice, as one does in the presence of danger:

“Will that change your plans, Mul-tal-la?”

He thought for a minute, with his eyes still on the smoke, before answering.

“Mul-tal-la cannot speak of a surety, but he does not think so.”

As he explained matters from his point of

view, the former course that he had indicated remained the right one to follow. The discovery simply added another element of danger to that which was there from the first. By kindling the fire where they had halted, they would give the impression that they had gone into camp for the night. This subterfuge ought to lure the Shoshones to the place in order to make their attack during the darkness.

The situation could not have been more delicate. To carry out the plan of the Blackfoot it was necessary for him and his companions to set out over the pass as soon as it became dark. They would thus be going directly toward the hostiles, who, in case they did not wait until a late hour, would be coming at the same time toward the travelers. Using the one road, it would seem that an encounter was inevitable.

The hope of averting such a meeting rested on the fact that the pass was of varying width, and in many places two or three routes were open. Two men following opposite directions might miss each other by a half-mile interval, and without the possibility of mutual discovery. Again there were stretches where they would have to come face to face. A not important

advantage of our friends was that they would be expecting—and would, therefore, be on the lookout for—the Shoshones, while it was not likely the latter would be watching for the Blackfoot and the boys, who were supposed to be at the entrance to the pass, where the smoke of their camp-fire spoke of their presence.

A vigorous blaze having been started, Mul-tal-la took the lead as before. It was understood that he was to hold his place considerably farther in advance than usual. Upon the first sign of their enemies he would warn them by signal, when they could conceal themselves, if possible, until the hostiles passed down the trail to the supposed camp. If this could be accomplished, the danger would be past and the problem solved. Everything depended upon the skill of the Blackfoot.

Night had begun closing in when the start was made in the order named, excepting that Mul-tal-la, as has been stated, led by a longer interval, and Victor Shelton was at the extreme rear. The guide was invisible to the boys most of the time.

The trail steadily ascended, and for an hour or more was easy traveling. It wound to the

right or left, passing into deep hollows, climbing steep ridges, circling obstructions in the form of massive piles of rocks, but without interposing any difficult places where it was necessary to halt or grope one's way.

The little company had penetrated more than a mile in this manner without hearing or seeing anything to cause alarm. Mul-tal-la was beyond sight, but the boys, George leading, were silent, listening and peering into the gloom, which, as yet, was unlighted by the moon. That would not rise for some time to come.

Suddenly a soft tremulous whistle came from the front. This was the signal agreed upon, and the brothers instantly halted. Zigzag was so well trained that he did the same. It had been deemed best to place him between Jack and Prince, so as to hem him in, as may be said.

Fortunately the check came at a favorable point. The rocks and undergrowth on the right offered a good place for hiding, and George Shelton, slipping from his saddle, grasped the bridle rein of his horse and forced him to one side. The animal stumbled, but a few steps took him far enough. Leaving him, George dashed back to Zigzag, and with harder work

almost dragged him after Jack. Victor was on the ground almost as soon as his brother, so that the boys and three horses were speedily bunched together, beyond sight of anyone passing over the trail unless his attention was drawn to them.

Quick as they had been the precaution was not a minute too soon. Mul-tal-la must have failed to discover his peril until it was almost upon him.

The first warning was a singular one. A sneeze sounded, followed by a guttural exclamation, and the next moment the crouching lads saw the dim outlines of a warrior striding stealthily over the pass to the eastward. He was moving slowly, with head thrust forward, and carried a long bow in his hand. Before he passed out of sight a second loomed to view, then a third, a fourth and a fifth—all gliding like so many phantoms of the night, and doubtless making for the supposed camp of the travelers a mile or more away.

Stooping low and silently watching the shadows, the brothers were beginning to breathe freely when, to their consternation, Zigzag emitted a whinny which, in the stillness, could have been heard half a mile away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

INDIAN CHIVALRY.

THE Shoshones instantly stopped and one of them uttered an exclamation. It was easy for them to tell the direction from whence the unexpected sound had come, and all stood peering into the gloom, bows tightly grasped and hands ready to draw their arrows from the quivers and launch them at the instant demanded.

Victor was so incensed with Zigzag that he was tempted to send a bullet through his brain, but restrained himself. He whispered to George at his side:

“Don’t stir or speak, but be ready to shoot!”

His intention was to fire upon the Shoshones if they advanced upon them. Such an advance undoubtedly would have been made, for the hostiles could not have been aware of the real danger of it, but it was prevented by the unexpected appearance of the Blackfoot, who came hurrying down the pass on foot, and called to

the Shoshones in their own tongue. The strangers immediately turned their attention to him, and the boys, from their covert, had the singular spectacle presented of a single warrior in seemingly friendly converse with five who were believed to be enemies.

“I don’t understand what he means,” whispered George; “do you?”

“Haven’t any idea, but it looks as if there’s going to be a fight. If it comes, you take the one to the left and I’ll drop him on the right; we mustn’t waste our bullets.”

“That will leave Mul-tal-la with three to fight.”

“But won’t *we* take a hand? We must jump right into it. After we have wiped them all out, I think I’ll knock Zigzag in the head—confound him! He’s to blame for all this.”

“Don’t be hasty, Victor. If Mul-tal-la needs our help he’ll call to us; he must know we are ready and won’t fail him.”

Meanwhile the Blackfoot was holding a talk with the five Shoshones, who made up the entire party. It seemed strange that a struggle did not open at once, but it may have been because the hostiles were ignorant of the force hiding

beside the trail and holding them under their guns. An Indian, no more than a white man, likes to engage in a contest with a foe whose strength is unknown.

Suddenly, to the amazement of George and Victor Shelton, Mul-tal-la called to them:

“Let my brothers come forward; no harm shall be done them!”

“Well, that gets me!” muttered Victor. “I don’t know whether to obey him or not.”

“It won’t do to refuse, but we’ll be ready.”

Leaving their animals behind, the two straightened up and picked their way to the path, each firmly grasping his gun and resolute that there should be no repetition of the performance earlier in the day.

The obscurity did not prevent the brothers gaining a good view of the five warriors, who surveyed them with unconcealed interest as they came into the trail and halted behind the Blackfoot and several paces from the nearest Shoshone. The strangers resembled the warriors who were the companions of Black Elk, the chief. Though he could not be certain, George believed that one at least whom they had met that morning was with the party before him.

Mul-tal-la now told a remarkable story—so remarkable, indeed, that the boys could not credit it. These five Shoshones were the ones to whom Black Elk had signalled by means of his camp-fire, and to which they had replied later in the day. But the exchange of messages was meant as a friendly interference in behalf of the Blackfoot and his companions.

The chief had good reason to believe that a hunting party of Cas-ta-ba-nas were in the mountains, and a meeting between them and the travelers was almost certain. The Cas-ta-ba-nas were a small tribe whose villages and hunting grounds were to the eastward of the principal range of the Rockies. They were small in numbers, but of warlike disposition, and were often engaged in hostilities with others of their race. They were wise enough, however, not to molest the Shoshones or Snakes, who were so much more numerous and powerful that they would have exterminated the whole tribe had provocation been given. It would not be far from the truth to say the Cas-ta-ba-nas were vassals of the Shoshones.

It appeared to be the fate of the smaller tribe to become involved to a greater degree with the

whites than were others of their race. This may have been because the most productive beaver-runs were in their section of the West, and consequently more trappers were drawn hither. There had been a fight the preceding winter between three white men and a party of Cas-ta-ba-nas, in which two of the latter were killed. This inflamed the anger of the tribe toward the palefaces. What more likely, therefore, than that, when they came upon a couple of the hated race under the escort of a single Blackfoot, they should destroy all three?

Black Elk, therefore, as the extraordinary story ran, had signalled to the Shoshones to warn the Cas-ta-ba-nas that they must not molest the little party on their way through their country. If they violated the command Black Elk would make sure that they suffered therefor.

This was the story told to the boys, and which impressed them as incredible.

“I don’t believe a word of it,” said Victor, who did not hesitate to speak plainly, inasmuch as Mul-tal-la was the only Indian present who could understand his words; “do *you*?”

“Mul-tal-la does not know; it may be true.”

“How could Black Elk tell all this to another party of Shoshones by means of the smoke of his camp-fire?” asked George Shelton.

“He could not.”

“Then how did these people get his message?”

“This Shoshone,” replied the Blackfoot, indicating the warrior whom the youth believed he had met before, “was with Black Elk. He sent him to find these Shoshones with the word from the chief; but it took him a long time to find them; that is why we did not see the return to the signal till the day was near done.”

“What need was there of his finding the others? Couldn't he have given the message to the Cas-ta-ba-nas himself without asking anyone to help him?”

“That he would have done had he not found his friends before darkness came. It may be,” added Mul-tal-la significantly, “that the Cas-ta-ba-nas are more afraid of five Shoshones than of a single one.”

“It may all be as you say, Mul-tal-la, but Victor and I find it mighty hard to believe it; but we'll do as you wish. What's the next step?”

“Let my brothers bring their horses to the path.”

George and Victor obeyed, and a few minutes later the three emerged into the dim light. Victor used the occasion to give Zigzag a spiteful kick as a reminder of his offense, but feared that the plodding, contrary animal was not much benefited by the discipline.

While the lads were thus employed Mul-tal-la and the Shoshones came to an understanding. The travelers were to resume their journey through the mountains, the five friends—if such they really were—maintaining the lead, with the Blackfoot riding next and his companions in the order already named.

“That suits me,” was the comment of Victor. “I never would have those villains walking behind us; it would be too easy for one to send an arrow through me when I wasn’t thinking. If they try any trick now two or three of them are sure to go down. I wish I knew whether or not they are lying.”

“We shall have to wait and find out.”

“And while we are doing that they may lead us into a trap. Ah! if we only had Deerfoot with us! They wouldn’t fool *him*, though he

never saw a Shoshone unless he has met one since we left him. Seems to me, George, it's about time that young chap showed up."

"I don't think we need look for him for several days. You remember he told us as much. He isn't thinking of anyone now except Whirlwind, and he won't let that horse run the risk of falling lame."

"And when Deerfoot does turn up he'll have the stallion trained so well that he'll know more than all our horses together, which isn't much. But we haven't any time to think of them. Mul-tal-la is nobody's fool, and I don't think he is likely to let this party outwit him, but I'll be glad when we are rid of them."

"Suppose they stay with us till we meet the Cas-ta-ba-nas and then join them in attacking us?"

"That's the thing I've been thinking about. You see, though there are five of the Shoshones now, they have no weapons except bows and arrows. We have three guns and they have learned about them from the white men they have fought. So what is more likely than that they are afraid to put up a fight until they have help?"

“It wouldn’t surprise me if it is as you say. I haven’t heard how many the Cas-ta-ba-nas are in this part of the country, but if they don’t number more than the Shoshones the two parties will be too many for us to handle.”

“We’ll make it interesting, anyway,” sturdily replied Victor.

It was a strange procession that filed through the mountains, the five Shoshones stalking forward in Indian file, with Mul-tal-la riding close to the last, then George Shelton and his brother, with Zigzag patiently plodding at the rear, it being deemed safe to leave him in that position, since there was no call for extra precaution, and he had little or no chance to disturb the arrangements.

By and by the moon appeared above the range and added to the dim light that had thus far guided the two parties. The trail which they were following proved easier of travel than at the beginning. Twice they had to cross small streams, but the rushing water was no more than a few inches deep and the footing of the animals was secure. Then they wound along a precipice, reaching downward fully a hundred feet, where the path was so narrow

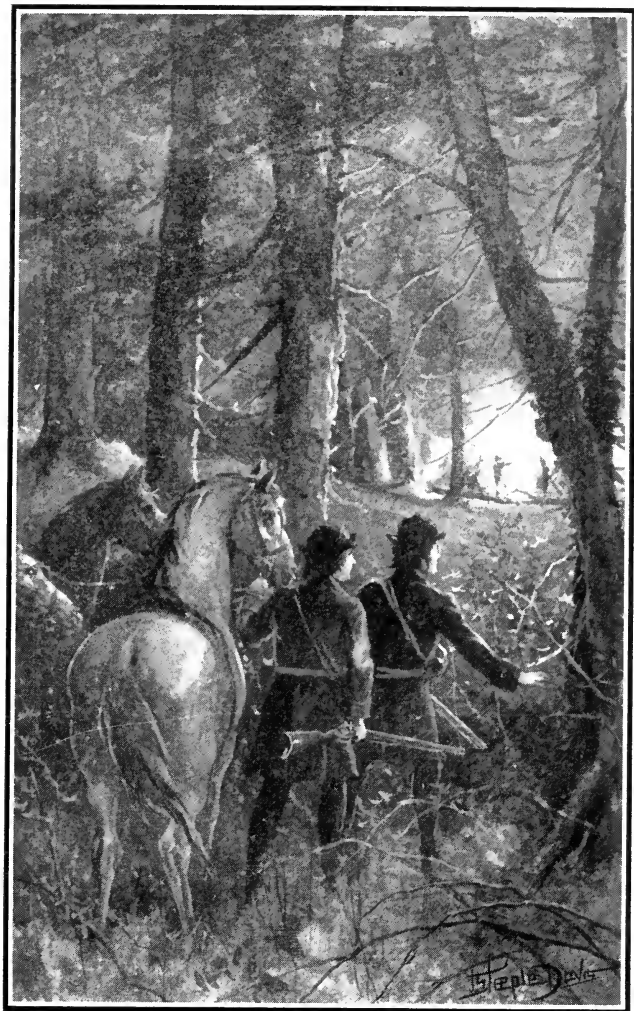
that there was scant room for a single laden horse. Peering into the gloomy depth the brothers felt a shrinking, for the slip of any one of their horses would have brought woeful consequences. George and Victor drew a sigh of relief when they reached a safer place.

Here the trail broadened for many yards, and traveling was all that anyone could wish. The progress was deliberate and seemingly as automatic as if regulated by machinery. The line of Shoshones did not increase nor slacken its gait, even when treading the narrow portion which caused the lads disquiet.

Unexpectedly in making a turn they came upon a camp-fire burning some rods to the left of the trail and in an open space. The first glance showed that fully a dozen warriors were grouped about it, some lolling on the ground or on boulders, several standing up, and most of them smoking long-stemmed pipes, which were made from a peculiar red clay found in the vicinity. They had evidently eaten their evening meal some time before.

“The Cas-ta-ba-nas!” exclaimed George, speaking over his shoulder to his brother.

The Shoshones halted and spoke to Mul-tal-la,



The Critical Moment.

who dismounted and talked with them for a few minutes. Then the Blackfoot addressed the boys:

“Let my brothers wait till Mul-tal-la comes back to them.”

With that he turned off with the Shoshones, who headed straight for the camp of the Cas-ta-ba-nas, the party straggling forward without any regard to order. George and Victor remained seated on their horses, watching the singular scene.

The glow of the fire, added to the moonlight, made everything more or less visible. The arrival of the visitors naturally caused a stir. The Cas-ta-ba-nas who were seated rose to their feet, and immediately an earnest conversation began. Hosts and guests could be seen gesticulating vigorously, and across, the intervening space came the odd sounds made by their peculiar manner of speaking. Speculating and wondering, the boys watched and awaited the issue of the curious incident. They looked for a sudden outbreak, though hopeful it would be averted. If the Shoshones meant to play false, their treachery would speedily appear. The conclusion could not be delayed longer than a few minutes.

While the brothers were intently studying the picture the Blackfoot was seen to withdraw from the group and walk hurriedly back to where he had left his friends. Shoshones and Cas-ta-ba-nas stayed where they were, but gazed after him and at the forms of the boys and horses not far off.

“We shall now know what’s up,” said George Shelton.

“Whatever it is, the decision has been made.”

Mul-tal-la came up, cool and collected, but clearly agitated.

“It is as my brothers hoped,” were his words. “Black Elk did as his warriors said; the Cas-ta-ba-nas have been told that he will slay anyone of them that dares hurt Mul-tal-la or the palefaces with him. They dare not disobey the words of the great Black Elk. No harm shall come from them to us. Let us go on.”

And so it proved that chivalry is not dead even among the American Indians.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CALAMITY.

IT seemed too good to be true, and yet all doubt vanished with the words spoken by the Blackfoot.

“I can’t say I liked the way Black Elk acted when we first met,” said Victor, “but he has proved himself more of a man than I supposed. I hope now he won’t punish Young Elk for running away from me.”

“Why not?”

“Because *I* gave him enough. Anyway, whatever the father did to his boys has been already done, so we needn’t worry over it.”

“Mul-tal-la,” said George, “you haven’t any doubts left?”

“It is wrong to doubt; the words of Black Elk were true; he spoke with a single tongue. My brothers need not fear.”

“Why don’t those Shoshones of his come back and see us through the mountains? It strikes me that that is the right thing to do.”

“No; they will stay with the Cas-ta-ba-nas and hold them back if they try to do us harm. They will be with them till we are far away; then they can go back to Black Elk and tell him that all has been done as he ordered.”

“It is better than I thought,” said the pleased George. “I don’t suppose we are likely to run against any more of those people; if we do, we can fall back on these reserves.”

The Blackfoot silently led the journey for an hour longer. No one observing the surety of his movements would have thought he had been over the route but once before. Everything appeared to be as familiar as if he had spent his life in the mountains. The trail continued to ascend and soon became harder to travel. Several times it looked to the boys as if they would be checked and turned back, but their guide always found a course that permitted the passage of their horses’ feet.

“This is well enough,” finally remarked Victor, “but I don’t see the need of it. We did a good deal of traveling to-day, and if those Indians to the rear are friendly what’s the use of hurrying to get away from them?”

“I don’t think Mul-tal-la means to travel much farther.”

Even as George spoke the Blackfoot halted. He had been pushing on in order to reach the most favorable spot for camping. It was found near the base of a mass of black frowning rocks, from beneath which bubbled a tiny stream of ice-cold water. This formed a deep pool close to the rocks, and then dripped away in the gloom of the boulders, trees and undergrowth. The place was sheltered against the arctic winds which sometimes rage at this altitude, and indeed was so attractive that while our friends were gathering fuel and preparing for camp, they saw it had been used more than once for the same purpose by other hunting parties in the neighborhood.

Hardly had the animals been relieved of saddles, bridles and the pack, and the fire started, when the three were given a taste of the variable climate of that section. Although summer had fully come, the wind moaned and howled through the trees at the summit of the rocks and on their right and left. Suddenly Victor called out:

“It’s snowing!”

In a twinkling, as it were, the air was filled with blinding flakes, which eddied and whirled

about the three and covered their bodies with its white mantle. The horses found protection by huddling close to the pile of stone, though the temperature was not very low.

The flurry passed almost as quickly as it arose. In a few minutes the air was as clear as before, and the moon shone from an unclouded sky. The friends gathered about the fire, which was soon burning vigorously.

It was the turn of George Shelton to go on guard for the first part of the night, changing places with his brother at the usual hour. Since this duty had to be divided among three persons, the Blackfoot would do his share in the early half of the following evening, alternating with George, while Victor would be given rest. This plan was kept up when Deerfoot was absent, so the division of the work was as equitable as it could be. When the party included four people the arrangement was simpler.

The action of Mul-tal-la removed any lingering misgiving the boys may have felt. Had the Blackfoot been distrustful of the honor of Black Elk, the Shoshone chieftain, he himself would have acted as sentinel for the first por-

tion and probably throughout all the darkness; but, while the night was still young, he wrapped himself in his blanket and stretched out to sleep, Victor Shelton speedily doing the same.

Left to himself, George Shelton entered upon his task in his usual deliberate manner. The fire was replenished from the wood that had been gathered, and with his gun resting on his shoulder he marked out a beat over which he slowly tramped to and fro. At the middle of the course he moved in front of the fire, so that any foe lingering near could have seen him clearly, and, had he been so disposed, picked off the youth without risk to himself.

George at first felt a natural shrinking when he knew his form was shown in relief against the yellow background, but after the pacing had been kept up for an hour or so without molestation this feeling passed off, and his thoughts became tranquil. He often peered into the gloom which walled him in on every hand, pausing and listening, but hearing nothing unusual. His expectation was that some prowling beast would be attracted by the light of the camp-fire, but it was the summer time, when

they were not likely to be pressed for food, and nothing in the nature of an attack was to be feared from wolves, bears or any species of forest creatures.

The youth looked up at the sky, which was clear and cold. The moon gave only slight illumination, and now and then he traced many of the constellations, as he and his brother had often done when at home or when on the trail in the leafy solitudes. He gazed at the Pleiades, which to him and Victor were always the Seven Stars, and again noted the peculiarity of that beautiful group with which I am sure you are familiar. When you look at the stars fixedly and try to count, you can see but six, but glancing abruptly at them the seven are visible. He recalled the fancy that one of the cluster was so modest that when stared at it shrinks from sight, to steal into view again after the scrutiny is removed. It seemed to George that he never looked at the heavens on a starry night without his eyes immediately resting upon the Dipper, as he and his friends called a portion of the constellation of Ursa Major. Then, too, he traced the Little Dipper, located Orion and the North Star, and in the

loneliness of the hour mused upon the One who had launched all these stupendous orbs into space and set them spinning over their mighty orbits, as they shall spin until time shall be no more.

Who can look at the worlds circling through the dome of heaven without being profoundly awed by his own insignificance and the infinite greatness of the Author of all these marvels? How little and mean seem the affairs of this life when we are brought into such intimate communion with the wonders that are beyond the grasp of the greatest intellect!

But the hours wore on and George was still tramping to and fro when he saw Victor sit up, fling aside his blanket and rise to his feet. Impressed before falling asleep with the duty that awaited him, he awoke at the right minute without external help. The two exchanged places after a few words, during which George made known that he had not seen or heard anything to cause alarm.

The experience of Victor was quite similar to that of his brother, and when the gray light of the morning began stealing through the mountains the slumber of the Blackfoot had

continued unbroken. He showed no surprise over the report of the boys. Upon leaving the camp of the Cas-ta-ba-nas the night before it was with a feeling of certainty that Black Elk had carried out his promise in spirit and letter.

While the boys bathed faces and hands in the crystalline pool, the Blackfoot strolled off, bow and arrow in hand, in search of breakfast. Wild turkeys were so plentiful in the mountains that he soon came back with a big, plump bird, from which they made their usual excellent breakfast. He told the boys that the meal must suffice until night, for he did not mean to halt any longer than necessary to rest the horses. Two meals a day are enough for anybody, and it is slight hardship for a hunter or traveler to get on with a single repast.

Soon after the journey was resumed the trail began to descend, but shortly rose again, though not to the same extent. The air was clear and sunshiny, and before noon, despite their elevation, which was not great, the heat became uncomfortable. To relieve the animals and for the sake of the exercise all needed, the three walked most of the time, Mul-tal-la keeping his place at the head, while the brothers trailed at the rear.

It was slightly past noon when they paused to rest their animals. The spot was in a valley-like depression, through which wound a stream of clear, cold water. A little to the right of the trail this expanded into a pool or pond several rods across and fifteen or twenty feet deep. The water, however, was so transparent that the stones and pebbles could be plainly seen in the deepest portion.

The temptation was too great to be resisted. Victor's eyes sparkled.

"George, we must have a swim! I never saw a finer place. Who'll be first in?"

The Blackfoot, like most of his race, was much less fond of water than the Caucasian. Mul-tal-la smiled at the ardor of his young friends, and remarked that he would stroll down the trail to refresh his memory as to the route. Then he passed out of sight, and the boys were left to themselves.

"This is a good chance to do our weekly washing," said George, as they began disrobing; "it's time we attended to that."

It was the practice of the boys and Deerfoot to look after that indispensable work at regular intervals, for they had not the excuse of the

lack of opportunity, since rarely were they out of sight of water. So the brothers brought their underclothing from the pack of Zigzag and laid it on the bank to don when their swim was over. Then they cleansed that which they had taken off, as well as they could without the help of soap. I am afraid they hurried through with the task, for in a very brief time they were frolicking in the icy water and enjoying themselves as nobody in the world can enjoy himself unless he is a rugged youngster, overflowing with health and animal spirits.

They dived and swam; they splashed and tried to duck each other; their happy laughter rang out, and it seemed to them as if they could do nothing finer than spend the remainder of the day in the pool. If the first contact with the icy element gave them a shock, it also imparted an electric thrill which tingled from the crown of the head to the end of the toes, and made them shout and cry out in the wanton ecstasy of enjoyment.

But in due time they felt they had had enough and the moment had come to don their clothing again, leaving that which had been washed spread out and drying in the sunlight.

They reluctantly emerged from the pool and gingerly picked their way over the pebbles.

Victor was a few paces in advance. His brother was in the act of leaving the water when Victor uttered an exclamation:

“Great Cæsar, George! Somebody has stolen our clothes!”

CHAPTER XX.

OLD FRIENDS.

“IT can’t be,” gasped the mystified George; “you’re mistaken.”

“Come and see for yourself; where did you leave your clothes?”

“Over there on top of that boulder,” replied George, coming forward and staring at the object named.

“Well, do you see them *now*?”

“Maybe the wind blew them off,” weakly suggested the other, although he knew such a thing was impossible, for there had not been a breath of air stirring for hours.

The two made careful search. Not a stitch of their garments was to be seen.

“And the thieves have taken those we spread out to dry. Aren’t we in a pretty fix? We’ll have to travel naked until we can kill a bear or two and rob them of their hides.”

“Who was the thief?” was the superfluous query of George, staring here and there in

quest of the wretch who had done this "low down" thing. "You don't suppose it was Mul-tal-la?"

"No; how could it be? What would he want of our clothes? We saw him go down the trail; I don't believe he is within a mile of us."

"Maybe Black Elk and his warriors have been following and waiting for a chance of this kind."

Victor shook his head. The thought was preposterous.

"He couldn't have known there would be any such chance, and if he wanted to do us harm he would have done it long ago. B-r-r-r-r! I'm cold!" muttered the lad with a shiver.

The matter was becoming serious, for if their clothing was gone they were in a woeful plight indeed. You will bear in mind that coats, trousers, caps, stockings, shoes—everything had disappeared. The theft included the underclothing that had been removed and cleansed by the boys, as well as the extra suits taken from the pack carried by Zigzag. Since these made up the only two undersuits owned by the brothers, you will admit that their situation could not have been more cheerless.

A curious fact was that their guns had not been disturbed, though both were left leaning against the boulder on which the clothing was laid, and must therefore have been seen by the rogue.

“We’ll have to go into the water to get warm again,” said Victor, with folded arms, bent form and rattling teeth. “I don’t see that we can do anything but wait till Mul-tal-la comes back.”

“What can *he* do?”

“If he can’t find our clothes he can go out and rob some bears or other wild animals of theirs, and let us have ’em”——

George Shelton caught a flying glimpse of a tightly rolled bundle of clothing which at that instant shot through the air and, striking Victor in the back of the neck, sent him sprawling on his hands and knees. George turned to see the point whence came the pack, and at the same instant a similar one landed full in his face and knocked him backward. But he had caught sight of Deerfoot, the Shawanoe, who rose from the farther side of an adjoining boulder, and both heard his chuckle, for he could not resist the temptation of having a little fun at the expense of the brothers.

“We might have known it was *you*,” exclaimed Victor, clambering to his feet and proceeding to untie the knots in his shirt and drawers, and finding it no slight task.

“We won’t forget this,” added George, warningly; “you think you are very smart, but we’ll catch you some time when you are not watching.”

Deerfoot was shaking with merriment, and as he came forward he said:

“My brothers need not wear bare-skins as they feared they would have to do.”

(This is the only pun of which we have any record that was ever made by Deerfoot.)

The shivering lads began donning their clothing, and then shook hands with their friend. The meeting was a happy one. The Shawanoe was as glad to see them as they were to meet him, whom they had missed more than they had ever supposed could be possible. He told them he had nursed Whirlwind until his lameness was gone, when he set out at a leisurely pace to overtake his friends. On the way he fell in with Black Elk, the Shoshone chief, and spent several hours in his company. Though it was not easy for the two to under-

stand each other, they managed to do so through the universal sign language to the extent that the Shawanoe learned that the chieftain had acted the part of a friend to the Blackfoot and the boys when they were in danger from a roving band of Cas-ta-ba-nas. So, knowing all was well, Deerfoot had not hurried to overtake the party in advance.

“Where’s Whirlwind?” asked Victor, while hastily dressing himself.

“He is modest,” replied Deerfoot. “When my brothers are clad to receive company he will come forward to greet them.”

“Seems to me you’re getting mighty particular, Deerfoot.”

It took the boys but a short time to dress, when, after hopping about for a minute or two, to restore their numbed circulation, they became comfortable. Being satisfied with an inspection, Deerfoot emitted a sharp whistle. It was immediately answered by a neigh, and the next moment the magnificent black stallion trotted into view around a bend in the trail and approached the party. Proud as ever, he paid no attention to the other horses, who raised their heads and saluted him as he came in view.

Halting a few paces away, he looked at his master as if awaiting his commands.

“Cannot Whirlwind bow to his friends?” gravely asked the Shawanoe; “since they are not polite enough to salute him, let him teach them what is right.”

The horse bent his head forward, drawing in his nose slightly and making a graceful obeisance.

“This is George Shelton; my brother does not know much, but he means well.”

Whirlwind stepped slowly forward and then sank on one knee. It was the one that had been lame, but it was now as strong as ever.

“This is my brother Victor; he means well *sometimes*, but my brother must not be trusted too far.”

“I wonder that he pays us any attention after the character you have given us,” remarked Victor, who nevertheless bowed low to the salutation of the stallion.

Deerfoot now gave a striking demonstration of the intelligence of Whirlwind and of the training which he had received during the comparatively brief time that he and his master had been alone together. Not looking at him, the Shawanoe addressed Victor:

“Deerfoot would be glad if Whirlwind would stand up for him.”

That the stallion understood these words was proved by his instantly rising as nearly erect as possible on his hind feet.

“Now let him give my brother’s handkerchief to his brother.”

Whirlwind thrust his nose forward and began fumbling about the breast of Victor. In a moment he drew his handkerchief from an inside pocket, stepped across to the pleased and wondering George, and shoved it into his coat.

“That gives my brother two handkerchiefs. It is not right. Let Whirlwind put the first one back where it belongs.”

Without hesitation the animal obeyed.

“The gun leaning against the rock—the one nearest us—belongs to my brother Victor. He is lazy; therefore let Whirlwind bring it to him.”

The stallion walked the few steps necessary, turned his head sideways and, grasping the rifle of Victor near its stock in his teeth, brought it to the amazed youth.

“Now make him bring mine to me,” said George.

“No; he has done enough of that; get it for yourself. Now, Whirlwind, Deerfoot is pleased with you; come forward and kiss him.”

The horse walked up in front of the Shawanoe, thrust out his tongue and licked his cheek. His master kissed his nose, patted his neck and spoke endearingly to him. There could be no question that the wonderful animal was happy and proud in the affection of his master, who, in his way, was more remarkable than he, since he had taught him all this.

“Only one thing is lacking,” remarked Victor, after he and George had expressed their amazement; “you ought to teach him to talk.”

“Though he may not use words like men, yet he can make his meaning known to Deerfoot, and that is enough.”

“There isn’t any doubt about his knowing what *you* say. You ought to teach him to be more considerate of the feelings of Bug and Jack and Prince and Zigzag. He doesn’t seem to care anything for them.”

“Whirlwind has the right to treat those of his kind as he pleases. None of them is his equal. Deerfoot is glad to see how careful he is of his company. If he is willing to notice

my brothers," added the Shawanoe with a smile, "isn't *that* enough?"

It was at this juncture that the stallion gave the most remarkable proof of his intelligence that had yet been seen. It almost struck the boys dumb with astonishment.

You remember that after washing their underclothing they spread them out on the ground to dry in the sun. Deerfoot brought the garments from where he had hid them and again spread them out. They had lain a considerable time, and Victor was about to inspect them to see if the moisture had evaporated, but Deerfoot checked him. Addressing the stallion he said:

"Let Whirlwind examine the clothes lying on the ground; if they are dry, he will hand them to my brothers; if they are wet, he will leave them lie where they are."

Victor's first fear was that the brute was about to chew up his garments, for he closed his teeth in a corner of his shirt, held it a moment, sniffing at it, and then came over and laid it at the feet of the youth. Of course he could not know that the article belonged to this lad, for he had not been told.

He returned and in the same manner picked up the other garment belonging to Victor and started to lay that also at his feet. After a single pace he stopped, shook his head and flung the article back where it had been lying.

“That isn’t quite dry enough,” said the wondering and laughing owner. “I wonder how it is with your clothes, George.”

Precisely the same thing was repeated with the underclothing belonging to George Shelton. One garment was dry, but the other retained a little dampness, which, however, would soon disappear.

“Don’t ask him to do anything more,” said Victor; “I shall be scared. It does seem that such animals should have souls.”

“Deerfoot is sure they have,” replied the Shawanoe with deep feeling.

Deerfoot now told Whirlwind to leave them for the time. He strolled off to the more abundant growth of grass on the other side of the trail. The three watched him amusedly, and noticed that he kept apart from the other horses. He was a born aristocrat, and always would remain so.

Zigzag was munching and looked up at the

stallion, as if he felt like renewing the acquaintance that had not been of a very pleasing character. He kept an eye on Whirlwind, and when he began cropping the grass Zigzag had the temerity to try to join him. Before he reached the stallion, however, he received too plain a hint to disregard. Whirlwind deliberately faced the other way, thus placing his heels toward the horse, so as to be ready for use when Zigzag came within reach. The latter paused, looked reproachfully at Whirlwind, and then solemnly walked back to his former companions. The snubbing was as emphatic as the former and was sufficient.

A few minutes later Mul-tal-la came in sight and joined his friends. All sat down on the boulders and exchanged experiences. Deerfoot had little to tell that was of interest. He was not disturbed by the cloudburst, and his occupation while absent from his friends had been, as he stated, the looking after and training of Whirlwind. The animal recovered from his lameness sooner than his master expected, and the latter could have rejoined his companions sooner, but he spent hours in "getting acquainted" with his prize and in training him

to understand the words spoken to him. It has already been told that some of the commands of Deerfoot were uttered in a mixture of languages, or rather in no language at all, the object being to throw difficulties in the way of anyone who might possibly gain possession of the stallion for a time.

The Blackfoot gave it as his belief that they would have no further trouble with people of his own race. They were approaching the Blackfoot country, and, though some of the tribes through whose grounds they must yet pass warred with one another, there was no hostility between any of them and the Blackfeet, unless it had broken out during the absence of Muttal-la, which was not likely.

While the friends were holding this familiar converse, the Blackfoot thought the time had come to warn them against a danger they were likely to be called upon to face, though it had not presented itself as yet. He told them of a species of bear, sometimes seen farther north, which was of such enormous size and ferocity that no single hunter dare fight him alone. Muttal-la said that he and three of his people had had such a fight, with disastrous results to the

Blackfeet. Two of the latter had guns, which, though of an antique pattern, were effective and would have quickly killed an ordinary animal. The bear was shot repeatedly, but he slew one of the warriors who had firearms and wounded another so badly that he died a few weeks later. And in the end the bear got away, apparently none the worse because of the bullets and arrows that were driven into his body.

CHAPTER XXI.

PRESSING NORTHWARD.

YOU know, of course, that the Blackfoot was describing the grizzly bear, though he did not call it by that name, any more than he referred to the Rocky Mountains as such. George and Victor were inclined to think that Mul-tal-la was exaggerating, for it was hard to believe that so formidable a creature existed. They had learned in Ohio and Kentucky that no brute traversed the solitudes that could not be slain by a single bullet if rightly directed, and several bullets, even when not aimed at the most vulnerable point, were generally sufficient to do the business.

Deerfoot, however, was impressed by the words of his friend. He had hunted with Mul-tal-la long enough to know his bravery and skill. He knew that if he entered any conflict with man or beast he would give a good account of himself. It was certain that he had put up a sturdy fight with his companions, but the fact

that a single animal had defeated the four and slain two proved that he must have been a formidable monster indeed.

When Mul-tal-la, after answering further questions, gave it as his belief that they were likely to meet one or more of these terrors, the eyes of Deerfoot sparkled. He dearly hoped that such an encounter would take place, for he could never forget the ecstatic thrill of a fight in which all his unequalled prowess had to be brought into play.

But the Shawanoe saw the danger that threatened the boys. Inasmuch as all four were likely to be separated for hours at a time while on their journey, it might fall to the lot of George and Victor to meet a grizzly bear. If so, the most natural thing for them to do would be to open hostilities at once. Deerfoot warned them against such fatal rashness.

"My brothers must not try to shoot or hurt the bear unless they have no other way of saving themselves."

"What shall we do?" asked Victor.

"Run as hard as my brothers can."

"Victor is mighty good at *that*. You don't know how fast *he* can run, Deerfoot."

The Shawanoe looked inquiringly at George, who at that moment caught a warning grimace from his brother. Deerfoot saw the by-play and had his own suspicions, but kept them to himself. He was determined to learn the truth from Mul-tal-la, and he did so before the close of day.

The halt had already extended beyond the time set by the Blackfoot, and the journey was now taken up and pushed till night. Mul-tal-la kept in the lead, with the Shawanoe next and the boys at the rear. When the afternoon drew to a close they were well through the narrow portion of the range and among the foothills on the farther side. Although the country was broken and rough in many places, the traveling was not difficult, and the party hoped to make good progress until at the end of a few days they would again enter a mountainous region. This would take a long time to traverse, and when it was passed they would be on the border of the Blackfoot country, though still a long way from the Pacific.

That night Mul-tal-la and Deerfoot shared the watch between them, the boys resting undisturbed throughout the darkness. The weather

remained clear, and at an early hour they were on the road again and pressing forward with vigor. The Blackfoot showed that peculiarity which comes to many in drawing near their destination; the closer he approached to home the greater became his haste.

The following day the boys met a pleasant experience. At the noon halt, while Mul-tal-la and Deerfoot were sitting on a fallen tree and talking, with the horses browsing near, George and Victor wandered off to look for fruit. They had seen some of it earlier in the forenoon, but it was too unripe to be edible. After living so long on meat they felt a natural craving for lighter food. The Blackfoot told them they ought to find that for which they were hunting, for they were in a region where fruit was plentiful and the season was now far enough advanced for some of it to be ripe.

George was the first to succeed in the hunt. A shout brought his brother to his side. George was busy among some bushes that were crimson with wild currants, and he was picking and eating them greedily.

“Better not eat too many,” warned Victor, proceeding straightway to violate his own

advice. "You know we are not used to this kind of stuff, and it may play the mischief with us."

"If I ate as much as *you* I should expect to die," was the rather ungracious response of George, who nevertheless heeded the counsel and began searching further for some other kind of fruit that had less acidity.

He succeeded sooner than he expected, for he ran directly into a growth of raspberries, many of which were purplish black in color, soft, mild and delicious to the palate. He called to Victor and the two enjoyed a veritable feast. In the midst of it they were joined by Mul-tal-la and Deerfoot, who partook as bountifully as they. Later in the season they found an abundance of plums, wild apples and no end of mulberries.

The journey continued for several days without special incident. When they reached the stream now known as the Great Horn they faced a serious problem. The current was rapid and deep, coursing violently between high ridges, some of which were so lofty that a regular cañon was formed. Mul-tal-la said they had come upon this river a considerable distance

above the place where he and his companion forded it, and on the suggestion of Deerfoot he began searching for the ford or ferry, as it might prove. When nightfall came it had not been found, and the Blackfoot expressed doubts of his being able to locate it.

This unexpected difficulty gave Whirlwind an opportunity to display his skill and intelligence. The party had paused at a place where the stream was a hundred feet or more in width, and with the current so roiled that there was no way, except by actual test, of ascertaining its depth. By hard work the horses might be able to swim or work their way across, but the necessity of taking care of the property on the back of Zigzag added to the difficulty. It was important that it should be protected from wetting. It would take a long time to build a raft on which to carry the stuff to the other side, and even then there would be risk of its being swept down stream. A dull roar that came to the ears of our friends through the solitude showed that there were falls or violent rapids at no great distance below, into which the raft would be likely to be driven with the loss or irreparable injury of much of the merchandise.

Deerfoot was disposed at first to divide this among the four, who could hold the articles above their heads while their horses were swimming, but he distrusted the ability of the boys to do their part.

The important thing was to learn the depth of the stream. He therefore asked Whirlwind to cross to the other rocky bank. If he could do this without swimming all difficulty was removed. The stallion was quick to understand the request made of him, though it is hardly to be supposed that he comprehended its full significance. When told to enter the stream he did so with only natural hesitation, feeling his way as his kind do when the ground in front is uncertain.

All attentively watched the noble animal as he waded out into the swift current, his foothold firm and strong. The water crept higher and higher, and when the middle was reached it touched his body. This was encouraging, but the channel might run close to the farther shore, and none breathed freely until the depth was seen to be decreasing. Finally the steed stepped out without once having been in water that was four feet deep, and at no point, despite

the velocity of the current, did he have serious trouble in keeping upright.

“No place for crossing could be better,” said the pleased Shawanoe. “Here we will pass to the other side.”

He whistled to Whirlwind, who instantly stepped into the water again, and came back much more quickly than he had gone over. His master leaped on his back, and, giving the word to his horse, led the way, with Mul-tal-la almost at his side.

“It will be just like Zigzag to take a notion to roll when he gets out there,” said Victor, as he drove the packhorse in ahead of him.

“If he does it will be the worst roll of his life,” replied George, who half feared the stubborn animal would try to do something of that nature. But, of course, Zigzag had too much sense to attempt anything of the kind. Indeed, he did his part so faithfully that he emerged from the river with his load as intact as at the beginning.

Matters were not pleasant that night. No food had been eaten since morning, for Deer-foot and Mul-tal-la had come to look upon the noonday halt as solely for the horses. It was

a waste of time to hunt and prepare a dinner, and it had not been done since Deerfoot last joined the party. The expectation, however, was that of having an evening meal, which was welcome after the long day's ride.

Although passing through a country abounding with game, our friends could not catch sight during the afternoon of elk, deer, bison or even a wild turkey. It was as if those creatures knew of the coming of the strangers and kept out of their way. It was not a good season to fish, though it was not so long since several meals had been made upon them. Still, more for the sake of the boys than himself and Multal-la, the Shawanoe brought out the lines with a view to trying his luck in the Great Horn, but he was unable to find any bait. Both he and the Blackfoot searched until the growing darkness stopped them, without finding so much as an angleworm or any insect that could serve them to help woo the inhabitants of the river to shore. Still more, the ground was so rough, broken and overgrown that the horses were unable to do any better than their masters in the way of food.

And this was not the worst. They had been

pestered by mosquitoes through the day, and at night the insects swarmed about the camp by the millions, tormenting animals as well as men. The poor beasts stamped the ground, switched their tails, bit and kicked, and at times were on the point of breaking off and dashing into the solitude. It was the turn of George Shelton to stand guard throughout the first portion of the night, and of Victor to act for the remainder of the hours of darkness. Deerfoot told them that inasmuch as none could sleep with comfort he would mount guard and divide the watch with Mul-tal-la. The boys did not suspect what was the truth—that the kind-hearted Shawanoe did this out of consideration for them.

Only partial relief was obtained by the recourse of travelers caught in such a trying situation. By enveloping themselves in the smoke of the fire until it was hard to breathe, they managed to fight off the pests for a part of the time. When the boys lay down each left only the point of his nose obtruding from the folds of the blanket. Even then that organ was punctured as by innumerable needle points, and most of the time was spent in slapping at the torturing insects.

There must have been a score of porcupines which busied themselves nosing about the camp in search of food. They were so familiar that in moving around one had to be careful to avoid stepping on the prickly things. They did not molest our friends, but their society was anything but agreeable. Victor expressed himself as envious of the protection nature had given these things against the mosquitoes.

Amid these trials Deerfoot and George Shelton felt grateful over a fact that had become apparent long before. It has been shown that from the very hour when it was agreed that Victor should form one of the little party to cross the continent, he began rallying from the decline into which he was rapidly settling, and which threatened his life. Except for some such radical change he must have been crushed by the incubus that was bearing him to earth. But the rough out-door days and nights had wrought their beneficent work. He had regained his former vigor and rugged health, and even before they crossed the Mississippi was his old self again. True, moments of sad depression came to him during the lonely watches, when his grief over the loss of his

parent brought tears to his eyes and made him sigh for the sweet companionship that could never again be his in this world.

It is a blessed provision that, if time cannot fully heal all wounds, it can soften the pangs that otherwise would make existence one long misery and sorrow.

CHAPTER XXII.

A CHANGE OF PLAN.

THE summer was well advanced when Mul-tal-la, Deerfoot and the Shelton boys drew rein in the Rocky Mountains, south of the stream known as Medicine River, and far to the northward of the headwaters of the Yellowstone.

They had had a hard time in reaching this point on their long journey. Numerous streams had been crossed, deep and dangerous defiles threaded, treacherous paths followed, and several accidents encountered. Once in following a narrow, winding path leading around a vast mountain wall, Zigzag lost his footing and rolled over several times in his descent to the bottom, fully fifty feet below. Deerfoot and Mul-tal-la hurriedly scrambled after him in order to recover the goods and to put the animal out of his misery. When they reached Zigzag they found him standing on his feet, with his pack somewhat askew, but seem-

ingly suffering from only a few trifling bruises. He was extricated with much labor from his position, and resumed his plodding task. One fact was evident; he knew more than he did before, and nothing in the nature of a similar mishap occurred again.

The mosquitoes still pestered our friends at times, but not to the degree that they suffered on the shore of the Great Horn. Once or twice they were pinched with hunger, but to no serious extent. They were now comparatively close to the Blackfoot country, and, if all went well, ought to reach it within a week. In fact, as Mul-tal-la declared, they were liable to meet some of the hunting parties of his people at any time.

On the night succeeding this statement two mounted Blackfeet, from the principal village, rode into camp and greeted the travelers. The couple were old acquaintances of Mul-tal-la, and, as may be supposed, the meeting was pleasant indeed. Deerfoot's friend had an absorbing story to tell of his experiences during the year that he had been as far removed from his own people as if out of the world. They listened like a couple of children enthralled by a

marvelous fairy tale, and would have sat in delighted attention the night through had their old comrade been willing to keep up the thread of his narrative, whose charm could never pall for them.

They were astonished to find the young Shawanoe able to speak their own tongue like one of themselves, and when Mul-tal-la dwelt upon the prowess, wisdom, chivalry and daring of the youth, they stared at him as if he belonged to another order of beings. Mul-tal-la would have told much more of his friend had not the youth checked him with a sternness that the Blackfoot dared not disregard.

The visitors were very friendly and George and Victor Shelton were much pleased with them. They got on quite well through the language of signs, and the warriors were again amazed when they heard their countryman speak to the lads in their own language. It must have been a marvelous country and people that sent the youths forth, and which had been visited by Mul-tal-la. It was plain that the couple, when they sighed and looked into each other's face, longed for the same experience that had befallen their countryman.

But with all this Mul-tal-la had also a sad story to tell. He had left home with a companion, but returned without him. It was a strange accident that overtook that comrade after he had surmounted so many perils, but his body rested many hundreds of miles away in a wondrous country, and his friends must wait to see him until he and they met in the happy hunting grounds that are the final home of all true and brave red men.

This visit caused an important change in the plans of Deerfoot and Mul-tal-la. As you know, the party had been steadily following a general northwest course, with the Blackfoot country as their chief destination. The intention was to remain there for a few days or weeks, and then press westward to the Pacific. When in the Blackfoot region a fourth of their journey would still be before them, and it led through a section the most difficult of all to travel. The understanding was that Mul-tal-la would accompany Deerfoot and the boys until all were given to look upon the mightiest body of water on the globe. By the time they reached the Blackfoot country again winter would be so near (if not already upon them)

that our friends purposed to remain among that tribe until the opening of spring, when they would set out on the return to their own home.

But Mul-tal-la, after a long conversation with his countrymen, told Deerfoot that when he joined his people he would not be allowed to leave them again. An unprecedented favor had been granted him and his companion. The one who had received such an indulgence could not receive it a second time. Moreover, the death of the comrade increased the difficulty, if that were possible, for the head chief of the Blackfeet, who was an autocrat among his tribe, would be offended with Mul-tal-la when he learned all that had taken place. Many Indian tribes follow the custom of the Chinese and punish an unfortunate leader, no matter how blameless he may have been for his misfortune.

Had Mul-tal-la returned with his former companion it is not unlikely that the chieftain would have permitted him to accompany Deerfoot and the boys to the Pacific, but, coming back without the other, such permission was impossible.

Long after the brothers had stretched out by the fire the Shawanoe and the Blackfeet talked together. Convinced that the life of Mul-tal-la

was in danger from the chieftain, Deerfoot was determined that his friend should not run the risk that awaited him if he went back with the couple or followed them after a brief interval.

He proposed, therefore, that the party with Mul-tal-la should turn off from the route they were following, force their way through the Rocky Mountains to the headwaters of the Columbia, and pass down that to the Pacific, after which the four would visit the Blackfeet and stay with them till spring.

Meanwhile the two Blackfeet would return to their countrymen and report what they had seen and learned. An outburst against Mul-tal-la was certain, but it would be given time in which to spend its force. The visitors would do all they could to placate and show their chieftain that Mul-tal-la would have been glad to hasten home had he not been under pledge to guide the Shawanoe and his friends to the Pacific. The Shawanoe would give his life at any time rather than break his promise, and he had taught the same high principles to Mul-tal-la.

Deerfoot was unwilling to admit that any credit in the matter was due to his teachings,

but he was forced to hold his peace when his friend unhesitatingly told him that among his people the violation of a pledge was not regarded as wrong when the interests of the one making the pledge called for such a course. "And," added the grinning Mul-tal-la, "I am a Blackfoot."

Deerfoot with all his sagacity failed to note one phase of the situation that was apparent to Mul-tal-la. The latter, despite the protest of the Shawanoe, managed secretly to tell his countrymen a good deal about the remarkable youth who had proved so unselfish a friend to him when such a friend was needed. He gave the story of his conquest of the wild stallion, of Deerfoot's incredible fleetness of foot, of his skill with the bow and rifle, of his courage and readiness of resource, which surpassed that of any of his race, and of his admirable character, which Mul-tal-la had never seen equaled by any white or red man.

There was one subject upon which the four red men talked freely, for it was always a welcome one to Deerfoot the Shawanoe. Unto the visitors had come vague, shadowy rumors of a religion different from that which they had

been taught, and which had been followed by their people from time immemorial. In some cases these reports were definite enough to awaken curiosity and inquiry. Stories were told of self-sacrificing missionaries who had spent years in teaching the new faith, and who had given their lives for its sake. It was a strange doctrine, indeed, which taught the sin of revenge, of deceit, of cruelty, of wrongdoing, and replaced them with love, forgiveness, mercy and the Golden Rule, and the assurance that a reward of eternal life awaited those who lived according to the will of the one and true God.

Immortality is not capable of scientific proof, but one of the strongest evidences of its truth is that yearning which is implanted, to a greater or less degree, in every human heart, and in every race, no matter how low or degraded its order in the rank of civilization. All religions, whether true or false, are based on the idea of a life beyond the grave. It accords with reason and with the self-evident fact that no man can feel that his life's work is rounded out and completed on earth, and that consequently there must be another existence in which that work shall be carried on.

That these longings, these yearnings, this instinctive reaching out for the things beyond mortal grasp, are an inherent part of our being show that they have been divinely planted there by One who is capable of satisfying them all, and who, in his own good time, will satisfy them. So reasonable and so well founded is this belief that the burden of proof is thrown upon those who dispute it. Let them demonstrate, if they can, that that which we call death ends all. But it is beyond their power, and from the nature of things always will be beyond their power, to do this impossible thing.

At the opening of this century we stand on the threshold of the most marvelous discoveries and achievements made since the world began. Some of these discoveries fill us with awe, and clearly presage the greater that are close at hand. Among them may be the scientific proof of a future existence, though such proof is not necessary with the most exalted intellects, any more than it is with the simpler and more child-like minds.

We must not wander, however, from the thread of our narrative, though the subject is the most momentous that can engage our mental

powers. When Mul-tal-la put into more definite form the dim glimpses that his countrymen had caught of the true light, he appealed to Deerfoot, who in his modest, convincing manner told the story of his conversion and of the sweet communion he held every day with the Father of All Good. It was a faith which no trial, no suffering, no torture could change or modify, and he impressed upon his absorbed listeners the ineffable beauties of the religion which made a man a new being and fitted him for the life to come.

Deerfoot had that rare tact of not pressing an important question too far. He knew he had said enough, and when his hearers ceased to question him he ceased to exhort. He, like all true Christians before and since, had to meet that most troublesome of questions: the evil-doing of those who profess the white man's religion. The Blackfeet had met Caucasians who prayed and bellowed their faith, yet whose lives belied every word of their profession. They wronged and cheated the Indians; they broke their promises; they maltreated them, and in short did everything that was evil. If the Christian religion made such men, the

pagans might well declare they wanted none of it, for they were unquestionably better than those hypocrites.

Deerfoot ranked such men far below those who were called heathens. He despised them utterly, and was sure their punishment would be greater than that meted out to those who live in open sin. He strove to impress upon his listeners—and it is fair to believe he succeeded—the distinction between true and false Christians, and assured the Blackfeet that they were justified at all times in rating a person, not by what he professed, but by his daily life, for it is thus that at the last day the great Arbiter will judge us all.

And so, without fully realizing it, the young Shawanoe sowed the good seed as the soil presented itself. It was he who had brought George and Victor Shelton to see the truth; under whom Mul-tal-la had become a believer; hundreds of miles away he had planted the germ in the ground offered by the trapper Jack Halloway, of whom he was to hear further; and now he had given the first glimmerings of light to these benighted Blackfeet, and it was a light that was not to be extinguished, but would

grow and become luminous to a degree that only the Judgment Day would make clear.

Thus it is with all of us. We have only to use the opportunities as they present themselves; to do the kind deed; to utter the encouraging word; to help the fallen; to relieve the suffering; to purify our own actions, words and thoughts, and, all in good time, the harvest shall appear.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MONARCH OF THE SOLITUDES.

DEERFOOT, Mul-tal-la and the Shelton boys were encamped in the heart of the Rockies. The Blackfeet visitors had departed two days before and were well on their way to their own villages. The air was keen and bracing, and the sun that had been obscured now shone from a brilliant sky.

The halt was made at noon to give the horses a needed rest, for they had done considerable hard climbing. Even the peerless Whirlwind showed the effects of the unusual task. It being understood that the pause was to be for several hours, a general break-up of the company followed. The Blackfoot and the Shawanoë strolled off by themselves, and George and Victor Shelton took another direction, with a caution not to wander too far and to return before sunset.

The boys soon found themselves in a region where progress was difficult. They were not

following any trail, and were forced at times to clamber over boulders and other obstructions, or to flank them; to descend into deep depressions and to climb ridges at whose summits they were obliged to sit down for a breathing spell. Such hard work made them thirsty, and when they came to one of the numerous tumbling brooks, whose waters were as clear as crystal and as cold as the snow and ice from which they sprang, they refreshed themselves with a deep draught and sat down for a rest.

“Whew!” sighed Victor, removing his cap and mopping his moist forehead; “there isn’t as much fun in this as I thought. I wouldn’t mind the walking and climbing if a fellow didn’t get tired.”

“And if you didn’t get tired you wouldn’t enjoy a rest like this.

“Do you remember,” he continued, “how Simon Kenton used to say at our house that no man could know what a good night’s sleep is unless he sat up one or two nights beforehand. I suppose there’s something in that, though we don’t have to try it on ourselves. I know that water doesn’t taste one-half so good unless you are as thirsty as you can be. It seems to me, Victor, that it’s time we bagged some game.

“We haven’t bagged much,” George added; “Mul-tal-la got an elk yesterday; Deerfoot brought down an antelope; I shot a turkey, and you came pretty near hitting a buffalo that was several yards off.”

“Came pretty near hitting him!” repeated Victor, with fine scorn. “I hit him fairly, and you know it, but these buffaloes have hard heads, like some persons I know.”

“Then you shouldn’t aim at their heads. Other people don’t, and it’s time you learned better.”

“I don’t know any relative of mine that is too old to learn a good many things,” replied Victor, without a spark of ill-nature.

“That sounds as if you mean *me*. I’ll own up that Deerfoot and I are liable to make mistakes now and then, but I don’t quite think either of us would run from a wounded antelope and keep up a yelling that could be heard a mile off.”

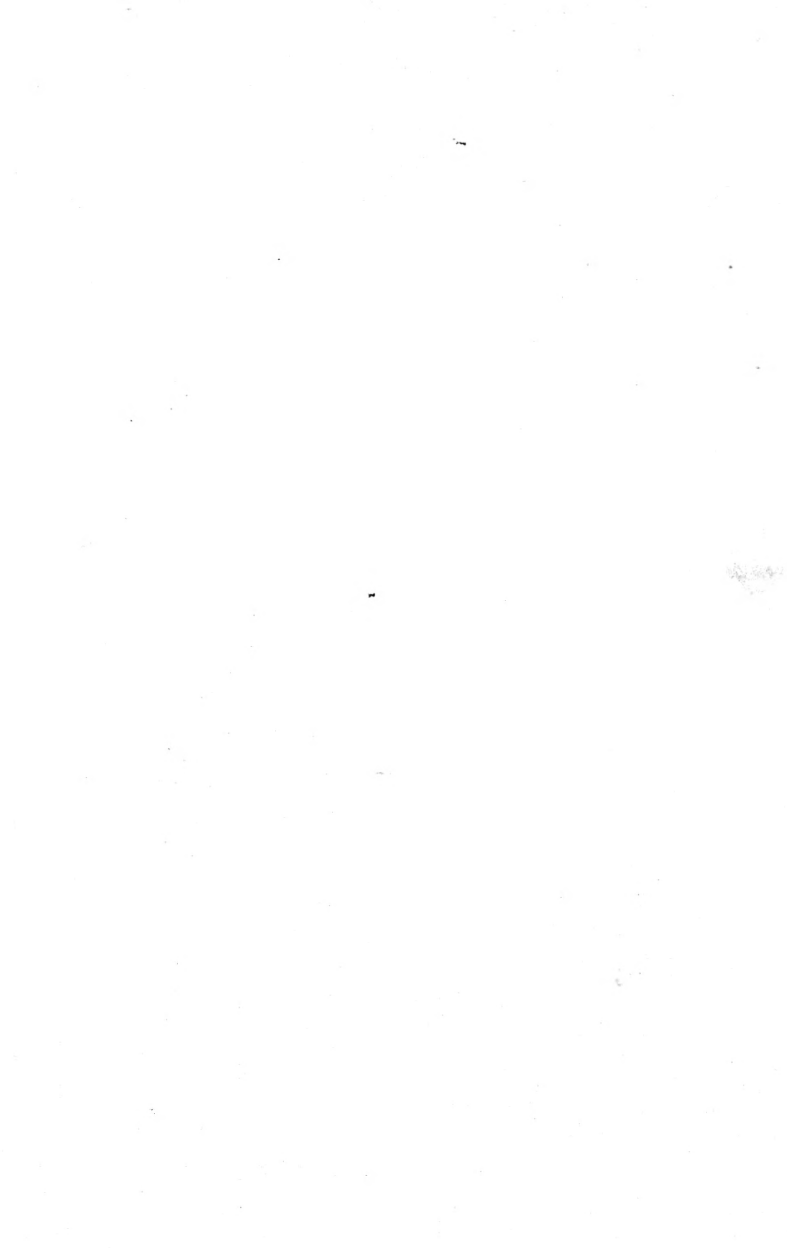
“It is sometimes a wise thing to run; you see it tempts your game to follow and brings him within range.”

“Where is the need of that when he must have been in range at the time you wounded him?”

“But couldn’t he turn and make off in another direction and get beyond reach before you could load again? I tell you, George, there was science in what I did. I advise you to try the same trick when you have a chance, and then”——

A peculiar hog-like grunt caused both to look behind them. The sight that met their gaze was enough to terrify a veteran hunter. Hardly a hundred feet away stood the most gigantic grizzly bear of which they had ever dreamed. They had listened spellbound to the story of Mul-tal-la, but believed that the panic he underwent at the time of his encounter with one of those western terrors caused him to exaggerate his account, though it must have been a fearful brute that could have wrought the havoc he did.

This bear had his hind feet on the ground and his front ones on a boulder, so that his massive back sloped downward from his head, and he was looking at the boys as if speculating as to what species they belonged. His size was tremendous. To the lads he seemed to be three or four times the bulk of any of his kind they had met in the forests of Ohio or Kentucky. It is not improbable that the estimate of the





A Western Monarch.

brothers was right. You know that the grizzly bear (which the early explorers referred to as a white bear) is now, as he has been from time immemorial, the monarch of the western wilds. So prodigious are his size and strength that he is absolutely without fear.

And he is justified in this self-confidence. One stroke of that mighty paw, whose claws are often six inches in length, will break the back of a horse or tear a man to shreds, and enveloping his victim in those beam-like front legs, he will crush him to pulp without putting forth more than a tithe of his power. A score of bullets have been pumped into that immense carcass without causing any apparent harm. The Rocky Mountain grizzly saves the hunter the trouble of attacking him. It is the bear himself who starts things moving and keeps them going at a lively rate. The advice of the most experienced ranger of the wilds is that if a man is alone and without an inaccessible perch from which to shoot, he should not disturb the grizzly. This advice is equally good for two persons, and would not be inappropriate for three in most circumstances.

It may be doubted whether the entire West

at the time of which I am writing contained a more colossal grizzly bear than the one upon which George and Victor Shelton gazed when they turned their heads. His bulk was so immense that they recognized him on the instant as the dreaded brute of which they had heard more than one terrifying story.

Why he did not advance upon the lads at once is not easy to explain. It probably was because the whim did not come to him, or he may have looked upon the couple as too insignificant for notice. It is not unlikely that curiosity had something to do with it, for no doubt they were the first examples of the Caucasian race that he had seen, though he must have met Indians and may have crushed an indefinite number to death.

The strange spectacle was presented for the next few minutes of the boys staring at the monster, while he stared back at them, no one moving or making any sound. George and Victor were literally paralyzed for the time and unable to stir or speak.

Victor was the first to rally. Forgetting the warnings of Deerfoot and Mul-tal-la, he sprang to his feet, faced wholly around, and brought his gun to his shoulder.

“What a splendid shot!” he exclaimed.
“See me tumble him over!”

But George remembered the words of their dusky friends, and, knowing the fatal folly of what Victor was about to do, protested.

“Don’t you do it! He’ll kill us both!”

In his fright Victor was cool. He took deliberate aim, and while the words were in the mouth of his brother pressed the trigger. The report and act threw George into an irrestrainable panic, and bounding to his feet he dashed off at the utmost speed. Across gullies, over and around rocks, threshing through undergrowth, he sped, not daring to look around and hardly conscious of what he was doing. He forgot the peril of Victor in his panic until he had run several hundred yards, when, realizing what he was doing, he abruptly stopped and looked back.

He had gone so far that he saw neither the bear nor Victor, and he began picking his way to the spot, shivering with dread, and expecting each moment to come upon the mangled remains of his brother.

Meanwhile Victor had a remarkable experience. Had he not been so impulsive by nature,

and had he been given a few moments for reflection, he would have let the brute alone; but, as I have shown, he fired straight at him. More than that, he hit him. In accordance with the almost invariable rule in such circumstances the grizzly should have swept down upon him like a cyclone. Instead of that he slowly swung his front around, dropped to his natural posture on the ground, and began lumbering away.

Incredible as it may seem, he probably was not aware that he had served as a target for an American youth. He must have been conscious of the landing of the bullet somewhere about his anatomy, but the matter was too trifling to disturb him. The annoyance from mosquitoes was more serious, especially when they attacked his eyes. In Alaska these pests often blind the bears by their persistent assaults, and the miserable brutes wander aimlessly around until they starve to death.

Even Victor Shelton was puzzled by the action of the grizzly. It would not have been so strange to him had the quadruped rolled over and died, for that would have indicated that a lucky shot had been made; but that he should turn and make off was more than the youth

could understand. He would have believed the bear had been frightened had he not recalled the accounts of Mul-tal-la, which showed the impossibility of such a thing.

In one respect Victor displayed wisdom. Without stirring from the spot he carefully reloaded his gun, keeping a lookout all the time for the return of the monster. He had caught sight of the mountainous, shaggy bulk as it swung through the undergrowth, which was trampled down as if it were so much grass, and then disappeared. - Would he come back?

While the lad was debating the question he heard the sound of some one approaching from the other direction. Turning, his eyes met those of his white-faced brother, who seemed to find it hard to believe that he saw Victor alive and unharmed.

"Where's the bear?" gasped George, when he could master his emotions.

"Why didn't you wait and see me shoot him?" asked Victor loftily.

"It can't be you killed him."

"He may live a few minutes longer, but I guess he's gone off to die by himself. You know wild animals don't like to have spectators when they give their last kick."

"It can't be," said George as if to himself; "you couldn't have hit him."

"Then what made him leave so suddenly? Tell me *that*."

"I don't know; I never saw one of them before; but why didn't he attack us? This bear is a bigger one than Mul-tal-la ever met, and it couldn't be he was afraid of us."

"Not of *us*—of course not, for only one of us held his ground, and I don't think his name is George Shelton, but he saw *I* was here; he took one good squint at me, and things looked so squally he decided to leave."

The complacency and self-pride of Victor were warranted, provided they rested upon a sure basis; *that* would soon be known. Few living woodmen have ever driven off a grizzly bear by a single shot, and it seems beyond the range of possibility for the feat to be performed by a boy.

Victor peered in all directions, and seeing nothing of the monster, turned and proceeded to "rub it in" with his brother.

"Let me see, George, you were saying something a little while ago about a fellow that you saw run away from the charge of an antelope."

George knew what was coming and rallied to "repel boarders."

"Yes; I saw a great hulking youngster do that very thing. You will find it hard to believe anyone could show such cowardice, but Mult-la was with me, and he'll tell you it is true."

"Do you think that the chap, who no doubt was trying to lure the antelope to his destruction, made better time than *you* did when you deserted me at sight of this big bear?"

"There may not have been much difference in the speed of the two, but you see the case is different. One boy ran from an animal that is as harmless as a rabbit, while the other fled from a beast that would have sent a half-dozen veterans flying, even though they had loaded rifles in their hands."

"But I stood my ground."

"Because you didn't know any better. You were too scared to run."

"But not too scared to shoot and hit the game. Folks generally say that the fellow who runs away is frightened and not the one who keeps his place and sends a bullet right into the face of the danger. What do *you* think of it, George?"

“I have already told you what I think. Let us leave the question to Mul-tal-la and Deerfoot to settle when we go back to camp.”

But Victor, unaware that the Shawanoe had heard the story long before from the Blackfoot, was unwilling to have it brought to his knowledge. He knew he cut a sorry figure when fleeing from the frantic antelope, and he did not like to hear references to it. He would prefer to appear ridiculous in the eyes of any person in the world rather than in those of the young Shawanoe. He saw his chance and used it.

“I’ll agree to say nothing about this if you don’t talk about antelopes when Deerfoot is around. Are you willing?”

Before George Shelton could refuse or give assent the conversation was broken in upon in the most startling manner.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A MEMORABLE ENCOUNTER.

THE sound was like that of a score of bison charging through the undergrowth. The affrighted lads glanced around and saw the grizzly crashing down upon them. Possibly he had awakened to the fancy that they were enemies, and one of them had sought to do him harm. At any rate, here he was!

George and Victor instinctively did what any two persons with loaded guns in their hands will do when assailed by a furious wild beast. They brought their weapons to a level and blazed away straight into his face, but they might as well have sent their bullets against a solid rock for all the good it accomplished in the way of checking the rush of the monster, who emitted his hog-like grunts and swept down upon them like a whirlwind.

Without any thought of the wisdom of what they were doing, the brothers separated, their

line of flight being almost at right angles from the beginning. Since it was impossible for the beast to pursue both at the same time, he had to select his victim. His choice fell upon Victor, but it is not to be supposed that he recognized him as the original offender in this business.

The gait of a grizzly bear, or for that matter of any of his species, is awkward when he is running at full speed. He has a grotesque way of doubling and humping his body, which seems fatal to high speed. Nevertheless, he can get forward at an astonishing rate, faster than a man can run at his best. If it should ever fall to your lot to meet a grizzly in his western haunts, don't fancy you can escape him simply by running. Keep out of his way from the first.

George Shelton ran and tumbled and scrambled over the rough ground for a considerable distance before he glanced behind him. Then he discovered he was not pursued. Panting from his exertions, he halted and began reloading his gun with a haste which made the work doubly as long as it would have lasted on any other occasion. As soon as his weapon

was ready he hurried back to the help of his brother, who was having a perilous time indeed. As he ran he called as loud as he could for Deerfoot and Mul-tal-la, for the crisis could not have been more serious.

Less than fifty feet separated Victor Shelton from the grizzly when the race for life opened. For a little way the ground was favorable, and the lad ran fully as fast as when fleeing from the wounded antelope. A glance over his shoulder showed the vast hulk doubling and lumbering along and gaining rapidly. In a straightaway race the fugitive was sure to be overtaken within a few minutes.

Something must be done without an instant's delay. There was no time to reload his old-fashioned gun, nor could he descry any refuge. A sapling appeared a little to his right, but he dared not resort to that. He believed the bear would jerk it up by the roots to get at him, and he was probably right in his supposition. So he kept on.

The situation was so critical that Victor Shelton did a desperate thing. Throwing away the rifle which impeded his flight, he turned to the left and headed, still on a dead run, for

the edge of a cliff. Of the depth of the ravine beyond he had not the faintest idea. It might be a few feet or it might be a hundred. He had no time to find out. Over he must go, and without checking his flight in the least, he dashed to the edge and made the leap.

Providentially the distance was barely a score of feet, and instead of alighting upon a rock almost in his line of flight, he landed on the comparatively soft earth. He was severely shaken, but in his fright he heeded it not. He fell forward on his hands and knees, scrambled up instantly, and was off again. He had dropped into a gorge only a few yards in width, which wound indefinitely to the right and left. There was no way of knowing the better line of flight, and he turned to the right.

He had gone only a few paces when he looked back to see what had become of the grizzly. He had stopped on the margin of the bluff and was looking down at the terrified youngster, who was striving so frantically to get beyond his reach. For a moment Victor believed the brute was about to follow him; but instead of doing that he lumbered, growling and grunting, along the side of the ravine, easily keeping

pace with the fugitive, despite the fact that the surface was more broken than in the bottom of the gorge.

Still, so long as the relative positions of the grizzly and fugitive remained the same, no harm could come to the latter. But a change speedily took place.

Victor had not gone far when to his dismay he noticed that the ground over which he was running began to slope upward. If this continued he must soon rise to the level of the bear, who acted as if he saw how the situation favored him. The plum which for the moment was out of his reach must soon pass into his maws.

The fugitive slackened his speed, wondering what he could do. He glanced at the opposite side of the ravine in search of a way of climbing out and thus interposing the chasm between him and his enemy. But the wall was perpendicular and comparatively smooth. If he kept on he would soon be brought face to face with the beast. He must turn back, with no certainty that the same hopeless condition would not confront him in that direction.

Just then a shout fell upon his ear. George

Shelton appeared on the edge of the cliff within a hundred feet of the bear. A flash and report followed. He had fired at their terrible enemy and the bullet could not miss; but the grizzly seemed as unaware of it as of the former pin pricks. Giving no heed to the shouts, the report and the slight sting, he saw only the lad below him, upon whom he had centered his wrath.

Victor had halted, glanced up, and was in the act of turning back over his own trail when the brute took advantage of the decreased depth of the gorge, leaped the short distance necessary to land him on the bottom, not more than eight or ten feet below, and tumbling, rolling, grunting, scrambling and flinging the pebbles and dirt in every direction, renewed his direct pursuit of the fugitive, with less distance than before separating them.

All that Victor could do was to run, and if ever a youngster did that it was he. Unquestionably he must have exceeded the pace he showed when fleeing from the wounded antelope. And yet it did not equal that of the grizzly, who lumbered forward like a locomotive running down a panic-stricken dog between the rails.

Suddenly another form dropped lightly into the gorge, landing on his feet a few paces behind the fugitive, who, as he sped past, recognized Deerfoot the Shawanoe. Neither spoke, for it was not necessary. The lad did not slacken his speed, which was at the highest tension, and the lithe young Indian, standing motionless, raised his rifle and fired at the grizzly when the space separating the two was barely a rod.

Deerfoot aimed at one of the eyes. He must have brought down the terrific brute had not the latter at the very instant of the discharge started to rise on his hind legs, as his species do when about to seize their victim. Despite the brief distance separating the two there was just enough deflection in the aim to save the eye. The bullet struck below that organ and did no more harm than the missiles that had preceded it.

But Deerfoot had interposed between his friend and the grizzly, and the fight was now between him and the furious Goliath. Never was a more thrilling sight witnessed than that upon which George Shelton gazed from the top of the ravine, and which his brother viewed from a safe point within the gorge.

The Shawanoe saw on the instant the cause of his failure to kill the bear. His gun was of no further use for the time, and, like Victor Shelton, he flung it aside. He did not doubt that he could outrun the grizzly in a fair race, and he would have fled had he thought Victor was beyond reach, but there was no saying whether the gorge was not in the nature of a blind alley or cage, from which the lad could not escape. To save him the Shawanoe held his ground.

At the instant of flinging aside his rifle Deerfoot drew his knife from his girdle and gripped it in his good left hand. The grizzly, as I have said, had risen on his haunches and reached out for his victim, but the space was too great. He sagged down on all fours, plunged a few paces forward, and reared again.

As he went up he must have caught the flash of flying black hair, of a fringed hunting shirt and a gleaming face. And as he saw all this like a phantom of his dull brain, he awoke to the fact that a dagger was driven with merciless force into his chest and withdrawn again, both movements being of lightning-like quickness.

He had seen that face almost against his nose,

and the ponderous fore legs circled outward and swept together in a clasp that seemingly would have crushed a stone statue had it been caught by those mighty legs. But Deerfoot ducked with inimitable agility and leaped back a dozen feet.

If the grizzly had not felt the bullets he now felt that knife thrust, and all the tempestuous fury of his nature was roused. He dropped on all fours, charged forward, rose again and grasped at the audacious individual that had seriously wounded him and dared still to keep his place an arm's length away.

Precisely that which took place before occurred again. As the shaggy monster reared, his head towering far above that of the Shawanoe, the latter bounded forward past the guard, as it may be called, and drove his dripping knife with fierce power into the massive hulk, dropping and slipping beyond grasp before the brute could touch him.

Deerfoot knew where to thrust to reach the seat of life, but the enormous size of the grizzly actually seemed to hold it beyond reach of an ordinary weapon, for after several blows the bear showed no evidence of harm beyond

that caused by the crimson staining of his great hairy coat. Apparently he was as strong as ever.

George and Victor Shelton held their breath at times when viewing this remarkable combat. They knew that if the bear once seized the Shawanoe he would not live a minute. Repeatedly it looked as if the youth had been caught. Once when the huge fore leg showed outside the shoulder of Deerfoot and seemingly against it, and his head almost touched the snout of the bear, both lads uttered a wail of agony, and George, from his place at the top of the gorge, called to his brother below:

“Poor Deerfoot! He is gone!”

“So he is!” chuckled Victor; “gone from the claws of the grizzly.”

Just then Mul-tal-la hurried forward to the side of George Shelton. The youth suspected the truth. The Blackfoot, although ordinarily a brave man, had no wish for a close acquaintance with so overwhelming a specimen of “Old Ephraim,” as he is now often called. He knew too well the tremendous prowess of the monarch of the western solitudes.

But Mul-tal-la could not stay in the background when his friend was in danger. Stand-

ing beside George Shelton, it took but a glance for him to understand the situation. Deerfoot was engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with the most formidable grizzly bear upon which the Blackfoot had ever looked or of which he had ever heard.

A minute told the Blackfoot further that the youth was certain to win, for, while he was continually thrusting and wounding his antagonist, who must soon succumb, the latter had not harmed a hair of the other's head.

To such a struggle there could be but one issue, provided no accident intervened. But a mishap is always possible in the case of the bravest and most skilful combatant. Deerfoot might slip at a critical moment and be caught. Amazing as was his prowess, he was not infallible, and death was likely to seize him at any moment.

The action of the Blackfoot, therefore, was to be commended, when he knelt on one knee and aimed with the utmost care at the brute. While he and the youth were interlocked there was danger of injuring Deerfoot. Mul-tal-la, therefore, waited until a brief space separated the two and just before the Shawanoe made another bound forward.

Mul-tal-la held his aim for several minutes, for he was resolved not to make any mistake. He aimed just behind the ear, and when he pressed the trigger the little sphere of lead bored its way into a vital part, and then it was all over.

Deerfoot had struck again and leaped back when he heard the report of the rifle, saw the outreaching paws droop, the snout dip, and the mountainous mass sag downwards and sideways, tumble over, and that was the end.

“Mul-tal-la only hastened the death of the bear,” remarked the Blackfoot when he and the boys clambered down into the ravine and stood beside the victor; “my brother had done the work, and the bear could not have lasted much longer.”

“Perhaps my brother is right,” replied the Shawanoe. Then he looked sternly at the lads and added:

“If my brothers do not heed the words of Deerfoot he will not be their friend.”

The boys succeeded after much talking in putting matters in such a light that Deerfoot finally agreed to soften his rebuke, though they felt it hardly the less keenly.

CHAPTER XXV.

THROUGH THE GREAT DIVIDE.

THE month of August was well advanced when our friends reached the junction of two streams where to-day stands Salmon City, Idaho. They were well received at an Indian village, whose people showed a wish to do all they could to help the travelers on their way to the headwaters of the Columbia. When Mul-tal-la made known their destination several of the red men, including the chief, shook their heads and said it was too late in the season to make the journey; but the party were resolute, for it was not only their intention to traverse the long distance, but they meant, if possible, to return to the Blackfoot country in time to spend the remainder of the winter there.

The Indians were right in declaring the way difficult, for the road led over a path so strewn with broken and sharp bits of rocks that in the course of time had fallen down the mountains,

that all feared the unshod horses would be too injured to travel. But, to the pleased surprise of everyone, no trouble of the kind appeared. Men and boys walked most of the time, and the animals kept pace with them.

Had the little company failed to provide themselves with fishing tackle they would have suffered for food, for day after day passed without gaining a shot at any kind of game. The streams, however, abounded with salmon, which were easily caught and much relished. It was oppressively warm during the middle of the day, but as the sun went down a rapid lowering of temperature followed, and in the morning frost whitened the vegetation and needles of ice put out from the shores of the streams.

You have heard something of the Shoshone or Snake Indians with whom our friends had had an interesting experience. This tribe a hundred years ago embraced the Indians of the southern ranges of the Rocky Mountains and of the plains on both sides. A village of Shoshones, where the explorers halted, contained hardly a hundred warriors and two or three times as many women and children. Regarding these people some noteworthy facts were

learned. They formerly lived on the prairies, but were driven to take refuge in the mountains from a band of roving Pahkees, who came down from the Saskatchewan country and attacked them with great ferocity. From the middle of spring until the beginning of autumn these Shoshones lived around the headwaters of the Columbia, where they were not molested by the Pahkees. Through these months the Indians depended mainly upon salmon, but the fish disappeared with the approach of cold weather, and other means of subsistence had to be found.

This little fraternity of Shoshones then made their way over the ridge to the waters of the Missouri, down which they cautiously moved until they were joined by other bands, either of their own people or of Flatheads. Thus strengthened, they had little fear of the Pahkees, and were not afraid to hunt the bison to the eastward of the mountains. They remained till the salmon returned to the Columbia, when they migrated to that section. Nevertheless, the dread of their enemies was so great that the Shoshones never left the mountains till impending starvation drove them out.

These people displayed some excellent qualities. Lewis and Clark reported them frank, fair and honest, and he and his men received generous hospitality at their hands. As with most of their race, war was the most exalted occupation, and no warrior could look for preferment until he earned it by some daring exploit. The triumph of killing an adversary was not complete if the victor failed to wrench the scalp from his head. If he neglected to do this and some other warrior secured the scalp, all the honor went to him, since he had brought away the trophy of victory.

After parting with the Shoshones, who showed regret at losing the company of the explorers, the latter began their final journey across the mountains. The first camp was on the southern bank of Lemhi River. Here Zigzag showed signs of slight lameness. He could be ill-spared, and it was deemed best to run no risk with him. His load was therefore distributed among Jack, Bug and Prince. It was not thought well to make Whirlwind a beast of burden. His proud spirit was likely to rebel and there was no necessity for offending him.

Early the next day Zigzag was better, but

the other three horses retained his load, while he plodded to the rear of them. Men and boys remained afoot. The Blackfoot took the lead, for though he had never been through this country, he had met some of its inhabitants, and their accounts gave him a more extended knowledge than any other member of the company could possess.

Victor declared that Zigzag was shamming, for though he limped slightly most of the time, now and then he seemed to forget it, but then Victor never had much respect for that particular horse. It was deemed best to humor him, however, and perhaps because he was ashamed to keep up the deception he was soon so far recovered that he walked without trouble after the burden had been replaced upon his back.

Beaver dams were often passed, but, singular as it may seem, nothing was seen of the animals themselves. Their rounded, cone-like dwellings extended long distances, and many proofs of their skill in cutting down and preparing wood were observed. These sagacious creatures will cut up the limbs and trunk of a large tree as smoothly and evenly as a professional

woodchopper could do the work, and in constructing their dams, some of which are of great extent, they display astonishing skill. No freshet is strong enough to break down these dams, and the architects provide for the overflow as men provide sluiceways and gates to set free the surplus of ponds and lakes. The doors of their houses are generally under water, and the structures themselves are often two or three stories high. They generally have sentinels on duty, and the slaps of their tails on the surface of the water never fail to warn their comrades in time to seek shelter.

These tails, it may be said, are quite a delicacy. When boiled or prepared by cooking they suggest buffalo or beef tongue, and are nourishing and palatable. A meal on beaver tails is always welcome to the traveler through any region where the animals make their home.

There is one accomplishment possessed by beavers not generally known, and of which I have never heard the explanation. Sometimes after cutting a large limb into the right length to be used in the construction of a dam, the animal, finding he does not need it immediately, floats it out into the middle of a stream and

sinks it to the bottom. If the water is clear you may see a number of such sticks lying here and there ten or fifteen feet below the surface. When the material is needed the sticks are released, rise to the top, and are transported whither they may be wanted.

Now, how is it the beaver sinks the buoyant wood? How he makes it stay on the bottom is, so far as I have ever been able to learn, beyond explanation. The most experienced trapper will tell you he doesn't understand it. More than once one of these men has pushed the pieces of wood loose. The moment he did so they would come to the surface and stay there. By no trick or device could he make them sink again, unless by attaching a heavy weight. That, however, does not solve the difficulty, for any substance can be sunk by such means, which is not the one the beaver employs.

As the party advanced deer began to show themselves again. It was no trouble to bring them down, and when the chance did not offer the fish always remained, so it will be seen that the food question gave the explorers no concern. The grass at times was not as plentiful as they wished, but take it altogether the

horses had no reason to be dissatisfied and the journey went promisingly forward.

The next important stopping place of the explorers was in the country of the Chopunnish Indians, who lived along the Clearwater and Lewis or Snake Rivers, which you will remember were both tributaries of the Columbia. The Chopunnish Indians were known as *Pierced Noses*, though it is difficult to understand why this name was given, since, so far as known, they never pierced their noses. The name was changed to Nez Perces by the French *voyaguers*, and has so remained ever since. You may have heard of Chief Joseph, who some years ago made his remarkable retreat northward to Canada, and repeatedly outwitted the United States regulars sent against him. Joseph was one of the most remarkable Indians that ever lived. He was the friend of the white people, and was held in great respect as the head of the Nez Perce tribe.

Our friends were impressed by these red men, who were large, fine-looking and of dark complexion, and whose women had attractive features. All were fond of ornaments. They wore buffalo or elk-skin robes, decorated with

beads, and the hair, which was plaited in two queues, hung in front. Seashells fastened to an otter-skin collar were displayed as belonging to the coarse black hair, and feathers, green, blue and white, were plentifully seen. In cold weather each man wore a short skirt of dressed skins, long painted leggings and moccasins, and a braid of twisted grass around the neck. The women used a long shirt of bighorn skin, without a girdle, and reaching to the ankles. Bits of brass, shells and small ornaments were tied to this shirt, but the head showed nothing except what nature had furnished.

The Nez Perces had a hard time of it. They were forced to toil during the summer and autumn to gather salmon and their winter supply of roots. In winter they hunted deer on snowshoes, and at the approach of spring crossed the mountains to the headwaters of the Missouri to traffic in buffalo robes. Added to this unceasing labor they had many fights with enemies from the west, who often killed members of the tribe, stole horses and drove the owners over the mountains.

The Nez Perces showed a very friendly disposition to our friends, who visited their vil-

lage and were invited to partake of their hospitality for a long time. Although the Indians had a scant supply of food, they offered the visitors all they wished. Deerfoot and Multal-la, out of courtesy, partook of salmon, but would not consent to deprive them of anything further when the travelers felt fully able to provide for themselves.

The visit to the Nez Perces solved a problem that had given the Blackfoot and Shawanoe no little concern. The party had progressed so far that the remainder of the journey could be made much more readily by water than by land. All they had to do was to descend the river in canoes to its mouth, or tidewater, or at least far enough to gain the coveted view of the Pacific Ocean. They would have to make a few portages and exercise skill and care in shooting some of the rapids, but the road was open and they could not go astray.

The question was as to what should be done with their horses. These could continue toiling forward as before, but the way was rough and tortuous, and would occupy a much longer time than the water route. It would wear upon the animals, all of which, with the exception of

Whirlwind, showed signs of the draught already made on their strength and endurance. If they could be left behind, the rest would do them a world of good, and they ought to be in prime condition when their masters returned to them.

Deerfoot and Mul-tal-la discussed the plan of leaving their animals with the Nez Perces. These Indians, like all their race, are exceedingly fond of horses, and the fear of our friends was that when they came back their property would be gone beyond recovery. While the warriors might not openly steal them, they could frame ingenious excuses for their absence. The loss of the four ordinary horses might not be so serious, for Mul-tal-la was sure he could replace them from among his own people, but the real problem was the black stallion. He was such a superb steed, so superior in beauty, strength and speed to any of his kind in that region, that wherever he appeared he attracted admiration and envy. But for the watchfulness of his owner he would have been stolen long before crossing the Divide. To part company with Whirlwind in what may be called a hostile country looked like voluntarily giving him over to the spoiler. No sum conceivable

would have induced the Shawanoe to sell Whirlwind. He was ready at any moment to risk his life for the animal who was equally ready to die for his master.

This was the situation when, as the party were about to resume their journey, they were approached by a tall, handsome warrior, whose dress, more gaudily ornamented than the others, showed that he was one with authority. He was absent while the visitors were receiving the hospitality of the Nez Perces, and now hastened forward to pay his respects while the opportunity remained.

The moment he drew near, Deerfoot and the boys saw from the expression of his face and on that of Mul-tal-la that the two were old acquaintances.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PARTING COMPANY.

IN fact, Mul-tal-la had made inquiries for his friend, and was told that he was absent on a hunt, and there was no saying when he would return. He was Amokeat, or the Man-who-never-Sleeps, and one of the leading chiefs of the Nez Perces.

Two years before, when a party of the latter were hunting on the Missouri, they were attacked by their enemies from the west, and all would have been cut off had not some Black-foot hunters arrived at the critical moment. The tables were speedily turned and the assailants routed. During the fight Mul-tal-la saved the life of Amokeat, when he was hurled to the ground and a savage warrior was bending over to deliver the final stroke. Not only that, but Mul-tal-la scalped the enemy with his own hand and presented the trophy to the Nez Perce leader. No greater honor could be done by one

warrior to another, and the gratitude of Amokeat was deep.

You will undertsand, therefore, how cordially this chief and the Blackfoot greeted each other. Mul-tal-la slipped off his horse and, as the grinning Victor said, seemed about to eat up the other, while Deerfoot looked on and was pleased with the effusive meeting.

Mul-tal-la and his people often mingled with the Nez Perces, and he understood their tongue well enough to make his meaning clear. He told Amokeat of the question he and the Shawanoe (to whom the Nez Perce was introduced) had been debating, and that they had about decided to make the rest of the journey on horseback. Amokeat instantly volunteered to take care of the animals until the owners returned. Mul-tal-la frankly told him that Deerfoot could not feel certain of finding Whirlwind when he came back. Amokeat reminded Mul-tal-la that he was a chief, and pledged his life to hand over the black stallion and the rest of the horses to the right parties.

“And he will do it,” added the Blackfoot, when he made known the pledge of the Nez Perce leader. “He is true and honest and

loves Mul-tal-la too well to harm a friend of his."

"Deerfoot does not doubt what his brother tells him; he does not doubt that Amokeat speaks with a single tongue, but" added the Shawanoe significantly, "there are other Indians who are not as true as Amokeat."

"My brother is wise; he is always so; he must not forget that Amokeat is a chief and not a common warrior. He will do as he says."

Deerfoot allowed himself to be persuaded, though no means convinced that he was doing a wise thing in leaving Whirlwind behind. He assented to the proposal, but his friends saw that he did so with misgiving.

The decision having been made, there was no unnecessary delay in carrying it out. From the scant supply of trinkets a number were presented to Amokeat, with the promise of more upon the return of the explorers, provided they found the horses awaiting them. The pleased chief secured a large canoe, capable of carrying the four persons and the indispensable portions of their luggage. The transfer was soon made, and the horses turned over to the care of the Nez Perce leader.

Mul-tal-la and the boys felt a little sentiment in parting for a time from their animals. There was something saddening in the thought that the quadrupeds, who had been their companions through so many hardships, trials and dangers, might never be met again. No person can fail to feel an attachment for the dumb creature that has served him faithfully. The brothers patted the necks of their beasts and expressed the hope of having them again as comrades on their journey back across the continent.

Deerfoot could be stoical if he chose, but he made little attempt to hide his feelings when the moment came for him to say good-bye to Whirlwind. He explained to him as well as he could the necessity of their parting company for awhile, and there is no saying to what extent he succeeded in conveying the truth to the noble creature.

“Whirlwind,” he said, as he gently stroked the silken nose and looked into the dark luminous eyes, “Deerfoot must leave you for a time, but he hopes soon to come back, and then you and he shall be comrades for the rest of their lives. If when Deerfoot asks for Whirlwind

he sees him not, and they tell him he is gone, then Deerfoot will not go to his home beyond the Mississippi till he meets Whirlwind. He will hunt everywhere for him; he will find him if he is alive. If any harm has come to Whirlwind he who has harmed him *shall give an account to Deerfoot!*”

Victor was standing beside his brother and now spoke in a low voice:

“Those words mean a good deal, George. Deerfoot doesn't feel easy over leaving Whirlwind behind. I believe trouble will come from it. I pity the Indian that tries to steal the stallion.”

“I believe he will be stolen. I don't know why I believe it, but Deerfoot thinks the same, and I don't understand why he consents.”

“Do you suspect Amokeat?”

“No; but even if he is chief he can't help some of his people getting the best of him. Can you blame anyone for trying to steal such a horse?”

“I blame him, of course; but I don't wonder at it. Look at Deerfoot and Whirlwind.”

Almost a hundred Nez Perce warriors, women and children were grouped about watch-

ing the departure of the visitors. Some whispered among themselves, but the majority silently looked upon the little group that was leaving them. The river lay a few rods away, and the goods had been placed in the large canoe, which was to bear the owners on their voyage to the ocean, still many miles to the westward.

When the young Shawanoe finished the words quoted Whirlwind laid his nose over his shoulder. Deerfoot placed his arms about the satin neck, fondled the forelock, patted the nose, kissed it, and then turned abruptly to his friends:

“Let us wait no longer. The sun is high in the sky and we have many miles before us.”

He led the way to the side of the rapid current, where the canoe with the luggage awaited them. George and Victor Shelton carefully seated themselves in the stern. Deerfoot, first laying his rifle in the bottom of the boat, stepped after it and caught up the long paddle, placing himself well to the front. Mul-tal-la sat just far enough back of him to allow the arms of both free play. Deerfoot rested the end of his paddle against the bank, gave a vig-

orous shove, the boat swung into the current, and the long, arduous voyage began.

The boys, who were watching their dusky friend, saw that he studiously avoided looking back, but kept his attention upon the management of the boat. He did this until they reached a bend in the stream, when apparently he could stand it no longer. Resting his paddle across the gunwales, while Mul-tal-la attended to the craft, Deerfoot turned his head and cast a long, lingering look behind him. George and Victor did the same.

The group of Nez Percés were still there, gazing after the canoe and its occupants. Amokeat could be recognized at the front, but in advance of him stood Whirlwind, with head high in air, his perfect outlines stamped as if with ink against the gaudy background of color, the slight wind blowing his luxuriant mane and tail aside, while he watched his master rapidly fading from view.

When he saw the face of Deerfoot he whinnied in recognition. The Shawanoe waved his hand, and those who looked at him observed the tears in his eyes. The next minute the bend in the river shut horse and master from sight of each other.

Facing down stream Deerfoot plied his paddle with a power that sent the boat swiftly with the current. He had taken less than a dozen strokes when he abruptly ceased and sat as motionless as a statue.

“Do you know what that means?” whispered Victor.

“I suppose it is because he feels bad.”

“No; he felt worse when he was paddling so hard. He is asking himself whether he ought not to turn back and bring Whirlwind with him. It won't take much to make him change his mind.”

Victor was right. That was the question the Shawanoe was debating with himself, and more than once he was on the point of acting upon the impulse to undo what had just been done. Mul-tal-la suspected the truth. He believed the return would take place. So he also stopped paddling and waited for the word.

The cessation turned the question the other way. Deerfoot did not look around again, but dipped the paddle deep in the roiled current, making his sweeping strokes on one side and leaving to the Blackfoot to preserve the poise by doing the same on the other side of the boat.

It was fortunate, perhaps, that Deerfoot and Mul-tal-la were compelled to give attention to the management of the craft, for the river abounded with rapids, most of which were dangerous. Often a single false stroke would have sent the boat against the rocks which reared their heads in every part of the stream. Some protruded several feet above the surface, some only a few inches, while others were located by the peculiar eddying of the current as it whirled over and past them. These were the most to be feared, for they would rip out the bottom of the canoe like the sweep of a broadaxe. But you know the consummate skill of the young Shawanoe in handling a canoe. His quick eye, his unerring stroke, his great power, his instant decision and faultless judgment had been trained from early boyhood on the streams of the East, and, though he was now passing down a river he had never seen before, he read all its "signs" as you would read a printed page.

And the Blackfoot was hardly inferior, for he had passed through long and severe training, and he handled his paddle like an expert. Where both were so skilful they worked smoothly together. Sometimes the Blackfoot

called out a warning to Deerfoot, but soon found it was unnecessary, for the youth was as quick, if not quicker than he, to detect the snags, rocks, eddies, bars and all manner of obstructions.

The shores were wooded and rocky at times, and now and then the explorers saw one or more Indians, who paused on the banks and surveyed them as they sped past. Generally one or both of the red men in the canoe saluted the others, and the same friendly spirit was shown by the strangers. George and Victor commented upon the experience which impressed them as singular, since it was so different from what they were accustomed to at home.

The explanation was the old one. These Indians knew too little about white civilization to fear the palefaces; that fear would come with greater knowledge. At intervals piles of planks were observed, these being the timber from which houses were built by the natives who came thither during the fishing season to catch salmon for the winter and for trading purposes.

Fuel was so scarce that it was often hard for our friends to find enough for a fire when

they went ashore to camp for the night. Victor and George proposed to supply themselves from the piles that had been left by the fishermen, with the understanding that the owners should be repaid if they could be found; but Deerfoot would not permit it. He said they had no reason to believe they would ever meet the owners, and it was wrong to use their property without permission. So all had to shiver in their blankets and go to bed hungry.

Watchfulness generally prevented much suffering on account of this deprivation. Bits of driftwood were picked up at several points, so that at dusk the party had enough for cooking purposes, but on the fifth evening they found themselves without a stick of fuel, though encamped within a few rods of a pile of lumber. Deerfoot was inexorable, and all had settled themselves for the night when three Indians came down the bank for a social call. They had seen the canoe put into shore, but were timid at first, though they recognized two of the occupants as belonging to their race. One of the visitors had never seen a white man before. Their wondering scrutiny of the brothers made the latter laugh. Victor rolled

up his sleeve to show the whiteness of the skin. The three grunted and seemed filled with amazement. He who met a Caucasian for the first time kept up a series of grunts, passed his hand gently over the faces of the lad, looked into his eyes, and then made Deerfoot, Multal-la and George laugh by his attempts to pluck out the tiny, feathery hairs that were beginning to show on the boy's upper lip, and which, if left to themselves, would in due time grow into an attractive mustache.

"A-o-uah! what are you trying to do?" called Victor, recoiling, the involuntary tears coming into his eyes because of the smarts made by the nails of the Indian's thumb and forefinger.

"He never saw anything like that before," said George. "I don't wonder he is puzzled."

"He wishes to shave my brother," gravely explained Deerfoot. "When the hairs come on his own face he plucks them out. He would do the same with my brother."

"I'll do my own shaving when the time comes; let him understand *that*," said Victor, showing his displeasure so plainly that the visitor gravely desisted.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DOWN THE COLUMBIA.

THE Blackfoot was gratified to find himself able to understand the jargon spoken by the visitors, although he did not know to what tribe they belonged. A marked similarity showed between many words in the two tongues, and conversation progressed better than would have been supposed, Deerfoot being able to comprehend almost as much as his friend.

Night was closing in, and the fact that the explorers did not start a fire when such an abundance of fuel was at hand clearly surprised the strangers. They looked at the ground and then pointed to the lumber. He who was apparently the leader began talking earnestly to Multal-la. His meaning soon became clear. He was urging him and his friends to make use of the timber. The Blackfoot shook his head and replied they could not take it without the con-

sent of the owner. The leader grinned and said it belonged to him and the two men with him.

That put another face on the matter. Deerfoot told the boys to go to work and bring all the wood they needed. He sympathized with them, but he would not yield on a question of principle. It need not be said that the brothers did not let the grass grow under their feet. It was almost cold enough for ice, but, more than all, they needed the fire for cooking the salmon that had been taken from the stream.

The visitors became very friendly. They were armed with bows and arrows, and showed a willingness to help in gathering fuel, but their offer was declined, and the steel and tinder—another source of astonishment to them—soon set a vigorous blaze going, and the broiling fish sent out a fragrant and appetizing odor. There was an abundance for all, and the visitors accepted the invitation to join in the meal. They ate sparingly, as if afraid of depriving their hosts of what they needed, and when through, each produced a long-stemmed pipe, filled it with tobacco, and smoked with apparent enjoyment.

The strangers remained for an hour after

the meal. Then, having smoked all that was in the bowls, they gravely shook out the ashes, carefully stowed the pipes under their blankets, and rose to go. The leader beckoned to Mul-tal-la to accompany him for a few paces, so as to be beyond hearing of his friends. The Black-foot complied, and the conversation between the two may be thus liberally interpreted:

“A bad Indian lives down the river,” said the visitor.

Mul-tal-la agreed to the statement by a nod of his head.

“He catches a great many salmon.”

“I observe that he isn’t the only Indian who does that.”

“I do not like him.”

“I am sure my friend has good reason not to like him. He must be *very* bad.”

“I owe him much ill-will. He will be mad when he comes to build him a home to use while he gathers salmon.”

“Why will he be mad?”

“Because the lumber you have used belonged to him, and he is gone so far away that you and your friends cannot pay him for the wood; therefore he will be mad when he comes here again.”

“I should think he would boil over. Who can blame him?”

Having delivered himself of this interesting information, the visitor signed to his companions, and the three strode off and were seen no more.

The humor of the thing struck Mul-tal-la, and he grinned while telling his story to Deerfoot and the boys. The Shawanoe was displeased, but had sufficient philosophy to see that there was no help for it. The wood had been burned, the food prepared and eaten, and though they might refrain from consuming more fuel—as they did—the mischief could not be undone.

“I’m trying my best to feel bad over it,” chuckled Victor to his brother; “but somehow or other I can’t.”

“That’s because you don’t feel as conscientious as Deerfoot.”

“How is it with *you*?”

“I feel exactly like you; so let’s say no more about it.”

There is no end to the salmon in the Columbia River. At numerous islands mat houses were seen where the people were as busy as beavers in splitting and drying the fish. Looking down

in the clear water they could be seen twenty feet below the surface, sometimes moving slowly and then darting hither and thither so swiftly that they looked like flitting patches of shadow. They floated down stream at this season in such enormous quantities that winrows drifted ashore and the Indians had only to gather, split and dry them on the scaffolds. Some of the people explained by signs that, owing to the scarcity of wood, they often used the dried fish for fuel. The material for the scaffolds must have been brought from a considerable distance, for no suitable wood was seen for many a mile.

As our friends descended the Columbia they were compelled at times to make portages around the more difficult passages. The canoe with its contents was carried on the shoulders of the four, who thus lightened what otherwise would have been a heavy burden. Landing on a small island the explorers came upon an interesting vault which was used by the Pishquithpahs for the burial of their dead.

Large forked sticks had been driven into the ground at about a man's height, and a ridge-pole, fifty feet long, rested upon them. Over

this were placed pieces of canoes and boards, which slanted down to the eaves, and thus formed a shed that was open at both ends. Impressed by the sight, the visitors peeped into the interior. Bodies wrapped in skin robes were arranged in rows, over which a mat was spread. Farther on skeletons were seen, and in the middle of the building was a large pile of bones thrown together without regard to order. On a mat at one end of the structure were a score of skulls placed in the form of a circle. The method of these people was first to wrap a body in robes and, after it had decayed, to throw the bones in a heap and put the skulls together.

That the friends of the departed kept them in remembrance was shown by the numerous fishing nets, wooden bowls, blankets, robes, skins and trinkets suspended from under the roof. The sight of numerous skeletons of horses near at hand indicated that the Pishquit-pahs sacrificed them to their dead.

The manner in which the Indian tribes of the Columbia formerly dried and packed their salmon may be thus described:

The fish were first opened and exposed to

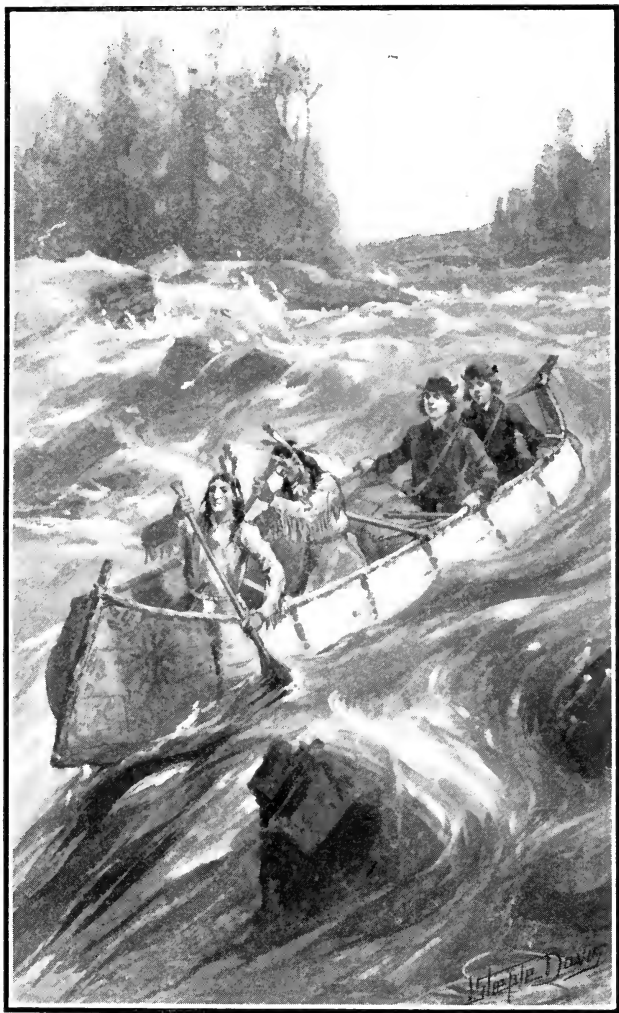
the sun on the scaffolds. There they remained until perfectly dry, when they were pulverized by pounding between stones, and then were placed in a large basket, made of grass and rushes and lined with the skin of a salmon that had been stretched and dried for the purpose. The fish were pressed down as hard as possible and the top covered with fish skins, which were tied by cords passing over the top. Thus prepared the baskets were placed in a dry place, wrapped up with mats, secured again by cords, and once more covered with mats. Salmon thus preserved will keep sweet for several years. Immense quantities were bartered to the Indians below the falls, whence they found their way to the mouth of the Columbia, where they were sold to white visitors.

George and Victor Shelton heard so many reports of the Falls of the Columbia that their expectations were at a high point, but the reality was less than they anticipated. Their height is less than fifty feet in a distance of nearly three-fourths of a mile. The first fall was passed by means of a portage a quarter of a mile in extent, for this fall has a perpendicular height of twenty feet. During the

floods in early spring the waters below the falls rise nearly to a level with those above, and the salmon pass up the river in inconceivable numbers.

Deerfoot and Mul-tal-la watched with some anxiety their approach to the second fall, of which their Indian friends had warned them. They first observed a smooth basin, at whose extremity on the right bank rose an enormous black rock which seemed to extend wholly across the river. Since, however, the stream must have a channel, this, of course, was impossible. A loud roaring came from the left, where the current ran more swiftly. Climbing to the top of the rock it was seen that the river was compressed into a channel a little more than a hundred feet wide, in which the water swirled and eddied so furiously that the boys were sure it was impossible to steer the canoe through the wild battle of whirlpool and rapids.

But the choice lay between that and the labor of carrying the boat over the towering rock at the expense of great time and labor. Neither Deerfoot nor Mul-tal-la hesitated, and George and Victor braced themselves for the struggle. It proved to be hair-raising. Gripping the



In the Rapids.



sides of the canoe, the boys often held their breath and crouched ready for a leap and swim for life, but the coolness and skill of the two Indians never faltered. Without speaking a word, each understood on the instant the right thing to do, and did it. Repeatedly the craft touched some of the jagged dripping points of rock, and an inch or two more to the right or left would have brought quick destruction to the frail craft, but that slight distance was never passed and they sped onward like a race horse. A vicious wave would fling the boat almost out of the water, and then a foaming breaker seemed about to seize it in its remorseless grasp. A moment later a whirlpool or eddy would have spun the canoe around like a top but for the powerful sweep of those two paddles, which worked like the spokes of the same wheel.

When the lads began to breathe more freely they would gasp and make ready to spring into the water, for disaster seemed rushing upon them, but the swarthy, muscular forms never wavered nor lost control. George and Victor had been with Deerfoot in many situations of peril, but they were sure he never displayed

such skill as when guiding the craft through these rapids. Being at the front, his hand was the master one, but, as I have said, it was as if the same impulse guided the arms of Shawanoe and Blackfoot.

This wild charge lasted for half a mile, when the river expanded to a width of two hundred yards; but before the brothers could find much comfort in the fact the situation suddenly became more trying than ever. The channel was divided by two rocky islands, the lower and larger being in the middle of the river. Few Indians dared risk a passage past these obstructions, but the Shawanoe and Blackfoot took it without a moment's hesitation; and, shipping a little water, sped through without mishap. Turning into a deep bend of the river on the right the explorers went into camp for the night.

A short distance below was a village of some twenty houses, in which lived a tribe of Indians called Echeloots, who belong to the Upper Chinooks. They were hospitable to the visitors, who noted several interesting peculiarities in them, of whom only a very few survivors now exist. For the first time in their travels among

the Indians our friends saw wooden houses. They were rude structures, whose chimneys consisted of a single hole each, with a small door at the gable end, which was partly underground.

You have heard of the Flathead Indians, also called Salish or Selish, who used to live in a part of the present State of Washington. To-day they number about a thousand. They are short of stature, badly formed, with large nostrils and thick lips and nose. It was formerly their practice to flatten the heads of their children during infancy, when the bones are soft and yielding, and from which fact came their popular name.

At the time of the visit of our friends the strange practice prevailed among the Echeloots, as it did with nearly all the tribes of the Chinook family on the Columbia. The flattening of the skull was not done by pressure upon the crown, as you might suppose, but by binding a flat board on the forehead of an infant. A little way above the crown this board joined the upper end of the plank upon which the child was stretched on its back, but the two boards diverged as they extended in the direction of

the feet. You will understand the process better if you will think of the letter V lying on one side, with the head of the infant thrust as far as possible into the narrow end. This brought the pressure over the upper part of the forehead, which was gradually forced down until from the eyebrows to the extreme rear of the crown was a single slope like that of the roof of a house. The skull rose into a peak behind and sloped away, as I have said, to the ridge of the eyebrows.

An Indian who had been subjected to this senseless treatment was shockingly deformed, and no one could look upon such creatures without a feeling of repulsion. Nevertheless, the process did not injure the brain nor diminish its volume. A warrior who had been made a "flat head" knew just as much as if his brain had been left to grow as nature intended.

For centuries the Chinese have compressed the feet of their females; the Flatheads have forced the heads of their infants out of shape, and the Caucasian women have squeezed their waists into the narrowest possible limits. A careful comparison of the three crimes must lead us to think that the last-named is the most injurious and, therefore, the most criminal.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT LAST.

INTERESTING and thrilling as was the descent of the Columbia, a detailed description of the voyage of the little party of explorers would become monotonous. They were hardly ever out of sight of Indians, all of whom were friendly, although precautions had to be taken against many of them that were thieves and eager to steal anything upon which they could lay hands.

You need not be told that the Columbia is one of the most important rivers on our continent. The scenery in many places is picturesque, grand and inspiring. The boys felt that the sight was well worth the journey across the country. Their enjoyment increased day after day as they drew near the sea. Game was so abundant that they never lacked for food, and the Indians were always ready to share with them. At different times they saw natives who gave evidence of having met white men at the

mouth of the Columbia. There were numbers of guns, civilized coats and trousers, brass buttons and various ornaments which could have been obtained from no one else, and, now and then, some intelligent Indian showed himself able to speak a few words of English.

One of the counties in the present State of Washington is Wahkiacum, which received its name from a tribe of Indians that have been extinct for years. Our friends paid a visit to a Wahkiacum village on the right bank of the river. After procuring some food and a beaver skin, the explorers climbed to the crest of an adjoining hill and with feelings of expectant wonder gazed to the westward.

At last! As the vision ranged over plain and wood and elevation they saw stretching away to the horizon the mightiest expanse of water on the globe. North, west, south, rolled the Pacific Ocean, extending at its widest part to more than one-third of the distance around the world.

No one spoke, but, grouped together, the spy-glass was silently passed from one to the other, and each gazed in rapt admiration and awe. George first offered the instrument to Deerfoot,

but he shook his head. He then handed it to Mul-tal-la, but he also declined, as did Victor, and then George leveled the instrument and held it for several minutes, while the others made the best use they could of their eyes. Finally George sighed and passed the glass to his brother. When he had finished he proffered it to the Shawanoe, but he indicated by a gesture that Mul-tal-la's was the next turn.

At last Deerfoot, standing erect, with his gun leaning against a near boulder, where his companions had placed their weapons, slowly directed the instrument westward, while all looked at him instead of at the ocean.

The Shawanoe's eye roved over the immense expanse, as he gradually shifted his gaze from point to point. Over hundreds of square miles nothing was to be seen but the limitless waste of waters. Ridges of foam and a faint roar showed where the long swells broke upon the beach. From the tops of cone-like lodges climbed little twisting wreaths of smoke, indicating the villages of the dusky inhabitants of the region between the ocean and the spectators.

Deerfoot now descried something which the

others had not seen. In a direct line to the westward and almost on the rim of the horizon was a tiny white object, like a peculiarly shaped cloud that would soon dissolve into thin air. It was a ship, and the snowy spread was its sails that caught the favoring breeze.

The vessel was many miles distant and heading for the mouth of the Columbia. It was the only vessel visible in that vast sweep of ocean. The Indian watched it as it gradually grew more distinct. He wondered as to the people on board, and speculated as to what part of the world they had come from. He finally lowered the instrument and peered in the direction without the artificial help. Yes; he could now see the vessel with the eye alone.

Pointing toward the right point he handed the glass to George Shelton and said:

“Let my brother look.”

The lad did so and the next moment exclaimed:

“It is a ship! Victor, you must see it!”

“I do,” replied the other, who nevertheless took the spyglass, which was next passed to Mul-tal-la. Then it went around in turn again, and the feast of vision was enjoyed to the full.

For an hour the party held their place on the elevation, studying the sea and the grand and varied panorama spread before them. They could have stayed all day and been content, for there was much that was impressive in the thought that they had reached the end of their long journey over mountain, through tangled wilderness and across prairie and river. Victor Shelton suggested that they should keep on down the Columbia to the mouth and take a bath in the chilling waters of the Pacific, but Deerfoot shook his head. It had been the understanding from the first that they were to press westward until they saw the ocean, but to go no farther. They had touched tidewater some time before, and could feel that at times they were really paddling through the waters of the Pacific. It would take several days to reach the mouth of the river and time had become valuable. The season was so far advanced that winter would be upon them by the time or before they arrived in the Blackfoot country, for a good deal of the return journey must, from its nature, prove much more laborious than the one just completed had been.

Deerfoot unexpectedly revealed one cause of

anxiety. He was disquieted over Whirlwind, whom he had left with Amokeat, the Nez Perce chieftain. He could not free himself of the belief that trouble was to come from what he declared was a wrong act on his part. Had the stallion been only an ordinary "every day" animal, the owner would have felt no concern, but the steed was sure to be coveted by more than one warrior, and Amokeat could not have understood the worth of the treasure he had undertaken to guard and keep for the return of the owner.

"Deerfoot did not use Whirlwind right," said the Shawanoe, shaking his head. "The heart of Whirlwind was grieved when he saw Deerfoot leave him."

"But," said Victor, sympathizing with the depression of his friend, "he is so wise a creature he surely understood why you left him."

"Yes; he understood, and that is why his heart was sad, for he knew that Deerfoot had no right to treat him so."

The Blackfoot now summed up the question by a remark with which the brothers ardently agreed.

“They will not kill Whirlwind, for they have no reason to do so. He will be alive *somewhere*; he will seek Deerfoot and Deerfoot will hunt for Whirlwind, and *he will find him!*”

The boys noted the flash in the eyes of the Shawanoe as he said:

“Yes; Deerfoot will find him if he has to hunt many moons and follow Whirlwind among tribes that are hundreds of miles away and who seek the life of Deerfoot.”

All understood the feelings of the youth who thus condemned himself for an act whose wisdom at the most was an open question.

Having uttered the words, the Shawanoe showed an indisposition to say anything further about the matter. He took the spyglass from the hands of George and once more pointed it at the incoming ship. He could make out the sails more plainly, and even caught the white rim of foam curling from the bow. He noted too that the wind was blowing briskly enough to make the vessel careen considerably under the impulse of the bellying canvas.

As it was still early in the day, it was evident the ship would be at the mouth of the river by nightfall. It would have been an interesting

visit if the little party had pressed on and met the captain and his crew. It is not impossible, too, that had it not been for Deerfoot's anxiety over his horse he would have modified the original plan to the extent of rounding out the journey across the continent by touching the Pacific itself.

But after all, what did it matter? The continent had already been crossed and, as the leader had said, the days and nights had become of the utmost value. Mul-tal-la believed it was safe to return to his people, and in point of fact he had grown homesick. Moreover, there was something in the fact that they were so many hundred miles from home that made George and Victor Shelton quite ready to give up the plan of going any farther.

And so our friends now turned their backs upon the Pacific and once more faced eastward. "Now for home!" was the thought in the minds of all four.

And here we must pause for the time. The incidents through which our friends passed and their adventures will be told in the final volume of the **NEW DEERFOOT SERIES**, under the title of

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[THE END.]

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